Australians at War Film Archive

Phillip Greville (Phil) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:42 I was born in Queenscliff, Victoria, on the 12th of September, 1925. It was an auspicious year in one sense, other than that, in that year, my father, who joined the army as a sapper [military engineer] in 1921,

01:00 had been invited to join the Royal Australian Corps of Signals, which was born in that year. And he became a signalman that year. He had married my mother, who was a Queenscliff girl, and who belonged to the ‘town’ as it were, my father was a soldier and belonged to the ‘fort’.

01:30 It was a marriage between the 'squids' and the 'sqods', it being a fishing village. Anyway, we remained in Queenscliff, and my brother Lee was born there as well, until 1925 when my father was posted to the Royal Military College [Duntroon]. He was a staff sergeant at that stage, and he became the assistant instructor of signals. He took over from a very famous fellow,

02:00 who had been the original RSM [Regimental Sergeant-Major] at Duntroon, ‘Chummer’. My Dad had to go before us, because there was no married accommodation available. My mother took us by train, eventually, when the married barracks became available. She arrived at Queanbeyan station at four o' clock in the morning. The railway line to Canberra

02:30 had been flooded and knocked off. She got off this train in the middle of winter, and got on this horse and dray to take her to Duntroon. She had never been so cold in her life. Anyway, we were there until the college moved to Sydney in 1931. In 1931/32, we lived in Bronte.

03:00 My father was then sent on a signals course back to Queenscliff, so we sent three months in Queenscliff at that stage, then back to Sydney, where we lived in Bondi. The college moved back to Canberra in 1937, the end of '36, and my Dad and the family went there. He was posted from there in '39

03:30 to Melbourne and promoted to warrant officer class one, as the RSM in the signals regiment, it was the militia [Citizen’s Military Force] in those days. The war broke out of course in August. Dad was invited to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] in October and he did,

04:00 he was commissioned and he was in the advance party to the Middle East. He set sail from Melbourne on the 13th of December, 1939. He was on the Stratheden, and his job was quartermaster to that particular group of people. He then joined

04:30 6th Div Sigs [Division Signals] when the main body came across. He fought in the desert, then in Crete and then in Greece and was part of the force that occupied Syria. When the AIF came home, he came home. He was shunted off to Ceylon [Sri Lanka] for a few months. Then he arrived home in October, 1942,

05:00 and he had four days leave, then he was pushed up to the unit which was waiting for him, and promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Can I just ask what it was like for you as a kid growing up with your dad...you were moving around a lot with your dad in the forces?

05:30 **Well, we missed him terribly and we were anxious about him, at times. Particularly when he was in Greece and Crete. He got home, he actually saw me play...I was playing cricket for Essendon by this time, and he saw me play one match against North Melbourne,**

06:00 **and saw me make a duck, being bowled around the legs by George Tripe. Which was a disappointment to me. He didn't see me play cricket again until after the war, when I was playing for Sydney University. But it was a loss in all sorts of ways. When you came to shave, there was no-one there to show you how.**

06:30 **Little things like that. But I had been very close to my Dad, and I missed him terribly.**

Did he share much of his military experience with you, either pre-World War II or...

No, he belonged to the old school that didn't bring work back into the home. Although we lived on station,

07:00 I knew very little about the army and I had no intention of ever joining it. But when I was at Melbourne High School, in my matriculation year, midway through the year I got a letter from the Labour National Service, saying I was to attend Melbourne University the following year, and do two years of a science course, then they would allocate me to industry or one of the services, as they saw fit.

07:30 And I suppose I was a bit 'bolshie' [Bolshevik - rebellious], I didn't want to be a scientist, I wanted to be an engineer, and I didn't want to...I didn't want to miss the war. And I calculated out that if I managed to get through Duntroon, I would be nineteen, and I would then be old enough to be sent overseas, so I had every chance of getting overseas quicker that way. So I applied for Duntroon

08:00 and fortunately got through and went there in '43, and the course was over two years. I graduated in 1944...

What was Duntroon like back in the early '40s?

Well, it was quite different to the '30s in the sense that there was a war on, and the

08:30 civil subjects had been cut to a minimum and the military subjects expanded, and we were being rushed through rather than....The quiet four year course had been cut down to two. Otherwise I think it was pretty much as it had been in the '30s, and later in the late '40s and '50s. After Duntroon, I had to do certain courses. One at SME [School of Military Engineering],

09:00 the potential officers course, to teach me something about military engineering. Then I went to Canungra, to do DP1 [Data Processing First Class] Training, which for officers consisted of doing about a five week course, and a very fiscal course. Then taking a squad of soldiers through the same course. We were then considered DP1 and fit to go overseas. I was posted to the 2/8th Field Company in Wewak,

09:30 and I spent...not very long with them, about six weeks with them, because the war then finished, so I didn't really see any active service in World War II, but I saw a lot of the engineering side of things, building roads and airstrips, mainly.

10:00 But 6th Div was running down quickly. I was a newcomer, had no points of course, but a lot of 2/8th Field Company had been in the war for a long time, and they were high on points, so they were posted home. Those that were home on leave at the time never came back, so the unit ran down very quickly. I was posted from there to 2nd Platoon of the 2/2nd Forestry Company. The 2/2nd Forestry Company

10:30 was again a very long serving unit, made up of Tasmanian woodsmen. They had been to England, Canada, then back into the Pacific. And a platoon of them had pulled in at Wewak. They logged the timber and milled it. This was at a time in which the infantry battalions had come back form the jungle and they were spread along the coastline,

11:00 and everybody needed hutting, and things for kitchens and messes and latrines and the like. And timber was in very short supply, so it had a very strict staff control on it. The platoon commander had gone home, it was now in the hands of a corporal, a lovely man by the name of 'Wes' [Wesley] Forrest, and I was really sent there to stand up to lieutenant-colonels and tell them,

11:30 no, they couldn't have their timber, they had to go through the APNG [Asia Pacific Networking Group]. Anyway, I enjoyed that period with them. But then they packed up and went home. Then I was sent to 16 Army Works Company, which was on Wewak Point. Wewak Point was as bare as a badger's bottom. It had been where the headquarters had been of the Japanese Army and the Americans had shelled it,

12:00 and bombed it and there wasn't a tree standing, but there was lots of underground structures which the Japanese had built. Then in December, just after Christmas Day, I was put on a ship, the [HMAS] Duntroon, which went across to Rabaul, and I was offloaded there, into a field company. The field company was

12:30 in the most beautiful banana plantation you ever saw in your life. A paw-paw plantation, rather, with bananas down the side, and lime trees. Having had nothing but bully beef and biscuits and tinned pilchards for some months, this was like heaven. As well as my platoon, I had eleven hundred Japanese prisoners of war, and about a thousand

13:00 Toli people working for me. The Japanese were mainly tradesmen and they were building a twelve hundred bed hospital, with the Toli people who were building roads. Then late February, early March, I was ordered home to start university.

13:30 I did university in Sydney, which I nominated for. Unfortunately due to my service in Wewak, I started to get malaria and that first year I was in and out of hospital all the time and I couldn't pass the examinations. So I had to repeat that year. In 1950 I graduated and I started my regular army career.

14:00 My first appointment was SORE2, that is Staff Officer with the Royal Engineers Grade Two, a major's

appointment, I was only a captain, to the chief engineer of Eastern Command. And I spent a year acquiring a great deal of knowledge about the army.

14:31 Then I was posted as the assault pioneer platoon commander of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, which was being prepared to go to Korea. I joined the platoon at the School of Military Engineering because the soldiers had come from 7th Field Squadron. We then went across at about Christmas time to Ingleburn where the rest of

15:00 the battalion was being assembled and trained. And we sailed for Korea on the Devonshire in early March, arrived in Kure about mid-March, and the CO [Commanding Officer] sent me to the battle school at Haramura, with my platoon to do basic infantry training,i

15:30 in six feet of snow. It was a fairly miserable couple of weeks. But when I got back down I was told that I was in charge of the advance party for the battalion, which comprised my platoon and the transport platoon. We sailed on a War Office LST [Landing Ship Tank] called

16:00 the Reginald Kerr, and we sailed out and eventually landed at Inchon on the 1st of April, 1952. We went up to the 'Kansas Line' and started to prepare our own positions and started to wait for the rest of the battalion who sailed across on a liner

16:30 into Pusan and then came up by rail. We did our basic training again with the battalion, until it was ready to go into the line. When we went into the line we took over from the 'Leicesters' [Royal Leicestershire Regiment]. We shifted battalion positions

17:00 onto the Chipyong-ni, and I was ordered to redo the front fence of a twelve hundred metre minefield which had been laid a couple of years beforehand by Canadians. A lot of the time I was only about eighty metres from the Chinese lines and we were hammering in pickets.

17:30 I had left my section back on a minefield gap, to secure that for our trip back in. I picked them up, we were moving back and between the last two minefield gaps we had to go through we were strung out and ambushed. One of my soldiers, Sid Carr was killed

18:00 and three others were wounded. Dennis Condon was captured and I was captured. That started twelve months and seven days of prisoner. After I came out of there, I was given some leave back home and then posted as the bridging instructor at the School of Military Engineering.

18:30 The CO [Commanding Officer] had gone; the senior instructor had gone, so that left me as acting commander officer as well as senior instructor and bridging instructor. The school had run down during the Korean War, because everything had to produce infantrymen. There was a large numbers of NCOs [Non Commissioned Officer] that needed qualifications, trade and rank, and there was

19:00 a plan there to build a school staff from about five officers and about forty-five other ranks to thirteen officers and a hundred odd others, and to increase the school's courses from about five to about eighty. The courses were all set up but the staff dribbled in. And it was a pretty big time,

19:30 and I was very busy. However, I look back on it and these days and everybody needs counselling after anything. That was much better than counselling. I quickly forgot any of my experiences and concentrated on the years ahead. After about two years…I got married by the way, when I was at university and had a son just before I went to Korea.

20:00 The last day at SME was a busy day, for my wife and for me. I took June to Prince Henry Hospital to have a child and my brother and I had to play in the final of the Captain's Trophy at Royal Sydney Golf Course, which we won thanks to my brother, and when I got back to the hospital, I had a daughter.

20:30 And then I had to catch a train to Puckapunyal, and then join Duntroon where I had been posted to. So about September, I was on the staff of the Royal Military College and I was there until October, late October, 1958,

21:00 when the family and I left for England. By then I had another boy, Guy, and we travelled on the Orcades, and went to London and down to Camberley to do staff college. Unfortunately in March, Guy had inhaled a peanut and the surgeon pushed it into his lung and they had to operate on him in a big way,

21:30 and he died from that operation. So, that sort of put a pall on us that year. However, I concluded staff college. But during the year, I was warned that I would be the next director of transportation, which was an RAE [Royal Australian Engineers] appointment, an engineer appointment, and I had to do a long transportation course

22:00 and a series of attachments, including we would all go on the way home, through the United States of America, to do further transportation training. However, my wife found herself pregnant again…We had a daughter Nicole, in 1960,

22:32 but then June found she was pregnant and was not allowed to travel to America. And so I went by myself, I spent six weeks there and then I went back home, June had the baby and we all moved into Amberley…something or other, in London, and started on our way home,

23:00 which was on the William Royce. We got home and went to Canberra, and I was the director of transportation from the start of '62, until midway through '65, when I became the SORE, Grade One Staff Officer, and the engineering chief for six months, as a fill-in, and I was posted as

23:30 as a GSO 1 [General Staff Officer – Grade 1], First Division. While at First Division, I prepared and was heavily instrumental in running Exercise Maralinga at Shoalwater Bay, the first big exercise there. Unfortunately as that exercise finished, I learnt that

24:00 Nicole had a tumour, and when I got back to Sydney, and that was confirmed, I asked for a compassionate posting while her future was sorted out. I became the SORE 1 works to the chief engineer of Eastern Command and eventually chief engineer of Eastern Command. Nicole died in 1970 and I made

24:30 myself available then back to unit…I was posted eventually to become the commander of the First Australian Logistics Support Group at Vung Tau in Vietnam, at the end of 1971. However, the war was… the decision had been made to

25:00 pull the Australian forces out, and they were having some difficulty with certain aspects of it, which were all transportation related. The 1st of July, I think it was, I was told to report to Canberra because I was going in there. So I went up to Vung Tau and we solved the main transportation problems

25:30 and we managed to speed up the movement back by one month in seven. So instead of finishing in March, we finished on the 29th of February, 1972. And my wife had come up at the invitation of our

26:00 army representative in Vietnam, Colonel Rofe. He had had lived in a house in Vietnam and June stayed with him for a week, and I joined her, we stayed there for another week while I fixed up all the administration regarding the force, and we came back through

26:30 Malaya and Singapore, a couple of nights in Bali then came home. The army had been re-organised and the transportation service had been taken away from engineers, and the transport elements of the Australian Army Service Corps had been taken away from them, and they had been melded into a new corps called the Royal Australian Corps of Transport,

27:00 and I was a colonel at this stage and they put me on the staff on the director Bill Bunting, who retired six months later and I became director of the RACT [Royal Australian Corps of Transport], then Arthur Tang had a hand in re-organising the defence force, and I was made the director general of Movements and Transportation Defence, or centre or something,

27:30 and was put on the staff of the 'PASD', that was the Permanent Head Assisting the Secretary of Defence. In the meantime they re-organised the whole of the movements and transportation, they never came near me to ask me my opinion.

28:00 They just gave me what it was and told me to get on with it. By this time I was getting a bit fed up and I put together a lecture which got a lot of publicity, and I was put under house arrest for a weekend and then required to answer thirty-two questions which I did. The senior officers of the army were very, very good.

28:30 They stood between me and the wrath of Arthur Tang, but they had to do certain things and they did them. And I was eventually ticked off by General Hassett, who was then CGS [Chief of the General Staff]. But I was taken away from Central Defence and I was brought back into the army and I became a Director of Logistics

29:00 Planning and Development, or something…Logistics Development and Planning, which I was in…And that was in the material branch, which was part of the new arrangement. Fortunately they got some sense and I was separated out from that eventually and I became the Director General Logistics, under the Quarter Master General, who they reinstated.

29:30 At the end of 1976, I was posted as the commander of the Fourth Field Group, Fourth Logistics, Fourth Military District, three titles, working to three different organisations, but fortunately by the time I left the job, by the time I retired in 1980 it was all Fourth Military District

30:00 and a much simpler set-up. So in 1980, I retired. I was invited to write for the 'Advertiser', which I did for six years, then they sacked me when I criticised Senator Hill.

30:30 In the meantime I had also been managing director of two firms, one making detergents, and one making explosives. But I found that I wasn't very good as a civilian employer. I had been too used to, I think, battling for my soldiers to be a good employer.

31:00 Anyway, I joined the staff of Senator Don Jessup, as a research assistant, and spent three quiet happy years preparing fiery speeches for him in Parliament, and I continued writing for the Advertiser until they sacked me.

31:30 Then in 1987 we decided to come up here, and I did. I put the house on the market, October 27 I think it

was, when the whole financial system collapsed, but we sold it in the next few weeks.

32:00 And we've been very happy here ever since. I continued writing for the 'Pacific Defence Reporter', and went to a number of army exercises. Dennis Warner was then the editor of Pacific Defence Reporter, but when the paper was sold and Dennis retired I gave it up,

32:30 and I was then approached by the corps to write volume four of the corps history, which took me a long time, ten years, it's a big book, it's a thousand pages. I started to stroke trouble, a little girl knocked me over in a car, which fractured my neck and

33:00 I had a lot of troubles from arthritis, and that slowed up the production. I had a triple bypass. However, we finished it and launched it in time for the centenary of the Royal Australian Engineers, on the 2nd of July last year.

33:30 Since then I've been in and out of hospital with minor problems. I haven't really done very much in the past twelve or fifteen months, except produce the erata for my book.

34:00 **Could you tell us what it was like growing up for you with your father attached to the military and moving around and what you saw of the Depression? How that affected you?**

The first thing is that I went to ten schools.

34:30 And some of those were quite dramatic differences in curriculum. I mentioned that my Dad went down on a signals course to Queenscliff, and I went to the little state school there. And I can remember being

35:00 punished, which I had never been before, all because I was automatically doing 'R's and 'T's as I had done in New South Wales, but in Victoria they did them differently.

Do you remember the difference? How were they different?

Well, the R in New South Wales was like that, and the T was like that. In Victoria,

35:30 the R was like that and the T was like that. And at six, it is not easy to quickly change, even with a ruler. That's only to demonstrate. I was at Bondi North for a long period of time, and I was pretty happy at Bondi North. I had a close friend named Dexter,

36:00 who happened to be born on the same day as myself, John Dexter, and we played a bit of cricket and we played some rugby league. I used to walk to school and the beach was only across the road. But then I went to Canberra and went to Ainsley Public School, and here for the first time was a comparatively new building

36:30 set on about five hectares of natural grassland, at that time. It had the most magnificent library. The facilities were so much better than Bondi North. In the meantime, they had started building a better building halfway up the grounds,

37:00 and eventually, after my time, they had an oval in the front and an oval in the back and hockey grounds. So there were vast differences in schools, even in those days, and I'm talking about government schools. Ainsley Public School was part of the ACT [Australian Capital Territory], but the ACT didn't have a Department of Education, they used the New South Wales Department of Education.

37:30 At the end of that year, I went to Canberra High School. Now there's been three Canberra high schools. The one that I went to was the first, and indeed the first full high school in the ACT. It went into Telopea Park, which had up until then been an intermediate high school. And the New South Wales

38:00 Education Department spared no expense in doing this. The headmaster, a Dr Watson, he'd been to the South Pole with Shackleton. They brought in 'Trunky' Anderson. Anderson and Colville wrote the Junior Algebra and the Junior Geometry, and he was a marvellous teacher. Frank O'Rourke played rugby league

38:30 for Sydney University, was brought by England and went over there and played rugby league over there while he did his master's at Oxford. O'Lochland had similarly been in the Sydney University rugby league team. Martin, the woodwork teacher, was a brilliant hockey player and so on. So the staff was really cranked up,

39:00 but we were due in August, 1939, to go into a brand new building near Civic Centre. And if you know Canberra that is now a music…and Canberra High is out in Wilcombe. But I never saw the new school because we were shifted. When I went to Melbourne, now I was halfway through second year when I went to Melbourne,

39:30 and the headmaster down there, Charles, Dr Charles, determined that I should go in mid-way through third year. In other words, I was still eighteen months off the intermediate certificate, because in Sydney they did the intermediate certificate in three years, in Melbourne they did it in four years, and the intermediate certificate in Melbourne,

40:00 after four years in science, physics and chemistry, was nowhere near the level after three years in

Sydney. Instead of doing six subjects, I had to do ten, some of which I had never done before. I had just started German in Canberra, they didn't teach German. All these sorts of things.

40:40 So you were above it in some ways and you were below it in others.

Tape 2

00:31 **What about social life as a kid, what sort of mischief did you get up to?**

Well, when we lived at Duntroon, we had the Mulga River…Of course there was no lake in Canberra then. But the river was a great drawing spot,

01:01 we'd go down there. Of course we swam in the nude because mother didn't like us going down there. Occasionally, you'd get sunburnt in the wrong spots, particularly just before you got a train to go to Victoria or somewhere. And your Mum might not know why you were not sitting down. We didn't get into too much mischief. We used to slip up into the hills

01:30 and light a fire and toss some potatoes in and things like that. Both my brother and I had bikes, and we used to bicycle around a bit. But my life was always pretty full because I would play cricket and football and swam and we'd play tennis.

02:00 **Was tennis a very social thing?**

Well, in Duntroon, before the war, the sergeants mess had a court. The officers and the cadets shared courts that were in Duntroon Gardens. Yes, Sunday mornings was the morning when people used to get there.

02:30 They probably played at other times, but I was busy on Saturday afternoons with cricket or the rugby. Swimming, the army pool we had was thirty metres.

03:00 We used to bicycle across there and we were able to swim there. In Melbourne, the first time we were in Melbourne, I went to Box Hill High School, which is right out through Box Hill, and I was trying to learn to play Australian Rules.

03:30 I played cricket at school but I also played cricket in a district team, in a park, cricket. And I used to swim at the Surrey Dive, and in fact I used to swim a mile backstroke there, twice a week, back and forth across the Surrey Dive.

04:00 I don't know whether you know it or not, but it was a large quarry that somehow struck water and it filled up, and it was about a hundred and ten yards across, and it was…Box Hill or Surrey Hills had a swimming pool, built at the front of the Dive, and to get into the Dive you had to

04:30 go through the swimming pool area. So I used to do some swimming and then go over to the Surrey Dive. Of course, no-one had cars in those days. You depended on public transport or bicycles.

Did you have a job at all when you were a kid.

Yeah, but not then.

05:00 After that I went to Sydney High and I played cricket for Sydney High, but didn't get to the football season before we were back in Melbourne, and at Essendon High. I started playing football for the North Essendon Methodists Team. The Essendon Football Club, had started up as a third eighteen,

05:30 mainly to accommodate a chap by the name of Keith Rawle, who had graduated from Essendon High the year before me. And Keith Rawle's father, Mr Rawle had been part of the 'Royal Barker Hardy Ruck' [?] for Essendon the first time that they went into the league. And he was a tough bugger.

06:00 His son was much smaller in statue, but a brilliant footballer and brilliant cricketer, but Mr Rawle didn't believe that Keith should go into the big football until he had grown up a bit more. He did and he became a star, and a star cricketer, a great cricketer. And we used to play on the Cross Keys ground,

06:30 made famous in the last couple of months by two fellows being shot there, at the Cross Keys, where they were watching their kids playing football. Anyway, to play on this team you had to go to Methodist Church once a year. I didn't like it because I can't sing a tune, but my brother, who can, quite enjoyed it.

07:00 But….I had a mate at school whose father was away at the war and whose mother continued on to run the grocery shop. I got a job on Saturday mornings doing all the heavy work around the grocery shop. It wasn't the first job I'd had.

07:30 I had a job before I started school, when I first went to Duntroon, a bloke by the name of 'Paddy' Pollack ran the canteen. And Paddy hired me to go up there and cut the butter, the fifty-six pound blocks of butter, into pound and half pound blocks of butter, and take the…

08:00 sixty pound sacks of sugar and measure those out into pound bags, and do other little jobs around the canteen for which I got thruppence. I was paid to do this on Saturday mornings, but I was allowed to get away in time…Because I was playing grade cricket by this time with Essendon, and I was allowed to get away early enough to get to the ground.

08:30 But that was the only civilian job I had. The following year I was at Melbourne High School. We started Melbourne High School in South Yarra, where it exists today, but we hadn't been in there a month when the Royal Navy arrived there and decided it wanted that building for its headquarters in the southwest Pacific. So the school was booted out

09:00 and we ended up at East Camberwell. So now I had to walk to the station a mile, catch the train into Flinders Street, then a train into Camberwell, then a train to East Camberwell. So that was three changes of train. I was playing cricket and football for the school, had to practice with them after school on Mondays

09:30 and Fridays, then on Tuesdays and Thursdays I had to practice at Essendon. And I played football or cricket on Wednesday afternoons at the school, and Saturday with…so I didn't have much time, really. The train travel was good in one way in that it enabled you to study, but it was pretty nerve wracking.

10:00 Particularly if you got the older style trains where they banged the door each time they got out.

It sounded like you played a lot of sport. Did you ever consider a career as a sportsman? What were you thinking that you would do with yourself as you got into your teens?

Well, I wanted to be an engineer, which meant that I was going onto university and I was expected to play sport there,

10:30 which I did, when I got to Sydney University.

What was it about being an engineer that appealed to you?

Well, I was good at maths and science, and I had read a bit on…the engineering was a positive thing to me, that you built things that people needed, and

11:00 the history of bridge building in particular was one that appealed to me greatly. I didn't like the idea of being in a laboratory, but I did like the idea of being out and building things. I wanted to be an engineer all my life.

11:30 And I had no real idea of being a soldier, whereas my brother always wanted to be a soldier and was always keen on the thought of being a soldier. But certainly, after I had been a prisoner of war, I wanted to be an efficient soldier, and

12:00 I put the soldiering ahead of engineering pretty much after that. When I say that, I mean…as in any profession, certainly in engineering, and in soldiering to some extent, you do put your hands-on

12:30 engineering at one stage, and then you find yourself in management and you are organising others. Hands on until you are a lieutenant-colonel and then after that it's more or less organising people. There is no doubt that if I hadn't…

13:00 If there hadn't of been a war, and I was down in Victoria, I would have gone to Melbourne University and been a civil engineer.

If you could tell me about your first few months in Duntroon and what they taught about being an officer?

Yes.

13:30 Well, there is little doubt that Duntroon was a bit of a shock to me. Although I had lived there I had never heard anything about fourth class training. I expected the discipline and everything of that nature, but I didn't expect fourth class training. I didn't like receiving it, and I never gave it out myself

14:00 and I worked hard to eradicate it. But we had hardly left the college and then it was back in again, so it is a pretty persistent thing.

Obviously it is a very different place today. Can you give us some examples of what was not so good about it?

Well, every meal was a time for harassment.

14:30 You would be asked questions continuously throughout the meal, about, what was the height of the flag pole; how many steps between here and there; who was the first commandant; who was the first staff cadet…all these things. I suppose there was some purpose to it, but I don't really see it.

Did people know these things or…

15:00 Yeah, they did know them. But there was sort of physical harassment as well, culminating in initiation

night, when we were just informed to be on….instead of having dinner, we were required to parade

15:30 on the parade ground, on the terrace, in our field kit and instead of going into dinner we were taken on a long march, which quite clearly became stupid after a while. And sort of running in the dark in an area where there was…culminating back in the gymnasium, where you had to strip and you were hosed

16:00 and you had to do all sorts of silly things. Anyway, I didn't mind that particularly. But we had a strange class come in, between my class and the senior class, which we called '3C', which was called 3C, and it was made up of chaps from the AIF. Some of these fellows had been commissioned. One in particular

16:30 had been in the battle of El Alamein and been shot through the head, and commissioned in the field. And these blokes were subjected to this same sort of nonsense, and beaten very severely on this particular night. In fact, one cadet, a New Zealander, instead of just beating someone with scabbard,

17:00 he had actually kept the bayonet in the scabbard and wrapped a towel around it and was beating this bloke. Anyway, that night, two or three of these fellows were quite severely damaged in the process and two of them never graduated. And I took a firm view that this wasn't necessary, and I held that when I was

17:30 on the staff, and I hold that now. It's just a form of bullying as far as I'm concerned, although a lot of my friends would dispute that. However, that is my view on it. The big thing about college life was the military subjects were taught well.

18:00 And we got enough military education over and beyond the sort of immediate requirements of service. Like we learned about the bigger movements of battle, and I still think that Duntroon

18:30 is the place where we should be teaching people the higher aspects of warfare, as well as making them into platoon commanders. I remember when I was the engineering instructor at Duntroon, I had to teach 'engineer stores' in five hours. I thought a lot about this because…

19:00 apart from giving people a long list of what were engineers stores and what weren't, or teaching them how to fill out a form about how to get engineer stores, there was not much you could teach them, unless you looked at the big picture. I put on a demonstration of the 'Crossing of The Rhine' [1945], and showed

19:30 them the flow of engineer stores up for that crossing, and how the movements along the road had to be so organised and planned beforehand to enable the engineer stores to get through, otherwise you would not get them. Everyone enjoyed it, including the tactics instructor, but he brought the director of military art along, and I got a real thrashing afterwards

20:00 because as far as he was concerned we were there to teach platoon commanding, and he wasn't prepared to listen to any of my arguments about the fact that teaching somebody how to fill out a form was a pretty boring five hours, where at least they would go away and remember that if they ever were on a river crossing they would have to think about where the bridge gear was going to come from and how they were going to order it and how they were going to get it up the road.

20:30 But generally speaking, the military instruction was pretty good. And of course we had some very fine instructors there. People like Titch Dawson, a New Zealander, who won a DSO [Distinguished Service Order] as a captain in the desert, and who I idolised as a child. He was a scrum half for the college fifteen and was certainly 'All Black' [New Zealand football team] material.

21:00 But Dawson was a great man and inspired people without much effort. We had NCOs there who had been to war and who knew what it was about and instructed very well.

21:30 And we had pretty reasonable material, we had Bren [machine] gun carriers, we didn't have any tanks, we had Bren gun carriers. We didn't have any horses. The class ahead of us, the horses still existed in the army when they were there and they were all required to do equitation.

22:00 There were no horses at Duntroon while I was there. My brother came to Duntroon in my final year and had to do two more, the war had finished, had to do two more years and they brought back equitation as a requirement.

How prepared did you feel at the end of the two years?

22:30 Very confident actually. The end of my two years was sort of rather funny. An AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] and I both contracted scarlet fever. I had never met her or come into contact with her, but out of the whole area she and I got scarlet fever. I was on an exercise,

23:00 about a six day exercise, and I was feeling terrible and I thought it was because had been sitting in the back of a machine gun carrier, right next to this old Ford engine, and it was a very hot and dusty area, and I thought that was making me feel…anyway, the exercise finished, we cleaned up the vehicles as we were required to, I went up and

23:30 I didn't go to dinner that night; I just couldn't drag myself across. The next morning I had to go for a

medical, the AIF, I passed it at eight thirty in the morning; they shot me out to the rifle range. After a couple of hours I asked to go back. As soon as the doc [doctor] saw me he said, "You've got scarlet fever."

24:00 I was put in the Canberra Hospital.

I don't know what the symptoms of scarlet fever are.

I don't either much, except that you feel rather awful. In addition to that I had some form of dysentery. I went from twelve stone nine to ten stone six in four days and they were worried about the effect on the heart, and as a result…I was still in hospital when my class graduated.

24:30 And I had to take sick leave and come back some time in January, late January to be medicalled. But I passed the medical. My graduation was backdated to normal and my seniority wasn't altered. But it was a bit of a…

25:00 But anyway, my graduation wasn't as exciting as it was meant to be. I went from there to SME where we were given a course in field engineering.

Was that very practical, that course?

The majority of the people that were on this course were corporals and sergeants from the Second AIF.

25:30 They were highly skilled fellows, but they had to be taught how to do the reconnaissance and the organising of work, which is an officer's job rather a section commander's job. The people who were instructing us were all officers and NCOs from the AIF,

26:00 and all of them highly experienced, as well as, in many cases, professional engineers. No, that was an excellent course. The one at Canungra was really conditioning more than anything else that followed it…

But did you have to organise for things to be built as part of your assessment or anything like that?

26:30 No, you do paper exercises, design exercises. You've got to go out and measure up a gap and design a bridge to go over it and bring out the task tables and the stores tables…And if it was equipment bridging, you built part of the equipment.

27:00 **Was there different types of bridges that you were taught to built, maybe ones that were temporary or…**

Yeah, well, the equipment bridges were temporary. They're quick to build and then you shove them across a gap. And then a different sort of engineering organisation comes along and builds what we call the semi-permanent bridge, which is a permanent bridge really.

27:30 And the equipment bridging is recovered and used again somewhere else up the road. The equipment bridges can, of course, be enormous, such as in Europe. But ours weren't. We didn't go into that very much. Around the South Pacific, we had a different problem there…

28:00 The platoon I joined then in Wewak had been up at But [airstrip] before I joined them, and their job was to keep a bridge across a river there to allow the convoys to come down from Aitape [airstrip] to Wewak. The bridge wasn't really wide…

28:30 The problem was that when it really rained up in the hills, a tidal wave came down the river about thirty-feet high, and if you left a bridge there it was going to be smashed. So the job of the troop apart from maintaining the airfield was to recover the bridging and stock it high enough above flood level.

29:00 Then when a convoy was to come down, they would put the bridge across again, then the convoy would go across and they would pull the bridge off and put it up again. Sounds strange, but that was the way things needed to be in certain circumstances.

So how long would it take to construct that temporary bridge?

Well, the troop might take half a day, or a day, depending on…The equipment bridging can be built very, very quickly.

29:30 When I was chief engineer, Eastern Command….I was out at SME, there was some sort of show there, with the Institution of Engineers people were there. One of them turned to me and said, "Phil, did you know that there are about a hundred bridges being knocked down on the Darling [River]?" I said. "No, I didn't."

30:00 Anyway, I got back home that night and there was a message saying. "The GOC [General Officer Commanding] wants to see you about the flood." And I was thinking it was about the flood over the Darling. And instead of that, there had been three hundred bridges knocked down on the south east coast of New South Wales, and the state government was screaming for help.

30:30 I got the OC [Officer Commanding] of squadron out at Holsworthy to come in and see me the next morning, and bring his RSM. We hired a little aeroplane and we went down. They were down there with a vehicle to take us around where they could. After discussions with the local authorities

31:00 they agreed that three bridges, if we could put three bridges up, they could continue traffic. I came back at midday, got the OC of the squadron to design the three bridges and give me the stores list and everything of that nature. I handed my report in to the GOC that evening, and

31:30 we waited three months for the state and federal governments to work out who was going to pay for the soldiers food and things like that. Then we got the job, but only for one bridge, it was a substantial bridge. The stores were brought up from Albury-Wodonga, the troop spent a day training while the stores were assembled.

32:00 We built it in three days, and that was it. But we could have had the whole thing done in…you know, urgency, urgency, urgency, until you get down to the fellows who are working out who is going to pay for this or that. They weren't paying for the bridge, but it was a battle as to who was going to pay for the extra fuel, the extra rations. You wonder sometimes…

32:30 But no, you can build these bridges reasonably quickly.

What materials would you use?

We were still using ‘Bailey’ at that stage, which was a high tensile steel. The British at one stage, wouldn't give anyone the formula. Actually, when I was on the staff at SME,

33:00 an old army friend Leo Cook came and said, "Phil, the AJC [Australian Jockey Club] wants a bridge across the Cooks River here to get vehicles into the White Farm Racecourse." And I said to him, "Well, if you show me what you want," and I got another fellow to come along with me.

33:30 We went out to have a look at it and I said, "Well, the only thing that I would recommend is a Bailey suspension bridge. But I'll tell you what. I will give it to my class as an exercise." Which we did, and they came up with Bailey suspension as being the answer. And so we gave them all the particulars.

34:00 Six months later they had ordered that bridging from Stories, a London firm, and it arrived there and 7th Field Squadron built that bridge for them, but the AJC got civil firms to build the foundations and anchorage…The bridge was there for nearly twenty years.

34:30 And was then pulled down, I don't know what happened to it after that. The AJC owned it. And I think although it was a bridge they hadn't built before; they built it in less than a week.

I wonder if you could just tell me about your time in 2/8th Field Company in Wewak? What were the conditions like?

35:00 **And what were you doing on a day to day basis?**

Well, 2/8th Field Company was a famous company, but it had to be rebuilt after Crete, it was lost virtually during Crete. But it was rebuilt over in the Middle East and came back and joined in on the Sixth Div operations. They were on the beach,

35:30 they were camped along the beach, there was a road in front of the camp and there was a swamp on the other side. So there was the beach, this strip of sand, the road and swamp. But it was a great place to live. You could get up in the morning, go in and have a swim and then come out again. My main jobs were

36:00 road construction and building construction. ‘Red Robbie’ [Lieutenant-General H.C.H. Robertson] had become the GOC commander, and he…felt uncomfortable in the house that had been built for the Duke of Gloucester to visit, because they had mosquito-wired it,

36:30 inside and outside, there was plenty of air coming through, but not enough for Robbie. I was to go up and redesign this house so that he could sleep at night. We put in louvers and things of that nature, and

37:00 mosquito nets…it was very interesting in that in World War II, a Brigadier Fairley, of the Medical Corps, ran an experimental medical thing up the coast here, in Queensland. Now the AIF suffered from malaria, it suffered from things like scrub typhus

37:30 and skin disease, particularly. But malaria was the main problem. Now Fairley had worked out that if you took six atebrin a week, one a day for six days, that it would hold malaria in a balance. 6th Division had ninety-eight percent incidence of malaria,

38:00 and everyone was in a ‘tiz’ [fuss] over this.

Had they been taking the medication?

Well, they increased it to two per day, seven days a week, and an officer had to put the tablet on the soldier's tongue, he had to swallow it, open his mouth for inspection…

38:30 And it didn't matter if the platoon was forty yards from the Japanese. This had to go through, and the sergeant had to be with the platoon commander and they both had to sign…and if the platoon commander got malaria, he was out, and if the company commander got it, he was out. Fortunately, the senior doctor of the division got it, and they suddenly worked out that there was a new kind of malaria.

39:00 By the end of the war, we had produced a tablet for that type of malaria. Which was fortunate for the Americans, because when we were in Vietnam…just north of Nui Dat was an area where this malaria was prevalent, and the Americans never had anything for it.

39:30 And we had plenty of tablets, so they brought half a million tablets or something from us, and that saved that formation. I was one of those people who mosquitoes swarmed on. I found that out on an exercise out of SME, at a place called Dead Man's Creek, where we were doing road location,

40:00 and we were in shorts, short sleeved shirts and using optical instruments to measure the inclines and directions. And my arms were just swarming with mosquitoes and my legs, and most other people only had the occasional mosquito, but they were attracted to me. And I was sitting in 16th Army Works Group Company

40:30 on Wewak Point, and I would sit down at lunch and all these things would swarm in on me and no-one else in the place was worried by them. So it was no surprise to me when I eventually got malaria, and it was no surprise to me when it took about five different treatments for me to get rid of it.

Tape 3

00:32 **You mentioned earlier that you were not looking for a career in the army to start with, but when you did sign up you were planning it because you were hoping to get to war. I was wondering if in those early days, you were thinking of**

01:00 **joining any of the other services?**

No, I always I wanted to be in the army. The army was the only one I considered. I get seasick like nobody's business, and I never felt a desire to be airborne for that matter, although I spent a lot of my time airborne. The fact was there was a war on

01:30 and I wanted to get into the war. My Dad's brother was in World War I, and Dad didn't get into World War I, and I know that he missed that experience. So he got into World War II as soon as he could. He was a particularly good cricketer and while

02:00 they were in Cairo and there was no war on, he was playing cricket for the Heliopolis Club. And he used to send the newspapers home to me, and he was scoring lots of runs against English test cricketers and the like at the time. And he was invited to captain the AIF cricket team, but he said, "No. I'm only playing now because

02:30 there's no war on. As soon as the war starts, that is all I want to do is the war." The powers-that-be wanted an officer and they eventually got Lindsay Hassett, who was on first name terms with every duke in England. Anyway, Lindsay Hassett got it, of course.

03:00 I wanted to get into the war, because I'd known how disappointed Dad had been. But there was no way I could join up, I tried it. They said, "Go home lad until you can shave. There's no point coming here." And I knew I couldn't get Mum's permission either.

03:30 However, when I had no control over whether I would get to war, in other words, when I was put into this National Service situation, I said, "Well hell, Duntroon is the way to go."

So given that they were concertinering the course then, making it shorter to get your through, how well prepped were you by the time you got to Wewak do you think? And did you know what to expect when you got there?

04:00 I'd read everything that I could on the war when I was a cadet, and there were some marvellous little, what you would call 'monographs' now, on the various battles up there, and I knew pretty much what conditions were like. And we had

04:30 chaps who had been up there for twelve months, or eighteen months. We had ‘Tusker’ McCloud who had been on Rabaul and escaped on a little boat across to mainland New Guinea and then walked out. There was plenty of information…I never saw any battling but two of my classmates

05:00 were wounded. Three were wounded.

Was that when you were up at Wewak?

That was just before I got there. And Russ Cornish was killed, Bruce McDonald and…

05:30 Ken McKenzie, maybe, both of them were wounded and awarded Military Crosses, they were with the 2/5th Battalion that was just down the road from us.

So even though things were winding down, there was still danger about?

Yes. Up in the hills it was. Well, that was a pretty vicious campaign,

06:00 the last Wewak campaign. I saw something that…When we were camped on that beach…Lionel Sharp was in the 2/8th Field Company and he asked me if I would like to go out to Manus Island, which was where all the Japanese prisoners were being put,

06:30 and I said, “Yes”. So I accompanied him out on a boat with a lot of new prisoners. And he had provided a water pipe to go from a well to the hospital. And he got news that there wasn't enough pipe, and he knew that he had provided enough pipe.

07:00 Now on Manus, there were two groups of people. There were Japanese Army people, who had been up in the hills and had been brought out of the hills and put onto this island, and there was a group of Japanese Navy fellows that had been there all through that part of the war. And no-one had bothered to take them out.

07:30 And they'd lived off the fat of the land, and they were big fellows, six foot tall, and arrogant as all hell. And they had deliberately crossed this thread so that the pipe zig-zagged like mad…so Lionel made them unscrew it, which was not a pleasant task, and re-screw it.

08:00 The conditions in that hospital were terrifying. I had never seen anything like it in my life. The Japanese were very sick people, and some of them died and…they just didn't have any people with any strength to take them out and bury them. And this crowd of navy fellows

08:30 were just sitting down there, just ignoring them, and not doing anything for their fellow countrymen. I thought it was just one of the most disgraceful things that I had ever seen. There was an aerial bomb, one of those parachute bombs, and it was about ten feet from a ring of marquees that the Australian army had put up, and no-one had touched this thing because they were in

09:00 a very tremulous state. If it had blown, half of them would have been killed. It was really a terrible sight, and perhaps a blight on ourselves for not doing it the right way. People were not very sympathetic to the Japanese in 1945. I was one of those selected to attend the surrender.

09:30 Each unit in 6th Division put a group onto Wewak airfield, and Red Robbie [General Robertson] had set up a podium at the far end of the airfield, and they dropped [General] Adachi and his staff off at the other end of the airfield, and made them walk right through…

10:00 The division was drawn up on each side of the airfield and made him walk the whole way down. He was not a very well man himself. But the troops that came out of the jungle were in a terrific state. He had about fifty-seven thousand when they started off, and he was down to about fourteen or fifteen thousand. The rest had died or had been killed.

The dead in the hospital were just being left?

10:30 They were people who had come out, been repatriated but didn't have the strength to live. They needed, what do they call it, in hospital now when you come out of the operating theatre they put you into intensive care, but we didn't have the people to give it to them, but neither did they. So many of them died. A stark contrast,

11:00 when I was on Rabaul, just before I left, I was asked to build a wharf at Kokopo, and we couldn't get any machinery there, so we devised a method of jetting these piles in by…

11:30 air blower anyway. We devised, we didn't have any diving kit of anything like that…by screwing some hoses from the respirators together, we could get down, and get enough air down there.

12:00 But up beyond them on the slope, was the most magnificent wartime camp that I had ever seen, and that was where all the Japanese on Rabaul were. They had market gardens, they had the lot. General Ether, who was the commander of the 5th [11th] Division had just dealt with the senior bloke, and he said,

12:30 "Keep your blokes there and that is it. You will be responsible if anything happens." They were a very well disciplined lot. But it's such a contrast to these poor devils who came out of the hills in Wewak.

Their supply lines had been cut for quite a while at that stage?

No, they hadn't had supplies for a long while.

13:00 Now Adachi, of course, committed suicide. The general on Rabaul was hanged, and I don't think he deserved it.

Why do you say that?

Well, he had been the general that had captured Singapore, but then he had been

13:30 displaced from there very quickly, and they had put a more political fellow in. The nasty stuff was due to his successor, not due to him. But he was blamed for it. He got knocked off.

What about being on the ground at Wewak yourself?

14:00 **You mentioned that you were looking after roads and wharves and building hospitals and things like that. Can you just give us a picture of how you would construct some of those things using the equipment of the day that you had in such an isolated place?**

Well, by then we had a reasonable amount of equipment. But the roads were basically made out of coral.

14:30 It was crushed and rolled, but it was very dusty. They used to get sump oil and pour over it, which meant that the dust got coated in sump oil. And if you were working on the roads all day, you got accumulations of this in your ear.

15:00 And our chaps used to have to get washed out regularly once a week, their ears. But I found my job basically was…we couldn't get stores. And what the troop needed from me was to get stores. The troop was a platoon in those days.

15:30 When they needed culveting or this and that, I would get in a jeep and go down…I had to go miles down the road. We were strung out because of these swamps and hills, we were really strung out on the bit of flat land that comprised the foreshore. And

16:00 part of the road was the beach. You'd go so far and then you've got Ellena [?] Beach and you'd go for miles on the beach and then you would have to go back inland. So I spent a lot of my time driving down and fighting with people to get sufficient stores to keep these jobs going.

What was the main obstacle in not having the stores supplied? They just weren't there or…

16:30 **When I went to Wewak from Canungra, which was where you became DP1 and where the equipment was…There weren't any socks. And I got brand new boots and had no socks. I have no idea why the supply of things was so bad at the end of the war, but they really were.**

17:00 **I think as the war finished, people said, "Well, they don't need any stores up there now, so we will cut the supply off." Certainly we were in short supply of almost everything up there. And as I said, the rations were terrible. We had bully beef and biscuits most of the time.**

17:30 **There was no bread. We got those awful pilchards, every Friday, in tomato sauce. We got 'M & V' [meat and vegetables] every now and again. But that's all the rations were, they were pretty grim.**

What was M & V?

'Meat and vegetables', a sort of stew that they used to put in a tin.

18:00 I remember we took a bridging boat out once…I don't know how we came into having this bridging boat. They must have wanted it to do something or other. But anyway we had it this Saturday afternoon and we went out and we fished in the good old way of throwing a few grenades over, and we pulled up mackerel.

18:35 And that was the first sort of fresh food that we had had after six months in the place.

Just out of curiosity, you mentioned crushing the corals to make the roads. How would you crush it? Did you have machines to do that?

No, it didn't need it. It was just rolled out with a steel roller, actually.

19:00 It wasn't coral off the reef, it was coral from the cliffs that were around the foreshores of Wewak. I know that a chap by the name of Sandy McGregor was pulling coral out of the same pits that we had been using just before he went to Vietnam in 1965,

19:30 so some of them were still there. We built what we called 'Chinaman'. Which was just a frame, in which a truck could go underneath and it's got griddles across…and you would have a [bull] dozer up the hill and dozer the material down

20:00 onto the top of this thing and it would drop down into the trucks and they would take it off. So most of the time it had been dozed out, and it was crumbly and any sort of big lumps would catch in the griddle and were sorted out later.

The sump oil combined with the coral would make it…I can imagine it would make it into a bit of a paste…

20:30 The sump oil was only a dust palliative after the thing had been in use ….you sprayed it on. Very, very thin. The trouble was the dust was then oil covered dust.

What was the state of the troops like, because Wewak had been a bit of a fight…

21:00 Oh yeah, it had been a bitter fight. The Australian soldiers recovered very quickly when they came out of the hills. The hills were pretty darn hard to take. But the moment they got down onto the beach and into the water and everything, they recovered fairly quickly. The interesting thing to me was…we got two bottles of beer per head per week.

21:30 And fellows would throw those in the sea, on the foreshore, and there was never any thought of anyone pinching anyone's beer or anything like that. As the weeks went on, and the chaps used to go home and they would mix units up. With the mixed units, there was thievery and fighting and all sorts of things would happen. So it was a great lesson

22:00 to the soldier in the value of units as units. You'd talk to Australian soldiers, "What are you fighting for?" "My mates." And if you break up that 'matedom', you were in trouble. You got a very different bunch of fellows in your hands. But while they were in their own group, they were fine.

22:30 But there were some villains of course, always. My Dad used to talk about a fellow who wrote a series of books. He was a North Bondi lifesaver by the name of Clift. And after the war he wrote these books, very successfully.

23:00 While he was in battle he was a sergeant, the moment he got out he was a bloody villain. Had to pull him down to a private soldier again, a signalman. And there were some Australians like that. But when the job is being done and they are surrounded by their friends, they were fine.

23:30 **Was it before your deployment or once you got to Wewak that you kind of, I guess, understood what had gone on in the islands in terms of real fighting between the Japanese and the Australians?**

Well, I didn't see any fighting, but I knew a lot about it.

24:00 I know that by the time…soldiers would go up and grab a position and wounded Japanese would be lying there, with grenades underneath them, and if you pulled them off to find out how they were, a grenade went off. Chaps would be there with an arm off and they were still firing their rifles…

24:30 Our people just could not take any risks, so if they captured trenches they just threw grenades into the trenches and that was it. It was their only self defence. I know people can't understand those things, but…I think in those circumstances that was the only thing that you could do.

25:00 **It makes a lot of sense in a practical sense, all things aside…**

Well, people had risked their lives a great deal. On the question of bravery, I look at this way, working with mines is a matter of skill. And you match your skill against whatever risks are there,

25:30 and I don't consider that as being brave in any sense of the world, it is just a matter of employing your skills. But as an infantryman, to get up and walk through a virtual sheet of steel, which you can do nothing about, to get to an objective…you may have to walk fifty yards, a hundred yards, two hundred yards, as they did in the desert. That takes an extraordinary amount of bravery because

26:00 everything is out of your hands. It is a matter of fate. It is terribly brave to be able to say, "Fate is if I go, I go." World War I was even worse. I was just reading today the eulogy of this fellow who died in New South Wales the other day, and they were talking about Australia lost twenty three thousand dead at the Somme [1916].

26:30 That is inconceivable, and it was all…apart from bombardment and things, most of it was people getting up and walking through a hail of machine-gun fire. Many of them getting one step, some of them getting ten steps, and then watching the fellows go down all around you.

27:00 It is no more advanced from a couple of hundred years ago where they drew up in three ranks and watched the cannonballs coming. You were not allowed to move.

Did you see anything in the fellows there, when you got there, who may have lost mates in that fight at Wewak and things like that?

27:30 **Who were casualties and they might have been close mates?**

Post-traumatic stress? Oh, I'm sure there were people who were affected that way, but no-one made a business of it. Even worse, in World War I. They called it 'shell shock' then, and I'm sure it was shell shock. I mean, any intensive bombardment that you go under

28:00 affects you physically and mentally.

For the training that you actually received in Australia before you went over to Wewak, how did it go for you actually putting that training into practice? Was there things that you learnt on the run as you were doing what you needed to do?

28:30 I believe the more training you get, the more skilled that you are, the better you can cope. But no-one

can train you for everything that is going to be in front of you. It is one reason why we like to have a lot of professional engineers in our field squadrons. Because every now and then we come up with a situation that requires rational thought,

29:00 and the problem has to be solved by going right back to basic principles, and improvisation is the name of the game. Sure, you might say, "The best thing is not here, there is none in the store." So you have to find something different.

29:30 That is basically a fundamental of military engineering, as opposed to civil engineering. In civil engineering you design to the best design, you order the materials, you get the right labour and equipment and you go ahead and build. In military, you build it with what you've got or what you can get. And therefore your designs have got to be different,

30:00 and you've got to build it with the men you've got. In Vietnam, we were able to be more flexible than our organisations, and we had ex number of men in a squadron who could be pulled out of that squadron

30:30 and electricians put in, for example. If we were doing an electrical project, we could pull up electricians from Australia and put them in a squadron for three months while we wired the base or something of that nature, but that is pretty unusual for our sort of engineering.

31:00 **On methods of improvisation, are there any good examples of the construction you were doing either at Wewak or Rabaul that you can talk us through, for the jobs that you were doing?**

I had to build a totaliser on Rabaul, the first big race meeting after the war. But I really can't

31:30 remember very much about that.

What is a totaliser?

Well, they didn't have any bookmakers, although there were plenty of them around, but the general didn't recognise them. We had to build this tote, it was a non-mechanised tote, but nevertheless you had to have the things to show the horses and the jockeys…

32:00 There weren't too many jockeys either. They worked it all right. They had tickets and things. My supervisors in the hospitals would say to me, "Don't watch the Japanese, he does everything back to front. But it's all right, it will be okay in the finish."

32:30 What he meant by that was, we saw that way and the Japanese saw this way, and they do quite a lot of things slightly different to us, but the finished product is all right. In fact, we learnt to, over the years, work with the Japanese a lot. Not that I did, but my Dad did in particular. He was on Rabaul incidentally. He was the chief signals officer on Rabaul.

33:00 I used to occasionally see him there. He was the chief signals officer in BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Forces] for some years, and he had a great deal to do with the Japanese post and telegraph organisation on which they were dependent for a lot of years.

Did you know your father was on Rabaul before you got there?

I think I did.

33:30 I think I had had a letter somewhere, through the system, to say what he was up to.

Were you able to seek him out?

No, but when we were playing football somewhere, he'd come and watch. He had a football team of his own which had some great footballers. Fellows who came to prominence many years later. ‘Len’ Cowley was one of them.

34:00 Sunday was our day off, and I played rugby league in the morning, and Australian rules in the afternoon. But I saw him about three or four times in the couple of months that I was there, so

34:30 that was more than I had seen him in a long while.

Was that good to catch up?

Yeah. Yes.

Did he share much of what he had been doing now that you were in the military as well?

We didn't really talk much about the army when we met up there. More about football.

35:00 That was a pretty soft job for him. My Dad had had a big job here. He had been commander of the Advance LHQ [Land Headquarters] Signals Unit, which stretched from Brisbane, from headquarters here in Brisbane…

35:30 to the LHQ Headquarters in Brisbane, to Lae. And he had twelve hundred girls and eight hundred B Class men. The girls manned the teletype system…It was just face to face signals, so that they had all

these bases all the way up the coast and across into Lae.

36:00 And he was very proud of the women, because he said they really worked through some very grim conditions. It was a twenty-four hours a day operations, and some of the areas were terribly hot, as you can imagine, all the way up there. And they had to sleep in tents.

36:30 And those in the midday shifts, for example, were pretty hot trying to get to sleep and everything, but they slugged it out. And of course their manipulative ability on the keys and things of that nature kept the system going.

37:00 **When you were in Wewak and that time was coming to an end, were you expecting to come back to Australia?**

Well, I had hoped to get to Japan. But there was only one small group selected from 6th Division, only one battalion, and pieces of other units.

37:30 The OC of one of the squadrons selected to go there was Don Cooper and he had 8th Field Company, and I was in 2/8th Field Company. 8th Field Company, we had this militia organisation there, an independent brigade. It had been militia, it was AIF by now. And Don was selected and he selected Bill Trout from my class, he was in his squadron

38:00 to go to BCOF. So the other three of us, Gibson, McGee and myself…I don't know where McGee went, but Gibson and I were sent to Rabaul. And were enjoying that when we were pulled out to go to university. Trevor and McGee went across to Perth University, and I went to Sydney. There were about twenty-six

38:30 of us from around the AIF who were pulled in and sent back to university.

That is a bit of shift, going from Wewak and what you were doing, to going to supervising eleven hundred odd POWs [prisoners of war] and a thousand odd…

Well, I didn't personally supervise, I doled them out…but the Toli people were the people who gave me the greatest thrill. I used to come to work on the backs of ‘tippers’ [truck], which we'd send to pick them up

39:00 from their area, and they would sing and each tipper was just that much behind the other. I can't remember what that sort of singing is now, that group singing…very musical, very strong people.

39:30 And they worked pretty cheerfully on the roads, mainly manual work to clean up after the dozers and things, and they did drainage and things of that nature. The Japanese were all tradesmen, and they worked under my tradesmen, so I didn't really have that much to do with them.

40:00 I dealt with my blokes and let them deal with theirs. And I didn't have anything to do with the administration of either group. We had other organisations, so I only had to worry about my own soldiers. And we didn't have too much to worry about. We had reasonable living conditions and we had marvellous fresh fruit.

40:30 I suppose the rations were pretty much the same, so we would eat the fruit.

Tape 4

00:30 **Could you tell us a bit about life at university?**

It was a strange business, the university. It had classes of five hundred people, stuck into large theatres. The staff had been used to lecturing to five people and suddenly they were confronted with five hundred.

01:00 They had no idea how loud they had to speak. They had no idea how big they had to do the writing on the board. There were no text books, there was no reproduction facilities of any value, and the staff could hardly cope, quite frankly. When I went for my medical for Duntroon,

01:30 the fellow said, "Six out of twenty-four." He said, "You're blind. You can't go into the army." And he turned the card over and he said, "Greville? Are you any relation to Sid Greville?" I said, "Yeah, I'm his son." He said, "Okay, twenty-four out of twenty-four." I was short-sighted…

02:00 But I mean, I was opening the batting for Essendon in the first grade cricket. And I used to bat against ‘Dicky’ Reynolds, who was a great footballer, but he was also a very fast bowler, of the Thompson-type windmill. I said, "I can't believe this."

02:30 Anyway, I battled on without any glasses, but I used to wonder a bit when I used to get bulls [bulls-eyes] for the first two sighters, and then I'd deteriorate out to an outer as I shot off rounds on the rifle range. When I got to university I just couldn't see the board. Anyway, I battled on,

03:00 and then I was at the cricket with my Dad, about 1947, or something, and we were watching a test match and we were in the old members stand, and he had a column in front of him between him and the scoreboard, and he said, "What's the scores?" I said, "I can't read the scoreboards." And he said, "What?" And he turned around and he said, "Why can't you read the scoreboard?" I said, "I just can't read the scoreboard."

03:30 So I ended up going to this ocular bloke who prescribed me some glasses, and I could then read the blackboard, but I had found my own way of getting through university by then. I had worked out from the calendar the books that were recommended

04:00 and I noted the ones that they were working from, which were not the ones that they told the classes to buy. So I used to go and buy them and I used to follow the course basically by finding out what was going and doing my own work in the meantime. And provided I did the practical work, I could then get through.

04:30 But it wasn't the ideal way to get through university. And Professor Miller at the end of it said, "There is only one other Duntroon graduate who has been through this university who has done less work than you to get through. I don't know how you both did it…" But it was a silly situation.

05:00 It is totally different now of course. They've got everything sorted out. I mean, they've taken over half of Redfern. But we only had this one building and the university course…We'd started at eight o' clock in the morning and we'd finish at one o' clock, Tuesdays to Fridays. Two to five, we did practical work. From six to eight, we did practical work

05:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and on Saturday mornings for the first year and second year, we did from eight o' clock to twelve o' clock. Hardly a university course under circumstance. It was just intensive class work all the way through. There was no time to…the Arts faculty is still working on those sort of old arrangements where they had half a dozen lessons a week and the rest of the time they wrote essays,

06:03 but not engineers. I mean, we had the scientists in with us. We did first and second year science in this particular time, but they didn't do any of the engineering subjects, which were the fillers in. I played cricket with the university but I didn't play football with them.

06:32 While I was at SME doing a potential officers course, I tried out with Eastern Suburbs rugby league, which I had always wanted to do. I had always wanted to play rugby league with Eastern Suburbs. And they started me on the forth and they gave me a half run in the firsts, and as a result of that, Ray Steer, who was a policeman and a footballer and a journalist…

07:03 Ray said, "Duntroon graduate shows promise." And I was into the GOC and was told, "Duntroon graduates don't play rugby league." So I joined Eastern Suburbs rugby union, and I stayed with them after the war. But unfortunately I got badly injured

07:30 in an army/navy game, in 1947, and busted this knee and busted this shoulder. And I was forbidden to play football again until I graduated. And I didn't play anymore football until I was down on the staff of (UNCLEAR) in 1955.

08:00 I made a lot of friends at the university who were in the medical, mainly those who played cricket, and some of them are close friends of mine to this day. One of them delivered Nicole…

08:30 I used to take my youngest and his youngest to the rugby league every week for a while when I was chief engineer in the Eastern Command. And she is my god-daughter, and a really wonderful person.

09:00 **So would you rate the quality of the teaching as quite of a high standard or…**

The quality of their knowledge was great. The ability to handle this sort of number was beyond their skills. And I don't really think they realised it.

09:30 I wrote a thing which I submitted to Professor Miller in third year, in which I said, "Look, they should really take a look at this and get some army people in, their method of training people in. Just get some basics in." And in addition to that they had to get some…

10:00 I mean, Miller himself would come into the theatre, and it had five blackboards across the front, and he would start writing at five minutes to the hour when the place was vacant. And he would start to write on that board, and he would have filled it up halfway through the third by the time we got in. And he didn't do anything or say anything, he just continued writing, and we were supposed to sit there and write out what he had written.

10:30 This was the most ridiculous thing. But there were no textbooks, you see. He was a pioneer in spin analysis, which isn't used these days. But in those days, it was a method of working out the stresses and strains in mulit-storey buildings, and he was brilliant.

11:00 But sitting there for an hour, writing like mad, before he started to rub it out again, was not my idea of university. And I pointed this out to him and he was very kind to me. The other notable thing at university was…

11:30 In your third year there, you do six months practical, and I went out to Mascot Aerodrome, for my first half of that six months, the first three months, and I worked on the airfield. They were diverting the river

12:00 in order to fill up the old river bed and put a runway on that. And I found this quite fascinating and I learned a lot there. And the officer in charge was an ex-air force bloke, by the name of Maunder, who I had quite a lot to do with later when I was CRE [Commander of the Royal Engineers] of Duntroon, an instructor of Duntroon,

12:30 and he was the Director of Works in the ACT [Australian Capital Territory], so that was a great help. I learned a bit about saw mechanics as well there. I worked for a week or so in the saw mechanics laboratory. The next three months I worked in the water and sewerage board, and I sat in the drawing office

13:00 which had about ten rows of three people, all doing drainage plans or water supply plans, and that convinced me of a number of things. One, that I didn't want to do water and sewerage. Two, that the field engineering was more my style of thing than sitting there and doing that.

13:30 The other was a strange one in that.…I got to know the fellows quite well of course, and these blokes were all graduate engineers, but they all had to go through this…Their girlfriends were all going to England and Europe. I said, "Don't you think you'll be behind these girls when they get back?" "Oh, no, no. We can get away." And of course, these big government departments, as the army was to…

14:00 aids seniority, was a pertinence. So these people had to do this. They didn't want to take long leave or anything of that nature. And I suppose ninety percent of graduate in the 1940s were employed by government engineering departments.

14:30 But I got the strong impression that all their girlfriends were going overseas and seeing the world and coming back with expanded minds and everything, and these fellows had only seen the collars of the bloke in front of him, and the drawing board of course. I thought this isn't a good thing. Anyway, there aren't too many government engineering departments these days. I think people in civil departments have a bit more of a varied life these days.

I might just move now to your work with the Assault Pioneer Platoon.

15:00 **What can you tell me about that time?**

Well, the Assault Pioneer Platoon's responsibilities were basically to help the rest of the battalion dig in, and we did a lot of digging, and there was a lot of hard digging. Soldiers occupy high ground, and high ground is rocky. So even if there is a bit of top soil,

15:30 you're hitting rock. Sometimes it is softish rock and sometimes it is hard rock. The Pioneer Platoon had about four bars that had a screw on the bottom of it. You held the bar and somebody knocked it in and you screwed it, and they knocked it again and you screwed it, and you remained friends with him provided he didn't hit you on the knuckle.

16:00 I can't remember the name of the bar now, but that was all we had. We didn't have any mechanical or air-driven tools of any kind. But my blokes would go out and they would help bore a few holes down and they would put some explosives down and they would shatter the rock to enable the infantryman to use

16:30 his pick and shovel to get rid of it. So that was one job. The second job was to clean up the area. There was always unexploded munitions, there was always discarded ammunition. And our job was to gather that in and take it away and dispose of it. My brother was serving with 2RAR [2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment],

17:00 and he had written me a letter back and said, "For God's sake, make sure people get trained on mine warfare, because 3RAR have had ninety casualties in the last three months and eighty-seven of them have been from mines. Our own." So that was firmly stuck in my head, and I was required to give talks to the battalion, to teach mine warfare

17:30 and to teach the principles of moving around minefields and things like this. And when we got in the line there were real minefields there, my job was to check the minefields out, to see that the fences and things like that were in place.

Could you talk a little bit more about the pre-deployment training? What was involved with that before you went to Korea?

18:00 Before we went to Korea? Well, my platoon had been at SME, and they did rehab [rehabilitation] of all the basic sapper skills, watermanship, mine warfare, a bit of concrete laying, that sort of thing. But mainly, hands on field engineering. We didn't do any

18:30 bridging, but we did some watermanship, because we though that the Assault Pioneers used the infantry assault boats to assist the rest of the battalion across the river crossings, if we had to do that.

Can you explain to me what that means, watermanship?

Well, it really means being able to operate barges or boats and be able to steer them and use an outboard motor and steer them and maintain them and things of that nature,

19:00 and to row and paddle as well. So it just meant being handy with boats enough to be able to use them in a war situation. And the boats we were using were equipment boats, well basically the ones that we were using would have been. So we had little nesting boats and we had folding boats. So we had to learn how to

19:30 unfold them and prop them and that sort of thing. And how to hold them so that infantry could get on and make sure they were balanced before we moved on. Those basic things. We had to use a lot of demolition techniques and mines…people had to learn how to fuse and defuse a mine, how to lay it properly,

20:00 how to record it properly. Explosives? Well, we learned how to cut materials and how to blow them up.

Were you given specific briefs about the terrain you would be working in when you got to Korea? Like what was the weather like when you…

Well, we knew basically what the weather was like.

20:30 I mean, we knew that in winter you could expect minus thirty degrees Celsius. We knew that in summer, you could expect a hundred degrees Fahrenheit.

Would that affect your work, the climate?

The climate affects our engineering work a lot. Particularly road works.

21:00 For example, engines can't be left outside at night with any water in the cooling system, so you would either have to drain it or keep them warm somehow. And this goes for pumps and all the other little equipment that you had. On roadworks

21:30 you would get water seeping down into the ground, it freezes overnight and expands when it freezes and cracks the surface of the road. You've got gloves, you've got to be able to do everything with gloves on, because if you take your gloves off and put it on the metal, it is hard to get your hand off the metal again.

22:00 These things were not easy to teach in Australia, but you learn them theoretically and you find them out very quickly I will tell you. So the climate certainly affected. And the winter, just as in New Guinea, in the summer rather, in the rainy season, you get these enormous floods that come down rivers. And a friend of mine, Ian Gilmour,

22:30 just before I got captured, was trying to save one of the bridges across the river, and he did save it, but it got knocked over in the next flood about a month later. The rivers would rise thirty feet. The other end of the river went through Chinese lines and they were clipping trees and things like this, so they would come down the river.

23:00 We had tanks sitting on one side of the river firing at these things to blow them up before they got to the bridge. The trees and the huts and the other things that came floating down. Because they would get tangled in your embutments, in the piers, and the silt would grab up behind it until the weight of it was enough to…so you had to get rid of that. He had a very exciting few days, I can tell you.

23:30 **Is sabotage something you always have to think about in terms of what you're building? Or perhaps even taking out the enemy's infrastructure?**

Basically in war conscious years, when you build bridges in a civil community, there are cavities in the bridge which are there for demolition purposes. Basically we don't need those in military bridging

24:00 because we know exactly where to place the few charges that will drop them, and we plan that way.

Is that because there are only so many ways to build bridges, and you know just by looking at a bridge where the weak points are? How does that work?

Well, yeah, basically that is so. Each style of a bridge has a certain way of attacking it.

24:30 But if you just want to stop traffic going over it for a time being, you just drop one span, but that is fairly easily put back or rebuilt. That fellow ‘Sandy’ McGregor I told you about, in Vietnam he struck a French style bridge that had been demolished at the ends.

25:00 He extended the bank seats and blew the damaged ends off, and just dropped the rest of the bridge onto the new bank seats. So any of these things are only good for a little while, but sometimes a little while is all you need in military…

25:30 I suppose the difficult bridge to knock over really are the ones that have been there for centuries, that are big and heavy and of that nature. But even so, you look for the king points of the bridge and knock it out.

From an aesthetic point of view, it must be very sad to have to destroy some of those old

bridges…

26:00 Yeah, well I cried when I saw the bombardment of that town in the Balkans there being knocked over. I thought it shouldn't be allowed to happen in this age where you can see it all on television and you've got beams knocking those shifts out…but it happened.

26:30 No, it is terrible, not that it really matters, but in the protocols to the Geneva Conventions cultural items are not meant to be destroyed. But as I pointed out in a book I wrote, I was against Australia accepting these things.

27:00 The people who put this together are the people who are going to knock them out anyway, and that's what happened anyway. All the people who ratified them have been knocking them out forever. The only honest thing about the Americans is they won't sign these things and they won't be…I'm surprised they haven't knocked that mosque over in that town they're in now.

27:30 There are some terrible things that happen now, and it's amazing that people can rebuild them afterwards. I saw something the other day, was it in Poland? They had rebuilt something, it was extraordinarily beautiful, and they had rebuilt it all exactly as it had been before.

Is there a particular bridge, from an engineering point of view, that you

28:00 **just think is wonderful? That you particularly like?**

Well, I was manager of a national symposium of the Potters Association of Australia. The president of the Potters was a colleague of mine, Trevor Gibson,

28:30 and the theme of the thing was that it was possible to meld art and industry together. I listened to all the lectures and everything of that nature, and I was dying to get up and explain to them

29:00 about how this affected bridges. It was materials eventually that affected bridge design. And you only had to look at the old style steel bridges, with their heavy I-beams and all their riveting and that sort of thing, and you look at the Gateway Bridge,

29:30 which is really a thing of great beauty when you look at it from the side. And that is only possible because you have got materials that enable you to build with such slender lines and such aesthetic sense. But in the steel age, all they had was steel and steel came in rolled steel joists, and stuck together with rivets. So they had these rather large, heavy looking bridges.

30:00 I think some of those suspension bridges are really beautiful, but I wouldn't like to be on one in war. I think they could be easily knocked out. I think the reinforced concrete bridges, like the Gateway Bridge, are ones that I prefer. Some of the old Roman viaducts…

30:30 **Can you just tell us how you travelled to Korea? And the first few days and weeks on the ground?**

We went on the [HMS] Devonshire, which was a British troop ship, and it took about ten days to get to Kure. I described earlier how I was pushed up to the battle school

31:00 and when I got back I was told that I was taking this advance party across. And we went on this LST, the Reginald Kerr, and the Reginald Kerr had about three or four British officers and the remainder of the crew were Asians, a great mixture of them.

31:30 They were very well behaved, it was the four British officers that were anything but, and they came on board in various stages of inebriety, including the chief engineer who had been in a fight and had lost a finger and was not fit anyway. We didn't see him for the rest of the tour. But I had been assured that

32:00 they had cooks on board and that we wouldn't have to have cooks. When the ship arrived, I slipped down and saw it, just to make sure where I had to go and bring the platoon in and what we had to do, and the captain said to me, "Make sure you bring cooks because we haven't got any." I went back and I told my company commander, he discussed it with his battalion commander, who discussed it with movements and the answer was they would be doing the cooking.

32:30 We got on board and we were hardly out of the heads and he said, "Where are your cooks?" I said, "We haven't got any cooks." "I told you to bring cooks." I said, "I took it through the whole system and they told me you were providing the cooks." He said, "No. Each bloke of ours cooks for himself." So I got volunteer cooks and they went down and they came back and saw me and they said, "You should see the place, it's terrible."

33:00 I went down there and I looked at it and I thought I wouldn't have any soldiers after three days.

Can you describe it?

It was indescribable, actually. It was dirty…every member of the crew came in and cooked his own meal and he just left scraps and things around the place, and they hadn't cleaned anything. So I got a working party together and we cleaned it.

33:30 A crew member came in and started to cook, and my blokes came to me…I said, "Righto." And I got a guard and put him on the galley door and said, "That's it." Well, a very angry captain summoned into me to his presence and said, "What is this, Phil? Are you taking over part of my ship?" And I said, "Well, my duty is to my soldiers

34:00 and there is no way I'm going to let your crew into that galley having cleaned it up to the standards to which my soldiers would be used to." So we had a ding-dong [big] argument. I said, "Well, turn the ship around and we'll go back in there and we'll fight it out with the authorities." "No, no, we can't do that." So they had to eat our food for three days. And I didn't get on very well with that captain. Anyhow, we got off at Inchon.

34:30 Inchon was where [American General Douglas] MacArthur's invasion had occurred in the late part of 1950. We had a very high tide and we had to sit around and wait until the tide was right before we could go in and put the beam down and roll us all off. We assembled in the city,

35:00 the two platoons were held there over night, and we pushed off the next morning up the road to…the Kansas Line, where there were some people there to meet us and show us the battalion position on the Kansas Line. There were two lines at this stage in Korea. There was the Jamestown Line, where the battle was, and the Kansas Line

35:30 was back behind the river on the high ground on the southern side of the river. So if for some reason or other we had to withdraw, we could withdraw to the Kansas Line, which was being successively prepared, and we were to prepare our battalion position on the Kansas Line as part of our pre-front line training.

36:00 We dug holes and wired the slopes and things as well as doing some mobile training…

What sort of training would you do being in country?

Well, that's close contact, battalion defence, withdraw,

36:30 those sort of things for about three or four days. We had a parcel of people from division headquarters and units…

What was the climate like when you arrived? Did you need to acclimatise?

It was April/May, and that was the start of summer, and it was quite pleasant at that stage.

37:00 Still very cold at night, and we didn't have any winter 'kit'. They were holding it for the next winter. It started to get steamy and wet after that, and when it rains it really rains.

Did you bring your engineering equipment with you, or was there already equipment there that you would be using?

No, our battalion brought all its own kit with us,

37:30 but we didn't really have any real engineering kit, we only had Assault Pioneer kit, which was…

Is that what you told me…

That's about it. A few cross cut saws and a few things…engineer shovels and picks.

38:00 We had some explosives stores. We had an engineering regiment in Japan, it was a Commonwealth regiment by this stage. They were very kind to us as we went through, they gave us a lot of timber and sandbags, which we were in short supply of.

38:30 So we had our only little stores stuff, which looked after us for a while. Then we got in the line and we just did the normal things in the line. It was a static line, but there were patrols that went out each night from the infantry platoons…

39:00 There was one fairly large…there was a company attack on Hill 227, which David Thompson commanded, and two of my sections were on that. One of the sections was trained in flame throwing and they went with Bill Lucas' platoon,

39:30 and I took a section up to blow a defensive thing out on 'Dog Outpost.' The section that was with the flame throwers, they had about three fellows wounded, my section didn't.

40:00 Then we transferred around to where the Black Watch had been. The first we had to do was to clean up the area again, unexploded ammunition, discarded wire, signal wire, and start to improve the defences…

Tape 5

00:38 **In regard to your experience in Korea, I would like to get into the detail of the mine laying**

that you were doing, just in terms of how it worked. If you could maybe start with talking us through the types of mines that were being used at that time?

01:00 I say that I (UNCLEAR) mine laying. By the time I got there it was quite clear that these were two edged weapons, and we weren't going to do anything more about it. A decision had been made that minefields would only be laid with the approval of the GOC, who delegated that to the CRE, that's the Commander of the Royal Engineers, a Colonel Myers.

01:30 And Colonel Myers decided two things. That no minefield would be laid to any other density but four mines per yard of front, which was about…twenty times the density of some of the minefields that had been laid before, and that it would only be on such ground that a tank could clear them

02:00 by running over them. And while we were still waiting to go into the line, in fact while we were still waiting for the battalion to come up, the CRE invited me to join an officer who was laying the one and only of these Commonwealth mines that were laid in my time up there. And I took along Corporal Cochran from my platoon,

02:30 and we went up and met this officer and we went forward a little to…It was a dark night, and Jack Bartholomew was his name, and he said, "You stick close to me," and Des was to stick close to his sergeant.

03:00 It was quite a difficult thing to keep direction and to clearly mark where the lines were and map them, in other words, in relation to the existing maps. Nevertheless, this was done very, very carefully. In addition to that…These mines were American mines and they had two safety switches.

03:30 The first safety switch was taken out by the sergeant and the second one by the officer. The sergeant kept the pins in his pocket and the officer kept them, and in the end they tallied them out in the end so that every mine was properly laid. Halfway through the evening,

04:01 a fellow loomed of the dusk from the wrong side of the minefield, with a much smaller fellow trailing him behind. Jack Bartholomew took one look and he said, "It's the bloody CRE," and it wasn't the CRE, it was the CRE of the engineering regiment, a fellow by the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Moore. And Peter Moore was one of those fellows who

04:30 had decorations all over the place. He had been dropped into Yugoslavia, he worked with Tito. He had come to watch Jack do this, and this was the last thing Jack needed, trying to bundle the pins and everything into his pocket. And so he said to me, "Phil, go and grab him and talk to him. Leave me alone while I do this."

05:00 Well, I did talk to him for some time…then some shellfire came down onto us and we all broke and went up the hill into the trenches to wait for this fire to go. Then went back and resumed the job and completed it.

05:30 We all reckoned that somehow or other Peter Moore had made a noise coming up and that's why they shelled it. Anyway, Peter left and we finished the job. That was the only mine laying job that I did. I didn't clear a mine field, but I did clear individual mines

06:00 that were in the way of where we wanted to make a crossing, so we went in and did that.

How do you go about clearing a mine once it has been laid?

Well, I will describe the next operation which I did, which was a couple of nights before I got captured. This long minefield that I described before…when we went into the line, first, into the lestest position, the 5th Enniskillen Dragoon Guards

06:30 did a raid on the hills opposite, they had Centurion [main battle] tanks. They went out through this minefield, believing that the mines wouldn't hurt them…they went up onto the hill and they steamed around there, while the Chinese staged fifty feet below the ground. They came back and they were all steamed up, "We did a great job." But there were three Centurion tanks knocked out by these

07:00 little half pound TNT [explosive] blocks. The reason being that it was in the shallow ground and they were wet, and the tanks sunk down until they bellowed. So when this half pound gelignite went off, because the tank had virtually tamped the explosive, the explosive was much more dangerous. And it knocked transmissions apart.

07:30 Well, we spent quite some time trying to recover these tanks. It took some days for the Royal Mechanical Engineers to get these tanks out. But it was obvious that you couldn't use armour on that sort of ground, or engineer plants on that sort of ground. You had to have it on firm ground.

08:00 There were these two tanks marks through this minefield. We were sending out a company patrol, which was to go out one way, go right up into the enemy lines and it was to come back in through these two tank tracks. And I was asked to ensure there were no mines left in there. I took a chap with me,

08:30 ‘Paddy’ O'Brien or something like that, Paddy was a bit deaf and I couldn't see, so we had a good team. And we clamoured through on our bellies, the whole way across this sixty or seventy feet, with bayonets

prodding the ground in front of us. And when we go to the far side

09:00 there was no fence. I said to Paddy, "They've got to be there, Paddy. You get up and go that way and I'll get up and go this way and we'll see if we can find the fence." So we both got up and all of a sudden the heavy machine-gun went whack, whack, whack around our ears, and we dropped back down. And eventually the infantry escort came out and said, "C'mon, we've got to get home." So we crawled back, got out and we went back home.

09:30 But it was obvious from our experience that night that the Chinese had fixed lines on those two tank tracks. So that was when the colonel decided…and I couldn't find the fences, he decided that we would have better fence that. And there was just enough room between that fence and the water crossing, Inchon Creek, which ran north and south through the valley, for the incoming patrol to go down that

10:00 narrow track that way instead of coming in through the tracks. Well, as it happened I got captured and they didn't do that raid for another six months, in another area. But that was the basic method of clearing the minefields. There was two methods to use. One was to use a minesweeper,

10:30 but you can't always do that. We didn't have any minesweepers by the way, in my platoon. But you can't always do that. The problem with a minefield that had been laid in October, 1951, and it was now August, 1952, you've had a winter in which you've had frozen ground and then you've had the thaw

11:00 and then you've had a spring, so you've got bushes that have grown up through the minefield, so you can't swing a thing around. So the only way to do it is to get on your gut and crawl through and prod for them. We had used dogs on mines. We used them in World War II, and we used them in Korea, but not

11:30 on minefield work. Dogs can pick out mines, but they're distracted when there is shellfire and that around, distracted if there is a lot of traffic around. So basically that is the only way you can do it. And we faced with this in Vietnam eventually, and we had to improvise equipment which enabled us to do that. Because that minefield was

12:00 about fifteen miles long, so you couldn't crawl on your belly there. We had to improvise how to do it. But minefields were a curse up there, and you had to fall back on the basic principles that only certain type of minefields would be used. Their use has to be centrally controlled and methodology has to be consistent,

12:30 and mapping has to be exact. And you've got to continually patrol the minefield fences to ensure they are not deteriorated from shrapnel or just from weather, and that there are no signs of the enemy creeping through. Either to mark his way through to get at you

13:00 or to alternatively steal mines and use them against you in other places, which they did in Vietnam.

You mentioned before about casualties, and the danger of that. Were you experiencing that in Korea?

As I said, 2RAR had about eighty-five casualties in three months on their own mines. That was the three months before we got there.

13:30 One of my jobs was to teach awareness, and we were pretty aware and we got off fairly well. In fact, while I was there we didn't have a casualty on the minefields. I don't know what happened after that. But I would say that we were terribly aware of…because of the experiences of 3RAR.

So what were the key things that you would actually teach in terms of being aware? Is it all that preparation and documentation…

14:00 Well, it is on two levels really. One is to make sure that the minefields are well mapped and well marked, but the other is awareness in the minds of the soldiers that despite that, even from the time that they went out through the minefield gap, to when they were coming back, the scene could have changed, because shell fire could have come down

14:30 and fences could have been destroyed. That happened to General James, ‘Digger’ James. Digger took a patrol out, came back in, saw a gap in the fence and thought, 'This is it,' they went in, one of the soldiers at the front tripped a mine and was killed, a couple of others were killed. Digger lost his right leg and half of his left foot.

15:00 And his career looked over, and he got out of the army and did medicine and then came back in and became a major-general, and chief medical officer. And he was very handy up in Vietnam where we lost a lot of people with legs lost…he was great in going around the hospital. He was commanding officer for twelve months

15:30 and showing that you could recover from this.

Just in the context of a battlefield, how does the assault team work in with infantry?

Well, it is just part of a battalion. One of our jobs was defence of the battalion headquarters,

16:00 so we were always located close to battalion headquarters, on approach to battalion headquarters. If we

were on a mobile team, we were the mobile defence for the battalion, so we moved with the battalion headquarters. If there was a task, like to go out and clear some mines or something, we sent a party out to clear them and then came back in to our logical position.

16:30 But we had a full platoon defensive task. We weren't on the front rim, we were on the next rim back. So if there were any sort of incursion into the line, we had to cover that incursion. Our defensive system was a series of strong points, really,

17:00 they could be company strong points, or a series of platoon ones, which were loosely bound by the company, depending on the ground. But that was our defence, which is why I say we were always on the high ground, company kitchens were on the back of the hill, and water of course was down by the creek, and that was another job of the Assault Pioneers, was to get water for the battalion.

17:30 Fortunately in a fixed position up there, the engineers did that. So they had water points and the quarter master used to go and collect…He had a truck and he used to go and get water. We put in little water points in each of the company areas and they would deliver to that. That's pretty much it, I think, for the Assault Pioneer Platoon….

18:00 A very useful part of the battalion, and the more sapper tasks they can do, the better, as far as engineers are concerned. Because that takes a certain load off engineers and allows the bigger jobs to be undertaken by the engineers. They've got more men and more power and more machinery,

18:30 and their own engineer stores.

So were you well armed in terms of…when you were doing your job were you protected by infantry?

We were partially protected by infantry, but we each had an individual weapon.

19:00 We didn't have mortars and machine guns. But we sat within the battalion fire plan. I can't remember now whether we had a light machine gun or not, I can't remember it.

19:30 **Can you give us a bit of a picture of the night when you got into the 'scrap' with the Chinese?**

Well, it was a long night. We left the lines at about seven o' clock, as soon as it got dark. I picked up the wireless operator

20:00 and wireless from the headquarters, D Company, Colonel Thomspon's company anyway. We went down through the minefield gaps which I was familiar with. I took one section and it was a section that I hadn't worked with before. I hadn't personally gone out on a job like this before.

20:30 And I had asked to have a protective patrol, because I knew that what we were doing would take a long time, would be noisy and would be close to the Chinese lines. However they sent a fighting patrol. Well, I didn't think that was going to help me, but anyway, off I went. But what I did do was put my section down

21:00 on the last minefield gap to ensure that I had a place to get back to. And we were carrying very noisy stores, pickets and wires and things like that. And I took Lance-Corporal Garner with me, and he and I felt our way along the fence, and we did that quiet quickly for a while. And then we ran out of fence. So then basically we had to try and find a mine,

21:30 to know where we were and plot our way along like that, building another new fence line. In the meantime, we had not been able to get the radio to work at any time. My aim had been to get through to those two slots, the tank slots, at the far end of this minefield.

22:00 And when we were to get in there, I was going to go back and pick up the rest of the section and go in that way. However, time was beating us and I knew that we weren't going to get anywhere near there, so I decided it would take so long for us to get back…therefore, we knocked off about four a.m. and it took us about an hour to get back in,

22:30 which was just before first light. Garner and I got back to the group. We picked them up, sorted them out in the line, got all the stores and went through another couple of minefield gaps and then we were in the last two. One of those gaps had a…low donga [donga – dry water course] in it.

23:00 The minefield was above us, and then there was a bit of flat ground, or slightly sloping ground, and then the edge of the Inchon River, so we didn't have much room. The Chinese had come in behind and they were sitting in the minefield. And Garner had just got to the last minefield entrance

23:30 and I was about a yard behind him, and my signaller was about a yard behind me and the rest were strung out, and they opened fire. Garner got hit with about nineteen bullets, and miraculously survived. Sid Carr got one bullet through the head and died.

24:00 'Bluey' Evans and somebody else were wounded. I couldn't get my Owen [sub machine] gun to go, like hell. All the minefield work I had done in there, I had done with a little Colt rifle that the Americans had.

24:30 I obtained this from 3RAR earlier in the tour. It was ‘beaut’ for minefield work because it had a sling, and you could sling it around and the weapon nestled into your back and didn't move. The Owen gun was in three dimensions and no matter what you did, the damn thing rocked and rolled around. Now I had been brought up on the Owen, and I was quite familiar with it.

25:00 But after the war, they put a sleeve on the Owen gun to stop…It had a fault, the Owen. When you belted the butt against something, like if you were boarding a truck and you put that down on the truck and bolted it in, it allowed the bolt to just

25:30 drop forward a little bit, and when you took the…and it was likely after that if you got another bump, even if it was on safety, it would fire. And there had been a lot of accidents. To stop that, they put a sleeve on it. Well, working at night on these minefields, and you've got your head down and this damn silly gun dropping around you instead of

26:00 sticking firmly on your back, and you hear them moving around in the scrub, you grab the Owen and you put the sleeve to one side and you're ready, but then realise it's only an animal or something and not enemy, so you put the sleeve back on and put the damn thing back on you. Well, I had obviously put the sleeve back on at one stage or the other. When I went to fire, I went up the hill at the Chinese to fire. And I couldn’t get the damn gun to go

26:30 and I obviously couldn't recall the…because I had not really been trained on the Owen gun again, I let myself down, and the section down. Anyway, I decided then that I'd better see what the situation was and I swung around and I moved a few yards back towards the river to get a better picture of the section.

27:00 And I slipped on wet ground and I came down with a thud and dropped the Owen. And I was trying to find it when some Chinese, who were on the opposite side of the Inchon River, jumped me. So I was in a physical encounter there. My glasses were here. And

27:30 I got butt-stroked, and another butt hit my glasses and broke one of my glasses, I found out later. But anyway, I was physically overcome and couldn't do anything and was quickly hustled up the hill. Hustled into the most extraordinary underground working that I had ever seen, and I had seen quite a lot of them because on Rabaul

28:00 the mountains had been tunnelled through by the Japanese and they had everything in there, all their stores and everything like that were in these tunnels. But this was a gigantic room and it had about fifty US [United States] Army litters stacked against one wall. It would have been a thirty foot high ceiling, and it had

28:30 corridors like a normal school corridor going off, and off that corridor it had sleeping cells, and I only saw the first forty yards of it, but the whole of that hill was built like that, and they built that out with little shovels and picks. And somewhere I could hear a single belt engine which was changing the air in there.

29:00 The next morning they pushed us out into a trench that ran for miles, like a World War I trench. Con, who was in my section, Con and I were trailed up this thing until the night-time came when we were put in some sort of holding area for a little while.

29:30 We went for another day's march to another holding area, and we met some American prisoners there. And my saga as a POW started from there…

How were the Americans holding up?

30:00 The one that I remember best of all was the corporal who was of Greek origin, and he was fighting mad. He had been hit in a number of places, and he had plaster on his arm, plaster on his chest, and he had lice inside the plaster. And he was a very strong boy.

30:30 I met some time later…the next area that I went to was a holding area for POWs. I was put in a box there, and Garner was put tin a hole in the ground with a Canadian,

31:00 and three American lieutenants, all US Marine Corps, all had been captured in the last three months. They were just mad at being in that position. And in fact, I ended up in the same POW camp as they all did. But the Americans in the camp that I was in…

31:30 were very well oriented, except for one who was…He had a dislocated elbow from the aeroplane crash.

32:00 He didn't want it touched and he wouldn't let us pull it out or anything that way. He was waiting until he got home and I was frightened that that arm would atrophy. But apart from that, they were all pretty good blokes. They were all different in their outlooks, very different in their personal make-ups,

32:30 but like any bunch of Australians there were some that I liked, and some that I put up with. And I guess I was the same with them. The OC of the camp, the senior American, was a wonderful fellow by the name of Bill Wilson. He loved Australia and Australians. He had been out here during World War II.

33:00 The Americans called him a ‘hard arse’, but I thought he was a wonderful bloke. But the Chinese took

him off in the middle of the germ warfare business and we never saw him again. And a Canadian took over from him, Joe Lesser, he was a different sort of fellow,

33:30 but a very good man. We had a South African Boer with us, who had joined the RAF, and was seconded to the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and got shot down. And we had a South African of English origin…I can't think of his name now,

34:00 but he was architect by trade. He had been a Spitfire [fighter] pilot in World War II, and joined up for Korea. He was in an AD51 [?] and when he got hit and he was on fire, he went to…in the Spitfire, it was like me with the Owen gun,

34:30 in that he forgot where the pin was, he went voluntarily for what he was used to, and it took him a second or two longer to eject himself, and as a result he was burnt, face and hands. There was one American black who wasn't in the original camp, but they expanded two of them.

35:00 Leroy…he was a wonderful chap. Unfortunately they let him out in the early exchange of prisoners. But they had been pretty cruel to him, the Chinese. They had stood him on a frozen river and poured water on his feet. He had lost half of his feet from frostbite. But he was a great man. They came in all sorts of parcels.

35:30 We had a Red [American] Indian by the name of Patrick O'Flynn. We called him 'Chief', and we also called his offsider in the kitchen 'Chief', who was a chief petty officer, of Nordic extraction, and was in fact a helicopter pilot. Flynn was a fighter pilot.

36:00 The helicopter pilot was in fact the hero of the bridges of Torokina, if you've ever seen that place. And they were a great pair. They had a little British soldier with them in the kitchen, who had been captured in World War II in Malaya, and transported to Japan and then to Korea, and was imprisoned in the mines area.

36:30 He mined coal for them, and that was a prisoner of war camp that he ended up in, in Korea. He didn't volunteer for Korea I might add. In the British system, he was discharged from the war, but he had a six year reserve service, and three months before his service was up they raised 29th Brigade, and they just swooped old Jimmy in.

37:00 So he ended up for three more years, back in Korea…

Was there a sense of camaraderie amongst all these different people from different places in the world to get through?

Yeah. The only dissident group were in a group down the hill from us, which contained three Boers, South African air force, and

37:30 as we used to march down past there, on a couple of occasions when we were taken down there…Olaf and they would exchange words in…Afrikaans, they would exchange words in Afrikaans.

38:00 At the finish, the night before we were to get in the cattle trucks that took us down to the key side, we were all in this big building some miles away from this camp…Olaf was standing around with a couple of Americans and myself, and we were just talking in English and these fellows came across and grabbed Olaf and there was a great stand-off.

38:30 How dare he speak English, he could only speak Afrikaans. And this was when this…separate policy had come in, and that included the English, they were to go to, there wasn't any doubt about it. And Olaf, who had a wife in England and wasn't going back to South Africa, he was having none of this,

39:00 we never saw them again, they just stayed in the hut by themselves. So overall, that was about the only dissident group that I saw in the place.

Tape 6

00:30 **Can you describe what the camp looked like? What you were fed and how you filled your days?**

Yeah. I didn't get into a camp until nearly Christmas, so I had a fair way of getting up there, which mainly comprised

01:00 this first interrogation area, in which I was in a box the whole period, except for these three days. The next area was where Jimmy had been imprisoned. It was called 'The Caves', or 'Camp Nine', and here I lived in a little lean-to, like a dog's kennel, off the side of a Korean house.

01:30 And there was an American in front of me, a red-headed sergeant, air force photographer. There was an American Marine Corps fellow up on the veranda, and I could hear him talking about all sorts of things with the Chinese interrogators, mainly about books. We had to sit to attention, all day.

02:00 **Were you tied up?**

No. There was a guard up there with a sub-machine gun. But by this time I had learned a couple of words, like 'Sobeyan', that I wanted to have a pee. And I would yell out to the guard, "I am Phil Greville, I am Australian and I want to pee.

02:30 Who are you old chap?" I never got a word out this fellow; he was having a bad time actually, because they thought he was a spy. When he said he knew nothing about it, that he had been on a B-29 [bomber], taking some photographs, spy. So he was having a bad time, and I was too, in a way. But the food was a lot better. Back down in the other place, we had sorghum which was the main staple food.

03:00 On one occasion they gave us some burnt field corn, roasted, burnt field corn, which I unwisely ate and suffered for some days with severe pains. I didn't fill in my time in that box in any way. I was just glad to get out of the box.

03:30 I couldn't lie down; I couldn't sit upright, so I just slouched in the corner with my legs diagonally across the box. And after three weeks, they put a South Korean prisoner of war in there with me, and he couldn't speak English and I couldn't speak Korean. However, we sorted out our places in the box pretty well,

04:00 and he was a nice lad with good manners. And that went on for a week, and then they put in this civilian with us. He was absolutely filthy. They had him tied with a rope around his neck down to his feet, and they shoved him in with us. Well, it got pretty sticky in there then.

04:30 When it came to feeding time they put in this one common bowl, and they'd undo his hands for a period, and in would go his dirty hands. Anyway, I was sitting in my corner of the box at night, with the South Korean soldier next to me and this fellow in the middle over the other side,

05:00 and I must have dozed off to sleep, because suddenly I've got this face right here, slobbering all over me, and I just woke up, reacted, and pushed him away rather noisily. And all the guards were around the place, and what he was trying to do was strangle himself. He got his things loose enough to get his feet to get leverage, to choke…

05:30 Anyway, he was put outside the box then for the rest of the night, and I was moved a few days later in with this other group of prisoners of war, including [Dennis] Condon…

You must have had terrible pain from cramps and so forth, how did you mentally work through that?

Well, I was being interrogated for long periods of time,

06:00 and that was worrying me. I got the stage where I felt I better get out of here before…what they wanted from me was my life story, and I said I wouldn't give them my life story unless they gave me pen and paper and I would write it out for them. And this gave me time to weigh every word. And

06:30 basically I gave them a description of my life on one page, which was pretty near the truth, except I never mentioned at Duntroon, I was in the war, I was invited to become a CITs [Communications and Information Technology] student after the war provided I did military service after…

07:00 And all I knew anything about was roads, and building roads, and I could repeat this and I had to about ten different times in the next week or so. It was near enough to the truth that I knew the differences. They then brought out more paper and they said, "You write an essay on roads." So I had a wonderful time designing

07:30 and describing highways, separated elevations…setting out all the equipment that you needed to build them and they brought the chief engineer of the force down and he was ‘ropeable’ [angry]. He said, "All I have is picks and shovels." So I was inclined to write something on picks and shovels.

08:00 So I forced my mind to get the drill for picks and shovels back in my mind, which I did, and I wrote that and they accepted then that I was an engineer and all I knew about was roads, so they let me go…But in this other place, the pressure…This was higher political

08:30 things. Again, I stuck by my business; I wouldn't do anything unless they gave me pen and pencil. And I finished up writing an essay on the role of chaplains in the army. Because to them the chaplain was the equivalent of a commissar, and I had a great deal of delight writing this essay about how the chaplains were there for the personal comfort of the soldiers,

09:02 and nothing to do with the management of the organisation whatsoever. But finally they started really banging on about germ warfare, and I wouldn't have any part of it. But I got tired and cranky, I guess,

09:30 and I spun on this fellow and I said, "Look, nobody in the world believes the Americans are using germ warfare here. If they were going to use germ warfare, they wouldn't have put cholera in here like you claim they have. Because cholera is all over the place here. They would have put measles in, or whooping cough or something of that nature." Well, that finished me in that camp, and I was booked on passage north the next day,

10:00 I wished they had asked me that four weeks ago. But the food was a little better there. It was rice now instead of sorghum. We got a meal at about eight a.m. in the morning and another meal about six o' clock at night. It was mainly soup, in the morning, rice and watery stew in the afternoon,

10:30 we didn't get any meat, it was vegetables, Chinese cabbage, which was the first one that I had there and I thought it was good. Then we went up and I eventually got into camp. We were in the village schoolhouse…I might add that the countryside again was a narrow valley at the bottom of high and steep hill sides

11:00 with a stream down the middle. Now I never saw in the direction southwards of the house that they kept me in first. And that was a typical Korean house. It had an outbuilding in which they had

11:30 their one item of cattle and me. And they had a flue which ran through the bottom of the floor, and that is how they kept warm in winter, with the fire underneath…the household consisted of a dear old man

12:00 and this much younger woman. The younger woman had at least four school-aged children. One about three, and one still at breast, and she was…and each morning she would get up at daybreak, get the children off to school, put

12:30 one baby on her back, and one on the front and off she would go up this hill, with a little hook in her hand, and she would till this little tiny plot of land. It was about eight hundred feet above her house. She would come down about four o' clock and make tea. And the old fellow would come up from the village, I don't know what he did down there, but he was dressed in a top hat and robes,

13:00 with a couple of his mates, and she would give them tea and then she would give the children their evening meal, and about eight o' clock at night she would start to do the ironing. They would wear these white robes, they would use rice starch, they would dip them in this starch, and then she would have these two little wooden mallets and she would beat out these clothes until they were stiff.

13:30 **It must have been strange watching these people go about their lives?**

Well, I used to peep through the hole in the thing there to see as much as I could. But the belting on the washing got to be a bit like water torture in the finish, and I was a bit glad to get into the camp. But the camp itself was a school building,

14:00 and it had a lot of glass in it. We had two rooms, one of which in forty of us slept and one which was our sort of recreation area I suppose, this school room. There was another group in another building a little way away, and when I got there they didn't even have a fence around us.

14:30 But it was winter and there was no way we could survive if we got out of the place. Anyway, a couple of fellows made a dash for it and they were caught about a half a mile away, and they then put a fence around the two groups and we all became one group. The sleeping area was

15:00 just a tatami mat on the floor, and we slept head to tail all around the place. There was one stove in the middle and we took turns to keep that going all through the night. Eventually I got the privilege of washing in warm water. The latrines were outside.

15:30 It was very, very cold. In fact, the Chinese came in one day and announced that it was fifty degrees Celsius, the coldest they had ever experienced…

Were they cruel? Or were they…

In general terms, they were not cruel.

16:00 But if you were being punished, they could be horribly cruel. And in the chapter that I wrote for the official war history, I outlined some of those punishments that were given, that were absolutely brutal. The Koreans, of course, would have been a lot worse.

16:30 They didn't give us any work to do. They were giving lessons, and we were a very recent part of this show, ‘Annex Three’ to ‘Camp Two’. And we were mainly aircrew, or very recent POWs. And they only gave a couple of lectures,

17:00 and Bill Wilson said they didn't need….they had a big stand-up argument. At this stage anyway, throughout the POW world, in Korea, the Chinese found out that these compulsory lessons weren't really achieving anything. So they gave up on Bill…but they demanded that we run lessons, and that was when I arrived at the camp.

17:30 And Bill said, "You're an engineer. Phil, you run the classes." I put up two sheets of paper and on one I said, "Who wants to learn something and what?" And on the other I said, "Who can teach something and what?" And then we formed a few classes. I ran mathematics, others did English literature.

18:00 But most of the courses that were wanted were associated with flying or finance.

Did most people participate to keep their minds active?

Yeah. We started to get faxa-cards. We had a fellow by the name of Ronald Chester Harry, who had been, who was, when he was shot down, in fact the manager

18:30 of the PX [American canteen unit] in Seoul. But he was a navigator and in order to keep his flying pay up, he used to do these check navigator runs, and unfortunately he got into Bill Wilson's aeroplane which got knocked out of the sky. And he was very lucky that Bill skilfully got this B-26 [bomber] down on this bit of river and they were all captured instead of being killed. But he had been for some time the bridge writer

19:00 for the New York Times, so he was pretty top-line. And he ran classes and we did that bridge…I can't think of the term now, bridge tournaments. We played poker by the hour, using corn for chips.

Now did people know where you were? Were you getting Red Cross parcels?

19:30 No, we didn't get any Red Cross parcels. I'll talk about parcels in a minute. My wife kept writing letters, and to my embarrassment, I was the first one to get a letter. I say embarrassment because I wonder how they picked it up. Letters started to come in after that.

20:00 I got two letters. Now the first letter contained a photograph of my wife, and every fellow in the place wanted to look at that, handle it. Parcels? The day before we left that camp we were all summoned and issued in the morning with a little pack, which contained

20:30 a good morning towel, a safety razor, a Chinese cake of Lux soap, it was made in China. I can't remember what else was in it. That evening, at five o' clock we were all paraded again and were handed a Red Cross thing, which contained exactly the same things…

21:00 The meals you asked about? These improved slightly as we went along. But our kitchen cooked for the whole of the valley, and the valley contained our prison compound and the other one I talked about,

21:30 and there all little ones, holes in the ground in which single prisoners were being held and interrogated and punished…but the food started off as…in the morning we would have a bowl of soup,

22:00 vegetable soup. At midday we got nothing, and at night we had rice and vegetables. Later on in the summer, at midday, we had steam bread, won tons, and after a while they let us build an oven

22:30 and we had baked bread instead, baked rolls.

Was that good to be in charge of making your own food?

I think it was. To this degree that we knew who was cooking it and handling it. Not that I thought the Chinese were anything but very clean.

23:00 First thing they gave me when I got into that cabin of a room, when I was captured was a bowl of hot water, boiled water. The Chinese Army had learned some years before that water was the deadly disease for armies, unless it was boiled. They were so clean that they used to annoy the North Koreans. They would rent from the North Koreans a house and they would spend two days cleaning it…

23:30 Which annoyed them very much.

What are your other observations about the relationship between the Chinese and the North Koreans?

I though that the Chinese were very Cromwellian in their attitude to everything. They were purists. Whereas the North Korean regime was still steeped in the…

24:00 'Whoever wins grabs everything'. Since coming home I have been asked to be associated with a Hungarian who was with Birchett, reporting this war. He escaped from Hungary in 1956 and has spent his life in Paris. Tibor Méray was his name, and I have the book that Tibor wrote.

24:30 In it he describes a night in which they went to a concert. And the Chinese Army gave this concert, the girls and everything like that were being put in trucks and taken away, much to the chagrin

25:00 of the Korean generals that were there. When they brought their own party down, the Korean generals got the girls, and Meray was explaining how the…it was really an army which had set itself out not to extort the local populace, but nevertheless they annoyed them in all sorts of ways.

25:30 And one could see this…and I don't know how they get on now. The Chinese were a few years before they separated from Moscow. They were still very much into the Moscow side at this stage. They were certainly Cromwellian in their approach to things in Korea…

26:00 Yeah, about this time they started to drive a pig over the hills, and the two chiefs would butcher it, keeping the head and eyes for themselves. Most of the carcass went to the Chinese guards, but we started to get

26:30 a little bit of pig fat in the soup and the odd bit of pig, which improved matters. On one occasion we went down to the Yalu River to unload a barge, and they must have reckoned that the goods on this

barge were for us. Anyway,

27:00 we unloaded them. I took the opportunity to have a swim in the Yalu, just to say that I had been in the Yalu, which didn't please the guards. But walking home, we walked through fields of chillies, and although we weren't supposed to touch them, we were able to grab a few chillies, and gave me a liking for chillies ever since.

27:30 But nothing else much in the diet. We had to do, first thing in the morning, before breakfast, we had exercises, which the Chinese gave us. We could also play a bit of softball, with a funny ball, and a bit of volleyball. So we were able to…

28:00 I lost a few kilos, but I can't remember how much now, but I was quite fit when I came out of it.

Was boredom a big problem? Were you able to keep yourself active?

It wasn't too bad in the prisoner of war camp, but sitting by yourself in solitary confinement, I had ninety days of that and that is out of this world.

28:30 The problem is if you start thinking about home, you start weakening yourself, you see. So you thrust the family out of your mind and you concentrate on other things like mathematical formulas or the novels that you've read, or something of that nature. Anything to keep your mind away from being sorry for yourself.

29:00 **How did you know that you were going to be let go?**

We didn't. Not until the last minute. I mean, if something had gone wrong…the guards were absolutely not cruel. They were ordinary peasant lads and on the whole they were…we didn't have much to do with them, put it that way. But they certainly didn't fraternise with us. But on the other hand, they didn't taunt us or do anything to us.

29:30 However, if they had been told to shoot us, they would have shot us, there is no doubt about that. And we certainly didn't have any respect for the Communist regime at all. The only reason we were there, being looked after like we were, was because we a bargaining chip in the Peace Conference.

30:00 **Could you explain how you came to leave the camp?**

Well, they had a Tannoy [public address] system in the camp and over the Tannoy came the announcement that we were all going home, and the movements were as follows…

30:30 We were all, "That's great. When?" But it happened very quickly. We were put on these cattle trucks and we sat in them all the way down to Kesan, where we were put into a camp, and…I met the Gloucesters [The Gloucester Regiment] and people like that, who up until then I hadn't met.

31:00 And we were then trucked down to Panmujon, in some order or other, which I never knew. I went out on the 1st of September. There were still fellows there after me, but I think I was the last Australian to come out.

What was the process when you got back to the Australian army?

31:30 **Were you debriefed and so forth?**

No, I will do that in two parts, medical and debriefing. The Chinese lined us up for injections for God's sake, two days before we went off, and we didn't know what they were injecting us with. All we knew was….I was G, I was in the middle of the line, and whichever end they started off from, I was going to get a reasonably blunt needle.

32:00 But the first thing they did when we got in Panmujon was to wash us, dust us down with anti-lice stuff and then give us a shower and give us new clothes and start injecting us again. I spent a few days in a front line area, with…

32:30 Bruce Rogers, who was the signals officer in my battalion and he was still there, in some role or another, on staff duty. And I met Hal, somebody or other, who was an army journalist,

33:00 Dennis Walter who was a Reuters correspondent. Then I was shifted into Japan and I stayed in the Kure Barracks, with the…the British had what they called,

33:30 the British [Commonwealth] Prisoners of War and Interrogation Unit. Might have been the British Commonwealth…anyway, some baby-faced second lieutenant interrogated me, and I never saw the result of that until I started to write the official history.

So he was quite forceful and tough on you?

34:00 Well, he had a big form that he had to go through, which he went through. I didn't see the form, I just tried to answer the questions the best that I could. But I've seen it since, and it shows a bit the state of my mind at the time. I wasn't as clear as I should have been. But I've looked at the results of that

34:30 intelligence survey of all the Australians, and we all got through it very well. And the OC of the unit said that there was no doubt that the Australians had handled it better than many others. And in fact, five of our fellows got Mentioned in Dispatches. Four of them soldiers, and one officer who was captured after me.…

35:00 So then we got more needles, Japan gave us a full list. So I had three lots in five days, I think. The fellows that were there in the Australian headquarters who looked after me,

35:30 they kept filling me with beer so I wouldn't look at the girls. I was keen to go up to Tokyo because I had never seen it, and very keen to get out to see the golf course that the Australian army had run for many years, which my Dad and Lee had given me many graphic descriptions of, but suddenly out of the blue,

36:00 there was an order to put me on the next plane to get me home…so I was on a DC6 [aircraft], which called into Manila for the night. They gave me two Filipino dollars and they put me in the Manila Hotel,

36:30 where I could put the food and everything on the…anyway, a Qantas chap, who lived next door, at the back of my mother's, who was then manager of Qantas in Manila, lobbed around and said he would like to take me out for the night and show me around the place…

37:00 By this time, I had bought one San Miguel beer, and that cost me ninety two sambarto, so out of my two dollars, I had one dollar left. And I didn't know what I was going to do with that, so this was very welcome, and he took me around to a few night-clubs and brought me back, he and his wife. The next morning, the plane didn't go for a while,

37:30 so I went up the street to have a look at.…the Americans in the camp had told me about this game where you put a basket on your arm and hurled a ball, and hurled it at the wall and catch…There was a beautiful arena there, and I watched that for a few hours until it was time to come home. I came home, had a month's leave or so as I said, and went off to…no medical check when I got home and no intelligence briefing whatsoever.

38:00 **How did you find settling in when you got home, after being away for so long in such difficult conditions?**

I took a few days, I suppose, to get back to normal. I don't know, my wife would say I'm normal now, but…I went to play a bit of golf, and I went and joined Randwick Cricket Club

38:30 because I was living in Coogee at the time, and it was just down the hill from there. But whatever had happened in the camp, there was one thing for certain, I had no hand/eye co-ordination at all. And they were very patient with me. They let me open up in the ‘seconds’ for a few games. I played against St George seconds, and a young fellow came out

39:00 and hit a hundred in such a quick time that I didn't know what it was. And I decided that I better give it up. By that time, things were getting pretty hectic out at the school.

Now you did mention that the school had run down a fair bit. Can you talk about the changes that you made in terms of building it back up again?

Well, most of the things were imposed upon us

39:30 in the fact that we were given the charter and we were given the program for the year, and the students started coming in with accordance of the program. The trouble was that the instructors weren't, so we had to spread our resources pretty thinly over it. The buildings had run down, and I kept everybody…we used to work

40:00 six days one week, and five days the next. I kept everyone back the sixth day of the second week to do building maintenance. I mean, the ceilings were falling down, so we pushed them all up and got paint brushes out and painted the place up a bit. Jazzed it up a bit at least. And in 1946, when I was going to university and living in the mess

40:30 in Victoria Barracks, Paddington, they made me a wine's member of the mess committee, and with the help of the Wine Consumers Co-Operative Society, and Johnny Walker's Rhinecastle, I decided to build up a decent wine cellar there, and did the same at SME. But at SME I ran into trouble

41:00 with ANSCO, the Australian Services Canteens Organisation, which had a stranglehold on the supply, and I had to work out ways and means of defeating this organisation, which was taking all the profit out. And further more they had brought up a lot of things like…

41:30 Rhinegold. And they were still palming this off. They had a rule that said, if they didn't have the goods that you asked for, you could go and get them on the market…

Tape 7

00:30 Yeah, there was one let out with the canteen service that if they didn't have it, couldn't supply it, you could go and buy it. So I decided we would ask by grape, by year, rather by any other way, you see, and the only other people doing that were the Wine Consumers and Rhinecastle, and…

01:00 So we did this consistently and they kept saying, "All right, all right." But I got a bit 'jack' [sick] of this and I wrote a paper called 'Robbery, Blackmail and Extortion,' which I sent down to the E-in-C [Engineer in Chief], and the E-in-C was kind enough to get it floated before the Military Board and they eased up the whole question. But we had a wonderful cellar at SME, and I went from SME to Duntroon,

01:30 and I did the same there. But when I was in England, I got a letter from George McClaine, who'd taken over as wine member from me and he said, "Had a very stormy mess meeting. The civil staff at Duntroon wanted to know what the hell we were doing with so much wine." And they didn't trust Greville's judgement and they wanted to do a stock take of this wine and get an expert down to see what they should hold and what they shouldn't.

02:00 And they chose Professor Waterhouse, I think he was geology from Sydney University, there were two Waterhouses at Sydney University. Anyhow, one of them came down and he declared it the best cellar between Sydney and Melbourne. That didn't alter the fact that by the time I got home, the first place I got to I rang the mess president at Duntroon and said, "Look, I would just like a dozen decent wines to start myself off here."

02:30 He said, "Come out and get what you want." He took me down to the cellar and there wasn't a bottle in it. They'd sold the lot and hadn't replaced anything. That's what you get in the army when you don't have that stability there. Anyhow, within a year they had rebuilt their cellar, too. One of the great things about the mess was that you could buy something decent and you didn't have to make a vast profit out of it, which meant that relatively poorly paid officers

03:00 could entertain with decent wine of they wanted to. And the policy stayed well with the army…we didn't have a cellar in South Australia when I was there because wine was so cheap and too plentiful and you could buy it from the shelf anywhere. You could buy it from the vineyard. In fact, we used to go and bottle our own most of the time. We didn't have any wine in Korea…

03:30 Yeah, well, I got stuck into organising the wine cellar amongst other things.

What was it like in terms of your career to be back in the army, in what I guess equates to peace-time career versus all the activity of World War II and Korea? For you personally?

04:00 By the time I got out of prisoner of war camp I was determined to become the most professional soldier that I could, and as far as I was concerned the war against communism was something very real indeed. I had tasted it. And my grandmother was the leading communist in the country.

04:30 She had been a great fighter for Women's Lib [Liberation] and all those sort of things, which I admired her for greatly. But dear old 'Ma' was stomping around Sydney, calling the Second AIF, "Five Bob-a-day Murderers." When her second son was over in the Middle East doing his bit. But then come July, 1941, the whole world changed and she was stomping around, "Second Front Now!"

05:00 But she was a great woman; she lived to be a month off 103. She got an MBE [Member of the British Empire] when she was 97, through the New South Wales government.

Was she pleased to see you back in the country after Korea?

Oh yes. The only thing was that she wrote a letter to

05:30 Mao Tse-Tung and said, "My grandson is in your hands and I'll expect you to look after him." Fortunately, that was snatched up before it left the country, and I didn't see it until I went to write the official history and went to look at the official POW papers. I think most of the communists in Australia,

06:00 at that time, were very naïve people. I'm glad in a way that Ma didn't see the downfall of communism. But I often look around and I would love her to be here now…I would love her to see the Olympics for example, with the girls swimming and running and playing ball and

06:30 bicycling, because she had thought against corsets and things like this, not that she would be seen without one. At 102, they had a big party for her and she insisted on wearing gloves and her hat. In fact, at 92, she went to see Mr Cleary, the tailors in Bondi Junction, and she said, "I want you to build me a suit." And he said, "What style?"

07:00 And she said, "Well, it has got to last me ten years but I want it to be stylish." Yeah…

It sounds like she had a lot of spirit…

She certainly had that. And her two Greville sons spent a lot of time in war. Her eldest

07:30 was an infantry signaller in World War I in France. And Dad had over four thousand days service outside the country, on active service.

Did you talk much to your brother about the experiences that you both had had? Did you share stories at all?

Yeah. We don't sit down and go through it, but every now and then something bobs up.

08:00 And I know a lot of his stories and he knows a lot of mine. He's a better storyteller than I am.

Your experiences of Vietnam. You started off by doing a reconnaissance tour in the early '60s?

08:30 I did a trip in '63. Colonel Bill Morrow, Trevor Gibson represented the engineers, I was the director of transportation and Phil Robinson was from the RSSC [RAASC, Royal Australian Army Service Corps]. And we were sent over there to do a reconnaissance and prepare

09:00 the chief of general staff's biannual exercise. And we spent the first week of the trip in Thailand, which was valuable to me because we had some war situations and I was able to look at landing places and other things. We went up to…

09:30 the main inland area. Then we went across to Vietnam, and we were briefed in Saigon, then we travelled to Nha Trang, up to Da Lat, down to Qui Nhon, we went to Dat Do, up to Hue,

10:00 and pretty near everywhere we went, the place got raided a day later. Either personnel attack, attack by people, or attack by air, mortars, shells. But we saw a lot of the country, and we got a good grasp. But we didn't go down the delta area at all.

10:30 We finished up at Vung Tau, Cap St Jacques. It was an interesting tour, apart from getting the general layout of the country, and the facilities of that country.

11:00 We saw quite a bit of the people, and I was impressed.

In what way?

I was impressed with their industry, I was impressed with their cleanliness. I was impressed by their capacity…In Da Lat, we went to the Da Lat Palace Hotel.

11:30 Da Lat is an extraordinary place. It was a French hill station. The Vietnamese weren't allowed to live there, but they provided all the servants and all the shopkeepers…The houses were all chateaux and things of that nature. And they had this big ornamental lake, and the Da Lat Palace Hotel was at the top of it, and they had gardens at the side,

12:00 going right down to the lake. They had a little atomic station, like Lucas Heights, on the far side of the lake. You could buy every sort of vegetable and that sort of thing in there, it was a really wonderful place. But the hotel had been turned over into an art gallery, and the art was absolutely extraordinary. It ranged from

12:30 Chinese fine line drawings to French Impressionists, and you could read the history of Vietnam just by going around the gallery, it was really a remarkable place. The portraiture was extraordinary. And they concentrated on the ‘Mois’ and the ‘Montagnards’, who were Aboriginal type people, and the paintings of them were marvellous.

13:00 And the food? The food of Vietnam was really extraordinary. Seafoods, and as I say the vegetables that were grown there. All in all it was wonderful. Anyway, we came back and wrote the exercise and it was a success. For that operation we were operating (UNCLEAR)

13:30 like you come in through Qui Nhon. When we decided to go there, we never had anything like the position we had in this paper exercise. And we went to Phuoc Tuy. My dealings with the war were mainly in preparing soldiers to go there. Although I was in the NC’s office when we started to plan the thing.

14:00 And I saw it go off the wheels there, when the NC was not permitted to go up there and discuss the plans and the order of battle for the engineers. Then I saw more difficulty when I was up in Sydney as GSO [General Service Officer] one of the division. When I realised that some of the people who were doing the planning,

14:30 didn't know enough about administration in the army. They didn't know how difficult it was to get things through ordnance. If you had proper authority, ordnance issued it if they had it. But if you didn't have the authority you couldn’t get it, it didn't matter if you had a letter from the CGS [Chief of the General Staff] saying that you were to go to Vietnam on such and such a date and you needed such and such. You had to have an authority, because that was the only way

15:00 their machinery worked. And we had a lot of senior officers and they just didn't understand this. And they were all in the operations area in Canberra. And the original deployment was shown to be quite wrong in the first few hours, when some soldier got into Saigon and got knocked over. And the newspapers had the news and the army headquarters didn't know anything about it.

15:30 And worse than that, the minister didn't know anything about it. Well, they looked around to find a scapegoat and the head of signals was the man. He had a little piece of paper in his hand, which he had taken up to DMRP [Director of Military Operations and Plans], well beforehand and said, "If you don't do this, you will have a disaster in there." The newspapers will be twenty-four hours ahead of you."

"Rubbish." Bingo.

16:00 So his neck was saved, but unfortunately the people's who head should have gone didn't, and they were there to muck up the next tour. The first thing was…on exercise Maralinga of course, we were training people to go to Vietnam and I was writing the exercises for that.

Can you talk us through some of the main things...

Yeah, well, the tunnels had come to mind at this stage,

16:30 so we built a big tunnel complex up in Shoalwater Bay. We were still doing search and destroy and all those sort of practices, so we wrote the exercise basically that way. It was also my idea to get the brigade in, or the task force as it was known then, and let the task force commander

17:00 run a series of battalion exercises before he was exercised with his brigade. So it was a fortnight of battalion exercises, then a fortnight of the brigade on exercise. The exercise got complex, in a sense, in that the New Zealanders decided they would like to run a phantom headquarters exercise with one of their brigade headquarters. That didn't worry us much.

17:30 The British sent out a Para [Parachute] Battalion, which became a pain in the neck, and then the British Navy sent out an aircraft carrier, and the Americans wanted to range a battalion in. So we finished up… each week we seemed to get another crew into this exercise. Anyway, it went okay. Except that the great uplift of the helicopters,

18:00 which the Royal Navy was going to give us, they flew off the first day and one fell out of the sky at about two hundred feet, fortunately no-one was killed, but they were all grounded and they didn't get cleared again until the end of the exercise. It was a good exercise, but again, the people who needed a lot of the exercise, like in ordnance,

18:30 said it was too expensive for them. They couldn't possibly put the stores into that exercise and then take the stores out afterwards. Fortunately engineers stores did…

Why were the British paratroopers such a pain in the bum?

They were an arrogant bunch. The CO was half-Australian I think, ‘Scovy’ was his name. He reckoned he was an associate of Scovy Beazley's, but he was named after Scovy Beazley.

19:00 They were given orders to do certain things, and they said, "Rubbish, we can move much faster than that," so they bolted up the thing and we had to stop them and turn them around and do this and that for them. They were pretty rude to everybody. It was so unlike the Brits….I would be concerned

19:30 about (UNCLEAR) themselves to be selfish, I think. Other than that, everything went okay. We had no casualties getting there. We had no casualties during the exercise and we lost a couple of fellows going home. I might add, it is little known, but it is a fact, that

20:00 the Australian Army lost as many people back here in Australia, over the term of the Vietnam War, as we lost in Vietnam and we lost them on road accidents. So we lost five hundred people up there, and it was five hundred people down here. The road accidents were the bane of peoples' lives. After that exercise, of course, Nicole got ill and eventually died,

20:30 and I was in Eastern Command as the chief engineer…and as chief engineer, I had to ensure that engineer personnel were available and trained to get up there. And the school was in my area, and it needed a lot of help and assistance. And then on top of that,

21:00 the union movement got involved. There was a cargo ship that used to run up and down, and the seamen's union withdrew people from it, and the navy had to man part of the ship. And then they took some more off, and they had to commission the master of the ship

21:30 into a naval lieutenant-commander. And before that he had been quite a nice fellow, but suddenly he grew horns. And then the waterside workers decided they wouldn't work the ship in Walsh Bay. And I got word of this, and went down there in civilian clothes and I saw the incident occur, where this little union

22:00 secretary got halfway up the gangplank, while the three gangs were in front of him. And he told them that this was a bad thing, and they shouldn't load anything and they shouldn't do anything for Vietnam, and he proposed taking them off, did they all agree? One gang agreed, and two didn't. And he said, "Right, carried unanimously.

22:30 All off, all around to number nine Walsh Bay." Suddenly a big fellow walked out and grabbed him by the chest and whack. He got up and said, "What was that for, brother?" He said, "My son is in Vietnam." Anyway, he duly got back into line and they marched around to load Australian wheat onto a British ship, which next stop was Hai Phong, next stop North Vietnam. That's how crazy the world was. But I had to put in

23:00 the means of loading the ship and every time they came to head again after that we had to discharge them. Then when the decision was made to pull out, there was big conferences in Canberra, and

defence was flexing its muscles and decided it would run this operation. And then when the director of movements, Tony Hallick

23:30 said he needed a heavy lift ship, which he had to hire, and he needed international standard containers, and the equipment that would handle them, they didn't know what to do…anyway, Hallick walked out of the conference and hired the ship and made arrangements for the containers and everything through Singapore to come into Vietnam.

24:00 Then in Vietnam, the Ordnance Corps said, "We don't know how to stuff these things. We don't know how to fill them up. Too hard, we can't handle it." And the LSG [Logistics Support Group] commander listened to the ordnance bloke and said, "We can't do it, we can't do it." Dunstan, who was the commander of AFE [Australian Federation of Employers] spoke to AHQ [Advanced Head Quarters], and AHQ spoke to Hallick and Hallick said, "For Christ's sake, get Greville up there now. He knows what it is all about."

24:30 So I was transferred up there and we sorted it out very, very quickly and it was no real problem, but we did send some transportation fellows up there whose job it was to load these containers, or stuff them, as the term is. Now we couldn't have done this job without the containers, because we had representatives from

25:00 Customs and Excise, and we had the hygiene people in. We were very worried about a large number of diseases up there, particularly foot and mouth. Every vehicle that came back from up there had to be processed and cleaned. Every bit of canvas had to be ripped out and destroyed. Every bit of the metal had to be steam cleaned,

25:30 cleaned up high pressure and then steam cleaned, and then put outside to wait for the ship that it was going to go on. So we had to steam clean them again, and we got them ready to go to the port, then we steam cleaned them again when we got to them to the port. Now we had a large number of vehicles, but we had many, many more cases of goods to come back. And these cases of goods were simply taken and put in the containers

26:00 and put in the containers, after they were prepared, put in the container, the container door closed and rat poison put in and eventually sealed. And they sat outside and the dust fell on it, and all we had to do was clean the outside of these metal containers. We carted them down to the wharf, gave them one more clean and put them onto the ship. Without that we couldn't have done it.

26:30 In addition to that, the cargo vessel the Japarit was a bolt vessel, it didn't have any floors or ceilings in it, so we put these containers in and that gave us a flat surface halfway up the hold and we boarded that out and we were able to put the vehicles on top of that. So without those containers, we wouldn't have had the space. Without those containers we couldn't have brought

27:00 the goods back in the condition that we brought them back. I should mention 'Baby Doll'. Baby Doll was the name of a tank, and Baby Doll had been shifted from Victoria with a great deal of fuss on some new transporters the RSSC had procured. And a journalist from the 'Bulletin' followed the

27:30 process of the hike of Baby Doll. Well, everything that could go wrong went wrong with this. And the DQMG [Deputy Quarter Master General] said to me, I was DTM [Director of Transportation] at the time, "Can you move these things by your LSTs from Melbourne up to Tin Can Bay." I said, "Yes I can, but I don't want to do it that way. I want to put them on the rail and rail them up to Roma Street

28:00 and take them around on LSM [Landing Ship Medium] to Tin Can Bay. I want to do that for two reasons. It's cheaper and it's quicker. But the second reason is I want to get everyone prepared to shift things by rail." "We can't do that, Phil." I said, "We've got to be able to do it. We did it during the war, and we've got to be able to do it now. We've put nine rail tanks carrying rail vehicles

28:30 in the New South Wales government railway system. And they're sitting there being used by the railway system, but they've never been used by us." Anyway, to cut a long story short I had to prove that I could do this under the cost of…And the LSM costs would only be the running costs of running them on the railways. At the time I was a member of

29:00 an export commission in Sydney, and sitting on there was a bloke from the New South Wales railways. And Jack and I got on pretty well. And I went and saw Jack and I said, "This is the problem. If we're going to use rail, you'll have to give me a good price." So he gave me a price and I went back and they changed the goalposts again and I had to go back to him, but he did it for me,

29:30 and we shifted them by rail. I arranged for the thing to be filmed as a training thing. And they got cold water at the last minute after Baby Doll, and they decided they wouldn't allow it to be filmed. Anyway, it went off without a hitch. And furthermore, the tanks were used in the Tin Can Bay exercise, and that exercise was under the command of O.D. Jackson, who

30:00 was our first task force commander in Vietnam. And the moment that Jackson got in he started to agitate to get tanks up to Vietnam. And we got them up there just in time for the big operations outside of Bien Hoa. To get them home, they had to be cleaned. And it took something like a thousand man hours

30:30 to clean a tank, and keep it clean to get it on board the ship. And it was to go home on the heavy lift ship that Tony Hallen had hired. That was the Hianya Maru, that was a Japanese ship. I went down to look at the loading, it happened in the first week I was there, I had taken over, and I saw these Vietnamese

31:00 employees of this American company that was doing it all, Alaska Barge & Transport Company, and they were slopping around in mud on the wharf and walking up and onto the tanks and the other cargo and everything. And we saw the ship off and I went straight to the port commander and I said, "I want to load all our cargo in future." He said, "Well, these people have got the contract and they've got to have it." I said, "I will pay them

31:30 as though they were doing the work, but I can't afford to have them doing the work, because we've spent hours and hours doing this, only to have them muddied up before they get off in Sydney." Well, three tanks, including Baby Doll, got held up in Townsville and they had to be off-loaded and cleaned up there and put on another ship. But that gave me the problem

32:00 of…I had to build up a force for each ship that came in, and fortunately we had transportation movement fellows there, so we had some technical expertise. We had people who could handle forklift trucks. And we just trained everybody else as we needed them. And we progressively got rid of it, all down the line.

32:30 There were a couple of things mucking us up. One was the Civil Affairs Program, and that is a long story that I will not bore you with. But the chief engineer of AFV [Australian Force Vietnam], John Hutchinson, had to build four hundred houses for married servicemen of the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam], the South Vietnamese Army,

33:00 and that was part of our Civil Affairs Program. So as I was pulling everything out of the depot, John was pulling stuff up to do this project. So that was awkward. And further more he wanted equipment that I was cleaning to go back out there…however, we sorted that out. Another thing was a gift program.

33:30 When we came out of Korea, we only had two battalions in Korea and very little else, but nevertheless, it took fifteen years to clean the account up, with the Americans for the war in Korea. And one of the fellows that was on it was a bloke by the name of Bing Crosby. Crosby was a very interesting fellow, I can't talk about him at the moment.

34:00 But Crosby was the treasury representative to go up with a small group of people and decide how we would handle the withdrawal, financially. And they drew up a list of things which couldn't come back, things which couldn't come back but could be given away,

34:30 things which couldn't come back and had to be destroyed and things that could come back. Now the things that couldn't come back but could be gifted, they sent a fellow up, a Lieutenant-Colonel Eric Thorpe, to Saigon, to handle this gift program. And he had to get all these stores listed. And then they made

35:00 a plan with Foreign Affairs and ourselves as to who would receive these things. They were sought after, too, by the civil community. All the stores, of course, were coming in to my depots. And I kept them in one place and Eric eventually came down and handled it from there.

Can you give us a bit of an example on those various categories and

35:30 **what was in each of them?**

Well, for example, the rations couldn't be brought back. They had been written off anyway, but they were up there in semi-tropical conditions and they had dust over the cartons. So rations, well, people want rations.

36:00 Medical equipment, lots of it couldn’t come back. Tentage couldn’t come back, paints and furniture and things like that weren't worth coming back. So there were all these sort of things that Vietnamese villagers wanted, Vietnamese hospitals wanted, the Vietnamese dental hospital wanted.

36:30 And Foreign Affairs, represented by the ambassador, he had a staff officer there and he worked with our bloke and they made a plan…some of the stuff was in Saigon, so it was silly for it to come down to Vung Tau, it went from there. But al the stuff that was in Nui Dat came back to us, except the buildings and they disappeared in a few weeks. The Vietnamese got in and took those,

37:00 sheets of iron and those sort of things. And I guess that was it…

What were the sorts of things that had to be destroyed that couldn't be gifted?

Agent Orange. That posed a bit of a problem…It wasn't Agent Orange that we had, but we had weed killer and I had some old containers there.

37:30 We put some concrete in the bottom of a container and then put these tins in and put concrete all around, and one of my ships dropped them off when we got outside the Continental Shelf, and dropped them in the bottom of the ocean. There was nothing else I could do with them. I mean, I couldn't have control over an area of Vietnam. As fast as our garbage tip buried things, the little fellows were in there

pulling it out again.

38:00 I thought that was the safest thing to do, but God only knows what's happening to it now. When it starts to leak, it will be at such a small rate it won't be affecting….. A lot of engineers couldn't bring back timber, things of that nature, so we gifted that. And we had a big camp there,

38:30 plus the recreational centre which had a swimming pool. We gave that to the army, plus our camp.

In terms of the camps that you gave over to the Vietnamese Army, what aspects or elements of it did you actually leave behind, or give over to them?

39:00 We left the whole of the camp and it was in perfectly good order, with all the air-conditioners and everything else in it, so they took that over. They took the leave centre, the recreational centre over, which was very nice. Better equipped than most motels around here. We used to send three hundred soldiers there for three days at a time, and they all had a bedroom each and they were catered for.

Tape 8

00:32 **What can you tell me about Vung Tau as a leave town?**

As a leave town? Well, there was the American airfield, it had a large number of soldiers protecting it, and a large number of people working on it, quite a few civilians.

01:00 There was a leave area for American soldiers to the right of us. The ARVN had people taking some leave there. There was a big ARVN signals school. And some would have it

01:30 that there were quite a few VC [Viet Cong] having their leave there as well. I don’t know whether that was true or not, but that was the general feeling. We had a policy, which evolved well before my time, and it was an excellent policy, and that was when our soldiers were in camp they were in uniform and armed.

02:00 When they went on leave, they were in civilian clothes and unarmed. There were two great things about this. One was, the provos [Military Police] could do what they were meant to do and look after our soldiers, and not ‘knit-pick’ them for undone buttons and things if they were in uniform.

02:30 And this meant there was a friendliness between the soldiers and the provos, which was fairly brittle, but none the less it existed and that made things a lot better. The second thing was that the people in Vung Tau preferred us in civvies [civilian clothes] and unarmed. The Americans on the other hand

03:00 never had any civilian clothes. They had terrible working conditions. The soldiers of ASC [Army Service Corps], they worked a normal day, seven days a week. They had pickets to do at night; they had to man the perimeters at night. And they were given leave on a rotation, for a night in town…

03:30 They were inspected as they went out the gate. They had to be shaven and cleanly dressed. The Americans on the other hand did twelve hour shifts, standing around on the perimeter of their airfield with nothing really to do. Their sentry posts were generally a CONEX [Container Express] container, which was a small American Army container,

04:00 which they had sandbagged on the outside, and sometimes on the inside. But they had this twelve hours everyday to stand there with nothing to do. So you'd find a Vietnamese girl in there with them most of the time. They fed in barracks for their first meal of the day; they were fed for the next twelve hours by…

04:30 these sort of work vehicles that run around, they ring a bell and they could get a hot dog I suppose or something like that out of it, whereas our fellows sat down for a proper meal at lunchtime and dinner and breakfast. They finished their shifts say at, I don't know what their shifts were, midnight to twelve, twelve to midnight…

05:00 I could see them going into town, unshaven and in uniform, sort of in and out of uniform, and they couldn’t have had the pride in themselves that our fellows did. The ARVN, when they were on leave, were in uniform and generally speaking they didn’t get

05:30 into clashes with our people, but every now and then there would be a clash between say their para units or their special forces units and a group of our soldiers, and the civil police, their ARVN police and our military police had to sort that out. There were

06:00 girls in the town, they were basically in two groups, the family people, the shop people and prostitutes. The prostitutes were run by one or two women, who our provost marshal kept in close contact with.

06:30 There was very few occasions that came to me in the six months where there where anyone was hurt or damaged or anything of that nature. And in fact that the farewell parades that the town put on most of the girls there were prostitutes. Very young, very pretty little Vietnamese girls.

07:00 There were bars everywhere. The restaurants were excellent. Vietnamese cooking is very good. And the food, as I say, is excellent, so the restaurants were good.

07:30 We would bring a company of soldiers out of a battalion for three days, and this was done on a rotation basis so we only had one company in Vung Tau at a time, and they were in that leave centre. But, they consumed enormous quantities of beer,

08:00 but nobody was on their back…so if they just wanted to sit in the camp and drink themselves silly, they could, or if they wanted to go into and get a girl they could. If they wanted to go into town and have a meal, they could. It was a pretty free time, and as I understand it, it meant a lot to the soldiers of the time.

08:30 I don't know how good the soldiers were the first twenty four hours when they got back into their lines, but that was not my problem. Drugs? We had very little dug problems, and when we did get it, it was mainly marijuana and mainly you would find that

09:00 it came from a group that had been together in Australia. We had a group from the catering school that came up and were spread amongst various units, but they would get together once a week and smoke marijuana, until we caught them.

What would the punishment be?

Basically we sent them home, rather than…It might sound silly,

09:30 but it was cheaper in the long run just to get rid of them. The GOC used to ask me to come up and have a game of golf occasionally, and we'd play around the airfield and there were American barracks all around there. And everywhere you looked there were ampoules of

10:00 of heroin mainly, that had been dropped around, so we were terribly lucky. Down at the airbase, I was friendly with the colonel that ran that, and he said that there was so much marijuana being used by the mechanics, that it worried the life out of him, but he had power. They were civilians and he had no power over them at all. And there's no doubt

10:30 that these fellows who were bored to tears around the airfield were using drugs of some kind or another. Near the finish there, we had soldiers wanting to marry Vietnamese girls and we didn't have a very good policy in regard to this. As we didn't have in Japan.

11:00 Those that persisted had to go through the Vietnamese administrative system. While we weren't very keen, the Vietnamese saw it as a great way of wringing money out of people. And at every level, they had to pay their way to get to the next level. So it was a pretty costly business for the soldiers, but those that wanted to, persisted. And I hope that everything turned out okay for them,

11:30 as it did in many cases in regards to Japan. My daughter's children are extremely close to a family, and those children's grandfather was in my class, and he was a battalion commander in Vietnam.

12:00 But his son married the daughter of a Japanese lady and a warrant officer infantry. The Japanese lady was a bookkeeper in my father's mess at Kure,

12:30 and a really magnificent woman. Her daughter is the Japanese teacher at Radfield College in Canberra, and her three children are very close to my grandchildren.

13:00 Some of these marriages worked very well.

Did you become good friends with any Vietnamese people on a personal level? Or even in your business dealings?

Yeah, I had quite a lot to do with the liaison officer,

13:30 who was a very strange lady. She was the owner of a restaurant there. But my predecessor took me there the night of his farewell. And I sat beside this lady, and she escorted me into dinner.

14:00 She pointed to the girl behind the bar and she said, "My daughter. Daughter of British Ambassador." So I went up and sat at the table, and this girl brought some drinks to the table, and she was a big tall girl, and she had very straight legs and big feet, and I thought 'My God, she is.'

14:30 She was reputedly a number two wife of the president, but she was certainly a big political lady in the area. The colonel in charge of the signals barracks, I was friendly with him, and the colonel who ran the Vung Tau Special Zone, General To, I was very friendly with him, too.

15:00 I didn't really get to know anybody else, except the lady who ran the hotel, who also ran the girls. The master of the Hianya Maru, I invited him to come ashore and to have dinner. And I arranged with the hotel to put on a dinner for us.

15:30 And she came out to meet him, and I introduced him, "He is the master of the Hianya Maru." And she

took two paces back and she went…the Japanese had occupied Vietnam for three years and

16:00 they were chopping the heads off…but she was the woman who had marched out of Jong Yen [Hanoi] down to Vung Tau, to escape the communists. I don't know what happened to her in 1975, but it was quite possible she got out. Certainly the other one would have got out.

16:30 **Was it hard to leave Vietnam? Or were you quite happy to get home?**

I was happy to get home, but I felt very upset about having to leave the Vietnamese people to themselves.

What were your feelings about what their future might hold?

17:00 There was every indication that the Americans were going to leave them in the lurch, as they did, and I didn't think that they could hold out against the North. However, the people of South Vietnam became very determinedly

17:30 capitalist, if they weren't before, they certainly were after. And I don't believe the communists, no matter how ruthless they were, actually got on top of them. And basically the economics reforms that stemmed from Saigon,

18:00 not from Hanoi…And they came from the ground up, rather than from the top down. We may have lost the battle, but I don't think we lost the war.

Have you ever had any desire to return to Vietnam?

I would love to, but there are lots of places that I would like to go to, too. I would like to go back to Korea, but I've just never had the opportunity

18:30 or the money to go back. Although I've been to America a couple of times, I've only seen a little bit of it. My daughter and her husband have seen a lot more of it, and they're in Salt Lake City now. We might get across at some stage to see them.

19:00 Not that Salt Lake City was to be my aim…but there is lots of America that is very attractive which we've just never seen. And I certainly want to pick my time. The other times that I've been there, in July and August, which is really revolting around New York, Washington, Virginia, where I've been. Really stinking hot like it has never been hot here. Really terrible.

19:30 But there are some marvellously scenic areas which I would like to see, and generally speaking I quite like the American people.

Now coming back from Vietnam. What were the lessons learned there for you professionally? That you were able to apply to your work back in Australia?

20:00 When I came back to Australia from there, the transportation service, which had done so well in Vietnam and in Borneo and around Papua New Guinea, was disbanded. It was taken off the engineers. And the transport, as I say, from RSSC was put together…the supply side of RSSC was given to Ordnance, as were the Engineer Stores given to Ordnance.

20:30 Although I was against this, I was too late. There was nothing I could do. And then they put me in the new corps, so I decided I had to build it. So I went and I gave lectures everywhere I could go on the need for the two philosophies to be melded together in the new corps.

21:00 On the RAE side, we were concerned with bulk transportation, we weren't in the delivery business. RSSC were a distributive organisation, and somehow or the other these two philosophies had to be melded together, even if the principles of one and the principles of the other were different. Everybody had to be capable of doing either one or the other. So that was the message.

21:30 But I was taken out of there and put in this defence organisation, and I had this run in with Sir Arthur Tang. And they took me back into the army to save me being belted about anymore. And I was the director general basically of logistics. And one of the things that I had to do in that job

22:00 was to put back the supplies organisation, from Ordnance, into the transport organisation of the RATC [Royal Australian Transport Corps], within the division. Because in the division, you put your supplies in the trucks, and the trucks run up to the units and they take what they are issued with and there is no other way that we can do it…there is a small amount that can be done by air and things of that nature.

22:30 But that is the basic distribution of ammunition, petrol and food. And to separate, and to say to them, "Well, if you want your supplies you've got to demand them of this organisation." And this organisation has got to get the transport together for you…you can't do that in a battle. So this was a twelve month fight,

23:00 because Ordnance has just got the supplies organisation, but finally it was determined that supplies platoon would sit under the transport platoon, in the RACT column, within the division. On the movements side, we had a director general of movements in the defence organisation then,

23:30 and I just hoped that he would establish the right things and everything, which they did. Then came the writing of the new manuals for the new organisation and I supervised that, and wrote myself the combat supplies set-up. I didn't want that to be mucked about.

24:00 You do a thousand and one things. At army headquarters there are conferences every day. There's situations every day that have to have teams put together…Anyway, I was glad to get out of there at the end of…1977. And we made it down to Adelaide.

24:30 On the 4th of February we got there, and it was so hot. We got inside the motel and stayed there for a couple of days. Eventually we got into a married quarter and took over this hybrid, as it was in those days….but that was a fine time. I enjoyed it.

25:00 The CMF [Citizens Military Force] had their problems. The regular side was pretty much okay. A lot of my job was social. A fair amount of it was talks to organisations and things of that nature.

25:30 **Was that quite satisfying? To be able to move around and speak to different organisations?**

Yes, I enjoyed that. I spoke on a wide range of things. When I was chief engineer of Eastern Command, I became very interested in the history of Victoria Barracks, because I was walking down behind a group that had come from the National Trust,

26:00 and Dr Pat Thompson was telling these people, and she stopped and she said, "That is where they used to hang the soldiers?" I thought, 'Goodness me. There have been no soldiers hanged in this barracks. And further more that was where they brought the kegs of beer up through the ceiling for the canteen.' And I wondered then just how many odd strange stories were going around.

26:30 After all, this was the National Trust. So I sat down and I wrote a history of the Victoria Barracks, the construction of it. And I gave a lecture on the army portion of the National Estate. I had a friend up last week who just bought a house over here, and he was showing me how to put these photographs on the computer,

27:00 and he said, "Do you remember when you fumbled around with all those things in Adelaide? Dissolve switches and things like that?" He said, "You can do it all now with this thing. It is very simple." In Adelaide I gave…

27:30 My wife of course ran the Ladies Auxiliary, and the second year I was there I gave this thing for her. It was so much for supper and to listen to me. That was quite an interesting talk. It ranged from, not only our buildings, and the artwork of the army…

28:00 It started out with a film, but basically the fortifications and the buildings that we lived in and worked in. Many of which are, of course, part of the National Estate, including the Victoria Barracks, Paddington.

What have been the highlights of your career? Because you have done such a number of things…

28:30 Well, I think I was very satisfied with building a transportation service which worked so well in the period from 1964 through to 1972. I was very pleased with the way that everybody got together and worked hard to get us out of Vietnam.

29:00 I can't say that I was pleased with my role as chief engineer of Eastern Command, because I lost too many battles. The Commonwealth Department of Works was a very difficult organisation to work to. It had a head office in Melbourne and it had regional offices

29:30 which were equally big in size and as qualified to do engineering work. And we would get together on the site with the climate and the traffic problems and everything else and design something for the army, and it would go down to Melbourne. And these fellows sitting in their offices in Melbourne would start to pick it around and say, "This is not in accordance with this and that."

30:00 And of course, it had to go through them to get to Treasury to get the money. It's a seven year job basically to get it agreed to, to get it agreed that it would be built, to get the master plan, to get it through the design stage before something starts to happen on the ground. And it is like a giant snakes and ladders board. And if you get up to ninety nine,

30:30 and you do something wrong, you're down to two again, and you have to start this whole process again. So it becomes very much a case of, will you stick up for you principles? Or will you jump ninety-nine? And you're never quite satisfied with anything that happens. But there was quite a lot done in that period of time. All the new barracks at Holsworthy and things like that…

31:00 I was much happier when they said, "We will close the rifle range at Anzac, because we have opened the one at Long Bay. And of course we want an airfield on it." "That's easy, just get twenty-three construction squadron in and say we will have an airfield here chaps, and you don’t have to worry anymore about it."

31:30 Except that somebody came along and said, "Ordnance instructions state that if there is an ammunition

depot there, the airfield fence has got to be x number of yards away from the boundary fence of the ammunition depot." So I shifted the boundary fence of the ammunition depot and…It's easy enough when you've got control of that sort of thing,

32:00 and provided you stick to the basic safety thing. The depot fence didn't have to be there, it could be another fifty yards that way, so we shifted it fifty yards that way. But when Treasury gets involved, you can rest assured that no way in the world that the most efficient and the most cost-worthy solution will be found. We had a classic case of the barracks at Townsville,

32:30 where my friend McGee, I pleaded with him to pay sixty thousand dollars to put a storm water drain in, where the married quarters were to go. They didn't do that, and three years later they had to pay three and a half million dollars to put the stormwater in. We could demonstrate this ad nauseam, but…

33:00 Treasury in those days didn't believe in technology. I wanted to put into the School of Military Engineering, I wanted to put decent printing facilities in. We did a big study on it to prove that everything was economical, and that the standard of the work we would put out would be of text book standard, instead of this dreadful old cyclacine stuff.

33:30 And in the end they weren't interested in anything other than, could we take three people off the staff, to compensate for this machine. The quality of the work didn't affect them. Only the numbers of people were the only thing they were interested in. Now if you have that sort of outlook, you can't get anywhere.

34:00 I remember a governor of New South Wales, a Royal Engineer by the name of Dennison. He was posted from New South Wales to Madras, and he wrote a letter home to his friend and he said, "Everything is fine here, except that the Treasury officials are going around and spending a shilling to save sixpence." And that was in 1856, and it has never been any different to my knowledge since.

34:30 Yes, we lost a couple of projects because I stood firm and said, "No this is what we want. These are the standards that you have agreed to and these are the standards that we want." But it didn't do any good in the finish. So you win some and you lose them. But that didn't satisfy me. I much preferred a job where the soldiers went ahead and did it. You said, "This is what we are going to do chaps," and everyone gets in and does it,

35:00 and gets off and goes home at the finish.

Are you pleased that you stayed in the army, rather than going to be a civilian engineer?

Yes. When Nicole was ill, I looked around to get a job and I was offered a job in West Australia, to a big mining town.

35:30 It was that far out of Perth, that I couldn't risk her in that position, so I knocked it back and stayed in. Then when I had this 'tiff' with Tang, I thought again about going out, but I had put in this paper the fact that it was necessary for someone to stay in the army and fight like hell for the things that we knew were right. So therefore, I couldn't

36:00 duck out at that stage. No, I enjoyed my army career, and I would certainly recommend it to any young man. Neither of my two boys decided on it. And one of Lees' did….

36:30 I really think that the army is a very satisfying place to be in. The organisation that they've got at the moment is wrong, and everyone knows it's wrong, and every time they do anything to fix it, they make it worse,

37:00 by raising another senior headquarters and sticking it on top of this thing. And basically what is required is for the army to run the army, the navy to run the navy, the air force to run the air force, and have a small organisation on top to co-ordinate those bits that have to be co-ordinated. But instead of that, Defence wants to run everything.

37:30 So you've got an organisation that doesn't…the army is a vastly different organisation to the navy, and a vastly different organisation to the air force. The fact that we're in uniform has nothing to do with it. The army is geographically associated. It holds ground and that is what it is on about. The air force fly well overhead and they are very flexible and they can fly almost anywhere.

38:00 And the navy runs around wherever there is a sea. But their organisations are totally different, but they are quite proper for their organisations. But we not only need to be able to hold that piece of land, but we need a corridor through which all the support and everything else can come up to it. The air has never been able to supply that adequately. Not even in the jungle.

38:30 So if we are to remain flexible, the army has to be able to do what its job is, and the navy has to be able to do its job. Every now and again, there is something in which we are all involved, but there are mechanisms for doing that and they are quite clear. You see, this is the thing about movements, transportation systems. When we needed railways, we went to the railways and hired them. When we needed trucks, we went to trucks. When we needed sea transport, we didn't go to the navy,

39:00 we went to commercial shipping and we got that. And we didn't fill that ship to unload it at the other end, we had an unloading organisation at the other end. The navy had brought two ships and are going

to buy four or two now to replace them, and they stuff them full of everything. So instead of having a crew or thirty-two or thirty-eight, you've got a crew of four hundred

39:30 on board a navy ship to do what somebody else can do with thirty two fellows on board. I just feel that we have lost the plot in Canberra. Politicians are too close to us...

40:00 All these funny little things that are happening at the present moment, and all we are doing is putting another headquarters in between the doers and these people down here, and I can't think that that is going to fix anything up. They've already put two in between…And one of the anxieties was that there was going to be a lot less general officers around. We've four times them now.

40:30 And the army is shrinking. That is Northcote Parkinson's theory. The smaller the workers, the more top level you've got.

INTERVIEW ENDS

NB. This transcript is of an interview filmed for the television series, Australians at War in 1999-2000. It was incorporated into the Archive in 2007.

Tape 9

02:42 **So take me back, this is you joined the forces and set up what you were doing and why you joined?**

My father, who was a regular soldier had gone away to the Middle East with the

03:00 first recce [reconnaissance] party on the 13th December 1939. So he spent a long time in the Middle East. He got four days leave when he got back and off to New Guinea. So I didn't really see him very much during the war but he wrote us and of course the war was of paramount importance at that time and Labour and National Service issued me with

03:30 an order in 1942 to attend Melbourne University to do science and I wanted to join the army and the only way I could really join the army at that time, I was sixteen, was to go to Duntroon [Royal Military College]. So I went to Duntroon with the view of doing a course, going off to war, coming back home and doing my engineering degree through them. So that was why I joined the Royal Military College.

04:00 As far as this war was concerned I only saw a little of World War II in New Guinea and Rabaul and then I went to the university and I only had really one job out after the university and this opportunity came up. My father was the chief signals officer of the British Commonwealth Forces Korea. My brother was serving

04:30 with the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment [3RAR] and because we were very short of infantry the other corps were providing these specialist platoons of the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, which the government rather belatedly offered to the United Nations forces. So I took enough soldiers from the 7th Independent Field Squadron

05:00 which was at the School of Military Engineering and with a few infantrymen we went to join the 1st Battalion at Holsworthy, at Ingleburn and we trained in the general area there from December through to March when we paraded through Sydney and climbed on board the [HMS] Devonshire and sailed for Japan. And

05:30 I was fortunate enough to meet my Dad there, who I hadn't seen in a long while. And after a couple of weeks mainly spent at the battle school at Haramura I was ordered to take the heavy equipment of the unit, plus my platoon, plus the transport platoon and we went across on an LST [landing ship tank, British War Department LST,

06:00 and landed on Inchon on the 1st April 1952. We moved up over the Kansas Line into an allotted position and we worked there until the rest of the battalion came along, about two weeks later. We did some more training and got ourselves ready and then we went into the line taking over from the Leicesters in a position that was opposite

06:30 some well known features called The Matthew Mark and John, I think and 227, just under the brow of 355 which was in allied, in United Nations hands. We then came out of the line and went back in to take, into a different position called the Nachung position under Brigadier Daly, I think

07:00 and 3RAR were alongside of us at this stage. So this was the first time we'd both been in the line together. I went out on a job that was to prove that some tank tracks through a minefield were safe and unfortunately we never found any mines that night, which sort of proved that it was safe enough

07:30 but the Chinese opened up on what was obviously a fixed line down those tracks. That brought a change in battalion plans for a raid into, which was going, the troops on that raid were going to use that on the way back in. So the battalion commander decided that a big fence line, which went right along the

Nachon Creek for about twelve hundred yards, I was required to check

08:00 that the path between the minefield fence and the creek was clear. I took out a section and put them on the last minefield gap to hold that gap and with Lance Corporal David Garnen, he and I went out and hammered pickets all night along the line because it was a very old minefield. It had been through at least one severe winter and

08:30 the winter plus the shelling had destroyed all the trace of the, or most of the trace of the front line wires. So we had to recreate that and check the ground carefully between where we established the fence line and the creek. We were working only eighty yards from Chinese positions and we didn't have any screw in pickets, we just had to hammer them in so it was obvious they knew we were there.

09:00 I really had intended to go right through to another minefield gap but we didn't have any radio communications. The wireless we'd been given was no good and so I decided that I would have to get back in time to pull the other troops out that were sort of employed, associated with this. When we came back in

09:30 I picked up the section, spread them out and we just got back inside two more minefield gaps when we were ambushed and in the melee I got caught and so did Denis Conlan, Private Denis Conlan. Syd Carr was killed and three others were wounded. They included Private Ross and Corporal, Lance Corporal Garnen had twenty nine

10:00 bullets hit him but survived and Billy Evans, AP Evans he was wounded. Anyway we were taken, Garnen and I were taken separately. I didn't know he was captured until a bit later. Up the hill I was hoping all the time that there'd be some fire from our side, in which case we might have been able to, I might have been able to get away but there wasn't any. We were put inside and

10:30 then marched northwards the next morning. I can still see that first room in which we were taken. It was basically a room. It must have been about fifty feet wide, fifty feet long and about forty feet high and it had hundreds of American stretchers, or litters lined up against the wall and from it

11:00 there were normal sort of passageways about, a passageway from a normal building and I was led off down there and put into a room which was about, you know the size that you could put two or three soldiers in. And this was where the Chinese obviously slept and I could hear a single donk engine which was

11:30 obviously turning the air over inside this enormous structure. They probably had four or five hundred people in this underground structure. The next day we were marched northwards for about fifteen miles and most of that was in a World War I style trench. There was a couple of more days in which we spent, one night I was interrogated for the first time

12:00 really. The interrogation in the front line hadn't been really very effective. But this time it was a fairly extensive sort of treatment and I just sat there mute through all the haranguing on and, until the Chinese said to me, "Why are you a running dog of Wall Street?" And I was silly enough to say,

12:30 "Why are you a running dog of Moscow?" Well this wasn't particularly looked upon with any joy and suddenly everyone was whacking me around the head. And I had everything, the few things I had, one handkerchief, my glasses were broken in the melee and they took those off me and a fountain pen I had. And I was manacled behind my back,

13:00 arms behind my back and I was shoved back into a holding cell. And I had a long and sleepless night thinking about this and I decided from that point onward there would be two way conversation between me and the enemy because to get involved was pretty silly. We were then marched

13:30 off for another two or three days. It was raining still and in fact down on the Imjin River, in the divisional lines at this time a friend of mine was trying to save the Teal Bridge but it was knocked out by this torrential rain. But anyway I could hear this river running

14:00 and I thought well this might be, might be the chance because we were pretty you know, we, Garner and I, sorry Conlan and I had about an escort of one corporal and about eight men and they attended to us fairly carefully. But as we neared the river they stopped us and bound our arms very tightly behind us

14:30 and a noose around our neck and marched us down to the river and took us across the bridge. So they were aware as much as I was that this was an opportunity that I could throw myself in the river and perhaps survive. Anyway we got to the first interrogation centre and at that place…

15:00 Well, the section was strung out. Garnen was in front and I was about a yard behind him and the wireless operator was next to me and the section was strung out behind. The ambush started with somebody jumping from, somebody firing from the last gap in the minefield

15:30 and I heard them all hit Garnen. I immediately turned up the hill and I could see all these flashes and I went towards them trying to get my Owen gun to go. Now I had not taken an Owen gun out and hadn't used one for some time and it has a sleeve on it which is there as an extra safety arrangement which I

in the heat of the moment forgot all about

16:00 and I should say that where we were knocking in those pickets you'd hear an animal in the scrub and you'd get ready to do something and then you, and I couldn't remember that I'd put that damn thing on. Anyway I then assessed very quickly that if I couldn't get the weapon going I must do something about the section and I swung left and slipped on the side link and from out of the

16:30 river behind me sprung three people and grabbed me. And while I tussled with them a fourth fellow came up with a Thompson machine gun and fired it. The darn thing just, the works just thudded forward and he cocked it again and I said, "Okay I'm going." They pushed me up

17:00 the hill and I made them push me up the hill with the thought that there should be some defensive fire or something coming down. Later I realised that was ridiculous. But anyway they got us half way up this hill and they pushed me in through an opening. And after I got out of the sort of narrow opening it expanded into this colossal room about fifty feet wide, fifty feet long and I

17:30 thought about fifty feet high off which ran a series of corridors. And in the big room were literally hundreds of Americans, about a hundred American litters, which they'd obviously captured. And I was pushed off down into a room which was about the size of the fourth bedroom in a house where you could put about three or four people in

18:00 and sat on the rock shelf and given eventually a bowl of hot water and offered a smoke. Well I didn't smoke so I just said no to a smoke but I did take the water, which I was glad to say was hot and obviously had been boiled. I could hear a single donk engine in the background, which was obviously being used to turn the

18:30 air over in this colossal underground structure in which they must have had four to five hundred troops. And the next day when we were pushed up out of there, marched northwards for about ten miles we moved through a World War I style trench and, which they had dug with pick and shovel.

19:00 **Continue the story? At the same time, as we have stopped…**

The first thought I had was one of extreme mortification. It's a terrible thing to have an operation like that fail. It's just something terrible

19:30 and that mortification remained with me for a long time, probably throughout my prisoner of war experience. But in one way it was, it also assisted me in the war between me and the Chinese, that was to go on for the next certainly ninety days.

20:00 As we moved back the accommodation we went into was less protective and probably better. The food wasn't at this stage any better anywhere along the line. On one day's march I could hear a river. Now it had been raining

20:30 the whole of the time, it had rained the night I was out working on the minefield. It had, and it had continued raining throughout this period. All the rivers there I knew ran towards the coast and when I heard this I thought maybe I'll have a chance to escape. And we were being, we were being

21:00 escorted by an NCO and about eight soldiers and the soldier, the Australian soldier I was with and I, as we approached this river they stopped us and they tied us from our elbows to our wrists and put a noose around our head and marched us individually across this river. Now the river was running

21:30 to within six inches of the under part of the bridge and it was a turbulent torrent. But nevertheless I thought if I could get in there maybe I'd be carried far enough downstream to get out and make my way towards the coast, but when they tied my arms behind my back I gave up any idea of that. We continued on for another day or so until we

22:00 got to a main, I would have thought a divisional interrogation centre and there I was separated from the other soldier and I was shoved in a wooden box. It had been crate around a domestic style refrigerator, but it was clean and I thought, 'Well, you know I can hang out here.' But I didn't realise that I would

22:30 be under such intense interrogation day in and day out for the next twenty one, twenty one days. Again the interrogation was mainly about military matters on the front line and that was easy

23:00 just to keep on saying number name and rank and that was it. They offered me tea. I didn't drink tea. They offered me cigarettes. I didn't need cigarettes and these were little wins for them. They couldn't give me anything, couldn't sweeten me up in any way and I was able to sort of say, "No I don't want this." Most of the interrogators spoke

23:30 American but they brought along a very senior fellow who spoke with an Oxford accent and spoke beautiful English, and as far as I could tell, good French, and he was interested in sort of different things altogether. Strangely enough on that hill that I was on there was a Chinese Army but not

24:00 Communist, non Communist army, who had a broadcast station and he was interested in who this fellow was because he spoke immaculate Mandarin. Well that didn't worry me. I didn't know anything about that station anyway. They were also fascinated with the fact that there was a new unit coming to join

the Commonwealth Division, which they

24:30 called the Royal Fusiliers I think. Anyway, and there was another regiment mentioned as well, the London Regiment, but anyway I learnt much later that it was, the two regiments were in fact the one regiment. But when they got annoyed with me they disclosed that, “I don’t know what you’re worried about, the divisional broadcasting station is welcoming them here. The United States Stars

25:00 and Stripes have published pictures of them marching down the street”. But I said, “Well I don’t know anything about them” which I didn’t. Anyway after about twenty one days they shoved an ROK soldier, Republic of Korean Soldier, a South Korean Soldier, who had been captured in with me in this little box which was about four foot six

25:30 long and two foot six wide and about three foot six in height. It was on its side. That made it crowded and a few days later they put a Korean civilian in with me, who they had with a noose around his neck tied to his feet and he was incredibly dirty. The ROK Soldier

26:00 was immaculately clean except that he’d been wounded in the chest and he had gangrene. The Korean, the civilian, when they brought in food they brought it in a common bowl and he just stuck his hands in and grabbed what he could out of it and in a couple of days I was starting to get pretty sick

26:30 and I decided that rather than get terribly weak I’d get out of here. Now what they were after all the time was my personal story and I said I wouldn’t give them a personal story vocally but I would give it to them if they gave me pen and paper. And I thought long and hard about it and I told them my story which was fairly accurate, except that I omitted Duntroon. I talked about my wartime

27:00 service and my university course which I said was a rehabilitation course and I had to pay back two years of that to the army but all I knew anything about really was building roads. So when they read that they dragged out this colonel back again and he said, “Well,

27:30 if you’re a roads engineer give me, tell us about road engineering.” and again I said I wouldn’t do that but I’d write them out a story on the road engineering. So I wrote about the most super-elevated highway that you could ever see with intersections and all that sort of thing and I put out the plant and I had a lot of fun for three days. And they brought an engineer officer along

28:00 who read it and he got very, very angry and explained to me that all they had were picks and shovels and this plant was useless. So I wrote another paper on pick drill and shovel drill and how to use a pick, lift one, strike two, which didn’t please them either but they sort of gave up then and I was pushed in with the

28:30 other prisoners that they’d collected. And then we started travelling north. We got to Pyongyang. Pyongyang by this time was as flat as a tack. It didn’t have a building standing but the two bridges across the river there were still up. And we were taken across the river there at night and spilled out at the end of the journey and we

29:00 were all sitting around and suddenly they came and grabbed me and off into another interrogation centre and I spent another twenty eight days there in a little dog box. They were spaced around the back of this Korean house and there they used to come and grab me and take me up and give me this same treatment. I used to walk up and down all

29:30 day saying nothing. And then they got onto chaplains and they wanted to know about chaplains and I said I’d write them a bit about chaplains. I was going crazy sitting there to attention all day. So I wrote to them about chaplains, they were fascinated by chaplains, they really allied a chaplain to their political commissars and they were terribly disappointed in my story about the chaplains. Finally

30:00 they got around to germ warfare and I suddenly got fed up with it all and I exploded a bit saying that, “Look if the Americans had been going to drop germs on North Korea they wouldn’t drop the germs that they’re allegedly dropping. They would put measles or some other fancy thing in there which would be very onerous on the population but I was certain that

30:30 they had never done it.” and that finished it. I was out of there about twenty four hours, thirty six hours later. It was a fascinating place in the sense that on the front veranda I could hear this American spilling his heart out to these people and that turned out to be Colonel Swarl [?] of the United States Marine Corps.

31:00 The next stop was up on the Yalu and I remember accompanying a Greek sergeant up there. He’d been shot through the head, and he’d just been shot through the knees and he’d been just given two planks, to stabilise the knees. He could walk by pushing down on the top of one leg, taking all his weight on these two planks, swinging the other leg and transferring

31:30 his arm but he couldn’t go into the field and relieve himself and things like that. So for those few days I was able to help him and I helped another British soldier who was the same way. But then again as soon as we hit civilisation I was separated out and shoved in a room and subjected to the same old business over and over again. After about

32:00 one week of this I was taken eastwards and taken into Camp 2 which was an officers’ camp basically

and I thought that's where I would probably end up. However, I was carted off and marched for another ten or fifteen miles

32:30 to Annex 3 of Camp 2. Camp 2 had two annexes. Annex 2 was for recalcitrant NCOs [non commissioned officers] and Annex 3 was for recalcitrant NCOs and officers, but also for late captures such as myself. Eventually I was put into the camp

33:00 a week or so before Christmas. The camp commander was a chap by the name of Bill Wilson and Major Bill Wilson, who was a marvellous fellow. The Chinese had started an education program in the camp two weeks before and Bill fronted up to them and told them that this wasn't on, that they weren't prepared to go on with this.

33:30 And strangely enough it was about this time that the Chinese lost faith …

Tape 10

00:40 I suppose the most unique part of the POW experience in Korea … I suppose the most unique part of the prisoner of war experience in Korea was that it was a continuation

01:00 of the ideological warfare that sparked the conflict in the first place. The Chinese had had a great deal of success in their own revolution by what they called their 'lenient treatment' and with their own war, when they captured Kuomintang [nationalist Chinese] soldiers they gave them this re-education program and they had a great deal of success in converting them to Communism. So they thought this was a great opportunity

01:30 to grab hold of a whole lot of people from the so called free world and induct them with Communism and the whole battle between the POW and his captors was not to be captured under this program. And the Chinese had some success with some soldiers and this has been

02:00 written about, particularly in the United States. However the British had a few go under. They were all socialist or Communist minded lads in the first place. As far as Australia was concerned we didn't have anybody but then we didn't have very many people anyway and

02:30 we were volunteers. The main part of this conflict was early in the piece. If I could just divide the POW period up for a bit. The first part of the war, the prisoners belonged to the North Koreans but after the Chinese got in the war in October, November 1950

03:00 they began to take over all the prisoner of war administration and they applied this lenient policy, high re-education policy to the prisoners. They didn't have very much success with officers and NCOs in particular and they didn't have that much success with the majority of soldiers

03:30 but they did have success with some and that was blown up in a propaganda way. Then they settled on things like the ill treatment of their own prisoners in Koge but we couldn't do anything about that. Then they settled on germ warfare and they rattled that along the whole of the period of the peace negotiations. Now the peace negotiations

04:00 started in January 1951 and didn't come to a satisfactory truce until August 1953. So in that intervening period this battle of ideology was pursued in the prisoner of war camps and we were the people who had to resist it in every way we could. Bill Wilson who I mentioned was our

04:30 American commander in the camp, he disappeared from our camp in January and he was in a hole in the ground until released. We had a number of other Americans who were removed and were put under intense pressure to make false confessions about germ warfare. So this was the struggle

05:00 that went on inside the prisoner of war camps and the Chinese got a bit tired I think of trying to convert various camps because the structure inside, the informal structure of the prisoners inside those camps were such that they resisted and that was important and from our point of view in the camp that I was in Bill Wilson had said, "No,

05:30 we will have no education" and instead of that the Chinese forced him to run non political courses like mathematics and English and music. And we didn't have any instruments but people talked about the theory of music and things like that.

Now just take me through your personal experience of that time. Condense that about what

06:00 **you found most difficult to adjust to in physical sense, emotional sense. Just take us back and just talk about your own experiences and don't get tripped up by specifics of the education program and that. I mean it was… perhaps and then just talk about that period of time. Cause that's really when you realised it wasn't going to be such smooth sailing?**

It was a long night. I can remember very well that there was no position that I could

06:30 put myself in that gave me any comfort whatsoever but churning through my mind was what could I learn out of this? And the basic thing was not to get involved in any argument of any kind. So from that time onwards I avoided any speech or anything else with them and I think it was a good lesson because I've heard

07:00 people talk about what they said and what the Chinese said and that sort of thing and I think some of them got sucked in regardless of what they said later. But in the camp itself, the Chinese by the way were an extremely clean army and that cleanliness brought a great deal of resentment

07:30 in the North Koreans, civilians, because on the way up to the camp I was periodically put into or near Korean houses and the Chinese would ostentatiously clean everything up and one could see the North Koreans resenting this very much but they were a clean army and they insisted on cleanliness around the camp.

08:00 And from that point of view being an engineer my seniors always asked me to make sure that the toilets were right and the grounds were clean and things of that nature. Food, oh we had, we didn't, the Chinese never put us to work and they weren't supposedly,

08:30 they weren't entirely really to put officers to work in one sense under the Geneva Conventions, which they wouldn't accept anyway but they were entitled to put soldiers to work. And when the two, when our, sorry… Wilson decided that we, the officers should help the

09:00 kitchen hands. Now the kitchen hands were, there was a British soldier, an American marine major and a chief petty officer from the US Navy running the kitchen and the supply of cold water, supply of water to the kitchen was very difficult. You had to march about two hundred yards

09:30 with a chogie stick, that's a pole and two buckets on the end, two kerosene tins on the end, down to a river. The water was, the river had six feet of ice in it which you had to get through to get the water and we didn't have waterproof boots or anything of that nature. So it was invariably that you got, your feet got sloppy and things. You had to

10:00 struggle up the hill with the chogie stick, and we took turns in doing that but that was about the only physical work we did other than playing games and doing educational things. It's very difficult to explain to people what solitary confinement is like. The only way that I can do it is to say there are sixty seconds in a minute and there are

10:30 sixty minutes in an hour and twenty four hours in a day, seven days a week, and if you think of ninety days of nothingness that has to have some affect upon you. Fortunately in my case it was broken up into sort of thirty day periods and in between I managed to be in a group of people in which I could talk to people again.

11:00 The other thing about those ninety days I suppose of suppressing this business of non involvement has probably made me; it changed my personality I suppose from an outward going one to an inward going one. It hasn't affected me so much as my family.

11:30 I don't think there's anything else really… I lost weight I suppose but I put that back on too quickly. My eyesight was affected.

12:00 The best thing that happened to me I suppose was when I came out I had a month or so leave with my family

12:30 and I had a very young son then, but then I was put back to work and that was the best thing that could have happened to me I guess, went to the School of Military Engineering and they were understaffed and I worked very, very hard and that got me back on my feet very quickly. I don't think there's anymore

13:00 I can say.

If there is one memory, and we are not using any of my questions, so you're not responding to the question, that will stay with you forever from that period of time, just describe that to me? And introduce it as

13:30 **one memory so we know what you're talking about?**

Yes I'll never forget when all of

14:00 us in that annex three were put together in a hall overnight to catch the train to Panmujon. There we met the people who we had marched past… in the valley. And the next morning we got on board the train, which were just cattle trucks but

14:30 every bump was a bump towards Panmujon and we were happy about that. When we got to Panmujon again we met the people from camp two and that was a great experience. And walking across the bridge was a very joyous moment.

15:00 It was, I might add that before we left the annex the Chinese came with gifts like a razor and a comb and brush and a good morning towel and the following day the Red Cross parcels were left in which

were exactly the same and then we were given a

15:30 series of needles, God only knows what they were but when we got down to Panmujon as we crossed the bridge the first thing they did was take you into the doctors and push needles into you. And then I was taken over by the Australians and given a decent feed and a couple of days later we were put on an aeroplane and taken into

16:00 Japan and the first thing that happened to us there they gave us the whole same crop of needles so that the pinpricks of freedom were rather peculiar. But we were all glad to get whatever the West could give us. And back in Kure there were still people from my battalion around and they looked after me very, very well

16:30 before putting me on an aeroplane to go home. I think that's about it there.

Just two things…is just the…?

As we went, we were taken from the camp at Kaesong down to

17:00 Panmujon in trucks and I think they were releasing a truck load at a time sort of business. And crossing us, going the other way were the Chinese prisoners who through everything the Americans had given them over the side of the trucks and

17:30 our prisoners didn't demonstrate that way at all. They were just glad to get across that line and until they did get across the line I don't think any of us didn't believe that hey something could happen, you know it was not far off. But it still hadn't quite happened and that kept us fairly quiet. But

18:00 when we did walk across that bridge we knew that we were on the way to our freedom and back to our families. I don't remember doing any wild Susie O'Neil dances or anything. It was just a matter of a very quiet relief, relief was the word,

18:30 yeah. The box in fact had no door…

Just set it up because let's say that, lead up to it what happened, you know when they took you from that interrogation presumably, or whatever? Just tell us a little story at the beginning and the end, pretend

19:00 **that you haven't talked about it before?**

I was incarcerated in this box which had been a crate surrounding something like a domestic refrigerator. It was four foot six long and it was about two foot six wide and three foot six high. You couldn't stretch out in it. You couldn't stand up. You could barely sit up without

19:30 hitting your head on the top and I'd been very comfortable in this for nearly three weeks. I used to, there was a stream, tiny little stream just above the box and they let me out to wash once a day and I was able to keep myself clean. Then they put a Korean,

20:00 South Korean soldier captured and wounded in. We couldn't converse very much, you know, 'number one', 'number ten', were about the limits of our joint experience, nevertheless I was quite comfortable with him in the sense that he could sit opposite me and my feet and his upper

20:30 body sort of fitted the box reasonably well. But a few days later they put in a civilian who was incredibly dirty. His clothes were filthy. His nails were filthy and his manners were appalling but the poor fellow had a rope around his neck, which was tied to his feet

21:00 and it was very difficult for us to let him sit in any way that gave him comfort. About the third night after he'd been in there he managed to get some slack in the ropes and he pushed his feet in such a way that the rope around his neck was strangling him.

21:30 It was possible that he was a spy or accused of spying or something of that nature, but anyway he was dead keen to kill himself this night and all I can remember was waking up from a fitful sleep with this face about that far from me and spew and spit and everything coming out of him

22:00 and I just pushed him back as a reaction and the guards came running and everything like that and he was taken out and made to sit outside for the night. That was one of the incidents I think which made me decide that I was going to get out of the box as soon as I could. I didn't think I would survive too long with the three of us in there.

22:30 The interrogation from that box, actually I was lucky too because for some reason or other they decided that all the POWs in this area would be photographed and I managed to get alongside the soldier with whom I was captured and I was able to

23:00 ask him whether he had talked about minefields or anything. That was the thing that I knew most about which the enemy would have liked to know about. I mean I, we had about a hundred and forty five minefields in the division and I knew at least two battalions worth of them extremely well and the patterns and all those sorts of things. So that was knowledge that under no circumstances could I allow the enemy to obtain in any way.

23:30 Anyway Dennis was able to say to me that they had never interrogated him and I said, “Well if they do don’t mention minefields, just you’re a carpenter and joiner”. That made me a bit more comfortable about writing out a, because I, if they had gone to Dennis and he had inadvertently mentioned I was a regular army officer my whole thing

24:00 would have been blown and I would have been in a great deal of trouble. So that enabled me, plus this incident to say well I’m going to write a life time story and get out of here. It was only a sort of three quarter page long but it satisfied them and that’s how I managed to get out of there. And because I remembered by heart I could write it out each time so that they couldn’t find any variation on the letter.

24:30 One thing happened while I was in that box. I was, before the others were put in it, I was bathing in the stream and the soldier watching me cleaning my teeth and I had one handkerchief and I was using the handkerchief to clean my teeth and the following day he came along and offered me his old toothbrush which was a very gentlemanly gesture and I gladly accepted it.

25:00 **Is there anything else you want to say about that time? Just to sum up?**

It was a great relief when I got out of that box and joined these other prisoners there. There were some American marines, officers. A Canadian officer and two Australian officers, two Australian soldiers

25:30 rather and they were in one wing of an underground cellar and alongside of that was another wing in which Chinese prisoners, disciplinary prisoners were encountered in and these poor people I think the worst that any of them had done was go to sleep at the wheel of a vehicle. And anyway they were incarcerated in there and

26:00 we were all pleased in fact that we weren’t being treated as badly as their own Chinese prisoners were because their officers would go in there and beat them with the buckle end of a belt and beat them horribly. So maybe we were part of their lenient policy after all.

INTERVIEW ENDS