Australians at War Film Archive

Lionel Laverty (Golden Boot) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:30 **Thanks for joining us today Lionel.**

The pleasure's mine.

If you'd like to give us a rundown, as we discussed, of your life?

Yes, well I was born on the 3rd November in 1941, nearly seventy years ago.

01:00 And I was born in Brisbane, but my family and everything lived in a place called Dulacca, Palardo in Queensland. It's out near Roma. I believe we lived at Palardo first and then went to Dulacca. We spent our youth there. I did until just before I was seven. I didn't go to school prior to that. Our education was home-based.

01:30 My mother and father both worked for the railway. My mother, in her younger day, worked for, actually, relatives, like as a housemaid and the rest of that. We had a wonderful young life. We didn't seem to want for anything. We had the company of all the animals that used to get born on the trains. They used to drop them off to us

02:00 and so we used to mind those. We used to raise – my mother especially used to raise the joeys, the kangaroos. They'd be gone, the mothers, die of road kill or other so she raised them and we had animals all the time. My father played in a band so there was lots of socials and everything out there. All my grandparents worked on the railways out there,

02:30 building the roads, building the rails to transport all the cattle because there's a great deal of cattle out there. We moved for various circumstances, I'll expand later. We had to move into the city when the family broke up. We lived with my grandparents in The Valley [Fortitude Valley, suburb of Brisbane] in Brisbane. That's when I first went to school.

03:00 From there we did various things. We had to wait around to get a government house and they moved us into these [Housing] Commission huts over in Victoria Park in Brisbane, right next to the golf course. The huts were just like the old army igloo huts and they weren't very warm and they weren't very cold. No, they were awful huts. But all the migrants

03:30 from all over the world were placed in there until they got their homes and we were in there with them. We met some wonderful people and still friends for life, you know. After a while, we got a house at Stafford, at 66 Ogden Street, Stafford and we moved there but in between time, I'd been to a couple of schools. I went to Valley Primary School - didn't last there long.

04:00 I was a good boy. Then I went to St Patrick's because we were Roman Catholic and my mother wanted us to go to a Catholic school. And St James' was the all-boy school but they didn't have any places so they sent about thirty of us boys to St Patrick's which was mainly a girls' school which was opposite the main girls' school which was All Hallows. Any my older brother Barry did something wrong there

04:30 so we had to leave there and we went to St James'. Yes we ended up moving to Stafford anyway. From Stafford, when I was there, I finished school and went and did a trade. In that time, I played a fair amount of sport. From when I finished my trade, my younger brother was in the army and he suggested that I join so I joined the army with him and I spent six years in the army.

05:00 We went overseas to Malaya, Borneo and places like that for a couple of years. And I came back and got out of the army and played professional rugby for a while then re-joined the army and then I was at Kapooka [camp] for three years and then my brother died in the services and I was ministerial so I got out of the army and joined the police in the ACT [Australian Capital Territory]. In between time, I got married to Gail.

05:30 I joined the police, came down here and worked in various government departments from the Department of Defence, Post and Telecommunications and finally I was a registrar at a high school for

nearly twenty years and I retired fifteen years ago and since then I've been having fun with my kids and my grandkids and enjoying life. And now I play as much golf as I can and I like being spoilt.

06:00 **Wonderful. Thank you. Well, we should go back to the start now and learn about your early childhood and you can now go into the details about your home and family for us.**

In our family, there was my mother, father and the four boys. There was Barry, myself, then there was Trevor then there was Stephen. Stephen was a lot younger than the other three of us.

06:30 He seemed to be, he was always growing/catching us up. He's a great young man actually. I didn't spend any time that I can remember at school. My older brother Barry, he moved down to Brisbane with my grandparents earlier, and he went to school because I've seen photos of him at school but there's no photos of me anywhere

07:00 being at school until I actually went to St James'. Our childhood around Dulacca and Palardo was just wonderful because my mother and father both worked for the railway as stationmaster and station mistress. Or Mum was mainly postmistress, opened the gates to let the trains through and all those different sorts of things. We used to just wander around – we must have been wild kids, I don't know how my mother put up with it. We used to wander around.

07:30 We'd go down, we'd do all the old tricks. We'd go down near the bridge and when the trains came across the bridge, we used to give the engineers a bit of a hard time and they'd throw coal off the train at us because you'd get your coal and you'd use that to heat up your heaters in your house and everything like that. We didn't have to do that because my parents worked for the railway and they could get as much coal as they wanted to but I think the engineers would be disappointed, on the trains, they'd be disappointed if we didn't do that sort of thing.

08:00 **What did you do to give them a hard time?**

Just, you know, screaming, yelling at them, poking faces, and just normal kids stuff. Thinking we're smart and we're probably totally stupid but I think they enjoyed it because often I think they'd be looking out when we weren't there. There was one time, three of us, Barry, Trevor and I went for a walk and we got lost and it took

08:30 my mother ages to find us. The roads in them days weren't bitumen, they were all dirt and each of the railway stations were about fifty mile apart and they were normally adjacent to big cattle properties. So that the cattle trains or the sheep trains would come along and pick up the stock and they'd transport them to wherever, Brisbane or wherever they took them to.

09:00 We used to get all the new born calves and everything off the trains and we used to have a tall house or there was a tall house as I remember and they used to put the cattle and everything, little calves, under there, keep them from the dingoes, but they used to be shared in the neighbourhood. Like we didn't keep them all ourselves, we used to share them in the neighbourhood so we really didn't want for much when we were kids.

09:30 I can't remember ever thinking that I didn't have everything. As I said earlier, my father played in a band and there used to lots of socials, dances and things like that because most of the people there were living in tents by the railway lines and building the roads, repairing the rails and so they'd have dances all the times. And I was

10:00 always in trouble because I liked the food, I liked to eat and they'd have country type - you'd have all these dances and I'd always put cakes in my pocket and biscuits in my pocket and things like that. I'd always have plenty to eat. I used to get into trouble because my mother would find them when she washed. We eventually moved. I know were at Palardo(?) first, then we moved into Dulacca. When we were at Dulacca, my favourite place

10:30 used to be on the back stairs of the hotel, at the Dulacca Hotel and actually Gail and I have been back there and I've sat on those stairs, they're still there. But we used to live in a house. When we moved to Dulacca, we lived in a house right next to the hotel. But disappointing when we went there, when I went back and had a look it had burnt down so it wasn't there anymore. But my mother and father had a break up and they split up.

11:00 As a young person, I'm not quite sure but I believe the reason was, my father - it was during the war - my father tried to go away in the services and they wouldn't let him because he's essential service working for the railway. So one time he thought he'd be smart and when the big boss came up from the railway, he told him off and had a big argument and told him he was an idiot, hoping to get sacked so he can join the services. But the boss was smarter than that and wouldn't sack him

11:30 and demoted him to linksman, I think they call them, people that ride up and down the railway line checking the lines to see whether they're broken or not. And we didn't lose any income; they promoted Mum to station mistress so there was nothing lost there. But I think from that time on, my father sort of deteriorated a little bit because he couldn't go away and it played on his mind a little bit.

12:00 He, you know, started to drink a bit, started to womanise, things like that. That's as a young child, you're assuming that. But eventually, as we got older, we know these things occurred and even though both my grandparents and my mother tried everything possible to keep the family united, it didn't work

out that way. As I said earlier, my older brother Barry,

12:30 a couple of years before him, moved down to Brisbane with my grandparents and went to school and we stayed, Trevor and I, with my mother and then Stephen was born. As I said, we didn't go to school but we moved, after a period time, we moved back down to Brisbane and that's when I first went to school, to a school called Valley Primary School.

13:00 I didn't last there very long, being a country boy. There was another boy at the school. He was the pet and we had an athletic carnival and in this athletic carnival – we didn't have shoes and things like that – but anyway, I beat him in the foot race and he pushed me over. I fell over on a rock and split my eye so when I got off the ground I decided to touch him up a little bit [punch him]

13:30 and so I got into trouble. And then there was another instant when I was sitting on a slippery dip and I threw this rubbish away and we had this funny tree that had these really long sharp things on it and it stuck in a girl's eye. And of course they reckon I – I didn't, I had no intention of doing it, I was just cleaning it off. They eventually asked me to leave the school. They sent us to a school called St Patrick's. We were supposed to go to St James'

14:00 which was the all-boys school, a Catholic school but they didn't have enough places so we went to St Patrick's which was mainly girls. We'd been there for a while, quite enjoying it actually – thirty boys and a couple of hundred girls, it was quite good. Both Barry and I, we were altar boys so we used to do all the masses and things like that or other. Do all the Latin.

14:30 One day, Barry was selected to learn the piano and part of his – 'cos we were poor and had no money and my mother used to work in the canteen nearly every day – one of his jobs was he had to weed around the music hall, keep it neat and tidy. That was one of his jobs for his free lessons. He was working there this day, digging away, weeding away and this young girl came up, was a bit keen on him.

15:00 And he wanted to get away and come with us and play marbles or whatever we were doing at the time. Anyway, he was weeding and he wanted to get it finished and she put her hand over the weed and said, 'You're not going to weed this until you talk to me.' and he went 'bang' with the little fork and hit her on the hand and of course screaming and everything went on. Then they had a school parade

15:30 and all of a sudden the girls sort of started to chase the boys, like my brother, and of course we took off with him and we ran down The Valley in Brisbane. And I was hiding behind the counter in Woolworths [department store] and I'm telling the girl behind the counter, 'Don't tell them I'm here, don't tell them I'm here, they'll kill us!' Anyway, eventually we go back to the school and the nuns had all the girls lined up and we were hiding behind the back fence. And we thought, the safest place is the boys' toilet

16:00 so we jump the fence and run to the boys' toilet but the girls seen us and they chased across and they had us hemmed in. Anyway, to cut a long story short, the nuns sorted it all out and we were moved to St James', the boys' school which was probably what we needed at the time. They were very strict disciplinarians. They used to have these leather canes and they were square and, oh, they used to hurt.

16:30 And so you didn't step out of line too often. But a lot of the time it was amazing at school. I was a sports person and I played rugby, represented rugby, tennis and athletics and cricket and things like that. And they were more interested in my sporting powers than in my academic powers. And it was years later that before I realised that I had mathematical ability.

17:00 Prior to that, I'd get nothing. I could see they put the formula on the board and by the time they finished writing it I could tell you the answer. But I couldn't tell you how I got it. And I used to get the cuts [strokes of the cane] for that because I couldn't write it on the board. And like, with spelling, when I was at school I'd probably get two out of ten. But anything that was difficult I could do. Like I never ever forgot -

17:30 we were in class, we were reading the old school reader. And we were talking about Australian animals, and talking about the platypus. And then Brother Ryan, I think it was, turned about and said, "Can anybody spell the Latin name?" And of course I put up my arm to say I could spell it. And everybody in the class laughed because I was the dunce - I, you know, got two out of ten. And they said, "Okay, you can spell it for me Lionel." I said, "ORNITHORHYNCHUS". It's amazing that

18:00 even now I'm nearly seventy, I never forgot how to spell that word. For some reason I just looked at it. It wasn't til later when I was studying accountancy that I realised that I had this sort of memory. And when I was doing, when I was a registrar at Kaleen High School [in Canberra], I could remember what I ordered, what we paid and I was spending millions of dollars for schools. And I can remember who I bought them for,

18:30 when, and it was something, an ability that wasn't used for thirty odd or forty years. So that was a little bit lacking in the education system, I assume. But we – after we moved from Victoria Park and we went to Stafford, I wasn't there long, and I went to work. A friend of the family offered us – offered me to do a trade as

19:00 painter and decorator. We had been very poor at that stage. I just went out to work. I did it for five and a half years at college. Nowadays they do a couple of years and they call it brush hands these days. But I learned French polishing, wood graining, sandstone, imitation marbling and all those things. I don't

know if I could do them now. But I went and did the – did my trade.

How old were you when you started that?

19:30 Before I was fourteen. I didn't go to school til I was seven. I left – I actually started - my birthday is in November, and I actually started for a chap called Frank Noonan prior to my fourteenth birthday. And the story about that, my first pay packet - I'd worked and it was one guinea - one pound, one shilling. And come home from work and mum's in the kitchen, and we had old wooden stoves and

20:00 and stuff like that's. Mum's in the kitchen getting ready, peeling the potatoes and wrapping them up in paper and things like that. And I come home and gave my mother my pay packet. And I was really, you know, really good, feeling really great. And Mum in a rush and everything like that, they got my pay packet, wrapped it up in the paper with the potato peelings. And threw them into the wood fire. And burn, of course burn my first pay packet. And when I got to work

20:30 on the Monday, Frank said to me, 'Well how did your mum think about your first pay packet?' And I told him the story. And he eventually, like you know, he said – he was a bit upset about it, I assume. But anyway that afternoon when I come home, when he dropped me at home again he gave me another pay packet. So I eventually got paid, Mum didn't throw the second one in the fire.

How did she react when she realised what she'd done?

Oh well, especially with money like that, it was, you know a pound them days was a lot of money.

21:00 And she, I can't remember now but she was probably fairly upset about it. But you know, as I said, Mum – a wonderful person, she never let anything worry us as kids even though we possibly should have had a lot more worries than we did have. Our grandparents were very good.

21:30 My grandfather, Charles Jackson Sheppard - I tried to role model myself on him. But I don't know if I made that grade. There was – we used to do when we were younger, the difference between when – in a couple of years we used to own racehorses. And they – some of them were fairly well – they won races and things like that. And all of a sudden we had

22:00 nothing. You know from being affluent to being poor. And we used to have to share shoes and even when we were teenagers, whoever was the first one home to get dressed got best dressed to go to the movies. And of course being, we were all about the same size. So the – our family life sometimes used to be a little bit hectic, especially if you're going out with a nice looking chick [girl] or something like that.

22:30 And you wanted to really look good and your brother's got your best shirt on. And he can fight better than you, so you had to leave him wear it. But there was – my life, my younger life there when I – during my trade was what kept me occupied was sport. I represented in rugby league. I played A Grade rugby league for Valleys [Valleys Rugby League club] when I was sixteen. I played A grade cricket about the

23:00 same age. I played tennis but not as good as Barry, my older brother, Barry was very good at tennis. He – one of his postings in the railway was up to Rocky – Rockhampton I should say. And he met Rod Laver's [famous Australian tennis player] brother which is Ian Laver. And he always reckoned Ian was a better tennis player than Rod. So I never played against him so I have no idea. But Barry was very good. But being left handed he's bad tempered.

23:30 And the racket used to get thrown around a little bit when it didn't do what he wanted it to. But he eventually met a wonderful girl called Sandra and she said 'Either tennis or me.' So he gave up tennis. And which it probably was a good choice. My younger brother, Trevor, he joined the army actually. He joined the army

24:00 a hundred and eighty four people before I did. And he came home from the army, he got posted, he'd done all this training. And he got posted to Enoggera [base] which is near home, just a couple of miles away. And he was always well dressed, well fed, plenty of money and everything like that. And I was working at the time on the Indooroopilly toll bridge and it was an awful job. We were painting – I know the boss

24:30 probably made a lot of money, but it was an awful job. And we were getting a bit short of work and Frank said, "Well I'm going to have to put somebody off." And there was an old fellow working for us, well I thought he was old, he's probably about fifty. And I – he was going to put him off and I said, "No, don't put him off; I'm going to join the army." So I went down and joined the army. When we enlisted in the army, I went down; there was about thirty or forty of us.

25:00 You went down and they do all these psych [psychological] tests. And I sat there and eventually we ended up in the room that was only two of us left in the room. And I thought, oh yeah, I've failed again. And the psych tests were one of those - this wheel goes this way and this wheel goes that way and you had arrows you had to figure them out. And they ask you silly questions and you had to try and give a logical answer to them.

25:30 But eventually it turned out the two of us were the only two that passed. And they called us into the room and congratulated us and said, decided to give us our army numbers, sign up then and there. And my army number - they said, "What number do you want?" And I said, "Well what's available?" And they

said, “16000 or 16001.” And I said, “I’ll have all the naughts please.” So that’s how I got my army number, 16000.

26:00 We didn't go in the army straight away because them days they used to wait till they had a platoon strength. They sent us to Wacol [suburb] in Brisbane. And we stayed there until we got a platoon strength and they moved us to Kapooka. And we spent ten weeks, twelve weeks at Kapooka learning the basics, just you know, how to polish your shoes and clean your rifle and how to fire it and the basic terminologies they use in the services.

26:30 From there they moved us to Ingleburn [base] which is the corps training. I had the intention when I joined the army to learn another trade. ‘Cos my whole idea, I already had one trade, let's go in the army and learn something whether it be engineering, whether it be mechanics or whatever it may be. But I happened to be a representative rugby player.

27:00 **Lionel before we go in depth into your army career, can we go back a little bit to your childhood again? And could you tell us a bit more about growing up by the railway in that community? And a little about the countryside and the environment that you were living in?**

Yeah, I could – it’s amazing. We used to, as children, we used to run up and down the railway lines in bare feet and everything like that. And there was a lot of wildlife around the place, terrible like snakes

27:30 kangaroos, dingoes, whatever your being. The actual, the itinerants, the workers on the railway used to live in tents alongside the railway lines. And that’s where my grandparents were. And I can remember my grandmother making dresses and things out of calico bags and because they couldn't afford to go to the local shop and buy a dress or you might get a hand-me-down

28:00 from somebody. But my grandmother was very good, and so was my mother eventually, at making all these clothes out of whatever there may be. But the dangers, I can tell you, like the dingoes were a danger because my mother used to take care of animals, like if a wallaby was killed and they had a joey, Mum would raise the joey, put it them in little bags, fed them and keep them alive. And when they were old enough to take care of themselves,

28:30 release them. And she used to put them under our house and same with the baby lambs and the calves. It was s stilted house, and the environment, if you had a look around was like scrub really. It wasn’t dense bush or anything like that, it was just like a tundra, it was just a tree here, a gum tree, stunted, none of these great big tall things. If you go out there and have a look now it hasn’t changed.

29:00 But the dingoes used to try and get all the young animals. One night these dingoes when, I'm assuming this is when Trevor was young, cos I was only young, I was living in the same room. That these dingoes were jumping up at the window of our house. And knocking on the window of the house. And my father heard them,

29:30 went and got his shotgun and as the dingo hit the window he fired the shotgun. And of course the dingo didn’t come back any more. But I don't know whether the dingo knew there was a young baby there or whatever and thought, this may be a feed. But that did – that happened there, there was nothing for us to go out in the yard and – snakes, you know, there were probably death adders and I don't know – I didn’t used to know what they were, I used to know

30:00 what the copperhead were, little copperheads, we used to pick them up ourselves, how stupid we were. And play with them. You know, all the people along the railway line as we were kids, we didn’t seem to have a fear for any of the animals. Like when we moved to the city, people would see a snake or a scorpion or what – my mother used to be petrified of centipedes. And she’d -

30:30 there was one in the street one day and she just run screaming away. But like out in the country, out where all the railway people were, in their – if you see these old white calico tents, you seen them, you’ve seen photos, ancient photos, well that’s exactly what they were like and they made – tents were like A-framed tents. And they were very well ventilated because you didn’t have walls all the way around. I don't know how

31:00 we were lucky because we lived in the actual station itself. My grandparents didn’t. So they had to live with their open fires and that’s something I probably miss a lot too, the old camp fires. We used to have lots of camp ovens and things like that. And as I said earlier, there was lots to keep the, everybody probably saying, there was lots of social life, there was lots of

31:30 as I said, dances, there was lots of people just strike up. Someone would pick up a guitar and next minute you got ten or fifteen or twenty people making all this music. And you know, I've always loved music, even though I'm tone deaf. And I’d – but my father wasn’t. It’s a pity I didn’t inherit some of his genes. But I could remember there was always music, there was always – there was never – I never saw any

32:00 violence or things like that. I think everybody worked too hard by the time they got back to their bivouac or their tents at night, they were tired. You know I think that sometimes, like my father, when he was demoted to linksman, could be away for days. Cos they’d have to do so many, 1500 miles of track.

32:30 And then come back so they were camping out in the open and things like that. So the life itself I think was fairly open. Everybody - I can't remember a sickness, like I don't remember things like whooping cough and things like. Maybe we ate well because we got plenty of beef and everything off the newborns. And so I don't think there was

33:00 malnourishment or – I can't remember. I was always skin and bones myself, but not now. But we used to live very well. And so as you said, I think twice. I know of people, my younger brother had to go to the hospital once, cut his arm on a glass. And the only way to get to hospital was on the train to Miles.

33:30 So if you were really seriously damaged, you either waited for the train or went by horse. That's another thing we used to do, four or five of us on a horse at once. And we fell off more times than we could stay on. I was trying to think there, there used to be various camps like the – each of the

34:00 railway stations were about fifty miles apart I think. I said earlier in the piece. The camps for the actual railways weren't that far - they might be two or three mile apart. And we'd often walk from one to the other. That's the time that, Barry and I and Trevor got lost when we were walking. We decided to go to one of the other camps and got lost. Mum found us, thank God. We could have been out in the middle of nowhere. But they were only a few miles apart.

34:30 And very labour intensive. Terribly labour intensive, the working on the railways. And a lot of them were immigrants, like Irish, which is my defence there. Got a shock there once looking through the family history, and one of the Lavertys was from Stirling in Scotland. And I thought, oh no, I can't be damn Scottish. But I ended up – no we,

35:00 our family come from Lake Tipperary or Kilkarney. And so I ended up not being Scottish. He went over there for his job and got born, whoever it was was born there. The trouble is like our name is spelt Laverty, L-A-V-E-R-T-Y. There's a lot of derivations of it, like L-A-F-F-E-R-T-Y and then it depended on the clerk when you

35:30 arrived. If you come by ship or whatever you did and if his literacy was such that it was LAFFERTY that's what you were when you arrived. I'm not quite sure any more about Dulacca or Palardo (?) was the first place we went to. And it was only just a little wooden hut. That's all

36:00 it was. It was a railway station. It was nothing but just a wooden hut. I don't know how we lived in it. When I went back and had a look it was all gutted so it was only just the four walls. So I'm assuming we had shelving and I can remember a sink, cos that's where Trevor cut himself - on the sink.

Was there a heater? How did you keep warm?

We had one of those combustion fires; they were sort of log fires. It was like

36:30 our stove acted as the heater because everything was either wood or coal. And that kept you going. Like, as you know it was normally only the mornings or the evenings that are cold out that way. So as a child I can't – even looking at my old photos I can't remember having that many jumpers on. Like a photo, you think you – well if you look at them you say, oh it must have been cold because I had a jumper on. But

37:00 if I look back through them, which we have done just recently because of this interview, I can see, not – I didn't have a jumper on anywhere.

Was it just one room, the hut?

Yes, it was – no it was divided. There was Mum's – there was the bedrooms were down to the right and that was Mum's bedroom. And we were open and then there was a big sort of kitchen area and then there was a work area where either Mum sorted the mail or

37:30 or Dad was, when he was stationmaster before he got his linksman's job, got his promotion. I'm not quite – I can remember it but there was a working area, kitchen and the bedrooms. But it was only wooden, it wasn't lined. So it wasn't like houses today.

38:00 But I suppose at least we had a roof over our head not like the people working on the railway - were just tents.

Well it's nearly the end of our tape so we might take a break.

Okay, that would be good.

Tape 2

What can you tell us about your mum as a person?

Well, from

01:00 a young age, when we were living – lived up in the railway working on the railway line, my mother was a – could do anything. Like people that lived in the country, you had to, if there was something to be fixed it was like, Mum could do it like a man. Like she could fix everything – if a toy was broken she could fix a toy. She needed to use a hammer and nail, she could do that. She was never frightened of snakes or

01:30 anything like that, but hated centipedes, absolutely hated them. She'd go screaming, running up the road if a centipede was anywhere around the place. And I don't know whether it was all the long legs that used to frighten her. But we'd have great big snakes in the yard and she'd go over and hang out the washing and the snake would be on the ground. Wouldn't worry her, you know. Cos she knew that the big snakes were the ones that weren't going to really hurt you, it was the light snakes that hurt you. And that's what they taught us. I can't remember

02:00 my mother ever raising her hand to hit me. It wasn't until later in life when we moved to the city that I got my first hiding [beating] I can remember from my father. But my mother was, you know, she was – fix things up. Like if something was going wrong, even if people were having trouble in the community she would, because being a postmistress and things like that

02:30 she had station, like she had a position within society. And so it was expected to be a leader of a community in a sense. And I think she was. Now being young that's, you got to remember I'm under seven so that's my assumption there. When we moved to the city of course, and my family broke up, we went from being fairly well off to having absolutely nothing. My mother had done everything, like she worked to get us to school

03:00 because we couldn't pay the fees to go to the schools. She had to work in the tuckshop [school canteen] nearly every day. She worked in places like the tanneries, like the hides where they tan the hides and then she worked in the canneries where the different people canned all the fruit and things like that. Talking about fruit, in our house, around our house in The Valley in

03:30 Brisbane the whole fences used to be covered with chokos [squash like vegetable] and I hated chokos, and I still hate them. But Mum found out by working in this cannery where they were canning all the fruits that ninety percent of the pears that were canned by all these canning companies were chokos, they weren't pears at all. And so I didn't eat many tinned pears for years and years. I love pears now, by the way.

04:00 But she, Mum, eventually, besides doing all those different types of work, eventually got a job in the post office in the suburb we lived. The post office opened there and they advertised for experienced people and Mum had that experience out in the scrub.

Gee that must have been great for her? Was she really happy to …

Oh, she used to love it, she used to love it. And Mum's – Mum was a person that never caught a bus.

04:30 She'd walk, it was miles. And it would be five or six miles from our house to the Stafford terminus was where the post office was, she'd walk there every time, or every day, rain, hail, shine. One time she went there in a flood. And she came walking back, she was soaking wet, all the way up to – just because there was a dip in the road, she had to walk through it, like where the old creek used to be and

05:00 where we lived at Stafford, if you went there now there's houses all over the place. But when we lived at Stafford most of it was bush. It was just a lot of Commission – like government built houses - all well built. The tall Queenslanders, you know, the houses on stilts. They were sparsely spaced around the place, there wasn't – there was an old school down near that terminus. And it wasn't for years later until they built a school up

05:30 cos the population of Stafford wasn't that many. And as I said, we used to walk everywhere. My mother would give me pocket money to go to the movies and I used to always run from my house to the terminus - the terminus as I said, was about five mile away. And I used to run there every day and run home so I could save my money. So I could go down and buy a milkshake and a

06:00 threepence worth of chips and things and show off to the girls at the movies.

Can you describe your mum for me? What did she look like during those years?

Mum was a very attractive lady. She was a very good sportsperson, she was a javelin champion of – I've got a trophy down there where she won the javelin. When she was young, by looking at her photos when she was young, she was a very solid girl. But I think

06:30 she had trouble with her health, with goiters [a swelling in the thyroid gland]and things like that. And she ended up being a very slim person. But couldn't stop her, you couldn't – she was so full of energy and she – if there's something to be done, as I said, she'd go and do it. And you ….

Did she – what colour was her hair? Did she perm her hair, curl her hair?

07:00 **What kind of clothes did she wear? What sort of fashion did she like?**

Well the fashion was a normal, the older type of – the photos there, I've got there. But a lot of it was

never new clothes. I don't remember new clothes. The new clothes we got, we as boys did because when Barry and Trevor and I went to work, we gave money to Mum. When I joined the army we gave an allocation to Mum. So she could have bought clothes and everything for herself. But I don't remember like,

07:30 we as kids, me as a young teenager, I would use my money to go and buy these lairy [loud in colour and pattern] trousers, and stovepipe trousers, ripple sole shoes, you know, like Elvis Presley. And the rest of it. But Mum, I never – she might every so often; you might see her in a thing. But she was, you know, I'm biased of course, she was only a little lady, only little. And but she was, I wouldn't – I don't think I'd like to cross her. But

08:00 she was – I never heard her swear. That's telling the truth, I never heard her swear in her life, from the time I was around. She heard me a few times. But as I said to you, she was just a doer, she was not – she was not a person to sit around. If something – if a hole needed to be dug in the ground– we were living at – when we were living at Stafford, when we first moved there,

08:30 we had the toilet out the back and we had to change the can all the time. The government put the pipe through the yard for the sewerage, but they weren't going to – they didn't have the money or the labour to dig the drain from our house to the pipe. So my grandfather decided that he would dig this drain. Not only was he digging it but my mother

09:00 would be out there with a pick and shovel and they ended up digging the drain. Got the council, and we were the first house in Stafford to get the sewerage because my grandfather and my mother, including my grandmother and you know, and the pipe, the sewerage pipes, they were enormously large. And they ended up – my grandfather connected it all up, smashed a hole in the thing, connected it all up. But that's the type of person [she was]. I think

09:30 my mother was like my grandfather.

I was just going to ask you about that. What was their relationship like? It sounds like there was some sort of connection there?

Oh they were, you know, chalk and cheese. Like he was a hard worker - he died working. Died wielding a pick, had a massive heart attack. At 59, and we thought he was old. Them days, like I'm going on 70 and I think I'm young. But he was –

10:00 Our house was almost the nicest in the street. Mum had this fetish. Wherever she went she'd pick up a rock. Like if she went to visit the beach, she'd pick up a rock and she'd bring the rock home and paint it. And we had these paths of painted rocks. I don't know why she did it but every place she went to, when we left, when everybody left, my grandmother and my grandfather had died and we had all moved out and there was only my Mum's aunty and Mum

10:30 there that they moved them into a smaller place - even when she moved to a smaller place she went and got rocks for that place and painted them. But wherever she went she could tell you where she got the rocks from. So I've got – I'm a bit like that. I've got a bag down there that I've collected over time, lead and different things like crystals and that. I've picked them up from different places; I might get my mother's trait. But

11:00 Mum, I was talking about mum before, and my grandfather, they were never, I think that's where we got our ethics about work. We – I've never been a day – I was never a day out of work. My grandfather, he was working for Hornibrook, you've probably heard of Hornibrook they're a big – and they used to –

11:30 part of their organisation was Purpool (?) petrol company, there used to be Golden Fleece, Purpool and Shell. But Purpool was Hornibrook. They were putting in this big tank, petrol tank and Hornibrook's son would come down to inspect, to make sure before they put all the sand in around the big petrol tanks to make sure everything was right. When he got in there the sand come down and trapped him in there. So my grandfather

12:00 he jumped in and got young Hornibrook out and old Hornibrook came along and said, this has been told to me by my grandfather, "You don't have to work another day in your life." So, but he worked, he ended up being the supervisor for Hornibrook. And the – and old Hornibrook used to, you know, we'd meet him

12:30 this man's a millionaire many times over and we're as poor as chalk. And he was a wonderful old man, I knew him as a wonderful old man. I didn't realise until later that he was a very powerful man. But he always told my grandfather, you know, you don't have to – you just supervise, you don't – the day my grandfather died they were putting in a petrol station and putting in a new petrol station. And he was marking out where the pumps had to be with a pick. Had a massive heart attack and passed

13:00 away.

So you seem a little emotional about your grandfather?

Oh yeah.

I imagine he replaced your dad?

Oh he was, in a sense, I didn't see my father from – for forty two years. He – he, when he left, the last time I saw him he visited us in The Valley. And he come and saw me and he took me up the shop. And bought me an ice cream. We walked

13:30 half way home, which wasn't very far, half a (UNCLEAR) five hundred metres. And he patted me on the shoulder and said, "See you later son." and I didn't see him for forty two years. I saw him on his death bed. I did look for him. At different times Barry and Stephen and Trevor I think had seen him. But.

Do you want to pause for a sec?

14:00 **But you're okay talking about it?**

Yeah, I'm okay talking about it. With my father, I went looking for him a few times. I heard once he was working as a cellarman in a hotel in the Valley. So I went down there to – finally went to the pub. And I asked around, you know, Walter Laverty - nobody knew him. And it wasn't until later on I found out that he is working under the name of

14:30 Bowman, as a cellarman. Like he took the name Bowman, cos we – I have extended family by the way, I've only just not so long ago found half sisters and things like that. Which we've been up and visited in Queensland. But I didn't know that he had other families. Which he did, he was fairly prolific in that area, I believe. But you know, even though I looked for him, I didn't

15:00 I didn't find him. And of course with my army life and then my police, moving down here, that it wasn't until many years later somebody contacted me to say he was dying from brain cancer. So in Brisbane, so that's when I went and saw him. But I think it was – I didn't see him all that time. Even though I think my brothers did.

15:30 **Well I think Barry said that he saw him at your brother's funeral?**

Yes, I was at the funeral, so I don't recall. I don't recall that. I was involved with the funeral. So maybe, I was in uniform, so maybe – I'm not quite sure. It's – that's sort of vague, I don't remember seeing my father there. There was lots, you know, he could have been, but

16:00 I don't recall that, Barry and I have talked about it. But I don't – Barry said he was there, and I said, no, he wasn't.

Funny isn't it, how siblings can have very different memories?

Oh, it is like – at the time I suppose it was fairly emotional time for us. And I don't know, I've always taken my mother's side. You know, she's

16:30 sort of sacrificed everything for us kids. And you know the – you don't reflect on it when you're young do you? You don't look back. It's not until you get older you see what your parents give away, what life they give. My mother didn't have a social life. He got married again

17:00 and he ended up being a bit of a dog. You know, all good people end up, somewhere along the line, they end up marrying somebody that's – shouldn't be married to. And but Mum was, never got that social life, she used to love – a beautiful dancer and she taught me to ballroom dance. And things like that. And she never got that opportunity. There was one time that I was working in my trade. And

17:30 previously, earlier - about a week earlier, I was painting these, the posts and with creosote. Creosote was a poison but preserved the timber. I stepped down into a 44 gallon drum of it and it went over my leg. I was alright, I washed it and I had overalls on. And she ended this date this night with this friend. And the friend came around

18:00 To pick her up and I said, "My leg's sore." And this is about a week or so later. And I showed her my leg and it was – had a big carbuncle on it. And it had a red streak about an inch wide going up through my groin. So her and her date sat up at hospital all night while they were giving me anti- tetanus needles all night at the hospital. So that was one date I know she didn't get to go on. But you know, Mum didn't get the social life that, for an attractive

18:30 lady of her age. You got to remember when she was married young, so when we're sixteen she's in her thirties. So she's not an old person. And when you think that – when you think, when you get older like now, you start thinking about what she didn't have in life. What she gave up for us.

19:00 We didn't have much when we were young. But I know my grandmother, Nana and Mum; they were the two best cooks of roast potatoes. Even today I try – I love cooking myself. Even today I can't cook the potatoes so they're crisp on the outside and soft on the inside. And they could do it every time. But I think it was the dripping or the – they used to catch all the dripping and the lard from the stoves. And I think that was the difference because we'd have

19:30 all these pots of different – if you cooked a different meat there's a different flavour. And this had to be used for this, and that had to be used for that. And of course that's where I got my love for bread and butter pudding. Oh I love bread and butter pudding.

That's one of those old fashioned deserts, isn't it?

Oh it is. I'm just – I've got a favourite now at the moment, Donna Hay [celebrity chef]. My kids give me a subscription to Donna Hay. And she's got one of their bread and butter puddings. It's done with ginger marmalade

20:00 and oh, it's really nice. And vanilla beans and stuff, if you like. But anyway.

Hey, we should probably move on to your enlistment and all of that in a sec. But I've just got one other question about your grandfather. You told me that he changed his name. Can you tell me that story and why?

My grandfather ….

He was Sheppard wasn't he?

No, no, his name was Sheppard, Charles Sheppard. But his name was Charles Sheppard. But his – if you ever

20:30 look around he's Charles Jackson Sheppard. And he took the name – there's another – I'll tell you another thing about a person changing their name in a moment. But my grandfather, who was Charles Jackson Sheppard, his name was Charles Sheppard but he took the name of Jackson, the town he was born in. And that's how he got the name of Jackson. My grandson is Riley Jackson Hardy and he's named after my grandfather.

21:00 The other person with a name was my grandmother, Nana, Lillian May Harriet Hickmott. And all these years we knew her as Lillian May, Lil, everybody called her Lil. And it wasn't until we were really doing family history that we found out her first name was Maria. But she didn't like it. So she only went by – so all these years I knew her as Lil. But I didn't know, and nobody

21:30 ever told us that her real name was Maria. So what seventy years or something she lived as Lil and her real name was Maria. So I don't think, you know, I suppose when you get a – those days when you were born and you got named after every second relative like Lillian May Harriett Hickmott, quite a – it's a fair bit like, my children when they were born, I said you can pick your own second name. I just them a first, or we just gave them a first name.

22:00 and they're quite happy with what they've got. Belinda is ….

Do you know why your grandfather chose to have Jackson in his name?

I think that's because the town - he was proud of the town he came from. And I've got a photo all I've got of Jackson. We'd been up there. We'd been up to the little cemetery. It's a small, little place. And there are relatives there. And it's just like, if you look, saw the old western

22:30 movies from years ago, and you come into this town where there's three huts, a hall and that's all it is. And a long hut which was a railway station. That's all it is. And we've been back there, gone up and had a look. And I don't know what he saw in Jackson, but that's where he come from. So you know,

But he's got relatives in the cemetery?

Well I'm – they – all these people, railway people

23:00 were itinerant. Like that wasn't where they actually came from. I'm not quite sure where my grand – I'm assuming my grandfather was born in Jackson, that's what I was told. But they – these people moved on, once a railway line was gone, they were gone. You never knew anybody for more than twelve months maybe. Because then they'd move on. There'd be somebody,

23:30 another task would come along or, started to, or there's no more repairs. Instead of having all these people with tents along the railway lines, they disappeared. They'd move out another twenty or thirty mile. And they'd – they'd move their tents and that's the way they'd go. And that's what my grandparents did. But my father and my mother didn't because they were stationmaster. They were actually working for the railways in a stable employment.

24:00 Like we're doing stationmaster and the trains and the post and things like that. Where our other relatives were on the railways so they'd move. When that section was done you pack up all your gear and you move on, another thirty miles up the path. And you work from there. So you didn't seem to – we didn't as a family grow together early because you're moving. Like my grandparents

24:30 were moving away from where we were. We were stable. In a nice stable environment. And they were moving in tents up and down on the railway line. So we didn't see a lot of our grandparents until we moved to the city, until we all moved. They went, my grandfather and grandmother, went to Brisbane first. And that's when they took Barry,

25:00 for him to go to school and things like that. And we sort of moved in later with them. Into this place. I can tell you a story about. We were terribly poor. And one day I was at Bowen Hills railway station, [it] was just down the road from where we lived. And I'm walking down there this day and these people were laying this new path. You know, a bitumen path down to the

25:30 railway line. And I'm watching them lay this and I looked down there and I seen this glint, this stuff

shining. And oh, what's this? And I kept quiet, I didn't tell anybody. And with everybody, went down to have a look and it was all these little bits of gold. So I got down and I dashed home and I went home and I got a little bucket and I got a little spade. And I went up there and I was digging out, digging out all these little bits of gold.

26:00 And I was putting it in this bucket. And I thought, this is good, we're well off, we are going to be really good. And I dashed home. And when my grandfather got home he told me he told me it was pyrite, it was fool's man's gold, you know. The way they were laying the path it had all this gold in it, I just wondered, I always wondered what the people thought the next day when they come back and found all these little holes in this path going all the way down. Here's me thinking I'm making my family terribly rich and I'm digging up this path. I'll never forget that.

26:30 **What child hasn't been fooled by pyrite?**

I know I thought I was really rich. I've actually found gold once. We went for a holiday up near Bathurst and I found some gold and I put it in a little vial, bought it back here. And Emma and their friends were playing dolls one day with, oh Barbie dolls whatever it may be and

27:00 decided they needed this little vial for a bottle for one of the Barbies. And decided to throw the gold away. Don't know where it is. I thought it was down the sink. I undid all the sink and everything like that. It wasn't much, a couple of ounces. But anyway. I don't think I was ever meant to be terribly rich.

Can we stop for a sec. I'm just going – an overview already of ...

27:30 **but you tell it in your own words and I guess it would be good to start to get to the point at which you went in 3RAR and went over to Malaysia for postings.**

Okay, so you want to go up to where I was posted overseas? Then we break or…

Yes, let's do it that way.

That will probably take about fifteen minutes to do that.

Okay, yes, let's do that. So when – I think we're rolling. We're rolling.

That's good, that's the best of our technology - you can cut and edit.

28:00 **Absolutely. And you know that if you want to stop at any time, you just say so. It's not a problem, press a button and turn the camera off. Not at all.**

No, I'll probably – I brought it up earlier that when I joined the army, one of the reasons was I was working on a job I didn't like doing at the time. And the boss was – because we were getting short of work - was going to put people off. And I suggested that he didn't, I was going to join the army like my brother, like Trevor.

28:30 And because I saw the life he was having. And he was really having a good time. So I left and joined the army and I went through the process of enlistment. And quite surprising, I got selected. And I told before about my number 160000, how I got that number. But we had to wait around. Once we got selected, we had to wait around at Wacol. We got sent up to Wacol and we had to wait until we had thirty people and they used to send them as

29:00 a platoon on the trains down to Kapooka. And you'd be that platoon, you'd be together all the time. Until you went to corps training. And then they'd split you up. At Kapooka, my intention of joining the army was to learn another trade. I did painting and decorating because we just needed the – somebody had to work, we needed the money, we had nothing. And a friend of the family was kind enough

29:30 just to give me a job. There wasn't what – I envisioned doing for the rest of my life. I envisioned being a great sportsman and all these sorts of things. And I had my chances but I was sort of, I fouled them up a little bit later. I made a few wrong decisions. I actually went overseas in the army and instead of staying here when they were just about to select me for Australia. But anyway, I'll talk about that later.

Let's talk about that down the track.

30:00 We went down to Kapooka, went through the processes of all the training at Kapooka which were the basics - learning how to use your weapons, drill, discipline, doing what you were told when you were told, not when you wanted to be told. I learned those processes. I was lucky when I went through Kapooka. I never struck – what we call a bastard instructor - I never struck one. And I think it rubbed off on me later because I went back in 1968

30:30 when I rejoined the army. And I was an instructor, so I was never a harsh person. I suppose the instructors were very similar to – like when I was an instructor I had ten to twelve weeks to train somebody to be a soldier. And these boys, well the ones I was training were going to 'Nam [Vietnam War]. The ones were training us were going to Malaya, Borneo and places like that. So you had to learn to survive if you really,

31:00 you had to take notice of what these people were saying otherwise you weren't going to make it. And there were a lot of people, to their demise by not doing what they were told, they didn't come out right.

But I enjoyed the life because I was a sports person and the services recognised sports people. And they really took care of you. They really did. You were

31:30 put in cotton wool and I'll tell stories about them later, especially overseas how they took... what they did with me. After doing Kapooka, we did all our training; I think all we did in the scrub was about a fortnight. We didn't do any

32:00 mainly bivouacs, there wasn't that many of them. There was lots of forced marches, every day you used to have to run every day, a couple of miles. Every morning before breakfast, go up have a shower and you'd have to then go and have your shower, have your lunch and come back. But in between time the first thing in the morning you had to get up out of your room, take your bottom sheet, you couldn't – it had to be your bottom sheet, you take your bottom sheet and go down and

32:30 parade and you had to stand there with your sheet over your shoulder while they counted you and said you were all in attendance, then go back because you had to make your bed every day. And so if – they'd go up and inspect to make sure you took your bottom sheet too. And your beds, they used to come past and throw a coin on it. It had to bounce. And otherwise you didn't make your bed properly. Then if you didn't make your bed properly you got a guard, you had to go and –

33:00 guard. Well them days the worst job was stoking the boilers. We had these big boilers to keep all the water hot and they were wood-fired. And you were given the job of going around of a night and you had to keep these alight. And people would fall asleep and people would get up the next day and they have cold showers, and you were just about to be killed. But anyway, like Kapooka was, I enjoyed it because it was all something new. And I, being a

33:32 a country boy, I was around rifles and weapons when I was young. So something I was never fearful of. And I was ....

I guess the physical exertion; you were already doing lots of that anyway, weren't you? Running five miles to school and back?

Yeah, well most – see we were terribly fit. Like I didn't – my older brother, Barry, got the first pushbike. You know, one time

34:00 I'm fairly ashamed of it; I stole a pushbike one day. I didn't own one, and I was down the Stafford terminus. And it was one of these....I was in a hurry to get home. And I jumped – grabbed this bike and rode it half way home and got a guilty complex, rode it back, put it back and then run home. But I did steal a bike once when I was young, so I hope they don't come and arrest me now. Don't show this to the local constabulary. Cos Senior Constable

34:30 Teddy Moriarty, he might be after me. He was a local cop at Stafford. But we didn't – as I said, we didn't have any mode of transport or anything like that when we were young. And the army was – they were very fitness conscious, like you never saw a person walking around obese in the army, very rare. You might get a senior warrant officer or a sergeant or staff sergeant,

35:00 maybe that weight but mostly – all the infantry people were fit. And the best part about it, they fed you. And you had, you ate the right meals. And we used to go on about them a little bit; they were much of a sameness, all the food. But it was there for a special purpose. You had the strength and you could do it. They made, like most of us didn't realise that you can drink too much water. Like if you drink

35:30 it will kill you just as much as being dehydrated. And all those sort of little basic skills they teach you. When you finish your recruit training, they then post you to a corps training. And I wanted, as I said, I joined the army to learn another trade. And I went down to my corps placement and you sit in front of this panel. And they say to you, "Alright, what would you like to do?" and I was telling them

36:00 what I would like to do. And they said, "Oh, you got Buckley's hope [no hope] Laverty." He said, "You're going to infantry." I said, "Why?" He said, "All football players go to infantry." And so I was posted to Ingleburn which was the infantry corps unit. At the time [it] was where you did your basic corps training. Before you went there, I think you did another ten weeks there, or so, just learning other skills like map reading and

36:30 the basic stuff you need like for survival, patrolling, night patrolling, reading compasses and all those different sorts of things. But I played a terrible lot of football.

But I've got to ask you, what did you want to do instead?

Oh, I thought at the time cars were around and everybody, all my – all your friends had all these old Holdens and they were always working on them, I always thought, well I'll be good if I

37:00 learned to do, be a mechanic or something like that. The army did teach me. I became a Morse operator, I became a bombs demolition. I used to blow up bombs and things like this. There's lots of things they taught me. But not the thing I thought I was going to do. But my life in the services, I would not change. I think it made a man of me. And taught me basics of taking care of myself, hygiene, money, being responsible

37:30 for what you did. Not you know, I could always lie, I'm a very good liar. But not for long. If I tell you a lie

I can't – I've got to know, they've got to change and I know that it's not really true. That's why I was worried about this interview that some of my stories may wander off the track because reality sometimes is not what the actual fact. I'll tell you some

38:00 stories later that got little bends in them. And they could – they're true in my mind. But they could be a little bit wrong.

But some say that's the art of good story telling.

It is yeah, it is. But I don't know, I was going – I'll ask after – I'll ask you a question after we finish.

Did you have jungle warfare training?

Yes. I thought I'd go on. After I left Ingleburn

38:30 we were posted, the 3rd Battalion, at Enoggera. We did all our – we did our normal battalion training there, we went to places like Canungra [Jungle Training Centre] or we went there a few times, went a few times to Canungra. I used to hate that place because we weren't allowed to wear rubber soled shoes. We had to wear leathers. And because the hills around Canungra have all this sort of a spiny grass and it's really shiny. And you're trying to go up a hill that's

39:00 one of five or six gradient. And you kept slipping cos your feet – and this is how they built you're strength up. They'd make you go up and down these hills, up two, slide one back. Oh it was so hard. I'll never forget that place. And jumping in cold water and jumping from towers, ten metre towers, flying along these – what do they call those things - flying foxes. It was great – probably was a great adventure but by Jesus

39:30 it was a tough place. They were preparing us for our warfare overseas. And had done a wonderful task for all our boys that went to 'Nam and Malaya and Borneo and Korea and prior to those. But it was a tough place. And we went there a few times. They were always pulling, army was always getting us on the planes, they'd make us get all our pack all up, because there was trouble with Indonesia

40:00 and Malaysia, confrontation and things like that. They kept saying to us, we're the battalion on standby. At any time, you could go. Have your gear packed and of course you have to use all your gear. So every time we had to pack all your gear up some of us used to think we were smart and we packed them with little cardboard boxes and things like that. This day they put us on these Hercules [planes] and flew us out and they said, "Okay, we are going fellas". All we had was our rifles; we had nothing, no clothes, no nothing

40:30 in our packs. And it was a ruse. We weren't going. They flew us over the Gold Coast, dropped the tailgate and said, "Have a look at the last look at the Gold Coast fellas, you're going over to Indonesia." And it wasn't. They flew us back to Amberley or wherever it was in Brisbane and landed us. From that day on we made sure we had everything packed, boots and because you never know. We eventually went a little bit more orderly than that. We flew over by Qantas

41:00 instead of Hercules.

So you were caught unprepared?

Oh only that once, only that once. But they were teaching us a lesson I think. We thought that our sergeants and our officers weren't as smart as we were, but we learnt that the shoe was on the other foot. We were the dumb ones.

And they would have seen thousands like you?

You'd think yeah. But I enjoyed battalion life. Especially when going to 3 Battalion there was, goes onto our family story, there's three of us.

41:30 **So why don't we stop there and the next section will be about your brothers in the battalion with you.**

Tape 3

00:30 **Lionel, I'm curious about the time you spent at Wacol waiting for enough men. What did you do while you were there?**

Well most of the time we did nothing. We just sat around there waiting and there was no training and all they had was some old soldiers there, some old cooks. And I met these two cooks up there and they used to

01:00 make this old brew called 'kick-a-poo joy juice'. And they used to get the big pumpkins, hollow out the pumpkins, and put all the fruit and everything in there, ferment it and bury it. And after a period of time under the ground it would come out and they'd drink it. And it was called 'kick-a-poo joy juice', and by jeez it was powerful. And being young, at that time I was twenty and being young and not, I used to

drink a beer, but not stuff like this.

01:30 And it was very powerful. But we amused ourselves there for a few weeks. There was no pretext of giving us any military training. They gave a us a few lectures to say what could happen and what may happen here and there. But eventually they shipped us all down to Kapooka. And we did our training, as I explained before, we did the basics. Know how to pull your weapon apart, put it back together

02:00 blindfolded, and do it in so many seconds and how to throw grenades, what not to do. How to prime them, how to fire them, say – mainly it was only rifles and machine guns at Kapooka. And plus the fitness side of things, they were very fitness orientated and lots of people used to get kept back because they couldn't finish the fitness training.

02:30 It was also very sports orientated - no matter who you were you played a sport. When I went there, at Kapooka, they said, “What sport do you want to play?” And I said, “I want to play rugby.” And they said, “No you're not playing rugby, you're playing basketball.” That was a form of discipline, their saying to me, “We’re telling you what you got to do.” So eventually I played basketball for about two games. And then they had a major game of rugby so then I was playing rugby.

03:00 Kapooka was more of a place for discipline where you learnt to try and obey, do what you were told straight away, don't question it, there's a reason for it. Like, common sense came into lots of things, but that’s, they tried to teach you that too. We had very good instructors, I did. I remember one bloke’s name was Snowcroft. People didn’t like him

03:30 but he was a good instructor. Perfectly dressed, and oh he was immaculate, that's a way. I'm a person; I was a person like that. You can see I'm not immaculate now, but I used to be like that. And my boots had to be perfect and my brass had to be – I got so way with my brass and everything I went down to the jewellers and got them gilded so I never had to polish them with brass ever again, just rub them cos they were gilt.

04:00 And got my trousers tailor made, and so they had tucks in them and everything was perfect. But that was, like Kapooka, that was the training. Like when we went onto corps training at Ingleburn, it was a different type of training. They taught you, as I said, navigation, navigation at night, the skills of working together as a platoon, more as a platoon together on exercise. Like

04:30 they might only be, you might only go out for a week. Kapooka was one week out as a platoon. At Ingleburn, it was longer. You go out – you’d do it more often, and you did stalking exercises. You don't it happens but it happens, you practice, you practice not being seen. You practice being camouflaged. And it’s amazing that what you can do if you use the local

05:00 environment, the local grasses, the trees and all those things, and you use, and the more you put on the worse you look. But you know, you don’t want a gum tree hanging out the top of your helmet. But you put enough there to break up the outline and things like that. And these sort of things came in terribly handy when we were in places like Thailand and Borneo much later in our career.

05:30 Like Ingleburn, we didn’t do a major exercise until we went to our units which was, I was posted to 3 Battalion and 3 Battalion, every battalion, did a major exercise every year. And them days we had three battalions in the Australian Army, one, two, and three. And eventually they established 4 Battalion. But when we went to 3 Battalion not long on after I got there, my brother Barry joined the army.

06:00 And he got posted, done Kapooka, infantry and everything, cos he was a sports person too. And he ended up at Enoggera but before that, Trevor my younger brother, was already in 3 Battalion. And they had, that means they had three brothers from one family in the one battalion. Now Barry and I were in – no sorry, Trevor and I were in the same company. And eventually they moved Trevor from my company to another company.

06:30 I don't know the reason why. But we stayed together until they wanted to go overseas. They asked people who wanted to volunteer to go overseas. And both my brother Barry and I did. And at that stage, I'm not quite sure why Trevor, I think Trevor probably thought more of Mum that we did at the time, and probably thought, well one of us should say home

07:00 so he went later with 4 Battalion to Malaya. But at the battalion unit itself, we did lots of different type of training. I did parachute training. I did Morse operator. I was sent away to do demolition of explosives. I did courses like that. You’d always go on an exercise,

07:30 one major exercise, every year. And they had names like Nutcracker, Icebreaker, and things like that. And there were some – I can remember, I think it was Nutcracker, and it was my twenty-first birthday. And we were out on patrol. And we had umpires, like they would try and make it as real as possible. And the umpires found out it was my birthday, twenty-first birthday, and so they arranged for me to get shot.

08:00 This shot rang out miles away, somebody fired a blank up in the trees and of course the umpires run over and put a tag on me to say I was wounded. So then I had to be taken back to rear echelon to go through – they went through the whole process, you got admitted to hospital, you done all those processes and they – if they said you had this wound you got bandaged that way, and everything like that. Anyway, it took a day and a bit to get back so my birthday was over before we got back to base. To

this base. But anyway,

08:30 I come back with this young officer. And he knew the story; I told him the story about my birthday. And then we were put in this field hospital, in this big tent. And next minute I know he's gone down to the ORs [Other Ranks] mess - I was a private at the time. And the ORs' mess was closed but the officers' mess wasn't. So this young officer went down to his mess and got a couple of crates of beer and brought them back to the hospital.

09:00 And the nurses and all of us sat there and had a wonderful party for my twenty-first. But we used to go on these exercises. It would go on for weeks and they'd try and do them as authentic as they possibly could. I found out later when I did get to Asia that the forest and the shrubbery was completely different. The denseness of the rainforest compared to the

09:30 hills around Singleton and places like that in New South Wales, they're very sparse compared to what overseas is like. So even though the training give us an idea, when you got there it was chalk and cheese, completely different. The place I think we got the best training and the hardest training was Canungra.

10:00 As I said, the exercises were tough but the place, Canungra was the place. The instructors there were the best. If you went to instruct at Canungra, you were the pick of the bunch. I never got selected to go there, I don't know why, I thought I was good. But anyway, I was probably too young. But it was a place where you bonded with people. Surprisingly the army

10:30 was fairly religious in the sense we had our own padres. And it didn't matter with our padres, it didn't matter what religion you were, Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Presbyterian, didn't matter what you were, you'd be, of a night time when you finish, it was hard training, bloody hard training all the time, going from dawn till dusk. They had a bar and you go up there and drink and the first people who would be buying the beer would be the padres. And they'd buy them for you and not only the padres but the

11:00 Salvation Army, unbelievable, the Salvation Army, always support the Salvation Army. They've turned up in places, where I was too frightened to go, like and they'd give you a cup of coffee. I don't know how they got the cars there, but they did. The places like Canungra was oh, besides a mind building place it was a body, like it sorted you out - what your parameters were. You might have thought you were good, but how good you really

11:30 were. I don't know about it today, but I've seen some film just recently on following your footsteps [television series called In Their Footsteps] and I can remember, I even started thinking jumping off that tower, going down the flying fox and things like that. And you had to learn to cross a river with all your clothes, all your equipment and don't get it wet.

How do you do that?

Well you, you use your hoochie, your tent,

12:00 hoochie we called them and you put everything in it. And you fold it like, as if you're folding a wonton or a spring roll. You fold it over and then you make it so it's got a bit of air in it so you can float it across. And you always were in the nuddy [naked]. So I would hate to – you'd have your rifle sitting on top of it, so if you were in a combat situation I don't think you'd go in the nuddy, but I can remember for, surprising for a place like Canungra, the water was

12:30 terribly cold. But I remember the times I went there it was just, it was just a tough place. When we finished our last, part of the exercise at Canungra, the last part I can remember being there, they gave us a task that we had to go down the coast. And we had to get from Canungra to this place down the coast, best we could, without being detected. And it was some sort of

13:00 competition anyway. There was four of us got together and I can't remember who was with me these days. But anyway, four of us got together and I decided that we would go across this hill and we went across this hill and I got down the other side and I found this road, and this truck came past, and we pulled the truck and I asked him where he was going. He was going right to the place we were supposed to be; we were supposed to take us three or four days to get there, walking. So we all jumped in the back of the truck, we were there in

13:30 drinking in the pub about two hours later. And so we put our tent up and the – later on the sergeants and that came along in the Land rovers, they knew we were there. And they just said, "You're smart enough, we didn't tell you how to get there." So we ended up getting in this truck, other people walked all the way. I don't know why they walked all the way. But and so anyway, it was a bit of fun at the end of it, but it's

14:00 I think it's a little bit different in training now. They use live ammunition and everything there now where we didn't use live ammunition. They have a lot more shooting galleries than what we did. There was a basic, but oh tough. We went there a couple of times prior to going overseas.

14:30 When the posting come along, when it was suggested that the battalion was going to go to Malaya and Borneo, they asked for volunteers. Of course my older brother and I said we'd go. And it was probably the wrong time for me. I was just, I was playing for Queensland in rugby. They were talking to me about

Australian selection and things like that. There's a few things they wanted me to change in my game. But the excitement of going overseas

15:00 and I think that sort of – it impinged on my football career, even though I did play. I did play against the British Lions and the Irish, and later on I played on the Commonwealth side overseas, was selected from all the army, all the services overseas. But I think if I'd have stayed in Australia I might have been lucky enough to get the green and gold on. [Play rugby for Australia]. Didn't. Later on I

15:30 toured New Zealand in '69 and that was like with the emerging type of Wallabies [Australian Rugby Team] and they sent five old fellows which was me, I was one of them, and all these young players to learn from the Kiwis. But anyway, that's off the track. As I said, prior to our posting, we did tons of other things. We had to learn because the environment we were

16:00 going into was completely different. The climate change, when you went in the rainforest at night time, you couldn't see your hand in front of you. And surprising, you could walk along the paths because all the fungi growth that grow along the paths in rainforest and it's quite simple if you walk with your head down. But that's not the secret of being a good soldier, with your head down! But we did numerous exercises,

16:30 as I said. There was one we went to up at near Rockhampton in Queensland. And we were there and they sent our platoon. I forget my platoon commander; I think it was Petitt was the platoon commander at the time. Well anyway they sent us out to this place and we'd been patrolling there for a week and somebody noticed there was no plants, no birds, no nothing and couldn't see

17:00 any animals. So they decided to check up on it and we weren't supposed to be there. The whole place was arsenic and so they had to move us out quickly. Because they were frightened of arsenic poisoning. But we were there - we were in there about a week before they woke up that this whole area was full of arsenic.

Where did the arsenic come from?

From the ground. It was the ground, it wasn't arable …

It was a natural …

17:30 We should have picked up, everything was spindly and – it wasn't me, somebody picked up, hey there's no ants, there's no nothing. So then they decided that maybe we better get out of there. That's actually the same place where I was allowed to fly a chopper, a helicopter. I was only allowed to fly a little way on the stick, but I can say I've flown a helicopter, not very far. But it's enough for me, I hate planes, absolutely hate them.

18:00 After a period of time, as I said, we got posted to Malaya and we actually flew over with Qantas. And got us to Singapore and went we got to Singapore we got put on these DC3s, these old planes and they flew us from there up to Malacca. But if you can envisage your school chairs these days with those little thin things

18:30 screwed into the ground? That's what the DC3s were like and you had the seatbelt, like as if you're sitting on a bus or – and these seats used to move, and we're flying from – thank god it wasn't too far from Singapore to Malacca - it petrified me. Actually I thought, here we go, and of course even now as history has said, mainly Indonesia, but the record of flights crashing over there is really bad. And

19:00 I hated the place. You know, absolutely hated it.

What about the Qantas plane, was that …

The Qantas plane was good. Because they treated us like a normal passenger, even though it was full of army people going over there. We had the normal things, we were allowed to have a drink, and normal food and all those different sorts of things. It was just a normal flight for them. A hundred or a hundred and fifty people on the plane, I forget.

19:30 It's not like today - the big jumbos. But you know, it was just a normal flight. I can remember now getting off in Singapore in the plane; I couldn't believe how hot it was. I couldn't – just – as if it closed in on you, it was just so heavy. One of the things the army did over there was when you arrived, you did a fair few weeks of acclimatisation where you

20:00 get – had to do running and learn to drink the – as I said before, learn to drink the right amount of water - not too much, not too little and get your body so it was used to it. I'm a very fair skinned person but I used to be a lifesaver on the Gold Coast at Greenmount. And because I was there all the time my skin would eventually go brown after it went red. And over there we'd wear shorts all the time

20:30 and we'd go out, you know, be normally tanned. You'd go out in the scrub for a couple of weeks. I'd come back, I'd be white as a sheet of paper. And I'd have to go and play football and of course I'd have these white legs. They used to call me 'Lolly Legs'. That was one of my nicknames because my legs were white, and then after a couple of weeks in the sun again you'd go a bit darker. But

21:00 initially I didn't. When I got there, my football side of things came to the fore and they – I was only a couple of days into training or getting – getting used to the climate. And they took me away to play

football. I played in Singapore, played against the British Lions. And

21:30 so I probably got acclimatised quicker than the other boys. But the life, even though I did a lot of sport in the services, I did a lot of soldiering too. They wouldn't have promoted me; they wouldn't have made me acting platoon commander and things like that unless I was a reasonable soldier.

So that was an Australian Army team against the British?

No, no, it was Commonwealth. It was in Malaya. There was three battalions

22:00 where we were stationed. That was the Kiwis, the Australians and Scotch [Scottish] and some Irish. Then you had the Commonwealth Headquarters. Then you had Butterworth [air base] and the thousands of soldiers and air force people and naval people over there. And it was a team selected from those people. And you played for the Commonwealth as the army. I played for the army many a times. And we used to play against the air force and

22:30 navy. Cos with the army, especially when national service came in, we had all the good players. So the army used to win all the time. But sport, as I said, especially overseas was important for the morale and everything of our unit. Like if we went out and won they could go and boast and think it was important. It was like your club football these days.

23:00 No matter what it is you support, something, you hope they win or hope they play well. So I always used to think my sporting side of things was just as important at times. Not quite as important when we were in Borneo. But important. As I said, we did a lot of training at prior to going overseas.

23:30 There was no confrontation when we first arrived [the conflict was called: Indonesian Confrontasi]. It became a problem when Malaya decided to become Malaysia. And they took so much of Sabah and Sarawak as Malaya. And the bottom half of what we call Kalimantan now we call Borneo, was Indonesian. So the conflict was there, the Indonesians believed that they owned

24:00 Sabah and Sarawak. And so that's where the confrontation started but before going over to Indonesia, the actual Indonesians invaded Malaya once, I don't know – well it would be in the [Australian] War Memorial. Cos we were there. They came over in boats and landed just – silly enough, they landed right in between the Kiwis, the Australians and the British. And they landed in a swamp.

24:30 And of course all we did was artillery, hit them with artillery and they surrendered. But it was amazing; they had all these ammunition tins. And these ammunitions tins were full of money. That money was given to them to buy out all the locals. And I couldn't stuff this money down my trousers quick enough. And ah, you know, I was padded out. I wasn't the only one. But eventually the battalion confiscated all the money

25:00 and put it into a fund, built places and homes and things for different people. Of the local Malaccans. Cos we were actually in Malacca. And so we didn't get any of the money anyway. But it was good thinking I was rich for a while. And wasn't worth much. I think it was two and eleven a dollar. I think that was the exchange rate at the time. But

25:30 after that, after the Indonesians came over for that period of time, then they established what we call beach patrols. And they'd send you out for a couple of weeks and you lolled around the beach keeping an eye out on whether you're going to be invaded again. And it was great; it was one of the best times I had. You couldn't be silly about it. But I was a lifesaver in my

26:00 younger days. And on the side of the Malaya that we were on at the time, it was just dead flat. Dead flat and calm, you could swim for miles. And it was just a beautiful place. And of course I love food and I like to cook and that's where I got my tasting for Asian food. Like I used to love the makan [Malay/Indonesian for 'food'] stalls, the woks, all the people by the side of the road making all these different

26:30 nasi goreng [wok fried rice], bamis [bami goreng is wok fried noodle] and all that, I used to love it. Lots of time I got punished for it because you might get a bit of food poisoning. But by jeez it was good cheap food. But after a period of time of course the conflict between Malaysia and Indonesia sort of built up. And the Ghurkhas and the British had been in Borneo

27:00 prior. And it was then decided that they'd send the Kiwis or the Australians and the Kiwis. We were sent to a place called Serikin in Sarawak. And this camp was half built - I've got photos of it there I'll show you later - this camp was half built by the British. And we completed it. We had a tour of nearly six months.

27:30 there. Mainly it was our base and we'd go out for patrol. We might go out for two weeks, might go out for a week. If you had a contact or something happened, somebody got injured, you'd come back. You always had a relieving platoon in so you could be relieved. You had to go on Pomigalana [sic] it was called, I think pomi means hill and it was a hill!

28:00 We had ninety pound on our back, they say forty-five kilos these days, but ninety pound on your back and plus you carried lots of water bottles. I carried five water bottles. And we had to climb up. You'd come out, you'd leave our base and you'd go through a kampung [village] a local kampung. Wherever

your base is you've always got something like a little city somewhere started to build up. And you used to have to climb these

28:30 hills, it was unbelievable and it was fairly sparse. It wasn't that bad but once you hit the top of the ridges, once to go to the top it was just dense rainforest. And it wasn't so bad walking here but once you got in the rainforest then you struck the thing like leeches and scorpions. I've seen scorpions a foot long. And the other types of things

29:00 on the terrain I used to hate was ticks. I'll tell you a story about ticks later. And elephants. Anyway we go up, you go along, at least there was two major ridge lines you'd either get allocated and that's what you patrolled. And then you'd go up to the border, sometimes you might fall over the border. And you'd go and have a look and try and find out what's going on. Cos they used to

29:30 come up and send a mortar over now and again but they never got close enough to hit us. There was one occasion there where the Canberra bombers used to fly over all the time and their main task was recce [reconnaissance]. They'd take photographs of different things. These British intelligence officers came up one day and they showed us these photos of these people. Big wheels and barrels,

30:00 they were carrying this great big gun up there, through the rainforest too. And they had this progression of photos showing you that they were bringing this gun up. And they showed you the photos of it being assembled. And they'd showed you a photo of it being all set up ready to fire. Then they showed you a photo of a big hole in the ground. So then we got to fire at this. Really, the British intelligence was so good. They knew where it was all the time and they just let it go through the work.

30:30 There's a photo of it somewhere - I don't know whether I've seen it in the War Memorial but there's a photo of it somewhere. There's an officer standing on the actual gun as it's being assembled. And I'm not quite sure whether, what nationality it was. I won't mention nationalities just in case; I know what nationality he was. But then after that photo then all it was, was a photo of a hole in the ground. So maybe if they would have got that gun up they could have really harassed us.

31:00 But we had the advantage here because we had the Kiwis, great artillery people. And we had the British gunners, they were very good. Though we didn't always get on but they were very good at their job.

How many of you would go out on those patrols?

About thirty, between twenty five, normally four sections. You had a platoon commander and his batman the sergeant and the radio operator. And then in your section you have

31:30 one or two scouts. You have a machine gunner and his offsider and probably two more, three more. And so you build up to about thirty, thirty two. And you'd go out there and you would – no smoking, no chewing gum, no hots, nothing was hot, never cooked anything. Because amazing how far you can smell chewing gum in the bush. Going on that we, sometimes you would have

32:00 some Iban [indigenous] trackers would come with you, like the local natives, they would come with you. But they got very upset with us - because I've got some photos around here somewhere, of them – they'd take their chickens and tie their chickens to their web belts and take their chicken with them and cook them on the way. And of course we wouldn't allow it; we wouldn't allow no fires, no coffee, no cigarettes. Even though we did carry – I carried as, in my

32:30 section, I carried cigarettes. If somebody got injured, you gave them a smoke. But that was in the pack, you never – you know, we used to blend in. We'd go into a ambush position, you might lay there for a few days. And there was no such thing of moving, no such thing of eating – they had this, the meal I used to hate - bacon and baked beans because it was so salty. And when you warm things up it's a little bit

33:00 better, but you can't warm anything up and you just got to eat it cold. The type of living we had was very spartan. When you're in the scrub and you would go out there, you know, might go out for a few weeks. And as I said, unless something happened and you'd come back. But they used to be amazing how good your senses become. How good your smell came. How good your sight was,

33:30 your hearing. It's amazing how your inner senses get so much better. The things I disliked about it was, were the orangutans. I didn't like them because orangutans would hang around the trees above you. And where they would hang, if they were hanging, you're there, they know if there's Indonesians or anybody else, they know your there because the bloody orangutans were there. But the orangutans would come down and they'd

34:00 steal your hat, if you left anything laying around. I reckon they're fairly intelligent. You know we had Des Cunningham, he was under his – one night– we had mosquito nets and he's under his hoochie. And the orangutan reached in and put his hand on his face. And our dixies, our knives and forks were all aluminium so they didn't make a noise, and so he's trying to stab this orangutan with a

34:30 spoon. It was an aluminium spoon and I could remember it all tangled up, and the old orangutan walked away and left him. There's a few more things about orangutans. But they'd come down and they'd frighten you in the middle of the night, you be sitting there, you can't see your hand in front of you, and all of a sudden there's in the trees just above you – oh good god. You know here we are, terribly brave.

You know there was lots of times we were brave fighting animals. That's you see like

35:00 I've had a tiger from not much further away than you are. A golden cobra, the same, about the same distance. Like if you talk about the animals over there, a lot of the places in, we used to patrol were, especially around Thailand, were ex-rubber plantations. And you'd run into a lot of old locals out there, rubber tapping these trees to get themselves

35:30 a few bob. They're not supposed to be in the area, but they were good for intelligence. Stuff like that. But oh, I think I lost my track there a little bit.

I'm keen to learn about that tiger. What do you do when you come face to face with a tiger?

Well we'd sort of hoochied up, we were in an area, we had a patrol base, the platoon had a patrol base. And

36:00 even though you had your base, you always had a picquet [guard] out and the picquet was always a way from the camp in four directions so you cover the directions. Mal Black, him and I were together, and once you do that, you take turns at cooking and you took – this is Thailand not Borneo - we were cooking and everything in Thailand. And this time Mal was out on picquet, and he was about a couple of hundred metres away from where

36:30 base camp was. And so I made up the lunch, I cooked the lunch and everything in the dixie and I took it out to him. And he's sitting next to this great big log. And I handed him over the dixie and looked up and I looked over the log and here's a tiger on the other side of the log. And so I said, "Mal, just have a look there." Cos it's amazing because tigers, like all cats, urinate on themselves. And they smell, they really smell if you're downwind of them.

37:00 And so I don't know why Mal didn't know he was there. And we don't know how long he was there. But you never said – we were armed to the teeth, we had our weapons and everything there. And we were both backing away from this tiger - it's a big, beautiful thing. But we didn't – we had a few episodes with tigers. But that was one of the first ones that was in Thailand. There was a Kiwi soldier that, we used to go and search through all the caves

37:30 because they used to put the caches away with ammunition and things like that. And he went down this limestone cave and when he got to the bottom of the cave, there was some cubs there. So he went and patted the cubs and things like that. And then went back, and left them, didn't harm them. Went back there and he went back to his base, went to bed that night. And of course the mother tiger, we assume it's a mother tiger - I wasn't in the unit, the story was related to us

38:00 Later - came walking past and smelled the kitten, and smelled the cub. He grabbed the Kiwi by the head and pulled him out of bed. He went a bit troppo for a while. Didn't kill the Kiwi, that's all, the soldier. Not the kiwi bird, the soldier and everything, so he was sent home. He went a bit mad but the tiger ran away, so we didn't have a great deal of problem with that. While we are on

38:30 tigers, we went into one area and what we always used to do, we always went and hoochied up late, on dusk. And you pulled everything down before daylight so nobody knew where your main positions were if they were observing you. Well this night we were running a bit late hoochying up. And we didn't notice tiger pads, like we called them tiger pads, but animal paths.

39:00 And we were setting up our beds and things like that. And next minute this tiger came running through the camp. And it got so confused because there's about thirty of us there. And it's trying to get out and we're trying to get it out. Anyway there was a chap called 'Horse' Meres and Horse was a big man, six foot six, and he always carried a bowie knife in his boot. And eventually he

39:30 must have got sick and tired and he jumped out and he grabbed this bowie knife and he's calling out to the tiger, "Come on you mongrel. Come out," and a few other words I can't use here. And eventually the tiger run back through the camp and Horse climbed up this tree, but the tree was only a very small tree and he got up, the further up he got, the further it bent. So he's only really about a foot off the ground hanging onto this tree. So the tiger, thank God, was more frightened of us that anything. And anyway,

40:00 he ended up taking off and so... those tigers! We had a very similar thing with a golden cobra snake - sat up in the middle of a path in front of us. And you know here, armed to the teeth, but we certainly walked around it!

Tape 4

00:30 **Now, I just want to ask you about the Thai smugglers? You talked about chasing smugglers in Thailand. Can you give us that story?**

Well I don't know why we were allocated, but one of our tasks, we used to patrol the borders, I don't know why, in Thailand. Mainly for, probably training exercises. But while we were

01:00 there we used to help out the Thai police by setting trip flares and things at night, trying to – there was lots of smugglers smuggling dope and other contraband. And somehow we got involved in that, not a great deal but we did one incident, one in our lot actually shot one of the smugglers.

01:30 And none of us could see why we were doing a police duty. And the Thai police I didn't like. They were very untrustworthy people. You wouldn't want to turn your back on them, like, maybe because they were in a harsh environment and probably their life and death, it may be. But I couldn't feel I ever trusted them. We

02:00 always made a pact, like we made a pact that this young fellow was shot, you see, sixteen year old, about a fifteen or sixteen year old kid. And he was carrying on his back a pack. And that pack was full of pencils. And the pencils were all drilled out and full of dope or full of heroin or whatever. The Thai police just pull it out, took the rubbers off and pull it out, the white powder. And

02:30 we said we'd never ever do it, we'd get them in the trip flare then we'd tackle them. Because you imagine a trip flare going off, very bright, and they're blind, you turn away, you come back and you can see them quite – you don't look at the trip light when you come back you can see quite well. And we thought, well most of them are not armed, I never knew of any that were armed. And so we had decided that

03:00 we'd tackle them in future. We had a couple of instances there where Des coming home set the trip flares one night - we used to set them on dusk. And every time you set the trip flare, the person who set used to turn around to the section and go, (wink) "She's right." And then we'd all go into our position. Well Des got up there and he set it all up and it's very difficult to set up a trip flare at night. And he got up there and he went (wink) "All right, mate." And just as he stood up the trip flare went off. And of course he's yelling out,

03:30 "Don't shoot, don't shoot at me, don't shoot."

So the trip flare was the set up was to catch the smugglers? And where were they smuggling from and to?

They just, just across the border into Thailand. Whether they were going into Malaya from Thailand or from Malaya into Thailand itself. I think the Thai border was a little bit more open than, with the Thai police than they were with the Malay police.

04:00 As I said, I didn't trust the Thai police, I believed they – the Malay police weren't much better. But they were always on the take. Like if you went anywhere and you crossed the border they wanted their graft. They'd let you through, a lot of them had religious beliefs where they didn't drink, but they'd try and – we'd go and buy duty free whisky or rum or whatever and they'd want you to give some money to take it across the border. Cos we knew they didn't drink we'd say, "No you can have it." It's cheaper for us

04:30 to - cos it was so cheap to buy duty free alcohol. And we'd say, "No you keep it." But they didn't want it because they didn't drink it. So eventually they let us have it anyway. Sometimes the Malay police would poke a pistol - if you had a car, they would poke a pistol in the car. Wanting to check your car out.

What I don't understand is why you were catching Thai smugglers when you were there for military operations?

At that stage being,

05:00 what we call ourselves a 'grunt' [an infantryman], we just sort of followed orders. I can see in my later life that I started thinking about why was I there. But we went on all these patrols, all over the place and we run across many rubber tappers. Like a lot of the plantations, rubber plantations had run down after the colonialists had sort of left. And a lot of people, local indigenous natives used to

05:30 go and tap the trees in these disused plantations. And so we used to run across a lot of those. And of course it was, at that time too there used to be insurgents around so they assumed the insurgents even though the communists had stopped fighting at that stage, they were still those insurgents there. And I think that was our job. But it was more smugglers we

06:00 run across than we run across any insurgent. I'd run across one old fellow we know in a rubber plantation and I gave him a Rothmans [brand of] cigarette. And we're trying to get some information out of him. He was a nice old fellow and he gave us a smoke. And I think that's the first and only time I've ever touched any dope. Because I'm sure it was, had to be cannabis or something like that because when I had a puff, oh I was all over the place.

06:30 As I said, I don't know why – I think our original thing is like when we patrolled around, that we were trying to find where they hid their ammunition or where they hid their literature. They'd hide it in caves and I suppose it worked out good for us because it ended up being a training exercise we could utilise very well when we went to Borneo. Cos we were experienced then in rainforests and not under the same sort of pressure or

07:00 conditions. In Thailand we lit fires and had meals and things like that on the Thai border. But where[as] in Borneo, when we were on patrol, we didn't – no fires, no cigarettes, no nothing like that.

So where the Indonesians a real threat on the Thai border? How did all that work?

No, well the Indonesians had nothing to do with the Thai border.

So what were the Thai border skirmishes about?

They were just ..

07:30 there was Communist insurgents within Malaya. And that's where they set themselves up. They set themselves up in the areas where they could either bribe the local population or get away without being, and still have their beliefs and get away without being harassed. But I'm assuming under the Malayan government Tunku Abdul Rahman I think was Prime Minister at the time. I think it was a sort of a PR [public relations] thing that we would help out on the border side.

08:00 And it seemed to be more political than soldier – even though the training was good for us. We got our leeches and all those other naughty, nasty things that they'd come along. You know, people show you these days on documentaries, these wonderful rainforests, they are wonderful. But they're terrible, I think they're not, you know a holiday - like walking up the Kokoda Trail -

08:30 it's not a holiday. It's very tough. But as I said, Thailand was more or less a minor thing. We had problems there. We got one patrol they took us out and they dropped us off and then we had to go, and were told, as I said before, there was no sort of maps; we made the maps as we went along ourselves. They eventually dropped us ten thousand

09:00 metres away from where they were supposed to drop us on the trucks. And when we walked out, when we walked in – yeah we walked in for days. We found no water. Amazing, no water. And so what happened to happen, we were running out of water. So our company commander at the time selected about ten or twenty of us, fittest people and we cut to the road

09:30 which was a fair few miles. We cut through the road to go, we carried these, met these water trucks. And we filled up these water bags. And carried them all the way back so the people could drink water, cos we had people out that time, we were running around. They had what they call these water vines, and they were about two inches thick. And you go along, the only way you're getting water, we were getting water, was cutting those and dripping them into our mouths. We went and done this

10:00 and of course we moved out after we got the water back, we moved out of the area. But while we were on that patrol, which I was on and so was Barry; we rested in the middle of the night, cos we just kept going. And we rested in a bamboo plantation, like a big bamboo – well it wasn't a plantation but bamboo and miles of it. And we're sitting there having a little bit of a rest and these elephants run through the bamboo. And it's

10:30 unbelievable. They end up not being really close to us. So probably a few hundred metres away from us. But the noise of them crashing through the bamboo was unbelievable. And here we are all sitting - there's nothing much we can do - it's pitch black. And if they were to come out at us, you know, we had our rifles ready. But I don't think we could have stopped an elephant in time. Dealings we had with elephants - weren't us, but through one of the para units [British parachute regiment] over in Sabah. They had

11:00 two of their tail-end Charlies, the boys off the back, taken and killed by elephants. So we were a little bit, you tend to be a little bit frightened of elephants in the situation like that. The thing that I found worse out of that night was in the bamboo, was these little bamboo ticks and they're very small. And you get hundreds of them on you. You had to take all these bamboo ticks off. You doused yourself down with

11:30 grain fuel to make them back out. Or you sit there with a pair of tweezers and if you get a tick on you, you screw them anticlockwise. Then you have a look to see if they've still got the head on. And we had all these ticks all over us. It was unbelievable. But anyway, we got over that, I'm still here.

Can I ask you a question about the training? Do you think the training that you got was satisfactory, was enough for what you had to do?

I don't think, like I was

12:00 one of those people that, there was a couple of things I got involved with, but I never really got into combat. But the situation, I was terribly close, but the situation was that my training was the best they could give me for that. There's nothing like you doing your own job unless you do that job. Like whether you dig the ditch or you write the book, and until you do that, it's something, you always questioning yourself, well I did anyway. I questioned myself whether I had the soldiering ability.

12:30 I had the reaction, cos that's what they trained me, they trained me to react, they trained me to do a certain thing. If we were ambushed from the right, or from the front, you had a tactic to go to and you bided by that, everybody knew that. So you never shot each other because you knew where each and everybody was going. You were trained to that sort of perfection. But when you're in a rainforest and it's thick and dense, you know you can't go...

13:00 They always say the machine gun goes to the high ground. So the machine gun controls the high ground. And you're in a rainforest, how can you tell you're on high ground? You couldn't see - lots of times you couldn't see more than twenty, thirty metres. Night time you couldn't see at all, you couldn't

see – you put your hand in front of you and you couldn't see it. So the type of training we had, like the places when we did

13:30 the Thai border and other patrols around Malacca and other places like that, got us used to the rainforest because rainforests were completely different to what we trained in. The closest we come to any sort of rainforest probably was Canungra or – and that was only simulated, it wasn't really out and out. A lot of – in Canungra there's lots of bare hills and things like that where, if you got up Pomigalana (?) in Borneo,

14:00 you're on top of the hill and your in the middle of the rainforest, and it's just native. As I said, there's orangutans, there's monkeys, scorpions everything all over the place.

Well let's talk a bit more about Borneo. So you were in Malaysia, west Malaysia, the peninsula for how long were you there for?

Well I went through 1963. And we – I spent two years thirty three days in Malaya, Borneo and Thailand.

So how long were you

14:30 **on the peninsula for? Before you went to Borneo?**

Before we went to Borneo - probably fourteen months. Then we went over, towards the end of our tour, we went over to – my tour, it was the second year, in the second year, we went over to Borneo. And we were stationed at a place called Serikin. That was our base camp. And we patrolled from that base camp. We would do

15:00 mainly, you go out on patrol. You wouldn't go out for a day, you would go out for a couple of weeks. You carried - the most important thing I carried was socks. Because nothing worse than getting athletes' feet. And the shoes we used to have were canvas shoes. They'd come all the way up to your knees because you wanted them - long canvas, long boots - because of the leeches. They had these leeches, dark brown with a yellow stripe on them. And they'd take about a pint of blood when they get on you.

15:30 So you didn't like the leeches. We used to try and beat it. We used to soak our uniforms in salty water or some of the mosquito repellents. We'd just soak them in there then we hang them up to dry them.

It was fascinating what you were saying about - so two week patrols and leeches …

16:00 Even longer unless you come into a contact which some units did. If you look up in the history we never lost anybody by gunshot wound. We had some people wounded, some accidentally killed. We had a young officer going through a cave and he had his Owen gun in his hand and the Owen gun had a brass returning pin, which held your firing pin. And obviously it broke, it shot off his thumb and

16:30 got up and killed him. Another friend of mine, he was having – in our group he put his Owen gun down the brass bit broke again and hit him under the eye. He went over. It didn't kill him this time but it killed a young officer. There was Buddy Lee - in one contact he got shot right through the knee. Never hit a bone. Unbelievable. He wasn't in my platoon. There was a couple of incidents I was involved in. Out of the way sort of incident -

17:00 there was young Downes [Private Larry Downes] was killed by mines and so was Vince Vella [Sergeant Vincent Vella] - they were on the same patrol. Vince was a sergeant, good bloke. And unbeknownst to me – I'll finish the story first, he – Vince was supposed to go home but the officer who was to take them turned out took ill. So they asked Vince to take the patrol. So he went and took the patrol. And on the way going out

17:30 the front end, forward scout and tail end Charlie, that's the worst two jobs. And Vince being a good soldier, rotated. And he decided that young Downes, Private Downes was tail end Charlie. So he decided that he would go back and relieve Downes - he'd give him a bit of a break. And he'd be tail end Charlie. In between time noises came up the front and Vince was called to the front. And as Vince

18:00 walked past we don't know whether it was Downes or Vince walked past, the mine went up between them and killed them both. If you go to the War Memorial and you have a look at Borneo, the caption of Borneo near the Vietnam there, you will see young Downesy's rifle there, that he was carrying at the time. There was another incident, Reno Weiland [Sergeant Reginald Weiland] was killed. My involvement with that

18:30 – I got involved with the first ones; I'll come back to in a moment. A couple of weeks before Reno was killed, Barry, Dennis Wheeler – who is in one of the photographs there, and myself, was sent on a patrol to the border. Three of us were sent on a patrol to go and check the border crossing and stuff like that. We carried just water bottle and a rifle. We didn't carry any radio or anything like that, we just go. But when we got up there,

19:00 the Indonesians were there and I had no radio or anything to call back to say that there were enemies in the area. So we laid doggo [stayed low and quiet] for a period of time because by their conversation, there were a lot more than three and there was only three of us. And we were on the down slope, down near the border. So after a period of time when I thought it was right, we pulled out. And I got back to my unit, which we radioed up,

19:30 and I'm assuming artillery was followed but whether it was just to annoy them, to let them know that we knew they were there. But going onto the story about Reno Weiland being killed - a few weeks later, we'd finished our patrol, and we went back into base at Serikin which was our base camp. And we'd have a week's break or whatever. Whatever time it needs to. But when Reno and them were coming back from their patrol, they come across -

20:00 cos they had to have a look on the other side of the border. And when they come back they were having a debrief on the ridgeline just near where we were with these Indonesian soldiers. And when they were having the debrief - when we went out on patrol we carried claymore mines and cordex. Cordex is an explosive piece of cord that you can wrap around a tree, put a det [detonator] on it and cut down a tree. If you needed to – somebody was badly injured, the easiest way to chop

20:30 down a tree is use cordex. If you didn't have access and you got big tall trees, how can you get a chopper in to save somebody's life, so you use your cordex to chop down the trees and get them in to get them out. Well Reno had this on his pack and he was standing up and he's debriefing his other section lance corporals and section commanders. And of course a mine went up between them and killed the Iban tracker and himself.

21:00 Shockingly it blew Reno to pieces because he had all these explosives on him. The part I was getting at, it's been on my mind. I think that two weeks earlier, they were planting those mines. Now, you know, maybe, maybe we should have had a closer look or –

21:30 And the part with that was we had to come out of base. We went through, we had to go through their platoon because the Indonesians had, used to come down and come observe their handiwork. And so I had to take my section which included my brother, Johnny Williams, Stony Bourke, Johnny Guy, myself, and there's one other I can't remember. Anyway,

22:00 I had to take them through the kill zone and place them on the ridgeline just in case it come as a defensive method. And the rest of the team were below the kill line. We had to wait there two days until the engineers got there because we had no way of – and they found four other mines. And the mines were in, with all my section, I don't know how none of us didn't tip them off. We didn't do much moving around.

22:30 The thing that worried me that they were American jumping jack mines and they were mines with three spikes on them. And you stand on the spike and they jump up about chest high and put about four hundred ball bearings at you. We knew one went off with Reno, and there was four of the others and they come in boxes of six. So always wondered where the sixth one was. But going back– they were two of our people that were killed. And plus the Iban tracker, that was three of our people that were killed.

23:00 Downes is a cousin of mine, I didn't know. And it wasn't until later that he lived in Bell outside of Dalby and that's where all my cousins work, they lived in Dalby. But it wasn't until later I found out we were related. The incident had been related with young Downsey then the area a few weeks before, the fact that I was in that area, there was movement there, I was in a situation where I –

23:30 there's nothing I could do, you know, we're carrying – we probably carrying probably fifty, a hundred rounds with us. There's nothing I could do as far as seeing, oh maybe should have waited till they left and gone and looked. But we didn't, I went back and reported it.

Well I guess you have – there's probably always a few regrets that you have about things like that. What's intriguing though is that you then spent two days up there in the kill zone, so this is where the mines were? This is where the two, Downesy and the other guy

24:00 **had died?**

Not Downes – not where Downes and Vince were, where Reno and the Iban tracker.

And so were you up there looking for the mines to clear?

No, ours was just a defensive position. Normal procedure they taught you was to prod with your bayonet and do those things, well we didn't do that. We had the least movement as we possibly could. We all knew

24:30 that as I said, they came in packs of six, and so we all knew that. But one of the – one of the mines was found under Johnny Williams tripod where his tripod come down on his machine gun. Johnny Williams was a machine gunner, a little Aboriginal boy, good soldier. Ended up coming back to Australia and getting in jail for doing a couple of things wrong, but he was a good soldier. But I don't know if you've ever seen those Tom and Jerry cartoons where the (UNCLEAR) gets up on their fingers and little

25:00 Johnny was like that. Here's this mine right under there where his tripod, been there for two days. So he sort of crept back cos, as if he was like sort of Tom and Jerry cartoons, thinking back. But I suppose it's not funny.

Must have been a lot of tension?

Ah, it disappears with age. Like it disappears with time. Like I think like these days people have post traumatic stress and

25:30 things like that. I don't know what happened in 'Nam but we always had debriefings. And we were under British control and so you were sort of debriefed in a way. I don't know whether we were gung ho [foolishly courageous] or anything like that. We were just as frightened, as terrified as anybody else. And we realised our opponents or the opposition at the time, they were exactly, they were no different to what we were.

26:00 We were, in a sense, we were lucky. We had a fair few contacts with them and we didn't lose any by gunshot wound. Other than accidents, we lost them by mines.

How would you rate the Indonesian Army in those sorts of encounters that you had? Were they clever; was it very guerrilla type warfare?

No, we didn't think them much soldiers.

26:30 The best soldiers over there, other than us, were the Ghurkhas. And I did a few patrols with the Ghurkhas and they're wonderful soldiers, really wonderful. And they used to think the Indonesians were nothing, they didn't think they were very good soldiers at all. Not having been close enough to shoot anybody or whatever, or do that, I was close enough.

27:00 I knew from the tactics from other things that occurred, that they had a leadership problem. Their leadership was normally by rank, family, your standing in society, not your ability. In the information we were given, if you bumped off one of their commanders, they go and wait til they get another one. And things like that.

27:30 We had some – our units had contacts with them. And when they sank ships and supply ships and boats that were going up the rivers. And that's where Jack O'Jackson got his Military Medal. He's an Englishman in the Australian Army of course. He actually was doing a parachute jump in Sydney for some show and he drowned in the harbour, the chute pulled him down.

28:00 This was after the war. But our unit, our battalion had contact with the Indonesians. And we got none shot by gunshot, other than the one through the knee. So it's amazing the number of bullets that are fired that doesn't hit anything. And including ours. It had been known that they'd throw grenades,

28:30 and they wouldn't pull the pin out, things like that. Or they had the old 36, you screw the base plate off and you put the det in the bottom. They'd throw the grenade, it wouldn't go off, and you'd take the baseplate off and they wouldn't have a det in there. I didn't have the experience but I know other people that had that experience. Cos they were in, they were in the actual contacts. We spent our time – the information was given to us

29:00 where they were coming, when the were coming and we'd go over there and wait for them. If they turned up, a limited amount of time you can lay in one spot.

So you relied a lot on intelligence?

Yes certainly, the British were very good. We travelled to the other side of the border. Everybody did that. You're not going to come to – well this is a border you're not going to cross our line. Well we did, we went thousands of yards across their side. The English had some soldiers that were really tough, they were tough boys.

29:30 We had to help a couple of them, they got injured. And they'd go all the way across – they'd go right across to where the camps were. And they'd sit outside and they'd observe them. They would watch what they were doing. They'd go up there maybe a month, two months. They'd live on the land and they were tough men. We had two of them with us once. And they came in to get resupplied to go back cos two of their mates were missing. And they went all the way back and got them, lucky enough they got them. They were wounded but they got them out

30:00 alive. But later we found that out. But they used to go across and they said how they knew the – when they build - pulling up that artillery piece I think I was talking about, did I tell you about that? Artillery piece, a while ago, the bombers, Canberra Bombers blew it up? This how all the intelligence come. From these people they sent across the border and plus what we did. Like they used to – there was one place we'd go to and there was two hills. And they'd come out of the area in their Land Rover,

30:30 jump out of their Land Rover, throw a mortar down on the ground, fire a couple of shots, put it back in the Land Rover and drive back again. And you could see them doing this, but they'd just fire and make a noise and then they'd go back. None of the mortar shells went anywhere near us. So they never really got close enough to us to sort of harass our camp or anything like that. And it was reasonably well fortified. And

31:00 if you were in the area it was defoliated. The English was the first to use Agent Orange [defoliant]. And around our camp there wasn't a tree. There wasn't anything. Hardly any grass or anything like that.

So with the jungle patrols that you did, you talked about how dark it was and pitch black. Were you sort of literally possibly going to encounter Indonesians

31:30 **metres away from you?**

Yes, expected that, yes.

That's what you expected?

Yes, we expected that. We weren't the only ones. Another time there we came back, we had a base camp called Bau and there used to be an old mining town. And it had an open cut mine. And when they were digging down in the mine, they hit an underwater stream and this big mine filled up full of water. And it was a beautiful place, beautiful,

32:00 crystal clear water and they built huts and everything down there, it was our rest camp. We'd do a month or so out in the scrub or two months and then they would bring us back to Bau. When my unit came back to Bau we were there for a couple of days. And then 3 PARA, [3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment] which was a British unit, was out in the scrub and a local kampong, a local area, was having a celebration. And so

32:30 they invited the unit down to the kampong for a celebration. They accepted, PR, and they left fourteen soldiers to guard their base. And away they went. In between time, the Indonesians came over and hit the base where the fourteen people were there. We were in Bau so we were the first people out on call. So they threw us in a chopper and we were choppered in, into the Bau camp. The

33:00 helicopter pad was below the hill so we were able to come in below the hill. And the Indonesians were firing from ridgelines around the place. They'd fire rockets and everything like that. The Q store [Quartermaster's store] was blown up because there was trousers and socks and everything hanging off trees. A couple of people were killed. None of ours. The warrant officer - I dashed down to the gun pit with him and he had his eye hanging out. And he got – I think he got an MM [Military Medal].

33:30 But one of the officers who was sitting there, their huts, like you'd say a house like this was only made of atap [palm leaves], just plaited leaves. And he was sitting up there on the radio all the time and bullet holes and everything in the place, all over the place. What was decided when we arrived, the Indonesians decided to pull out. So it was then decided that we would chase them. So we broke into groups of three or four, they choppered in some tracker dogs with us.

34:00 But we had trouble with the tracker dogs, they kept getting constipated and you either shot them or chopper them out. So we choppered them out. You know they were too nice a dog – they were big things. Anyway we did it with our tracker dog. And we'd, for days, we'd chased these units. The Indonesians, they split up and what happened was the other, like Scotch guard [1st Battalion, Scots Guards] - we were all involved - they set up ambushes and we tried to

34:30 channel the Indonesians through these ambushes. There's only one I know of, that was in my area, ambush in my area. And I know the report came back, no confirmed kills. So it worried me a little bit. So obviously they were fighting with their heads down, I'd say. Because if you get a – if you have an experience as a soldier and you learnt to do an ambush and

35:00 you set up a killing room, nothing comes out of the killing room. The way you set the machine guns up and the cross fires and everything that goes on, if you're in that area walking along the path you don't come out. But anyway, that's by the by. But we went out there chasing around– some cases, when their soldiers died they hid them. They were a bit like, didn't like anybody getting hold of their bodies. They used to hide them. I found

35:30 I don't know where it is, but I found this water bottle that was all engraved, somebody had sat there and engraved it all. I don't know whether I left it with the battalion or something like that, it's a souvenir. I'm not quite sure. But I had that one there. And when we were at night time, we were out, just in groups of three and four. And we were out there, we hoochied up at night time and you can hear them walking, walking in the river – in the creeks and that. But you can't see anything so what can you do about it.

36:00 And when there's more footsteps and there you are, what do you do? Do you say, "Hey mate, stop here!" It's only three of us but we'll be right. But that area, there was just – that was as close as I possibly got to any really great deal of problems. The mines were – I thought about it later, was a bit of a problem. But I think all your training just comes in and you

36:30 you just do what you're told.

Did it make a difference to you having your brother Barry there with you?

Ah, his wife said to me, cos she was over in Malaya with us. And his son was born, Sean was born over there. My godson. Barry is left handed, pretty bad tempered, the time he was, pretty bad tempered, but I trusted him.

37:00 There was things, we used to do boxing together and all those sorts of things. And I suppose having -- I never ever thought about it, I'll be honest, I never thought about losing my brother. I never thought that, in later years I did of course, I said it could have happened. But him being in my own section, being my gunner, you know, so things like that you don't know.

37:30 You don't think these things will ever happen again because they're not supposed to happen, in a war zone. And you've seen the photos and things like that. So it did actually happen. He got injured and had to be taken out, that's how we ended up being separated. I'm not quite sure what his injury was now. But anyway, they just vacced him out [evacuated]. And he came back to Australia and he went to

38:00 Vietnam and his tour over there, so did Stephen, so did Trevor. I came back to – oh we went back to, from Borneo and everything, we went back for a short period of time to Malacca, that was another farcical thing. They got up there and they decided that they would chop – they choppered us off out of Borneo from our base. And took us to an aircraft carrier or converted helicopter carrier, used to be an

38:30 aircraft carrier. And this aircraft carrier is to take us back to Malacca. So I don't know who got the bright idea, but anyway, they choppered us in. And they had about twenty choppers. And they used to call them sticks. And when they came and they dropped us off on the top of the carrier and they went back to get others, on the – after our stick came in, one of the choppers went in, like it went in but none of them

39:00 nobody drowned. It was only the pilot and engineers on the plane –helicopter, they got out. But farcical about the trip, we came back on the aircraft carrier. And they got back to Malacca and they decided they'd do this big PR thing. So they used landing craft to land us on the beach at Malacca, outside of base with all these people there. And they landed us and when they did, they landed us in chest deep water. You know and here's – we done all these things and look all

39:30 wonderful. And we're trying to get through this water, and a short fellow like me, I was close to drowning. So, I don't know why we couldn't have landed some other way. Here we are, all these brave soldiers returning trying to swim. So you know. But you know that was – you know that was their novel way of us getting back in. it was amusing on the aircraft carrier that, they had all VB, Victoria Bitter [beer]

40:00 on for us cos that was our drink. And I can remember all the British sailors trying to give us their British beer. And this was awful stuff. Almost had a riot on the ship. But they ended up giving us our VB. And we used to get a rum, a type of rum called Service – SRD rum, the services rum diluted. It's like golden syrup and beautiful. Although I don't drink rum. Might have a sip with my brother if he's here. But it was beautiful.

40:30 They used to give it to us, a toddy [a drink] each evening. But after leaving Borneo, I'm just trying to think of anything else happened in Borneo other than the patrols.

Oh, the paratroopers, Indonesian paratroopers. That was the peninsula was it?

That was, that was

41:00 in Sarawak.

Did you witness that?

Yeah, like I was with – I went in, we didn't witness the initial attack. We came in when the attack was just being completed. We were the first reinforcements to arrive. And everyone else in between time, their unit's trying to come back from this kampong. Which was their company. And we were, as I said, choppered in to a side of a hill. And so we were –

41:30 we were open to their rocket fire and things like that. It didn't seem to do anything to us at the time. It's amazing that it didn't take them long to decide to split us up into groups, small groups as I said, and then we – we went out and chased them, harassed them. And just kept after them. And I suppose, I don't know whether they --

42:00 they probably weren't good soldiers, if they were to turn around they ….

Tape 5

00:30 Okay we did the landing outside of Malacca and we went back into our normal unit processes about disembarking to come home to

01:00 Australia. I got my posting which was to Puckapunyal in Victoria. So on returning to Australia we went there. And I was there for a period of time as establishing 7 RAR. And in between time, again with my football, Box Hill was a suburb of Melbourne. And they were going into first grade rugby union competition. And they heard that

01:30 my six years was up. And they suggested that I play for them – get out and play rugby and the offer and the money was too tempting. So I got out of the army and I went and played professional rugby for a period of time, for that season. During that season I, I met a lot of people, socialised with a lot of people. And one girl, named, Roslyn Manson was her name, she was a model, she used to be on - I don't know if you've seen the Pix

02:00 or Post [magazines] years ago - she used to be on the front pages of that. She was a bit of a social climber. And being – being an international footballer I was pretty high on the social list. Anyway we were going out together and things like that. And I decided that I wanted to go and see a bit of Australia. So I went over to Perth after the season was over. She followed me over. And I had some

friends in Perth I had met. And

02:30 we decided, oh we'll get married. And anyway, in between time, my mate over there, he owned – he's rich and he owned butcher shops and everything like that. Apparently they were having it off all the time. And eventually our marriage lasted six weeks. And it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. Then I rejoined the army. Then I

03:00 marched back into Kapooka, almost eleven months to the day I got out, almost. It meant that I kept all my qualifications, all my legal qualifications, my training, everything. I kept that, I didn't lose it. And so I marched back into Kapooka and the day I was marching into Kapooka, one of my sergeant friends noticed me in the platoon and he come across to talk to me. And he said, "Football training is on this afternoon. Come down to training."

03:30 And I got approached by a platoon commander when I got to my new platoon. I said, 'Could I go to football training, they've asked me?" And the two commanders said, "No", because you do so many weeks before you do anything. And that's understandable. And anyway, about an hour or so later over the intercom when I was at Kapooka it said, "Recruit Laverty report to oval number so and so." So I reported down to this oval in my football gear. And Colonel East was the commander of 3 RTV.

04:00 Oh 1 RTV I should say. And he got down there and they had two sides picked, the recruits and the staff. And he made me captain of the recruit side. And of course we killed them, we did the stuff. And when we finished the game he came over to me and he said, "What can I do to keep you here?" Because my training it hadn't stopped, I wasn't going to stay there long as a recruit. And I said, "Group 9 corporal." And he said,

04:30 "Okay, I will put you on a course, and if you pass it - that's doing all the drill instructing, weapons instructing and all that - if you pass that, we will make it up." Well eventually I did the course, two weeks. And I passed it and they made me up and I became a weapons instructor, went to weapon. I didn't like drill. So I went to weapons and I was there for a fair period of time until I had a young recruit

05:00 drop a grenade in my bay. And getting him out wasn't a hard process to get him out, but you had a drain to push the grains down in if you ever had that happen to you. And somehow or another, either the baseplate or part of the grenade blew off and hit the heel of my boot. And it bruised all my leg and that means – my leg was black all the way even though it was only the heel. And I couldn't do any of the weapon instruction or anything like that,

05:30 or the drill. And so, Maurie Armstrong was the warrant – the WO 1 RSM Regimental Sergeant Major. And so he said, "Oh you come and join my regiment police." So I ended up being in the regimental police for most of the time, my last, say, year and a bit, at Kapooka. While I was in that job, I did courses. I said before I did exploding mines and different things like that.

06:00 The police used to come up to Kapooka and I'd come down here to Duntroon [Duntroon Military College, Canberra] and I would give them lectures on, if people played with bombs, it's not like today these remote control bombs, they're all only pressure. And the theory was if they carried them, you can carry them out and all that. Well you couldn't do that these days. It's more sophisticated now. But you know, all I'd do was I'd set up all these booby traps and

06:30 blow all these police up. And they found out, what had happened was, my brother Trevor came back from Vietnam and he'd been home for a short period of time. And they sent him to New Zealand to train the New Zealand soldiers. When he got over there he got off the plane in Wanganui and collapsed. And they flew him to Wellington. And they wired me. I was at Kapooka and they said he had viral pneumonia. And very ill. So they flew me over there.

07:00 My brother, my older brother didn't go, but Stephen went and I went and Mum went. But when I got there I found out he had cancer. And it killed him in ten weeks. And I came home. We had arranged for Qantas to put him on the plane and get him home to die in Australia. And I flew home early and I had to go back into Sydney. And then I had to go to Victoria Barracks and

07:30 stay there and wait to meet the plane and things like that. There was – something had to be done. I forget what it was now, something stupid. Anyway, when I got to Victoria Barracks they informed me that he had relapsed. And that they couldn't get him on the plane. So they didn't know what – how long he was going to take to recoup, so they flew me back to Wagga. And I went back to Wagga and I was sitting there that night and the duty officer

08:00 called me. No – actually I was going out with Gail; I was at teachers' college so I went to see Gail. And I told the duty officer where I was at the teachers' college. And anyway, when I was coming out from seeing Gail - they had a curfew at 10 o'clock - when I was coming out I noticed the duty vehicle was there. So one of the other drivers took my car and the duty officer took me back to headquarters.

08:30 and that's when he told me that my brother died. That was amazing because the same night my posting come through for Vietnam. And I said at the time, my mother had – of course after my brother dying and that, she had a nervous breakdown and things like that and I asked for a deferment, a couple of month's deferment, on the posting. And it was

09:00 rejected. Barry, who married Sandra, Barry's father [in-law] was very, knew lots of people and he knew

Andrew Peacock who was Minister of Defence at the time. So he wrote a letter to Andrew Peacock. The next minute, I got ministerialed. And the ministerial, this was 1968, and the ministerial was still August ’75. And so that means I'm going to be sergeant for the rest of my life. And

09:30 there was other things that come around. So I decided, well I’d get out of the army. But before I get out of, say I'm leaving Kapooka, I wanted to get on how I met Gail at Kapooka. Gail was at teachers’ college. And there was some friends of mine playing who played for Australia - Barry Stumbles played in the second row. And we were fairly friendly and he was at the college. And we played this game this day and we played

10:00 teachers’ college and when it was over I said, “Listen, let's go out on the town.” I say that, cos they never had much money. So I said, “I will shout you dinner and we will go to the RSL [Returned and Services League].” So I went and got him a sergeant’s pass that matched his description. And I said, “I will meet you at the Turvey Tavern.” That's a tavern, a hotel in Wagga where they all used to go and drink. So when I met him there, his girlfriend was with him. And his girlfriend brought Gail along. And that’s how I met Gail.

10:30 That night I had to get on a train at midnight and go from Wagga to Sydney because I had to play in the off services rugby in the next couple of days. So we’re having such a good time, next minute I know I had to catch the train. So I grab my bag, gave the car to Gail, and of course she had my car, so when I come back I had to go and see her, didn’t I. So that’s how, I was lucky enough to meet Gail. And eventually it bottled on from there really.

11:00 We ended up being married and having a lovely family, which I will talk about shortly. At that time, when I was doing all that bombs with the police, there was a superintendent, Don Waring. And he was up there in Wagga. And I was talking about him and I was telling him about, I was thinking about giving it up because

11:30 the career was gone. And he said, “Well, why don’t you join the police?” this is the Commonwealth Police, Feds [Federal]. And you still had to be six foot tall; I'm five foot eight and a bit. But they accepted me because of my specialist skills as a bombs person. So that’s when we came to Canberra in 1971. And prior to that we got married. And then we came down here to Canberra and settled in here. In the police I spent three and a half years in the police. In between time, we had

12:00 Belinda, my oldest daughter. And then Emma, the youngest. We settled down her. Gail’s parents lived here, her father still does and he’s ninety six. I stayed three and a bit years in the police. It was very funny coming from a professional organisation like the soldiers then coming into what the police force was them days. It was just chalk and cheese.

12:30 Management skills were null and void. I don't know how I put up with it for that period of time. But anyway, I eventually thought there was no promotion here for me.

What was your role there before you move on?

Oh, mainly guarding embassies or mainly doing things like that. One of my main jobs was The Lodge [the prime ministerial residence]. I was the [undercover] drunk in the park when Billy McMahon was Prime Minister. Sonia McMahon

13:00 is a lovely person, absolutely lovely person. I know she didn’t make the tea and scones, the cook did. But she would bring them down and like, if they weren't there on the weekend, they would allow us to swim in the swimming pool and do all those things. They were wonderful people. She was really good. He was a bit of a fitness fanatic. He was. But anyway, one of my jobs was being the drunk in the park. Old grey coat, beard, paper bag out in the park, that sort of thing. We used to do a lot of guarding of embassies.

13:30 Which was really not much police work really. Different times you did get some. I decided there was no promotion there so I decided to join the public service. And which I did do, Department of Defence originally and post and telecommunications and then Department of Education where I spent twenty years in that job. And as I said, retired fifteen years now. In all I think I worked for thirty five years for the government.

14:00 You know I've been a JP [Justice of the Peace] for thirty one years. Well also, but that’s by the by. My family now consists of, Belinda’s not married but Emma’s married, got two – we got grandkids, Mackenzie and Riley, lovely kids. Mackenzie she's a twelve year old, about time she starting to pull her wings in a little bit, she loves to dance and that's all that’s on her mind. And other things like homework and that’s not. And little Riley’s

14:30 the three year old terror. But he's going to be a brain, a very smart young boy. Not like his grandfather, Gramps. He calls me Gramps. It’s a funny thing, we talk about life. When our children, when they got to fifteen, sixteen years of age, we put them in an exchange program and they went overseas. Emma went to Yugoslavia and

15:00 Belinda went to Indonesia. I've never been over to visit those families that Emma was with. But we did visit the host family that Belinda had. And when we got over there, he was a high bank manager, plenty of good pay and things like that. But I found out while we were there, at the same time I was in Indonesia, as a soldier he was in the Indonesian Army. So there was a chance that

15:30 we could have been in – not that we know that we did. He never confirmed to me that he was in any conflict or anything like that. But we're sitting in the same house talking about the same sort of conflict and we could have been opposite sides and all of a sudden here he is being a great father to my daughter. And so it's funny how cultures sort of change. And they're a wonderful family and we hear from them from time to time. But you know

16:00 how one moment you're on one side of a rifle and then next moment you're – it's a little bit like when you look at Gallipoli and how the Turkish revere the Australian soldiers. And it's probably a very similar....I don't know whether they revered us or were frightened of us, the Indonesians. But I found Pak oh– I can't think of his

16:30 last name. But anyway – so him and I got on really great. So you know, different – all of a sudden you have this cultural complete change, you don't – their life, the way they live is completely different to what they did and how they tried to adapt when I was there, to adapt to the way I lived. How they tried to cook me a steak. And they still put all this horrible sauce over it, instead of having a lovely – you know things like that. But

17:00 I'm just trying to think now, like – after we all worked away and did our normal job, raised our families. At the present moment, it's just recently, my mother and Gail's mother has passed away. As I said, Gail's father is ninety six, he lives here and he's hale and hearty and going great guns.

17:30 So we hope he keeps that up a lot longer. And there's things we've done ever since like, I still played my sport for a period of time. I was an international volleyballer, I was captain of my local golf club, very good club. I don't know why they took somebody like me as their captain but they did. And I do, I play golf as much as I can now. As much as my health

18:00 let's me. I can't go really out on cold days. Because of the lungs. But you know, I don't – my life has been a good one, this has been a really good reflecting exercise for me because of the situation I'm going through. And then I've got, I realise I've got nothing to be disappointed about, yeah. I've done – jeez I've done some things. And there's a friend of mine and

18:30 she's learning, well studying book writing, writing a book and she wants to write my autobiography. And so this sort of thing may be great because when I previously, because of the cancer, I'd lost my voice. Well I got to the stage, I've written pages. Because she wanted me, she wants to write this down. But this will save me I think lots of things now.

19:00 But I'm not quite, you know, I haven't done much in the last fifteen years. I've retired. Which took me ages to talk Gail into retiring. Being a school teacher, she loved teaching. But I'm very pleased now we have a very good life. As you can see, it's the only country in the world - I heard somebody say on the news this morning -

19:30 it's one of the few countries in the world you can come and you can do anything. We had nothing, barefoot kids, and now my children own their own homes. Emma and David own two. And what other country in the world can you do that?

I wonder do you often think about what would have happened had you decided not to go overseas with the army and pursued football?

Yeah I often think, I think you have, you have a fate, you have a lot, you have a thing you are

20:00 put here [for]. I'm not overly religious but I do have my beliefs. I think we are put here to do something. And I obviously done mine. If I – I'd probably – I don't know whether I'd been a success. I was – as a player, as a rugby player, I was a individual, I played fullback and wing. And I was terribly fast and kicked goals. And

20:30 they used to try and talk to me to be more of a team person. And that's what they were talking to me before I went overseas. And the hints were like, you know, you're – we want you to play for us but we want you to play this way. We don't want you to play your way. Maybe – I represented enough, I didn't represent my country in a sense but I did through my services. In the sport. And I played against a lot of very good sides. I toured New Zealand in '69.

21:00 That was just a thank you tour really. And I don't know what would have happened, I probably wouldn't have met Gail, I wouldn't have had the kids. I don't know. Like I've often said to friends of mine we've discussed, a lot of ex-soldiers and sailors and airmen and it was amazing. I always think if I knew I was going to survive I'd have been a lot braver. And

21:30 I think back and I think about, I know my brothers, I know the other three, and I always thought I was a reasonable soldier or I wouldn't have been given the responsibility unless I was. But I always thought that Stephen was a better soldier. He was more – his mind was more set on being like that. And to me he was, that's what I was paid to do. I did it the best I possibly could. But he was, still is, he's

22:00 now an officer in the cadets. Like he does the school cadets and stuff like that. So he's getting on a bit and he still does that. So he had that mind bent. He was always going to be, I think he was always going to be a soldier. Even though he followed the three of us into the army. The recruit people at Kapooka used to say, "No, not another Laverty." But, you know, they have their own families now.

22:30 Barry, Sean who is my godson, that's Barry's son, he was born in Malaya. And Barry, after that, when we were young, our name being Laverty, you used to get a lot of – people used to pick on you, used to call you 'dunny cart'. The Hunter brothers, the people who used to come around and pick up the cans and they used to call you all those names. So you're forever fighting when you were young. And so when Sean was born, or Ari his name, is.

23:00 He changed his name to Ari. Israeli. And Barry said he is not going to have the same trouble we had. He's not going to have the name Laverty, so he changed his name by deed poll and took off the TY. So Barry's name is Barry Laver. And surprisingly enough, Sean ended up being six foot five; six pick handles across the shoulders,

23:30 nobody's going to pick on him. Nobody. But he is a big fella, he's really big. I would not cross him, I wouldn't cross him. So when my mother died - I think as soon as they get organised they're going to change back [by] deed poll to the name Laverty again because Ari's children want that now. They call me 'Godfather' too.

24:00 I don't know how it came up, I think the movie came out and I ended up being "Godfather". But he's – he's like the son I never had. But … yeah as I said, he was down here just recently and him and my brother, and we had a great time. It was a pity I was a bit ill when they were there. But in the middle of the chemo [chemotherapy]. But my younger brother Stephen came down. And we had a great time cos I was, in between doses

24:30 and I was feeling really good. And I'm still – I'm very good now. I enjoy my wine and my golf.

Your wider family is obviously very close and important to you?

Yeah, oh terribly. My whole family is here, my children are here, my grandchildren are here and we're ten minutes from one house to the other. We don't live in each other's pockets. Gail takes care of Riley and

25:00 when Mackenzie was born - Emma's been married twice - they split up and so it was either me go back to work or Emma go back to work straight away because they needed money, they would have lost their house. And so Emma went back to work so I had Mackenzie from a couple of weeks old. Right through, I had her – she was – all day, every day. And which Gail does

25:30 most of the time now with Riley. And the main reason I don't, I still have my time with Riley, I can't get near, too many kiddies, colds and things like that at this moment, especially when I'm on treatment. Cos sometimes your white blood cells can get all over the place. But with Mackenzie, we were very close. We used to – she's an outdoors girl and she loves

26:00 just sitting out in the sun and that's what she's doing now, dancing and doing nothing else. Won't do her homework. But you know, we're lucky in that. And as I said, they've got their great grandfather here too, Gail's father. So we have a lot of family here, we have Gails' aunty here, Roma, Roma Page. And I'll just mention her, I hope she doesn't mind. That she was the wife of Bob Page who was

26:30 lieutenant on the Krait [Australian commando vessel during World War 11] and was terribly unfortunate enough to be headed to Singapore. So you know, the family – our whole family as far as I know go back to the Crimean War. As far as being soldiers. And so does Gail's family. So they're all, you know, I don't think anybody really missed out on the Second World War did they, poor people. If you watch the shows they put on now

27:00 I'd have hated to be in that type of war, jungle warfare was completely different. I'd hate to be – I'd hate to be in Afghanistan or anywhere now is those open plains. Nowhere to hide. I'm assuming the training today of the soldiers would be different. They'd still send them to Canungra or – because that was the toughening up place, but whether they still send them there because the terrain is completely different. Maybe

27:30 if they go to East Timor or places like that, it would be but I can't see any conflict coming up in our neighbourhood for a long time to come. I hope not anyway.

What sort of advice would you give to your grandkids if they were considering a career in the military?

Ah, probably not go – not go to war. Like, we're patriotic people, I am, I'm very Australian.

28:00 We went there and we fought because the government sent us there to fight. Our boys went and fought in Vietnam because they didn't start the war, the government sent us there and our boys were treated, my brothers and that, not me because I didn't go to 'Nam. I was still wear a uniform, I still wear my medals even though I've got a few of them. But when they first came home, even when I came home, we were sort of ostracised in a sense, you know?

28:30 A lot of soldiers wouldn't go out in their uniform when they'd go out at night. They'd come from the barracks and go and get civvies [civilian clothing] on and go. You were always trying to grow your sideburns a little bit longer or your hair a bit longer so you didn't stand out as a soldier because people used to give you a bit of a hard time. If you in any way react, you'd get yourself into trouble. But I don't know,

29:00 I don't think it's easy to say now, I say my war is over. But I'd hate to see the warfare today is just. They fire these things and they can be hundreds of miles away and what chance have you got. Alright, all you do is secure the ground, it's not as if you're – it was like in – the disappointing thing about my – at Borneo and all those other places you patrolled this area and then you had to patrol it

29:30 the next day, and the next day, and the next day, because it was never yours. When you moved out, they moved back in. So you know, it's completely, I don't know the warfare is just different. I'd hate to -- I hope in my lifetime, I'm pretty sure that they won't be going, the kids won't or the grandkids won't be going to a war. But if they do,

30:00 I want them to be in a specialist area. I think we all, maybe like my father, they may have had his disappointment of being rejected. Being told he's essential service and couldn't go away in the Second World War. So they may end up like him or something like that, which was bad luck for him I suppose and he may have not come back from the war. You never know what would have happened.

30:30 I thought, to me, the army life made me – we were four boys, a single mother, it toughened me up. It had an education system and put me through that education system which, especially in Malaya, you'd have a fair bit of spare time and in the army education system was like, you went and done a unit like you do at university. You go and do a unit when that

31:00 unit is complete, it's finished. Now if you did a history unit or a maths unit or whatever it may be you've done it. And it was recorded down so eventually that's how I got university entrance by doing what they call SGCE. Certain, I don't know some grading it was anyway. And that gave you entrance into doing tertiary education. Otherwise, as I said, I left school before I was fourteen, I didn't start til I was seven. So I didn't have a great deal of schooling.

31:30 So I wasn't until much later that, meeting Gail, and she convincing me that I am fairly intelligent and then finding out later that I was – I'm not overly intelligent but smart enough. That all those wasted years and your advice. I've had people ask me what would you do about so and so.

32:00 I'd tell them go back and get your education, it doesn't hurt you. Once you get that bit of paper you can do anything, even go and do an arts degree. If you want to. Or something, just get a bit of paper because you've got to get your foot in the door. Once you get your foot in the door you can prove to anybody you can do anything. And if, I've always said, everybody reaches their incompetency level.

32:30 You always reach an area where you are incompetent. At that stage when you reach that level you move sideways or you move somewhere. And you'll find then that when you move you go up again because you haven't struck that barrier, you're learning something else. And I went from, as I said, from a thirteen and a half year old, fourteen year old painter and decorator to a senior registrar. And if I can do it anybody can do it. And my kids

33:00 at the moment, they both work for the police. Belinda is in Triple 0, she does the emergency calls and stuff like that. She likes doing that. Very smart, Belinda, very smart cookie. Emma is one of the bosses in people strategy, where you do all your industrial relations. She's very good at that too. Our family is

33:30 settled, we don't have to worry about our family any more because as I said, they own their own homes and they're settled fairly well. So all they got to worry about is taking care of me now. Which they do.

Did you have any closing thoughts before we wind up?

Not really. I know there's lots of things I've thought about over the last weeks or so since we started the discussion whether this was going to occur. And there's probably lots of things I haven't

34:00 said. But you know, it does help getting some things off your – as I said before, we as brothers, we hardly talk about it. We might, one night you might have a bit too much to drink, and then we might talk about it. But for some reason or another, we find – and you probably know because you've done these interviews with us old buggers, most of us get teary.

34:30 And I don't know whether it's make up or whether it's from being in a war or being in that situation, that sort of pressures that, it puts -- it makes you a little bit more sensitive. Like I'm so sensitive to news items, I'm sensitive to anything about kids. You know, you can come up and belt me in the head and do – hit me with a stick and you won't get a tear out of me. But if

35:00 it's to do with kids or something like that, you can't help. I don't know whether that's to do with our service. When you think about it, I got out in 1971 and this is 2011 so it's forty years later, isn't it? And it's still, and it's still -- now and again it's still a problem. It's not, it's not always. But if you meet.... like I didn't march on Anzac Day for many, many a year.

35:30 And then Mackenzie one day said, "Can we march?" So we've done that. I do police volunteer work when I'm well enough. I wear my medals and I wear them proudly now. My kids think it's good. If you look at our family there's enough

36:00 medals to go around. None of us – all my three brothers fought in Malaya Borneo. Oh Stephen didn't go to Malaya, but Stephen and – Trevor and Barry fought in both areas, Vietnam. So they had the tough

times, so did Stephen. Stephen was an engineer, a sapper. And trying – he always wanted to be infantry, but he ended up being the sapper. But I always thought he was the best soldier of all of us. But that was

36:30 my opinion and he often. I've told him that. And he said, no, he wouldn't accept that. And sort of in my case I think they've always looked up to me as a leader. I don't know, for little reasons like years ago, Stephen was at a party with his friends and these people gatecrashed the party, about twenty people gatecrashed

37:00 the party, and I was home from leave from the army and I was visiting these people and I was having a drink with the father. Stephen was a lot younger than I, cos I was soldier then. So I just walked out in the middle of the road and I decked [knocked out] the leader and they all went. And so they always thought that was my role. I'm not a violent person or anything like that, but on that occasion.... There's many a time you have to defend yourself. But on that occasion

37:30 if I didn't do it, I could see it turning into a riot. And I'd seen people, big riots before. And so when there's ten or twenty people involved in a fight it's not very nice when there's girls and everything around. So I was always taught the direct attitude, the direct approach was the right attitude. And on that occasion I did. And I think ever since that day going back many years ago, they've always thought that if something was going to be done I'd do it.

38:00 If it was going to be retribution or nemesis taken, I'd take it. And I don't think I would. But we're lucky, we have a wonderful family. My brothers, we are getting closer now – we had sort of grew apart. It's not far from here to Brisbane but I visit there more than they ever visited here because my mother was there. But we're – no I wouldn't, as I said,

38:30 I've got a good family, good extended families, their children are wonderful and I have as a godson, and I have a great god kid – godkids and things like that. And I've had a wonderful time. Thank you very much.

Thank you, it's been a pleasure.

INTERVIEW ENDS