

Australians at War Film Archive

Joseph Vezgoff (Joe) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 28th August 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/671>

Tape 1

00:52 **Joe, firstly thank you very much for talking to the Archive it's a real pleasure and thank you for offering this**

01:00 **opportunity to talk to you. Perhaps we could start, as I suggested, with a summary of your life and if you could begin with telling us where you were born and when?**

Well I was born in Newcastle. My father was Russian and my mother's Polish, and he being in the Railway sort of shifted around a fair bit. So between Newcastle and Sydney was the main childhood years and school years.

01:30 **Where did you go to school?**

The last school was at Cleveland Street High in Sydney.

What did your dad do?

My father was a labourer on the New South Wales Government Railways.

Brothers and sisters?

None, I'm the only one.

And when did you leave school?

I'm not quite sure of the year now, that's one from left field,

02:00 it was fairly early, I think I was about 13 when I left school.

And what did you get up to then?

In what way?

What did you do when I left school?

When I left school I moved down to Wollongong and I spent my teenage years with my aunt at that stage. And there I went into the coal mines. I worked in the coal industry for a few years, back

02:30 before mechanisation, a lot of unrests during that period which probably forced me to join the services because there was a big coal strike in 1949 complaining about dust conditions in the coal industry at that stage, and we were out on strike quite frequently. And I was boarding and always had an interest in the army, I guess and I decided

03:00 to join the army in 1950, January the 13th.

Were you underground in the coal mines?

Yes I was underground. I worked with horses hauling the skips from the coal place, miners working at the coal place, pick and shovel work and so on in those days and I graduated on to driving an electric loco [locomotive] towards the end,

03:30 and that's when I left the industry.

Can you tell us about your early military, where did you join up and what happened next?

Right, I joined up in Sydney and I moved out to Ingleburn where the Recruit Training Unit was and I did my basic infantry training there, and from there I moved into

04:00 1 Battalion which was based just up the road a little bit at Ingleburn and from there the Korean War had broken out and we were told we were going up to reinforce, in Japan.

You joined at what level?

I joined up as a private, and we all went over as privates, the plane load which left Australia. The first plane load of reinforcements. We arrived

04:30 at Hiro eventually and joined our company and there I was promoted to lance corporal in charge of Essonex [?] water and that's the business I had when I moved over to Korea.

What were the major actions you were involved in Korea and what period?

The major actions we had, that I experienced in Korea, was all the lead up actions where we went

05:00 right through from South to North Korea, and I think we were about fifty miles or so from the Yalu River, was the famous river penetrated north. From there we were chased back when the Chinese entered the war and between that and them there were quite a few little skirmishes and actions which we participated in.

So you were involved in the retreat

05:30 **as well as...?**

Oh yes, yes, all the phases of war I suppose.

And did you go right through to the static stage of the war?

I don't think, as far as static goes for the early part of the war there, we were never in one place long enough to draw a real good defensive line because we were either advancing, or retiring or retreating. So one

06:00 marks the area.

So you got a pretty good view of the geography of the grand peninsula?

Yes.

A tour. When did you leave Korea?

I left Korea after I was wounded after the Battle of Maryang San where I was wounded during that particular action and I was carried out by two Chinese prisoners we had at that time. I had some part of shrapnel

06:30 removed in Korea in the American MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] Hospital and then I was flown out to a British hospital in Kure where they operated on my head. I had a bad head wound and then I had three weeks recuperative leave on Iwo Jima, Miyajima sorry, which was a rest camp for the wounded troops.

Were you still a lance corporal?

Oh no I

07:00 became a section leader eventually.

Can you tell us about after you left Korea?

After I left Korea I was posted to the National Service Training Unit, the main one being the 13th National Training Battalion at Ingleburn. We were responsible for training National Servicemen. At that time their length of duty was 3 months. That was fairly

07:30 worthwhile because you could see the complete change from a young, brash young lad 18 coming in, to a pretty well developed young lad when he finished his 3 months training.

You couldn't have been too much older yourself though?

I think I was about 23 I think, at that stage.

When you joined up, did you join up for a specific period of time?

I think it was, it was 3 or 6 years.

So after you were at Ingleburn training what happened?

08:00 After I left Ingleburn I was posted to Malaya. I joined the British Jungle Warfare School at Kota Tinggi as part of an elite group of Australians who stayed there for two years. It was thoroughly enjoyable. All the British units that arrived in Malaya, their advanced parties used to have to go to this jungle warfare

08:30 school, do their 3 weeks training and they would then train their units when they arrived in Malaya. So it was a fairly good system and we also trained Special Branch people, Police, etcetera, who were all part of the anti-communist terrorist operations.

09:00 **So after Malaya?**

After Malaya, I came back and joined 2 Battalion at Holsworthy, served a period of time there and then I was posted to the School of Infantry at Ingleburn which had a Depot company which trained all

09:30 people who left their recruit training areas and had received advanced training under us at Ingleburn before they were posted to the battalions.

Can you give us an idea also of your rise through the ranks up to this point?

When I left the National Service Battalion to go to Malaya to join the British Jungle Warfare School

10:00 I was a sergeant. I was acting platoon commander for the latter part of the 6 months that I was there as a sergeant, and Colonel I B Ferguson was my Commanding Officer in Korea. And then from 2 Battalion I moved to the School of Infantry. And from there, that was about

10:30 1958/59 I was then promoted or due for promotion to warrant officer and I was posted to Kapooka to become company sergeant major of A Company there, but before I arrived there I was told I had been selected to go to Vietnam as part of the first 30 Australians who were due to go there.

What was your rank

11:00 **at that time?**

My rank was still sergeant but I was waiting for my official proclamation of warrant officer class 2.

When did you go to Vietnam for the first time?

To Vietnam?

Yes.

1962 and came back in 63, August.

How long were you there for?

About 12 months, 13 months, going on for 13.

And after you got back from Vietnam?

11:30 I was posted to the Officer Cadet School at Portsea in Victoria where I stayed for about 6 years training potential officer cadet school, officer cadets.

And when did you leave the Regular Army?

Before I left I was moved to Army Headquarters Methods of Instruction Team which was responsible

12:00 for running training courses throughout the army for school instructors and potential leaders in methods of instruction. So when 1970 came I had 20 years service up at that stage, I decided that now's the time to get out while I'm still young enough to get a job outside.

And your major life in civilian life?

My major work

12:30 well I joined John Lysaghts at Port Kembla, which was a fairly big steel plant and company right around Australia. I was mainly recruited to start up a new plant down at Westernport, down in Victoria so, but my main work was, team building, leadership training, safety, etcetera, which was

13:00 industrial training.

And in your personal life when did you first get married?

I first got married about 1953.

Just when you got back from Korea?

Yes, that's right.

And children?

Two children, one boy and one girl.

And I've already mentioned that you went on to have a second marriage and...

Yes a second marriage to

13:30 Patricia who was a doctor, a Doctor of Philosophy, worked at the Wollongong University, now retired and who is now a marriage celebrant.

That more or less brings us up to the present day, does it Joe?

Just about yes.

Thanks very much, that's a good summary. We might go back to your early years and even before that. What sort of bloke was your dad?

14:00 Looking back now at their lives, they arrived in Australia about 1916/17 and there was no Government support in those days sort of thing, like migrants have nowadays and little, well no grasp of the English. They had to learn the language. I think as a consequence I suffered as a kid because they couldn't help me with my school work or homework, those sort of things.

14:30 As far as local friends and that sort of thing goes, was very hard except for myself 'cause I could talk Australian or English as you would call it with my school children, school friends.

Did you act as translator for them sometimes?

Maybe a couple of times. They kept very much to themselves.

Did your mum and dad when they came out here were they together at the time or did they meet out here or?

15:00 Well that's a big mystery to me because I never ever got around to asking them about that until it was too late and they'd both gone.

Whereabouts had they come out from?

My mother came from Poland on a ship and my father came down through China, Vladivostok, down to Australia.

Whereabouts were they from in Poland and Russia?

My father was from a place called

15:30 Tomsk in Russia and I'm not quite sure where my mother came from.

Do you know what brought them either together or independently to Australia?

No idea at all, no idea at all which I'm very sorry to state. Because when you're a young kid you don't sort of ask these questions. Where did you two meet or so forth, etcetera.

It sounds like, did you get to know them as adults when you grew up?

Not really.

16:00 I think I had a pretty harsh childhood growing up which did reflect on my schooling and subsequent career really, because I didn't really gain my Leaving Certificate until I was in the army when I decided to do it in one year.

Relatives out here? Any cousins or uncles and aunties?

I have one cousin; he was in the coal mines all his life.

16:30 He retired about 4 years ago. I still maintain contact with him. And he's about my only close relative in Australia.

And that was on your mother's side or your father's side?

On my father's side.

You come out and were growing up in a fairly tough period around that time and especially with migrant parents? Can you reflect on that time?

It was the Depression era. I remember going to school in

17:00 bare feet, no shoes or when I did get shoes they were probably about three sizes too big so that they'd last longer. There were no bathrooms, the type of houses we lived in, I can't remember a bath. I remember hopping into the copper after the wash had been done to wash. No showers, gas light

17:30 no radio, so there was no entertainment in the home situation.

Did you learn to speak Polish or Russian?

I could speak it originally but it's all gone now. All gone.

What do you remember of the food that was put on your table at that time?

Probably salami and borscht and

18:00 black bread.

This was a very different diet from your friends at school?

Very much different. I can't remember too much fruit as I was saying, as the situation dictates. Very hard living.

How were you treated at school being a son of a migrant family?

Alright, alright, I didn't get any nicknames as such.

18:30 I have no recollection of any problems in that area.

How were you at school? Were you a good student?

Not really because I lost quite a few years of schooling because I had a fractured skull when I was about 7 or 8 which took out about 6 or 7 months of schooling and then I never ever caught up, plus the fact that we were

19:00 shifting around from school to school didn't help me at all. I remember in 5th Class, I had to repeat 5th Class twice.

How did you fracture your skull?

Oh we were kids going down to the bush with an axe and chopping down trees and it threw off the handle and it hit me in the head, but yeah, that really put me behind the eight ball.

How was your home? Was it a happy home between your mum and dad?

Yes, there were no

19:30 arguments that I can recollect. It wasn't a loving sort of situation that I can remember.

It must've been pretty tough you were moving around from house to houses and...

Yes, yes it was difficult and the houses were pretty crummy. The old terraces homes around Redfern and Waterloo and most of those have been demolished now,

20:00 but they were pretty bad.

That would've been a fairly rough part of town, did you learn to look after yourself down that way?

I think it toughened me up a bit. We had our Waterloo Gang and there was the Erskineville Gang and the Surry Hills Gang and that sort of thing. Rock fights and that sort of thing.

What gang were you in?

I said the Waterloo Gang.

20:30 **Who was in the Waterloo Gang?**

Guys of my own age. Not that we got up to too much trouble because we use to amuse ourselves by scaling trams and going into town and going to Luna Park. At that stage there were a lot of Americans in Sydney from the Second World War on leave or based around there. And the Yanks used to treat us

21:00 well you know, they'd throw us some money and we'd go on rides. And then we'd scale a tram on the way back home. By scaling I mean you hop on the back of a tram without paying, that sort of thing.

Can you tell us anything about these Americans that you met at that time?

No really, never got close to them. You'd just stand there looking forlorn and looking at what they were doing. They'd probably take pity on a guy because there's this little

21:30 Aussie kid barefooted and poorly dressed I suppose and unkempt and they probably took pity. Like we all do nowadays if we come across something like that.

What was your impression of the war at that time?

The impression, I think my first impression was before the war when I opened up a paper which my Dad had brought home and there was this big page on the Maginot

22:00 Line in France and I was really fascinated by all the tunnels and bunkers and the guns and so forth, because we were brought up in the war years and there was war pictures everyday in the newspapers and so forth, so one sort of grew up with being indoctrinated in that sense. This caused me I guess to join the National Emergency Services, I became an Air Raid Warden's runner. Which

22:30 was a big thing cause it gave a kid status, you know the armband with NES [National Emergency Services] across it and a tin hat and a gas mask, and you sort of wandered around with the Air Raid Warden. This was a system set up in each district, in each suburb in Sydney, they had their own Air Raid Wardens and runners and their basic task was to ensure that the blackout restrictions were imposed. No lights were shining out through

23:00 windows all that sort of thing.

What did you do to check on all those things?

Well I didn't do too much myself I used to just walk around with the Air Raid Warden and my job was, if there was any damage done or so forth, was to race to the headquarters and report what was going on. I think the most exciting night was when the Japanese submarines came into Sydney Harbour and you could

23:30 hear everything because, everything was pretty low rise in Sydney in those days. There were no tall buildings and the sound that came up from the Harbour, the depth charges sort of came right across and hit us in Waterloo. Searchlights going. It was actually two nights because the night before there was an aeroplane flying over Sydney and there were searchlights going on everywhere and the following night the Japanese submarine sort of came in

24:00 and did their damage.

What were you thinking at the time?

I was only 14 years old, I wasn't drinking.

What were you thinking though?

Oh what was I thinking; oh I thought you said what were you drinking.

What were you thinking though, you know, you must've thought maybe the Japanese were around every corner?

I wasn't greatly worried about it; it was just part of life. It was an experience it was an excitement and I'm involved in it,

24:30 type of thing.

What did you do on that evening? What did you do when you heard the explosions?

I was amazed at the number of people who came out of their houses and stood around on street corners and talking amongst themselves wondering what was going on. And we had to sort of shoo them off and say go back into the houses, it's much safer in there, in case there's bombs dropped and so on. We didn't know what was going on

25:00 ourselves.

Who was the warden you were a runner for?

Who was he?

Yeah.

I wouldn't know him from a bar of soap now. He was just a grown up person. We learnt a bit about first aid and so forth in those days and a little bit about Morse Code. I don't know why because we never had the Morse Code key.

What other work were you doing at the time, you'd left school at that time

25:30 **I believe?**

Right, from there I moved down to Wollongong.

You'd left home?

Yes I'd left home.

How old were you at that time?

I was about 15 when I left home and moved in with my aunt which was the consequence, when I spoke about it earlier, about when I was not very happy and not very restful. And I moved into a...

Where did that restlessness to leave home come from?

26:00 Probably a lack of schooling, a lack of a decent home life I guess, and I moved into my aunt's house which was far different, caring, and I had a cousin there.

Did you mum and dad stay together or?

Oh yes they stayed right to the end. My father died of a cancer and my Mum died of old age.

26:30 **When did your father die?**

1948, 47 - 48. In those days they used to, the notification of your parents death, in my case, I was sleeping on the front veranda at Balgownie and it was about half six in the morning and I knew my father had been sick

27:00 but I didn't realise how sick he was, and this policeman came in and tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Are you Joe Vezgoff?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Your father just died." And with that he turned around and went back to where he came from. Then I had to tell the rest of the household.

How did that affect you at the time?

It was a shock naturally. Being woken

27:30 from a deep sleep, an early morning sleep and saying your father had died and then having to tell his sister, who was my aunt.

As immigrants do you remember discussing or them having any opinion about the fact that Australia going to war?

No I don't think war was ever mentioned at home, and so on.

28:00 Of course we hardly ever had newspapers. We didn't have a radio so our news was pretty scarce.

Were you into reading at the time when you were growing up?

I didn't have many books as a kid unfortunately. It wasn't until I was about 13 or so that I started to buy my own books, little pocket books and I became

28:30 a good reader, avid reader and still am an avid reader.

What were you reading at the time when you were buying those type of books?

It was like a Readers Digest book, it was called the 'Pocket Book' I think it was called in those days. Little stories about different things. The world in general.

And did your mum and dad give you a religious upbringing?

Well they tried to. They were both Catholics and I remember going to Communion and so forth,

29:00 at the Catholic Church near our location, yes.

I'm wondering how you knew about the Anzac tradition?

Well I think when I was at Cleveland Street High School I remember coming out at lunchtime and there was a whole division of soldiers in

29:30 Prince Alfred Park and they were ready to march off to the Middle East I think it was at that stage, and the flash of bayonets, you know when you get a division of troops you know, shouldering their rifles with their bayonets, 'cause they marched through Sydney and then they marched down to the boats, and I thought that's very impressive.

30:00 It had an effect on me and I still see that scene in my mind.

Had you any ambitions to join the army at this stage?

No I didn't not at that stage. It wasn't until I was in Wollongong when I was about 17 years of age I tried to join BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupational Forces], the British Commonwealth Occupational Forces, in Japan but they said you're not old enough, you've got to wait until 18.

Can

30:30 **you tell us a little bit about the conditions you were working in, in the coal mines in Wollongong?**

Dusty, sweaty, wet. I worked in several mines chasing different positions and higher money. Working with animals, in the dark, watching miners at the coal face sweating and perspiring and shovelling coal

31:00 under terrible conditions. Rock falls, mine falls, accidents, yeah it wasn't, they were primitive conditions and the conditions they were fighting for were worth fighting for in those days, dust mainly.

Were you involved, what way were you involved in the union movement at that time?

In the movement?

31:30 **Oh in the actions...**

Well I marched, I went up and marched up in Sydney with the rest of the strikers and stood outside Parliament House and made the same noises all the rest of the group were making, protesting.

Were you genuinely interested or were you just going along because you had to?

I was genuinely interested plus it was a day out with the boys and a free train ride and...

How well did you understand their

32:00 **cause?**

I understood it because I worked in it. I was working in those conditions.

In what way did your sort of decision to join the army, was related to feeling adverse working conditions in the mines?

Well at that stage I was moved up to a mine at Berrima near Bowral, and the 1949 strike had started and that was causing a lot of loss

32:30 of time and wages and I was boarding and so I got out of the mines at that stage and I took on being a brick layer's labourer and I was labouring for three brick layers which sort of was pretty hard work. Then I thought, well I think I might join the army.

Did you, at the time the communist movement was involved with the union movement, did you have any association

33:00 **or knowledge or contact with the communists?**

No I didn't, I was never an avid communist at all.

But were you aware of the communist sympathisers in Australia?

Oh yes, yes, the whole coal mining industry was a sort of communist control.

But knowing your father had left or had left these situations in

33:30 **Europe, did you have any sort of increase in political awareness of the situation of what your mum and dad had left or what was happening in Russia and Poland?**

No, no, I think my mother had a sister in Poland. She used to correspond with her but I never ever knew what was going on. I was never ever told. My father's mother came out to Australia pre war

34:00 and that's about the sum of that part.

What other influences were happening in your life at the time?

Which time was this?

Before your army life, in the coal mines?

Oh before my army life, I played football for Bowral first grade, reserve grade; I played with one of the greats of Rugby

34:30 League, Mul Mulligan, who'd just come back from the 48 tour of England. He was the captain/coach of the Bowral team. So that was enjoyable playing Rugby League. What else, the normal going to dances, you know what a young bloke does, going to dances and having girlfriends and

35:00 so on, yeah.

What were you spending your earnings on?

Well wages weren't that high so board took up most of it and the rest was left over for having a few beers with the boys.

And taking girls out?

Taking girls out.

Did you take any particular out?

Well that's where I met my first wife at Bowral, yes.

35:30 **Can you tell us about that, how you met her and what it happened?**

I met her at the dance. Her name was Dorothy, a lovely girl and we were an item for quite awhile and when I joined the army she decided to break it off and I can see her mother's point of view because her mother was a widow and she had a pretty tough time bring up Dorothy and her

36:00 brother David, and she probably thought what's a brickie's labourer, how is going to provide a good life for my daughter, and she probably had an influence in breaking it off with me. So when I joined the army it was broken off but when I came back from Korea we started up again and then married.

Can you tell us about your decision to join up? Did you discuss this with friends or did you go

36:30 **with a colleague or did you go just off your own back?**

No, I just took it off my own back and said look, I've got to join the army, and this was before even Korea was on the horizon.

How considered was the decision, was that?

It was pretty well considered I think because I had the vision of going to Japan to join the Occupational Forces over there. I saw a means of travelling the

37:00 world, seeing a bit of the world.

Did anything else motivate you, say for instance to go to Japan and the BCOF? What was your motivation there?

Just travelling, getting out of Australia, seeing a new country, that's basically it.

Did you have strong nationalistic instincts or were

37:30 **you following in...?**

Oh no, no, there was nothing on the horizon to make you nationalistic in those days. Of course the army had been run down or running down. It was just after the Second World War and the interim army I think it was called then was just bare bones of a very small group of men.

38:00 **What did you know of BCOF?**

I didn't know so much about, I knew they were occupying Japan and that was about it. It was like, if somebody said what did you know of Korea before you went there? I know at Ingleburn we had our first lecture about Korea and the officer in charge pulled out a National Geographic and said this is all I could find out about

38:30 Korea. He said there are tilers over there. That's always stuck in my mind.

What did you know of the United Nations that had formed after the Second World War?

I didn't know too much about it you know being a young 22 year old lad. Korea was their first big decision wasn't it, for the United Nations to flex their muscle and show they are a force, yeah.

39:00 But I didn't know too much about it.

So how would you describe yourself at this stage in your life?

Oh a happy go lucky, have fun, live for the day and enjoy your mates and try and do as best as you can in what you're doing.

Firm ambitions or anything?

I

39:30 didn't have ambitions. I suppose the only ambitions I had was to do better than most people in my platoon or group or section.

Tape 2

00:31 **Did you know growing up, anyone who was in the army? Did you have any army role models?**

No I didn't. There wasn't anybody that I knew. Oh sorry, of course when I was at Balgownie we used to have welcome home dances for ex-servicemen coming back from New Guinea. The village would put on a dance and give them a little present and welcome home speech and so forth, which was very good.

01:00 But so far as a real role model, no.

When you first joined up and went into camp at Ingleburn it must have been an interesting experience for you then with no army background?

It was, recruit training was always a shock too. Young lads going in, do this, jump, discipline. It was very interesting learning about weapons and tactics

01:30 and that type of thing.

How did you respond to the army discipline?

Very good. Yeah I seemed to be made for it.

What do you mean by that made for it? What is it about your character?

I'm not sure but I was good at taking orders and obeying orders and probably giving orders at the end of my career.

What about the conditions of being in camp?

Conditions in those days when we first joined up were pretty primitive

02:00 to today's standards of barracks. It was just a long hut with a row of beds either side.

What was the main physical training you started doing there to begin with?

The main?

The physical side of the training?

Oh physical side was just the normal route marches, PT [Physical Training] and sports, nothing really strenuous.

Who were the other recruits going into the army at that stage? What mix

02:30 **of people was it that joined up at the early 50?**

A mix of people, there were musicians, there were drifters, there were adventurers, there was a polyglot of mixture.

Which category did you fit into at that time?

I'm not quite sure; it was all an experience.

03:00 I was sort of looking for experience.

Who were you mentors in camp then? Who were the people training you that made an impression on you?

Probably a chap by the name of George Harris, was the, was one of our platoon sergeants, and I guess he became my role model and George went to Korea with us but he was in another company. I tried to get into the same company as George but

03:30 unfortunately they said, "No you stay here. You've got to be in charge of the 2-inch mortar crew." So I said, "Fair enough."

What was it about George Harris that impressed you as a recruit?

He was a very dedicated soldier, ex Second World War. A real soldier soldier, George, unfortunately he's no longer with us, he's gone.

04:00 **What was the relationship between the officer class that were in charge of you and the new folk that were coming in?**

In a training situation it's different. They've got a particular style on leadership. They have to assume and not get too close. It's only on active service that people change. Well you have to change your leadership style according to the situation.

04:30 You know one day say if you're in the reserve area or rest area he becomes one of the boys and sits down and talks or plays cards with you or talks man to man. Where the situation arises, where you've got to race up a hill charging against the enemy it's a different style of leadership. When he says jump, you jump that type of thing.

Were all the other musicians, and drifters and

05:00 **other mix of people in the army so ready to accept this discipline as you were?**

Yes they were, in our particular group.

What was the relationship like between the cadets that were already there and those that were joining up for new bods?

I couldn't see much difference really they were just accepted like we were accepted when we landed in Hiro to join the battalion.

Was there

05:30 **any kind of initiation in joining the army in those days?**

Not really, no, there was no bastardisation or anything like that, as such.

What were you training for at that time? Was there an eye on a possible conflict in Korea do you think?

In the early part we were training for war like any type of training, minor tactics, platoon attacks,

06:00 platoon defensive positions, learning to use all types of weapons.

How well equipped was the Australian Army in those early days of the Regular Army?

Well, we had the same weapons as they had in the Second World War the Owen gun, the Bren gun, the Freyer Free rifle, the Enfield, the 36 grenade, the 2-inch mortar. They were the main weapons we had and trained with.

06:30 **What was your first introduction to the Lee Enfield?**

The first introduction?

Had you used a rifle before that?

No I hadn't no, no.

What did you think when you were handed the rifle to use for the first time?

Well the first time I fired it I thought it goes a powerful kick in the shoulder.

Were you a good shot?

Yes I was a first class shot.

What about bayonet drills and that kind of thing, were they still doing that at that stage?

07:00 Yes, bayonet training was part of the recruit training standards.

How does it feel to be doing a bayonet drill for the first time being confronted with this sort of imaginary enemy in this aggressive type of warfare?

Well you sort of realise that you have to handle your weapon well and perfectly. It's either you or the other person and you've got to be better than the other person. So you have to learn

07:30 apart from bayonet training firing all types of weapons, yeah.

Did you accept that readily? Were you an aggressive young man?

I wouldn't say I was aggressive but I was keen.

What about the notion that it was you or the other man and you might have to kill someone else, was that something you thought about at the time or...?

No, you just become indoctrinated and brainwashed and away you go.

08:00 You just accept it.

What about when that became a reality perhaps later on in Korea?

Well the reality, I think my first reality of how serious it was when I walked past a first aid station and saw five of our people lying under groundsheet with their army boots sticking out and gaiters. You knew they were dead; they were covered up fully,

08:30 and the realisation came that boy, this is - this is serious stuff.

How did that affect your feelings about what you were doing when you saw that sight?

I don't think it affected me that much but the realisation came that you could be one of those people.

What about the first time you were confronted with an enemy in a kind of you or them situation?

09:00 Well normally in a situation like that everything is happening so fast that you don't have time to really think. All you have time for is to implement your training and if somebody says go there or move around there, you just do it or you yell out, "You move there," and people jump, that's part of training.

Training and that indoctrination obviously is very powerful but after the event either at the time or

09:30 **later on in your life, have you reflected on that, on that question?**

Well I remember one time in Korea, well the first time I think that we were going on a patrol with an American tank and we were in trucks near Pakchon and we were ambushed and we were machine gunned. The truck was machine gunned. There were about 19 or 20 people on this truck

10:00 and the aim, or the shots flew from the front of the engine right to the rear and riddled the tyres and the side of the truck but didn't hit anybody. That was the first close call that I had.

We'll come back and pick up the training stuff in a minute but we might just talk about that for a minute. Can you take us through that day

10:30 **when this ambush took place?**

Right, what was happening, we were told that our mission was to go up this road to see where the enemy was. At that stage they were North Koreans. This was as far as we ever penetrated into North Korea and we had this escort, an American tank, with us and then we were ambushed. We hopped out and I was in charge of the 2-inch mortar at that time, and we

11:00 let a few off from the side of the road and then the tank fired a few shots into this hillside then we moved up in an extended line, bayonets fixed and when we got up there we found two dead enemy.

Killed by your mortars?

I'm not sure; it could've been the tank fire. They had no weapons apparently they had been taken by

11:30 the rest that were there.

What goes through your mind when you're suddenly under attack for the first time?

I think it's like driving a car you're not going to have the accident, somebody else is, and somebody may get hit and you just say, well tough luck. You don't think you're going to get hit although it's probably always there at the back of your mind. The feeling

12:00 is still there but in the heat of battle you haven't got time to think about these things too much. It's only when you stop, it's like the second time when I got hit through my backpack that I was carrying, my forward scout, it was later in the afternoon about 5 or half past 5 in the afternoon. It was in the middle of winter, the snow was about half a metre

12:30 thick and my forward scout called me up and he said, "I think I saw some movement up ahead." Now I was carrying an Owen gun. I was the second commander at that stage and I said, "Okay Duke," his name was Duke King, I said, "Where is this movement?" He pointed and I said, "Show us your rifle." So he gave me his rifle and I gave him my Owen gun because my Owen gun was only a short range weapon and I

13:00 let fly at where I thought this person was. And immediately it felt as if a hand had picked me up by the shoulders and threw me back down the hill. And, if the sights had been probably lowered a little bit I would've got it between the eyes. Anyway it was too late to do anything. I scrambled back and pulled the section back it was a bit too late to do anymore that evening. Darkness

13:30 was descending and I think I, I didn't know much about shock in those days but I managed to move away from the group and got behind a rock and I started to shake. I was suffering from shock there was no doubt about that. When I started to realise, you see I nearly got killed then, another inch and I would've been dead. So I stood there, sorry I sat there

14:00 for awhile until I overcame this, and I moved back into the section area and resumed what I was doing.

Did it come back to you at times this shaking or shock?

No, probably another time when a Chinese grenade landed between my feet. We were climbing up this very sharp pinch and there was a Chinese outpost raining grenades on us and I did a tap dance which would have done

14:30 Fred Astaire a bit of competition, and I kicked it down the hill further. But I didn't suffer shock from that. One of our chaps got creased across the head with a bullet, but after that I was okay.

Is there a network you can talk to in the army at that time?

No there was no such thing as counsellors if that's what you're referring to. Even when we

15:00 came back, I remember coming back at Mascot and it was raining, which was far different to our departure where TV cameras and press and so forth were waving us goodbye. It was a wet rainy day I arrived back at Mascot, and a cranky old warrant officer said, "Okay hop in the back of the truck." and took me out to

15:30 Marrickville. It was far different to the original departure but there was no counselling, no.

Obviously counselling's quite a modern thing, especially post Vietnam it's come in but at the time could you perhaps go to your commanding officer or was there someone you could talk to if you needed to?

I suppose there could've been and I think a few of the guys did do that when they

16:00 probably said they can't stand anymore. It's either that or they shot themselves in the foot or blew a finger off to get out of that situation.

Was it ever a case that as a section commander you had to talk to any of your men about things?

Not, not really, no. They kept, in those days; they kept their feelings to themselves pretty well much,

16:30 in that way.

Just going back to those two incidents, we'll deal with one then the other, getting shot through the backpack, what can you hear of, you mentioned it was just like getting pulled back down the hill, what could you hear or see when that bullet went past you?

You didn't hear it. I mean, the one that hits you, you never hear. It's the one that goes over your head or to the side you hear it go crack over your head.

17:00 It's the ones that you don't hear are the problem ones.

Was that a saying you knew about beforehand or was that something you've learnt from experience?

Sorry?

Did you know about this about not knowing about the bullet that hits you?

Oh yes, yes, you often hear these tales, 'don't worry about the ones you hear, it's the ones you don't hear'.

So what happened immediately after, then you found yourself sort of lying down at the bottom of this hill?

Well regroup

17:30 and pull my forward scout back and we go up on the other side of the hill under cover. That's when I went through my shock stage and then got over that and settled the section back into their defensive positions and dug in.

When was the realisation that you had been shot for a start? You didn't realise that immediately?

Oh when I took the pack off and saw the bullet hole through it.

What did that look like?

It

18:00 was just a jagged tear through the two man tent I was carrying, yeah.

Was there extra pressure on you not to be a shaky mess at that time being in command of a section?

No you don't feel the pressure, you just do your job you know, what you were trained for. It was more, I guess being a section commander in active service in those days, in the early stages

18:30 you were, it was on the job training type thing. Whereas as the war progressed they had their NCOs [Non Commissioned Officer] battle schools back in rear echelons where they trained NCOs in tactics and that type of thing. But the original guys, it was on the job training.

I want to talk a bit about training. You mentioned when the ambush happened at Pakchon this was the first time you'd been shot, or

19:00 **the first time you'd had a close call, training comes into it then you do what you're trained to do. What is your first thought then when you were in that truck?**

Well the first thought was if I jump out first I'm going to have 19 blokes landing on top of me or if I'm the last one out I might get shot so I probably jumped out in the middle somewhere in the group.

And what did training demand you do then?

19:30 Well you just take cover and try and note where the firing's coming from and then you wait for your platoon command to issue out orders and what to do. So we lined up then for a platoon attack.

How are orders given or received in a state of confusion like that?

Well, a very loud voice so people can hear over the noise of battle. It's like leadership, situation leadership, your leadership style

20:00 is dictated under what circumstances you are in. If it's a dangerous situation people expect firm orders given and the person fully in control of that situation so whatever he says you do because you know that your life is in his hands and you've got to obey him, yeah.

You were on a mortar, 2-inch mortar at that stage?

Mm.

20:30 **So what sort of orders would you have been given?**

Oh right it's hard to remember 50 odd years ago.

That's sort of why I asked generally but what...

Okay, Shuftie. Shuftie was a marvellous character. He was a Second World War digger and inside his mortar he would carry cigarettes and handkerchiefs, biscuits, pens, socks and so forth, so it took about 5 minutes to empty

21:00 this mortar out. That was the second occasion and the first occasion happened when we, at the Battle of

the Apple Orchard. I was still 2IC [Second In Command] in charge of the mortar and we saw these North Koreans running across this rice field and between us and the enemy

21:30 below us was this American tank and our company commander talking to this tank commander telling him to fire, where the enemy was. So I said to Shuftie, "Okay Shuftie there's some enemy there, over up and beyond where the tank is, let's fire some rounds." This was the first occasion with the socks and the chocolates and cigarettes and, came out and we'd been

22:00 carrying these mortars around for quite a few weeks under all sorts of weather conditions and the cartridges had become somewhat damp, and we let one go and it made a big bang. It went sort of pop and we watched in amazement as this mortar sort of slowly climbed up out of the 2-inch mortar and heading towards our company commander and it landed near the tank and the tank commander yelled out,

22:30 we could hear him, "God damn the gooks [slang term for Asian soldiers] are mortaring us!" So the tank went west and the company commander went east and we went north. So we left the rest of the mortar bombs there, they were fairly well useless, we wouldn't use them again.

What is your role then if your mortars aren't working?

Get rid of them and wait for a resupply, yeah.

While we're on that, can you just describe the 2-inch mortar for us,

23:00 **for someone who's never used or seen one before?**

Well I'll use my hands. A 2-inch mortar is about that long, it's about that round and it fires a bomb which either, the explosion sets a detent off which then makes the front active so when it lands it explodes.

23:30 Yeah, a pretty useful piece of weaponry really.

It's also quite heavy. There's a base pipe as well?

No, no, it's all in one piece.

And it's basically just a tubular firing...

Yeah, mm, it's good for flares at night time or when they were under attack, it provides good illumination. It's good for that.

How did you carry all this around? You must've had quite a few mortars.

24:00 Yes, the weight factor was always a big problem for us. Of course the hills are fairly high; you've probably seen pictures of Korea. I've actually seen a chap on [(UNCLEAR)] up his pack, we were having a rest halfway up and I sent him with 5 boxes of matches to lighten his load and he felt a lot better for it.

24:30 **Was that a psychological thing?**

I think it was.

Would you ever be able to get rid of your mortars to lighten your load?

No, no not really, you had your 6, 12 rounds yeah.

How were they carried?

They were in cartons, cartons of, if I can remember 6 in a carton, yeah.

And what had happened to the mortars that you'd used at the Apple Orchard that time

25:00 **what was wrong with them?**

Well as mentioned we'd been carrying these mortars around under all sorts of weather conditions and the moisture had got it and affected the cartridges, yeah.

The quarter light or whatever it was, wouldn't function?

Yeah, mm, it was like a shotgun cartridge, the base became damp.

Is that a problem that was widespread in the Korean campaign?

It was widespread in our group. I don't know about the rest of the

25:30 battalion.

How many times did you have to deal with faulty equipment?

I think that was the only occasion. The rest of the weapons we had were fairly basic and the Bren gun

hardly ever malfunctioned the Owen gun was a good weapon. The rifle, there was no problem with the rifle.

I want to go back because we've skipped over stuff and we will come back and discuss a little bit more about these engagements, but

26:00 **you mentioned training comes into it straight away. By the time you arrive in Korea you're trained up well enough for you to go straight back to that training in an ambush for instances in Pakchon. What training drills in Ingleburn or in Japan before you went to Korea established that in your mind?**

Well digging in, defensive positions, platoon positions, patrolling, laying minefields, that was fairly basic stuff which we learnt at Ingleburn.

26:30 We had a pretty intensive 3 or 4 weeks training in Japan once we got there. Long route marches got us physically fit. 13 or 14 miles at a time. All sorts of weather conditions there also, digging in, and defensive positions patrolling and I think by the time we got to Korea we were pretty well trained.

At what point, because the Korean War

27:00 **started about 4 or 5 months after you joined, at what point did your training start to encompass the patrolling for instance that you might do in a Korean campaign?**

Not so much, it was fairly basic at Ingleburn, yeah.

And later in Japan?

Yeah, and later in Japan. I think that the patrolling really didn't come into its own

27:30 until it became sort of, later on in the Korean War when they were doing lots of patrolling and defensive positions, from defensive positions.

Is it fair to say then that all your training was based on Second World War experience?

Yes, I think that was the last war where you had a front line with the Korean War. Nowadays everywhere is a front line. Malaya, Vietnam

28:00 etcetera.

You mentioned your story about your instructor with the National Geographic, when was the first time you heard about the Korean campaign? Do you remember it breaking out?

Only what the newspapers were saying, the 77 Squadron was in action. The perimeter around Pusan was tightening up, that's all we knew about it.

28:30 **You hadn't joined the army specifically to go to war but it must've looked very much like that was going to happen. How did you feel about suddenly being in a front line situation?**

It didn't worry me, you're a soldier, you do what you're trained to do and you just accept it.

I'm not suggesting necessarily it have worried you but it must've maybe excited you or...?

There was a lot of excitement, yes, definitely

29:00 flying to Japan, first time I'd ever been in an aeroplane. First time I'd been on a big ship when we left Japan to land on Pusan. Landing in Korea. Yeah it was all a big adventure, yeah.

Can you take us through that plane ride out to Japan and that leaving, was that a big emotional occasion for you?

29:30 Not really it was a wet day leaving Japan, boarding. I remember the food wasn't that good. We had sandwiches I think aboard the ship, and I can't remember too much about the boat ride really.

Had you been married by this stage?

No, no, I was still single.

Were you in a relationship with your wife to be?

No, no.

30:00 **So who saw you off when you went to the airport?**

Nobody, a lot of reporters and newsreel people that's about all. No close relatives.

What was your impression then to arrive in Japan this first foreign place you'd ever seen?

Sort of new, you know you look at people; you look at how they're dressed.

30:30 You look at the buildings; you look at the paddy fields. How people live and you're like a big blotter, you

soak it all up. And you enjoy it, it's new, it's exciting, it was.

How much was the residue of the war in evidence in Japan that you saw?

Not so much, I was quite amazed when I went to Hiroshima at the lack of damage.

31:00 This was 1950, that there was hardly, or 51, that there was hardly any damage visible. Houses had sprung up quite quickly. Yeah.

When did you get to go to Hiroshima?

I passed through there after I was wounded. I passed through there on my way to Miyajima which was a convalescent place, a little island on the Japan Sea.

31:30 **Where was your training conducted when you first arrived in Japan?**

Where was the training conducted, about 14 miles away from our main camp, up in the hills in rugged country in open countries, yes.

What was the purpose of that training specifically?

Just to toughen us up, get us fit. Make sure that our tactics were right.

32:00 Train the platoon commanders in control of their platoons, section commanders in control of the sections. Getting our communications working, our wireless sets, signals, operating as a battalion, yeah, which it achieved quite well.

What role did you have at that stage?

At that stage I was lance corporal in charge of the mortar.

32:30 **This was after you had tried to change company or changed company to be with George Harris? What was that?**

That was before I'd tried to change. As soon as I landed in Hiro I approached the company commander and I said I wanted to join A Company where my old platoon sergeant is. That's when I was offered the stripe, so,

33:00 being mercenary, and wanted to advance and the fact that I didn't have to wear the one stripe if I was in Korea because you know, people who wear one stripe it just sort of looks lonely.

The war was really going on at that stage when you were in Japan, did you hear about where you would be deployed or what were the overall strategic aims at the time?

Well we never got any information of where we were going

33:30 to be put, to be placed, what our role was going to be 'cause before we got on - arrived there, China had started [General] MacArthur's big plan of cutting off the North Koreans and we didn't know what our role was. We thought the war will be over soon and we'll just end up doing a bit of mopping up and then come back.

34:00 **What was the reaction among your men to the Inchon landings?**

Oh good, yeah, it was a masterpiece, a master stroke of MacArthur's.

When you say you thought the war would be over did it look like after Inchon that it was going to be a UN [United Nations] victory?

It did because we chased the remnants of the North Koreans right through into North Korea had a lot of actions on the way through, and as I said, we got near the Yalu River before we were chased back

34:30 by huge numbers.

Which is another story, or this part of the story that's coming. Where did you land then when you took the ship over to Korea?

We landed at Pusan Harbour, I think. We were met by an American band and lovely ladies dressed in their national costumes who handed out flowers and so forth to our commanding officer. We were put on cattle trucks and shunted off to the railway station and

35:00 I think we caught the train to a place called Taegu where we disembarked and started the operations from there. Our initial couple of weeks was mainly acclimatising by climbing big hills, big mountains, not hills, they're mountains and learning to operate as a battalion.

How was the climate?

Climate was

35:30 from very hot to very cold. You had snow in winter and very hot in summer. So you had the extremes.

And what was it like when you arrived?

September, it was just approaching late autumn I suppose, early autumn.

36:00 **Did you have any problems adapting to the environment in Korea in any way?**

Not really, I think you get used to living in a hole in the ground after awhile. It's being soaking wet is the problem at times when you arrive and you may be caught in a rainstorm or squall, and then having to

36:30 dig into that position, and then you have to organise sentry duties and so forth amongst your section, amongst other things. Assign defensive positions and then dig a hole and try and see the night out as comfortable as possible.

How mobile was the situation when you moved into it?

We didn't have our own transport.

37:00 We had to rely on the Americans' trucks most of the time but whenever we were the forward battalion we were provided with transport and moved forward that way. Disembark, attack a hill, dig in, then maybe the next battalion would pass through you and they'd take the lead position.

Was there a sense of a conquering army? What

37:30 **was the morale like?**

The morale was very good because we had lots of little victories on the way up. Good actions, no defeats as such and I think our main big morale - main big morale booster was the Battle of the Apple Orchard where we sort of retrieved or saved an American parachute battalion or regiment which

38:00 had been nearly cut off and we were fortunate to surprise the North Koreans and hit them from behind. So that was a big victory for the commanding officer and gave the battalion a boost of its ability.

That's the action where your mortars failed to work?

That's right, yeah.

What part did you play in it after that?

Well

38:30 after that it was mainly the platoon went off and did their charge up through the orchard with their bayonets flashing in the sunlight and then regrouping after that and I rejoined the platoon with 50 and co. and we dug in, and by that stage we had captured a couple hundred enemy prisoners and they were sent off

39:00 back down the road. There was a lot of chaos going on at that stage and nobody knew what was going on except that we were managing to kill people and capture people. I think we only had about four casualties ourselves.

We have to change the tape.

Tape 3

00:31 **You mentioned Shuftie, could you tell us a bit more about the blokes you were in the platoon with? Well any other characters that come to mind?**

Yeah my 2IC [Second In Command] was a chap by the name of George Long. George was Chinese/Australian born and a fine lad, a fine soldier and George and I often shared

01:00 the same foxhole. I met George back at Ingleburn before we went over there and we'd go around to a Chinese restaurant and we'd order Chinese food and George would order steak and eggs, and the Chinese waiters would sort of scratch their heads and wonder what this guy was all about. But anyway, George was eventually killed back in Australia, in a road accident

01:30 shortly after coming back from Korea. He crashed his car. But George was the sort of guy that when he was on sentry duty at night time, and of course being Chinese, you'd have to crawl around to the next foxhole and he'd sort of pre-warn them that he was coming and not to shoot him. He'd say, "Do you want to buy a truck load of bootlaces.

02:00 I'm seeling bootlaces tonight." "Oh get stuffed George." So George would hand over the watch, the section watch to the next chap to do his sentry duty on the front. Yes, George was a fine Australian.

What problems did he have of being of Chinese origin apart from the sentry duty one you mentioned?

The only

02:30 problem he had, he had a good sense of humour, George. Whether it was a defensive mechanism or not I'm not quite sure but I never ever saw George suffer any remorse or anger. He was the same guy right throughout the campaign. Highly respected.

Was he able to speak Chinese?

I'm not sure about that, no.

That played no part in his career in this war?

No. Oh George and I were out on forward outpost at

03:00 one stage in front of the battalion, the only two right out the front, and there was a message got back that there was a Russian and a Chinese who were our forward outpost out there. That was a standing joke with the battalion later on. It become sort of folklore.

Was the Russian tag something that came up?

No, no, not really no, 'cause I used to swear and curse like any good Aussie did in those days.

03:30 **Who were your other close fighting companions?**

George Maul he was, he came back a bit early to go to the Officer Cadet School. George was a lance corporal at that stage and I still maintain contact with George every Anzac Day. Brian Heedon ended up getting a bit of shrapnel in his back. He was

04:00 evacuated early. He ended being a sergeant and he died of a heart attack later on.

Your platoon commander was a chap by the name of Morrison is that right?

Yeah, well I had quite a few platoon commanders. I served under three battalion commanders about five company commanders and about four platoon commanders. Yeah.

Which of those

04:30 **made the greatest impression on you as a young recruit?**

This is a hard question to answer because they all served at different periods of time in Korea. Jock McCormack who was a Scotsman, Jock, unfortunately I got him the sack

05:00 which is an unusual story because, I'll probably tell you now. I came back from leave from Tokyo and I had a big pack of Suntory whisky so I invited him for a drink with a few other guys from the platoon and Jock not being used to Scotch after being absent from it for a number of months, went down and started to abuse our company

05:30 commander. He was a fine company commander, Reg Saunders, the only Aboriginal officer in the Australian Army. And he called Reg a black bastard and I didn't hear about this till later on. He then, Reg sort of said to him, "You're under open arrest. Take off your boots and get back up the hill. I'll see you tomorrow." And Jock sort of ignored this and wandered down to the Kiwi [New Zealand] field artillery unit at the back

06:00 and started to give them fire orders. And then they got rid of Jock and that was the last I saw of Jock until 1956 in Malaya. But Jock at this stage was a major and he was stationed in Singapore and he rang me up at the Jungle Warfare School I was at, and he said, "Hey Joe, is that you?" I said, "Yeah." He goes, "Do you feel like a whisky?"

06:30 So I said, "Yeah." So I went down to Singapore and we had a few whiskys and the full story came out why he called poor old Reg a black bastard. And I said, "What's the story?" He said, "Well when I arrived the sergeant major yelled out to Reg Saunders there's a

07:00 new officer joining our company. I think he's from the UK." And Reg says, 'Christ, not another Pommy bastard.' And calling a Scotsman a Pommy sort of played on Jock's mind and that was Jock's story of why he didn't like Reg Saunders. I saw Jock McCormack a few months ago up in Canberra, yeah.

What about Reg Saunders,

07:30 **he's quite a famous figure because of his Aboriginality?**

He was a very good company commander, Reg. He mixed well with the troops and he moved around and was a good tactician.

What dealings did you have with him on a...?

Not, the only personal dealings I had with Reg was with just before the Kapyong battle when we were going to get together with the Turks and celebrate Anzac Day, a sporting

08:00 fixture, and some wreath laying and so on and Reg wanted me to organise a soccer game. I'd never played soccer in my life but I said okay and before we could do that we moved out, up to Kapyong Valley. But I met him a couple of times back in Australia. Yeah.

He must've been quite an impressive person to overcome

08:30 **the prejudices that were in Australia at the time?**

Yes it was, he was impressive as a man, as a soldier, but I won't go into what happened to him after.

You mentioned sentry duties and foxholes and stuff, could you explain a bit about how you were operating at the time and how you dug in and what you

09:00 **did?**

Okay, your battalion commander lobs up on top of the hill which you're going to defend and he gives you your area of responsibility and he says that's your section area there, 1 Section there, 2 Section over there, 3 Section to the rear, the platoon headquarters to be in the middle. So then you get your section and you site your Bren gun on its most tactical position. You then spread your rifle

09:30 groups around the perimeter and yourself slightly to the rear where you can see your section, and you dig in immediately. Because you never know if you're going to get mortared, or shelled or attacked straight away. So once that's done, you then dig your latrine pit, you then organise your sentries for the night, your orders group, what's going to happen tomorrow.

10:00 Yeah, so it's a pretty active period.

Can you describe the foxholes you dug and what sort of accommodation they provided?

Well a foxhole is normally chest high where you can lean out the parapet with your weapon. And it's about that wide and probably about the length of your body

10:30 and it can be longer for a two man or three man area, and the dirt you dig out you sort of spread out well over the front so it doesn't form a barrier where bullets can penetrate and also give away your position. And you camouflage as best as you possibly can. You dig rubbish holes for your ration

11:00 tins so they're buried, hygiene purposes. And yeah, that's about it.

Were you particularly vulnerable from enemy attack while digging in?

Oh you could be, yes, that's why it's such an emergency that once you occupy a feature that you dig in and if it's an enemy feature obviously their defensive position is facing the wrong way

11:30 anyway, and you have to sort of dig in on what would be their reverse position on the hill, on the knoll. But sometimes you can utilise, or we did utilise some of their foxholes. But their foxholes in a lot of the cases, the Chinese fellows had dug small bore hole type foxholes where they just sort of slide in.

What

12:00 **sort of kip or sleep could you get in a foxhole?**

Not much if you have, it depends on the stand to, if it's a 50 percent stand to that means you only get half the nights sleep. Or if it's one sentry per section and your section is down to about maybe 6 men or 5 men that means a sentry's duty would be

12:30 for about one hour, each person, and then he'd pass the watch on to the next so forth. So there was a problem of lack of sleep right throughout the campaign. Or if it's a 100 percent stand to, where everybody's awake all night, that's under very dicey conditions, you get no sleep.

What situation would be a hundred percent stand to?

Well Kapyong was one, Maryang San was probably another one.

13:00 They were the two main battle areas. There were some false alarm areas somewhere where you had to do 100 percent. Near Pakchon was a hundred percent stand to where A Company was overrun and had to pass through our positions. They were pulled out in the middle of the night which was a bad tactical situation.

How did the troops deal with that sleep deprivation?

13:30 Whenever there was a stop or in the truck. The truck would be jolting you know, going up the road and you'd see people nodding and catching their little siesta. It's amazing where you can sleep. You can sleep standing up and you can sleep, walking also.

Were you ever sleep walking?

No, no, once yeah, but only on an exercise up in Queensland one

14:00 time where I actually fell asleep carrying a ration, big ration pack and I walked into a tree.

What does it do to your nerves and your relationship between people when you're that tired and...?

The relationship in the section, you probably think the nerves would be frayed. They blow off steam, maybe in a rest area somewhere,

14:30 they'd gather around a camp fire and tell yarns for three or four hours and joke and so forth, and talk about their experiences in Japan or on leave and so forth, yeah. But there were several cases where people went off the rails, yes.

Any specific ones you'd care to share?

Oh people chewing off a finger to get. I think that in my time in Korea

15:00 13 months, in our platoon there were three instances but they're very hard to prove, but you know.

Was that an accepted thing?

No it wasn't, it's a court martial offence really. It's called a SIW, Self Inflicted Wounds but probably a

15:30 bit hard to prove.

And so they left in disgrace but not on a court martial?

Yes, there was one chap, he's dead now, I probably won't mention his name, but it played on his mind once he got back from Korea that he did this sort of thing. He spoke to me at 13th National Australian Battalion when I was there. He said he was very, very sorry.

16:00 He admitted it but it made him feel better that he got it off his chest.

In a foxhole you have quite a lot of equipment too, what's with you at the time?

Well you have your transient material you have your weapon, you have your magazines, you have your hand grenades, your pack, sleeping gear.

And how does all that fit in there with you?

16:30 Well at the time you wear most of it. I know that in the depths of winter in Korea that I used to go to bed with a pair of socks, boots, long John L Sullivan type underwear, service dress, trousers, another pair of windproof trousers, John L Sullivan singlet, a shirt, a service dress jacket, a

17:00 windproof jacket and an overcoat if you had your overcoat with you, and then you crawl into your sleeping bag and still shiver.

What protection from the weather above was there?

Well you just had your poncho or half man tent which you would clip up together to form a small two man tent but you couldn't use them on all occasions depending on the activity at the front.

17:30 So you'd just make a sort of lean-to over your foxhole to keep the elements out.

What were they called those lean-tos?

Oh hoochies or two man tents.

Because hoochies, can you describe the more permanent set ups they had in Korea later?

Yes, hoochies could be anything from a small little lean to a something more substantive, yes.

18:00 **Can you explain what it's like to be out on sentry duty?**

Sentry duty, you do it in Korea, you do it from your foxhole, the section front, so you just stand up in your pit and you peer out the front all the time. Keep looking at your watch and then when it's time to hand over you wake the next guy up.

18:30 **What are you looking for?**

Movement, lights, noises, anything like that.

Was there an occasion when you were on sentry duty when you had to report movement or light?

There was but it was an embarrassing one. We weren't told there were Americans to our front and one stage, this was early on,

19:00 and I was on sentry duty and I saw all these lights moving down across my front. So I woke up my platoon commander and I said, because I could see Chinese holding lanterns coming down the hill. So I

woke up the platoon commander and I said, "Look we're going to be attacked soon, there's

19:30 a large enemy force coming towards us." and I nearly had him convinced until somebody else had a look and said, "No they were flares." which had been dropped by American planes across our front, across the American front which were in front of us. The longer I looked at these I could definitely see a hand holding these lanterns. It was very embarrassing.

Embarrassing

20:00 **in hindsight but not at the time?**

No, no at the time I thought I was doing the right thing.

Also it must've been quite frightening?

Oh no, that's enemy we've got to do something about it.

What would happen if, maybe not personally, you had to give the warning but what would happen if the sentry gave a message to the platoon commander and there was something?

Well he'd alert all the section commanders

20:30 stand to and he'd alert the company commander and the company would then stand to, everybody would stand to and just await what was going to eventuate.

What are you doing at stand to?

Stand to, you have your weapon handy, you have your magazine handy, your grenades handy, you make sure everybody in the section is alert and standing to, move around talk to them and prepare them.

21:00 **In one of the battles you took part in, was this, were you fighting from foxholes or was there ever an occasion you had to use your weapon in that situation?**

There was, Kapyong was one, but we didn't have foxholes because we were on the ridge line which was sort of very rocky and you couldn't dig. So you had to gather rocks and stones and form a sort of a wall in front of you to give you some type of protection.

21:30 **Perhaps you can take us through Kapyong because that was quite an important strategic battle, what was the operation? How did it start and what was your involvement in it?**

Well we were in the rest area on this particular day just before we were supposed to liaise with the Turkish troops and we were told right move, pack up, we're moving upfront. Because we'd

22:00 expected to have another couple of weeks in the reserve area. So boarded trucks and moved up the road and as we were moving up the road we saw all these South Korean troops going the other way. Some were divesting themselves with their equipment, some were taking off boots and putting on something more comfortable to walk in or run in I guess, and it looked dispiriting and we wondered what the hell was going on.

22:30 It was the 6th ROK Division and they were obviously the rear element of the division and they were just sort of evacuating very quickly. Anyway, we moved through this group of people and eventually arrived at Kapyong which wasn't that far up the road. And moved up the ridge lines and occupied our company positions.

What was at Kapyong?

Kapyong, there were a few little local, a

23:00 little local village there, not like it is today, and very hilly country. Below us there was a little river, stream, a bit of flat ground where the road ran through the valley. It was getting quite dark at this stage and that's when we heard all the movement. The refugees,

23:30 there was continuous movement going down below us. Some of the platoon which I was with, we were on the lower edges of our spur line and we were located behind A Company. A Company, they were the ones that copped all the flak, most of the flak. And above them was D Company, B Company was across the road occupying a separate piece of ground.

24:00 So the night sort of came and shots were fired.

You were unable to dig in you mentioned because you were on the ridges. Can you explain the topography of where you were?

It was hard rocky ground, hard with scrubby trees, rocky ground, rocks, no soil and this ridge line extended right up to the top where D Company

24:30 was, so that's what the ground was like. In some parts, obviously, I think, people were able to dig a little bit. Get in between crevices and between rock formations and form some sort of defensive positions but mostly was seen as rock walls.

What were your orders at nightfall, that night?

Our order was prepare for the enemy.

25:00 I think our battalion was probably holding a three battalion front. We were last out and there were gaps everywhere and the Chinese were just coming down through the valley and coming behind and they got into Battalion Headquarters and support company and yeah we were very thinly spread.

I mean with all those people running, retreating you must've known something

25:30 **big was going on?**

Oh yes, we realised that something bad had happened up the front, something had collapsed. We knew the 6th ROK [republic of Korea] Division, which we didn't have much faith in anyway, the South Koreans unfortunately. And they broke and we were rushed up to fill up the holding gap

Were you aware how outnumbered you

26:00 **would be?**

No, it must have been pretty big if a full division were held here, you know, not a full battalion, but it didn't seem to worry us. At that stage the morale was high and we were prepared to stick it and fight it out.

What happened as that night came on from your perspective, can you take us through it?

Yeah, C Company was fairly lucky being a

26:30 reserve company. Our main task was to, in case if A Company was overrun we'd move and retake that position or D Company's position or B Company's position so we were the reserve company. The night became quite noisy as the hours advanced and darkness came and the flow of

27:00 refugees and tanks moving around below us, and gun fire. And I saw something and I wondered what it was for awhile. But at either flank to our front there were traces firing straight up into the air virtually, and then I worked it out that what they were doing they were using that as a means of

27:30 navigation, that as long as they kept one tracer fire on the left and the other tracer fire on the right they knew they were heading in the right direction. A Company got hit pretty bad throughout the night. There were a few probes that came in between us and A Company but that was about all. We had a sleepless night but luckily we were more like A Company and

28:00 B Company. B Company didn't have any casualties I don't think. It wasn't until they started to pull out to come across to rejoin us that they started to lose a few people.

What could you see going on around you from where you were?

I didn't see much until daylight next morning when I saw all the B Company activity. The B Company were launching their attack on a group of about 80 Chinese who were

28:30 in a sort of defensive, old defensive position trenches and I saw a platoon of packs going in and we gave a little bit of supportive fire from our position.

How does a platoon attack in trench position in that situation?

A normal extended line. Either two sections up, one in reserve normally. Depending on the terrain

29:00 you are covering. It depends on how wide your front is going to be. It could be one section up and leap frogging the remainder of the sections through. So there's various combinations of a platoon attack.

What cover did they have in that battle?

What our troops or the Chinese?

Your troops, the Chinese were entrenched you said.

Yeah down below there were about 80 of them who were...

29:30 I think they must've been cut off when daylight came or they didn't reach the objective they had to get to so they just took over these old trench positions down below in the open grounds, but the Australians came through and took it.

And you could see what was going from your position?

Yes, it was like watching a movie.

Can you describe that movie for us, what was happening?

Oh,

30:00 you could hear the rifle fire, grenades going off, people pulling back, people rushing forward, people

jumping into trenches. Yes, yes.

Were there people actually getting killed?

I didn't actually see anybody fall. There were a few killed in that action, yes.

30:30 **And what happened next?**

Right, next we were told to, I think it was in the afternoon, the Turks came out, that's right, with fresh ammunition with the CO [Commanding Officer] and the doctor aboard. They took out some wounded and later on that day they said okay we've got to pull back.

31:00 We've got to do a fighting withdrawal. We had to pass through D Company which was up on the highest feature.

This was about the end of April 1951?

Yes.

At any point during this battle did it occur to you, you were doing a fighting withdrawal on Anzac Day?

Well Anzac Day wasn't till the 25th and we were the day before on the withdrawal. So

31:30 I suppose the association sort of didn't sink in until later, well after.

It was never mentioned at the time?

No.

How does one conduct a fighting withdrawal? How did that happen?

The withdrawal was well handled. D Company stayed in its position and we moved up and to the right and to the rear prop and then the B Company - we sort of leap frogged back and you know it was just a matter of -

32:00 and the artillery sort of kept - they did a marvellous job the Kiwis of keeping the Chinese back. The Chinese would race forward, the artillery would then fall on them and cause terrific casualties to them and we managed to get back unscathed virtually.

How much of the Chinese pushes could you see from your position?

32:30 **before you moved back?**

I couldn't see any Chinese attacking at all. When you're leap frogging, you're sort of looking, chasing your men up and placing on the ground, holding fast waiting for orders who's going to pass through here and who's going to pass through there, but you're watching your front all the time. But the artillery was doing such a good job that they kept the Chinese from getting up into your face, as the saying goes.

33:00 **Did the Chinese have artillery fire as well?**

They had mortars, didn't experience any artillery, no.

How was the communication happening in that kind of confusing situation?

Communication was pretty bad from Battalion Headquarters to the forward companies because they were on the lower levels and the hills were in the way.

33:30 But there was one, I think one, Charlie Company, our company was relaying a lot of the messages through to A Company and that was how the communication managed to be done.

And how were these messages being relayed?

Between people on the ground, verbally, runners or the platoon commander moved down

34:00 talked to the section commanders, yeah.

You were using radio communication but only from a platoon commander level, who could contact the company commander or the platoon commander?

Well the platoon commander had his platoon sig [signaller] and the platoon sig would communicate with the company signaller, the company signaller would communicate with Battalion Quarters.

34:30 **And that was the communication that was most difficult. How long did that withdrawal take?**

It took, it's hard to remember now, about 3 or 4 hours.

Was that constant tension for 3 or 4 hours?

Constant tension yes, certainly.

When did it finally end? When did you find the position that was...

35:00 Well when we got down to the river crossing and we saw our commanding officer standing there, R.B. Ferguson, he seemed to be nonplussed about things, just standing there and waved us through and we occupied another position after that, and that was the end of our Kapyong episode.

When you say you occupied another position, were you able to dig in?

Oh yes, yes.

35:30 **What happens in the immediate aftermath of a well a battle that's that tense?**

Well ammunition resupply, a good feed, hot food is probably the main priority. Evacuating any wounded that one may have. Passing on prisons which we had. Pass them on down the chain of

36:00 command. Making people comfortable. That's about it.

What dealings did you have with the wounded?

Well we didn't have anybody wounded in our platoon so there was no call for that.

You were watching them go past or...?

Oh yes, yes, when they were

36:30 leap frogging you'd see wounded stretchers being carried through. The Chinese prisoners were carrying our wounded too.

You mentioned a hot meal, what were you able to eat on the front line?

Gee, that's going back now.

Not that memorable?

The only memorable feeds was turkeys on Thanksgiving Day,

37:00 which the Americans supplied, or chicken. But most food which our company cooks cooked up was probably made from our ration packs but spiced up a bit, maybe a curry or a few vegetables thrown in to make it more appetising.

What was in a ration pack in Korea?

Ration pack, gee, they had a variety of meals, C rations,

37:30 ham and lima beans, spaghetti, meatballs, little tins of fruit salad, chocolate, biscuits, paper cigarettes, some toilet paper. But your stomach sort of got used to

38:00 eating little.

When you were eating in forward position were you able to heat up any of those meals?

Yes, you had hexamine tablets where you could heat up a tin, or if you were in reserve position you'd build a fire and stand your can next to the fire and make sure you punctured a couple of holes otherwise it'd blow up on you.

38:30 Or eat it cold depending on the situation.

What was your debriefing after the Kapyong episode?

I can't remember any debriefing as such but we were successful in holding up the push and we did a good job, and that was about all.

Were you aware

39:00 **of the...**

Significance? Not really. It was only until later on that we knew we were instrumental in Seoul from being captured in actual fact, or the Americans being cut off, encircled. If we hadn't done that it would've been chaos.

When was the first time you got a commendation? I mean, the whole, you received a presidential citation for that action, when was the first time you received

39:30 **words of commendation for that?**

That happened after I left Korea. I think they had a big battalion parade and the American general presented the, officially, the American citation but that was after I'd gone.

But you must've become aware of the strategic role before then though?

Yeah, we heard that we were awarded the Presidential Citation

40:00 but people wondered, what's that, you know what does that mean?

Do you still feel like that?

Oh no, no, I'm very proud of it. But there's another battle which I think should've eclipsed Kapyong which was the Battle of Maryang San.

We have to change the tape.

Tape 4

00:30 **The Battle of Maryang San, can you tell us about your role in it?**

Yes certainly, the whole operation originally called Operation Commando which covered a large area. The area which we were involved in the features were - called Maryang San and our role was to capture a defensive Chinese position.

What phase was this?

01:00 **Was it during the advance or the retreat?**

This was advance. It was entirely different to Kapyong which was bore holding position and this was attacking a heavily fortified Chinese position, and I think it was probably a ratio of about 2 to 1 which one shouldn't do but we were successful.

Can you tell us, can you lead us through the battle and

01:30 **your role in it?**

Yes certainly, we moved off probably about 4 a.m. in the morning and we had to cross a low level, misty, shrouded river bed and occupy a feature called 220. This feature had stopped the KOSBs [King's Own Scottish Borderers] from capturing 355 which was the main feature

02:00 'cause they were being enfiladed by fire from these two positions. So the middle sects were knocked back, they pulled back and our company was told to capture these two positions. So we moved off early in the morning across this misty valley and started to climb the feature so we got above the misty area

Is that what you do, you just say

02:30 **oh let's attack it and well that's okay and we'll just climb up that hill? Surely it's somewhat more complicated than that?**

Well I was the lead section going across with my Platoon Commander Maurie Pearce who did the guiding and if we'd run into anything we'd do our normal tactics you know one section up, then leap frog until eventually we occupied the feature. So we

03:00 got halfway up this first feature. The Two Twenty position and Maurie Pearce gave me an air panel to lay it out. An air panel is a big orange, well for this day it was a big orange coloured panel for aircraft identification. I laid it down on the ground and I think the Chinese must've spotted it because they ranged in their mortars onto my section area. 'Cause at this stage I then became the reserve section.

03:30 The other two sections passed through and they started to engage the enemy who were up in that higher position. I remember a big flash going off about 15, 10 metres away, sorry about 5 metres away. Sort of a grey orangey flash and my head jerked, I felt something

04:00 in my side and then another one went off about the same distance and I got hit again, and I couldn't stand 'cause a piece of shrapnel had gone right through my ankle and my head was bleeding. I had a slouch hat on; we didn't have tin hats on in those days.

Why were you not wearing tin hats?

I think we threw them all away when we first landed

04:30 in Korea. We thought they were fairly useless and right throughout the campaign we either wore slouch hats or the fur hats.

Well that's a bit of a, the tin hats served the Australians in two World Wars and you were throwing them away, why was that?

I'm not sure, we just sort of, we thought they were pretty useless at that stage and got rid of them. But anyway

No, actually I'm interested in the tin hat

05:00 **because it is an iconic vision of the Australian soldier and yet you...**

Nobody in the battalion wore a tin hat.

Did you think you needed head protection?

No, we didn't think of it that way at all. We didn't think of them as a life saver in any way at all.

Yet you were issued them?

Probably if we were in a static position all the time, tin hats

05:30 probably would've been appreciated. But we were on the move all the time and they were hard to hide or carry or wear, we didn't like them at all.

Were there any particular regulations regarding what you needed to carry into battle?

Well when we moved over yes, when we first landed we had the tin hats but they weren't enforced and we were quite happy wearing

06:00 our slouch hats and gradually they just sort of disappeared.

Have you still got your tin hat?

No. Somebody's probably using it in Korea somewhere as a cooking pot.

Very good, you were also doing something before you got wounded, why were you stretching that air identification marker on the ground?

Well, we had aircraft in support for the attack if required and that was there

06:30 to stop the American planes from machine gunning us or firing rockets on us.

Did they actually do that?

Well if you didn't have the air panel it's very hard to distinguish which are the forward troops and which are the Chinese troops and so on. So it was more of a safety measure.

Could the Chinese also deploy these things to fool the aircraft?

07:00 Oh, but we had different colours for different days or different operations, yeah.

Sorry, getting back to this moment when you were suddenly - did you realise you were wounded or what was your understanding of the events at the time?

I took my slouch hat off and spurts of blood were coming out of my head and I thought hello, so I put a shell dressing on it and somebody else started to bandage me up and in the meantime

07:30 the rest of the section was getting hit, and they all got hit, the whole lot were wounded and...

Anyone more serious than others or?

No, all about the same, nobody died.

What were the wounds from?

Mortars.

Shrapnel?

Yes, shrapnel, metal and the platoon sergeant also got hit, he was not far from where I was standing and

08:00 at that stage they'd sent back two Chinese prisoners into my section area and I got them to carry me out plus the road in the section, and in the meantime the platoon commander wanted our section up to continue the advance to engage the enemy further and there was nobody left.

What does it feel like to be wounded by shrapnel?

I

08:30 don't know, I didn't have any fear or anything. At that stage I had been there 13 months and it was the most serious thing that had happened to me at that stage, and I thought oh well I'm wounded I'll be evacuated and I'll be going home.

What was the effect of being initially hit as you recall?

Surprise, surprise I suppose.

09:00 But we'd mainly experienced shell fire and rifle fire and mortar fire right throughout our tour but this was the closest that any had landed to me - near me.

Instinctively, I mean despite all your training, we're a human being that's evolved to respond to injury and the body responds independently of injury, what was your body telling you was going on?

Self preservation

09:30 at that stage so I tried to find the smallest crack between two rocks I could find to get into, to take cover but there wasn't anything there. It was one of those rocky ridge lines that we were on. There wasn't much we could do except just suffer casualties. Anyway...

Could you walk after that?

Hobbled, I sort of walked on one leg. I had these two Chinese prisoners

10:00 one arm over each of their shoulders.

How did the Chinese prisoners fit into the advance?

The forward sections had captured one small outpost and these two Chinese had given themselves up. So they sent them back down the hill to where I was, so I doubt if I could've walked out, I couldn't have walked out. So with the rate of the wounded, walking

10:30 wounded they were mainly, we got down the bottom anyway, of the feature we walked up and then the Chinese ranged in on us again because we were out in the clearing. The mist had risen and they started to throw mortars on us again.

And you were with the two Chinese prisoners?

The two Chinese were yabbering away to each other. You could see them probably cursing

11:00 and swearing, we were being fired on by our own troops.

Were they helping you voluntarily?

Oh yes, yes, they were passive prisoners, yeah. They didn't make any attempt to escape.

But they were walking down the hill, what was the circumstances of them picking you up and carrying you. Did you say look help me out or?

Yes it was more sign language, you know, hands, come here and take me down.

11:30 **That seems quite extraordinary to me, you've just captured them and they're helping the people who were attacking them with their wounded. Was that a sort of normal occurrence?**

Well, we had high regard for the Chinese and I think they probably had a high regard for us too. I think they were pleased they weren't killed or wounded themselves and they were looking for a way out

12:00 from that situation as we were who were wounded. So anyway we got down to the first aid post and then I was shunted off to an American MASH unit where they wheeled me into a tent and there were arms and legs scattered around on ground sheets and that, and I looked over and, "I said I'm okay, don't take any part of my body off." So they looked at my ankle and they did, bandaged

12:30 that up and extracted shrapnel or whatever was there. They looked at my head and they said, "We can't do anything there so you have to go back to Japan."

What was an American MASH unit like?

It was terrible; it was not like the MASH series on TV. It was full of wounded Americans groaning and moaning and complaining,

13:00 and I was glad to get out of that situation. Nurse give me a shot, give me morphine. That sort of thing.

Is that what you were asking for, or everyone else was asking for?

No not me. They go me on to a helicopter and flew me to the airfield and they flew me into Japan were they operated on me at the British General Hospital.

13:30 **Was it your first trip on a helicopter?**

Yes it was, yes.

Can you tell us a bit about your involvement with them in Korea apart from - had you seen them around, they were a new weapon, or a new...?

There wasn't much helicopter on the front line area, there could've been in the rearish line areas but we never saw any on our advances.

14:00 Mainly they were used for evacuation of wounded.

And what was the upshot of the Battle of Maryang San?

Well we occupied all the features eventually and handed them over to the British, and I think that within a week or fortnight they'd lost them and I think it was a futile effort eventually, I guess. Charlies had a lot of manpower.

14:30 **Talking of that manpower they employed human wave tactics?**

Yeah.

Can you tell us what it's like to face a Chinese human wave?

Oh bugles, whistles, normal tactics, people racing up, firing, throwing grenades. They were good soldiers.

What's your opinion of the use of human wave tactics?

A waste of life really.

15:00 Depending, they can be quite successful and they were on a lot of occasions against say - a lot of the Americans experienced it, a lot of the South Koreans experienced it but if you were steadfast and you've got enough ammunition and firepower you've got a better position because you're not as exposed as they are. You've got cover

15:30 and they're in the open basically.

Can you describe a particular action that you were involved in when they deployed human wave tactics?

Personally no I can't. It didn't occur on our section front. It occurred maybe on some other platoon area or other companies.

Just to go back a little bit

16:00 **you were chasing up the Peninsula, chasing at the time North Koreans troops, what changed, what was the moment advance turned to retreat, the idea that things were going to be all over very quickly where you thought oh, oh we're facing the Chinese?**

That happened at Pakchon the famous River [(UNCLEAR)] in North Korea,

16:30 and that's when the Chinese came in and hit the Americans very hard and then there was a large Chinese formation came in on our front, and we were just south of Pakchon area when we first struck the Chinese or the Chinese struck us. They hit, it was late in the evening, and they hit A Company and

17:00 when you're in a defensive position at night time and holding your own you stay there, but they were told to withdraw and they unfortunately, and that's where they suffered their main casualties pulling back, and they pulled back from our lines because we were down below in the paddy fields where they were attacking us. A Company passed through our position and moved to the rear and formed another

17:30 defensive position and that's when we had a new change of battalion commanders and I.B. Ferguson took over. The brigade commander sacked our battalion commander at that time.

Why was that?

Well, I think he disobeyed orders. I'm not sure of the full story but they shouldn't've pulled off the feature that they were on.

They were in tactically good advance

18:00 **and that really dropped you in the poo a bit had they?**

Yes, they certainly did, yeah. But then...

What were you doing at that time?

Well we were in the paddy fields fighting off the Chinese who were coming down the road and A Company passed through our position so we stayed there. We stayed there that evening, that night and next morning

18:30 we regrouped and pulled further back down the road and into another area.

What sort of shape were they in when they were passing you?

Pretty rattled, swearing and cursing and abusing people for pulling them off the hill. They were pretty angry.

And what effect does that have on you when all these people are retreating past you and your...?

- We didn't know the situation. We thought
- 19:00 that they were told you know, officially that was the right thing to do. The brigade commander didn't want them to be moving off that feature. But however the acting battalion commander, our battalion commander saw things differently. Anyway, the next day we went on patrols
- 19:30 and they'd disappeared. They'd captured a few prisoners but the Chinese had disappeared from our front completely.
- Had you lost any close mates up until this time?**
- One, he'd got hit by mortar shell, yes. He was a lovely chap who was in my section, an English chap, it was on a Sunday and there was a church service
- 20:00 being held at the rear and they asked us if anybody wanted to go to church and he was the only one that wanted to go. So off he went and we heard an explosion and he'd walked into a minefield and lost both of his legs and died eventually. I always took a dim view of religion after that. The only, I think he was Catholic, the only true Catholic we had.
- 20:30 **Who was the other chap who you said was a friend was killed by mortar?**
- We weren't quite sure whether it was a North Korean mortar or a drop short of one of ours. It was never ever worked out. Just that one.
- Who was he and what was your relationship with him?**
- Oh not that close but I knew him, he was more of a close friend of my
- 21:00 mate George Ball. George went back to Australia and told his parents what happened and gave them the full story of the situation.
- Can you tell us about any incidents of now so called, friendly fire? I don't know what you called it back then?**
- There wasn't too much of that 'cause we had the Kiwis most of the
- 21:30 time. We had the American 4.2 mortars I think at Kapyong for awhile but they bugged out. They left everything behind - their mortars, their vehicles and so on. So we were left without that particular support. So far as drop shorts, well that goes, no they were very good
- 22:00 highly respected, the artillery support.
- What did you fear the most while you were at the front line?**
- Mines, I think mines are the most fearsome thing. We lost our second in command of our company when on a drive into a minefield in his jeep, and he and his driver were killed. This was earlier on in the
- 22:30 advance. The things you can't see. The fear of mortars was probably the next thing. You didn't worry so much about other aspects of warfare.
- What wound did you fear the most?**
- What wounds?
- 23:00 Well one of my chaps in the section was wounded at Maryang San he had a foreskin wounds. As a matter of fact he was an English enlistee, a K Force chap, and I had a letter from him just recently and he's dying of cancer in the UK. He went back there driving buses and he had a name of 'foreskin' after that.
- 23:30 **What action could you take against mines, or what precaution did you take against them?**
- Against sorry?
- Mines?**
- Well if you can't see them you can't take any precautions. Sometimes mines laid by the enemy are haphazard here and there. There was, we were going up one road one day and the tank was in front of us and it rolled over a box mine. The box mine is one you probably
- 24:00 can't detect. Everything is wooden, the exterior, and it just lifted the tank up and nearly tipped it over and these battered bleeding Yanks came out through the turret shocked and bleeding all over. Jumping Jacks were a dangerous mine, they'd jump up about waist high and explode. We took over an area
- 24:30 from the Northumberland Fusiliers at one stage. They'd been overrun the same time as the Kapyong Battle and the Gloucesters were overrun, and we took over this hill feature and the dead bodies of the Northumberland Fusiliers still in the pits, the weapon pits and they'd been there a fortnight or so and the skin was falling off their faces and maggots, and the smell was atrocious.

25:00 And we couldn't do much about it because they said don't touch them; don't bury them because the war graves people are coming up with the bags. Eventually they did turn up with their big rubber bags and rubber gloves and they just scooped the bodies into these bags and removed them. Although in front of their positions there were Chinese dead but they'd been buried with a little stick in front with their Chinese names probably.

25:30 The whole area was a mess. There were scattered magazines, rifles, weapons lying everywhere. It was a real disaster. So we had to live there with the dead for about 3 or 4 days. That was very unpleasant.

It sounds dreadful. Would that have been the most - what things sticks in you mind looking back on that time as the most fearful moment of being there?

26:00 Apart from being wounded, the grenades landing around my feet, the bullet going through my pack, being ambushed in the truck. Things like bullets whistling around your head and mortars going off in the distances and around

26:30 your position, you don't count them as anything, that's part and parcel of life. I think that was memorable plus the poor Northumberland Fusiliers we had to live with, and you asked the question about the mines at that stage. Of course we had to go very carefully with blades of grass, to

27:00 probe our front in case there were any trip wires and do that area very carefully to make sure that the position was clear of mines. Which it was.

When you were at the front line and you've got some time off what do you do?

You go to a reserve

27:30 area and you have a shower, a bath hopefully. Of course, you know you go 6 or 8, 10 weeks sometimes without a wash.

I'm thinking more or less on a - you're not awake for those - all the time you're at the front line, how are you sleeping? When you were with the Northumberland Fusiliers in their position how did you sleep at night? Where were you?

Well when you're tired

28:00 you sleep. You're tired most of the time really; it's easy to fall asleep. It's probably better that way because you don't dream. Your sleeps interrupted anyway, you're woken up every 2 or 3 hours, sentry duty.

When you were up there with the, say in that trench with the bodies of the dead from both sides around you was there any cause for reflection on

28:30 **the purpose of why you were there?**

I didn't give it too much thought but I felt sorry for the English people lying around us, but as I said earlier on, you're not the one who is going to have that car accident; it's somebody else that's going to have that smash or die. It's sort of a denial I guess, or rationalisation.

29:00 **You think you're immortal?**

Yes you do.

You mentioned briefly before some of the weapons of the enemy, can you just tell us a bit about what they were using against you?

Well probably the most fearsome sound I guess is the 'burp' gun

29:30 which I think held about 50 rounds from memory, and it's a very high sharp pitched rain of fire and very fearsome to hear. As far as rifles go no, any machine guns no,

30:00 mortars were a worry but the burp gun was a fearsome weapon. 'Cause we didn't have anything like it we had an Owen machine gun in the section which had 28 rounds or so. You had about 4 magazines and that was all you had.

Can you still hear the sound of a burp gun today?

I try not to listen to it.

30:30 No I don't.

It was quite a distinctive sound in the Korean War?

Oh yes.

And can you remember the first time you fired your gun in battle?

Yes, on a feature called Sardine, sorry Salmon I think it was.

31:00 I was in the section and we were leap frogging and suddenly it was my turn and I find myself, I'm the actual section that was going to do the final assault, frontal assault, and of course we're all firing madly you know. We could see the dug outs, the trench line, the crawl trenches and just firing where you think a head might pop up.

Are you firing

31:30 **during, normally are you firing at targets or are you firing to keep people's heads down?**

You fire at targets when they pop up. If the enemy is down under cover you've got a great opportunity to be standing over the top of him at the end and you're probably at a better advantage to either bayonet him, or shoot him or drop a grenade in.

Was there any situations where you had to do that?

Well we did it on that area

32:00 but there were only two bodies there by the time we'd finished, the rest had scampered.

Did you ever have to use your bayonet in action?

No, I didn't.

I could imagine there were situations where you would've had to open fire on someone to let - to protect yourself?

Mm.

Did that ever happen to you?

No.

So it's all rather anonymous or is it personal?

It's anonymous because

32:30 thankfully because if you're killing people you don't take personal responsibility. You don't say I killed that guy and I killed that guy over there and I killed that guy over there. You don't know who killed him because you've got the whole section firing. So mentally, probably, now, you can say I don't know if I killed anybody but I fired at people.

33:00 So it's a sort of a safety valve that you can sort of think that way.

Yeah I can imagine - you are very much a unit aren't you?

Yes that's right.

You said you went for adventure. Towards the end of your 13 months was it still an adventure?

Yes it was. The reason I got out of the army after 20 years was there were no more wars.

33:30 And so from Korea, Malaya and then Vietnam and then things sort of petered out so I thought to myself, one day sitting in the bush, the Australian bush soaking wet in a trench, what am I doing this for, there's not more wars there's no more adventure. And I was

34:00 at the right age to get out anyway, pension time and young enough to get a job.

You mentioned you went on leave to Japan, that must've been a great relief?

That's the worst thing they can do for troops, is give the R and R [Rest and Recreation] because you get used to living in terrible conditions in foxholes, wet, hungry,

34:30 dirty, filthy and suddenly they say you're going on leave, five days in Tokyo. So you say great. So you end up in Tokyo you have baths, showers, hot water, plenty of beer, women, spend a lot of money and then you come back again into those terrible conditions and it takes awhile to settle into

35:00 it. And instead of raising morale I think it sort of decreases. I've spoken to a lot of guys who experienced the same sort of thing.

Does it not give you something to hope for, a bit of a rest from all those bad conditions?

Sorry.

Does it give you something to look forward to, what are you looking forward to if you are at the front line except leave?

Probably if you were sent

35:30 to a reserve area at the back of the battalion would've been just as good. It probably would've been better.

Can you tell us in particular about any particular leave that sticks in your mind? Going to Japan?

Right, we were based at Ebesu which was the leave hostel in Tokyo, and the format was you'd wake up in the morning, go and have breakfast, catch

36:00 the train into Tokyo either see a film midday and end up in one of the beer halls for 3 or 4 or 5 hours and then you'd end up in a house full of women somewhere, and then you'd find a cab after that and back at Ebesu and then this is repeated for three weeks sort of thing. And

36:30 at one stage going back to Korea on a DC3 I was sitting next to another Aussie and I could hear this song being played. "My heart cries for you, dies for you, dodado." I said, "Can you hear that?" He looked at me, "Hear what?" "The song they're playing over the loudspeaker."

37:00 He said, "There's no music, no song." I nudged the other chap on the other side and he edged away from me. It was sort of, I don't know some sort of a, I don't know a DTs [delirium tremens] of some description. Yeah, it was rather strange. I always remember that but I definitely heard a full orchestra and a full song going on.

That's pretty good in the back of a DC-3.

Oh,

37:30 God yeah, this was before we took off.

And what would happen to troops if they brought back some disease they'd caught? Was that a self inflicted wound as well?

I don't know too much about that really. I think some of the guys used to have penicillin needles and back at Ebesu they'd say okay give me a shot. And okay pull your pants down, and you'd give

38:00 them a shot of penicillin.

Did the army issue condoms?

Yeah, yeah if you wanted them.

Was it - looking back did you enjoy those times?

The times in Tokyo or the times in - I can't remember too much to be quite truthful. I remember walking along the Giza and this

38:30 big black limousine pulled up and this American in civilian clothes said, "Do you want to come up and look at Mount Fuji?" At that stage I said, "No thanks I'm heading for the beer hall." But I could have had a bit of culture instead. I think I should've gone with him but I did go to a museum in Tokyo

39:00 to get a little bit of culture. a look at ancient Samurai weapons and regalia but the rest of the time reminded me of that song, or beer, women and song.

And towards the end of your time there, going back to Korea, knowing what you were going back to, how was your own personal morale?

What

39:30 on that trip in 2001?

No going back to the line after your R and R in Japan?

Well that time I got the platoon commander the sack which I told you about earlier, Jock McCormack, it took a bit of settling down. As I said, I think it does more harm than good.

How was your - I mean

40:00 **after your 13 months are you wanting to go or are you looking forward to a long break at the end of your tour?**

I was looking forward to getting home after convalescence. I had three weeks on Miyajima, my leg was healed, my head was healed. The homecoming was different to the departure as I said. Departure cameras, reporters

40:30 newsreels, coming home rainy afternoon hop in the back of a truck and no helping hands. Dumped into a staging camp at Marrickville, given leave and that was it. Yeah.

Have to change tape.

00:30 **You've seen a lot of front line action in Korea, personally is courage do you think a definite resource in a man or a finite resource?**

It's a good question, I think it depends if you're being really threatened your courage will come out.

01:00 If you're not threatened and you can see the pitfalls of the situation your courage is probably not as strong but your basic survival instincts come in, self protection, and courage comes out. I guess this is why you see people who get the DSCs [Distinguished Service Cross] and MCs [Military Cross] and VCs [Victoria Cross] who are racing up and they know they are facing death,

01:30 but if they don't do something about it that's courage. They think if I don't do something I'll die, so courage comes out.

How often can you ask someone to do that before that courage begins to wane?

Yes, it depends on the respect of your commander who may order you to do it. And

02:00 you sizing up the situation yourself.

Can you tell someone who - is everybody endowed with courage do you think?

I don't think so. It's a hard thing to talk about. You've got to be put in a situation before you can measure it.

You can't tell in advance how some will react under fire for instance?

No, no,

02:30 no.

Was that something you particularly were concerned about, how you might react under fire when you went into battle?

No, what gives you courage is the rank also. If you've got the rank and you're responsible for people your rank carries the courage for you, 'cause you say that I've got to do the right thing. I've got show that I'm strong, I've got to show people how

03:00 to do it. I've got to encourage people. So when you assume rank I think the courage comes with it.

You mentioned before something about of coming home and the difficulty of coming home? Or you hinted at some of the difficulties of coming home. Could you comment a little bit more about that what we were talking about on the tape break?

Yes, certainly, I found...

03:30 Well let's start with Korea first of all, the battalion I served with, the 3 Battalion had stayed there right through the Korean War period and people were just replaced when their time was due of having served 12 months there. So people were coming home in dribs and drabs and the unit wasn't coming home as a whole. This had an affect I guess on

04:00 unit pride although 3 Battalion always had that pride. But other units probably not so much, and looking back at the Vietnam experience I knew that, that when I left Australia with the first team that went to Vietnam, a training team [Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV)], that we had the Minister

04:30 for the Army address us and so forth, and chief of the general staff. And then we had to sneak out of the country in civilian clothing carrying slouch hats in brown paper bags and had to sneak back in to the country again when I left Vietnam. I had to come back in civilian clothes and sneak back into the country and nobody to meet me.

05:00 And I was given leave and I had to catch a taxi to Ingleburn and that was it. As far as the units, who I felt sorry for were National Servicemen returning home. Some of the battalions did come home complete as a battalion but quite often when National Servicemen had done their time

05:30 they came home, catch a plane, arrive at Mascot, given leave and thrown straight back into civvies [civilian] street even maybe discharged, which was a terrible situation. Whereas the Regular Army guy would've been posted to a Regular Army unit amongst his own peer group and could talk about Vietnam, talk about problems, talk about solutions and whereas

06:00 the National Serviceman couldn't do that. Once he was discharged that was it.

Did you find that you had that support network when you came back from Korea?

From Korea yes, because a lot of the guys who were instructors in National Service were ex-Korean guys who I'd served with and you tend to form a bond, talk about things.

06:30 **But you mentioned when you came home from Korea you went to Marrickville barracks and you felt somewhat disorientated or how were you?**

Yes, yes it was sort of a shock to the system I guess. Although it wasn't so bad for me because I had three weeks convalescent on a beautiful little island in the Inland Sea, Miyajima and I had time to sort of reflect

07:00 and talk with guys who were wounded, they were all wounded, ex-wounded and managed to resolve things. And then when I knew it was time to go home I was better adjusted than a lot of people who one day are on a battlefield or front line somewhere and suddenly put on a plane and back in Aussieland amongst strangers. You know,

07:30 people who couldn't care less what you did and not interested in how things work or what you did over there, or where's Korea, sort of question. Yeah or where's Vietnam, sort of question.

Staying on Korea, you returned to the country, what was the impression of the war you were fighting in? What did you generally find people, level of awareness of what you'd been through and what was going on and as why

08:00 **Australians were there?**

What on the 2001 visit?

No when you first came back in 53 what - the country you returned to how aware did you find the country?

Not very much aware. You see the war had only been finished 5 or 6 years. The Second World War and people were getting over that period and Korea was a peace action,

08:30 that's what they called it. It was United Nations action, it wasn't sort of classified as a big scale war which it was. I think there were in Korea, the casualty rate per rata was much higher than any war Australians had fought in, apart from the First World War. And I wasn't aware of that until recent years when reading up on a little bit of the history of

09:00 casualty rates. But we had a pretty high casualty rate because we were only one battalion at that stage and we didn't have other battalions to, other Australian battalions to relieve us, so we were continually front line most of the time. Advancing, retiring, defensive positions and very seldom in a rest area. So it was sort of a continuance war for a fine

09:30 unit.

Did World War... what was the reaction of World War II vets, or any vets that you spoke to at that time, to your Korean Service?

Very scant, not that I talked to many World War II guys. I didn't have any necessity for joining a RSL [Returned and Services League] Club because I was in an army unit. I was either at Portsea down at Victoria, Officer Cadet School instructing.

10:00 And we had a mess, a sergeants' mess and that was our club, so I didn't join any RSL Sub-Branch, there was no necessity for it. It wasn't until about 2 or 3 years ago that I joined the RSL Sub-Branch here in Ostamere. But their knowledge was scant there's no doubt about that. It's like asking you

10:30 what do you think of Timor? I wouldn't know much about Timor.

I'm thinking also did the World War II Vets regard Korea as a real war?

Oh God yeah. Even the K Force guys who served in the Second World War, yeah. They probably saw more action

11:00 there than they did in their 3 or 4 years in the Second World War.

After, any personal difficulties, dreams or difficulty of sleeping after leaving the front line and coming back to Australia and recuperating from your wounds?

It's strange to say that, it's only in the last few years that I'm doing a lot of kicking in bed and my wife's says where are you running off to, where are you running, or

11:30 who's attacking you or you know, but I do have a few dreams, yes. It's amazing that because I know quite a few guys now who have flash backs. Ex-Vietnam guys and Vietnam finished a long time ago and it's suddenly striking now and yeah, some

12:00 investigation should go into that.

Does it sound similar to your experience of your memories of Korea? Or the feelings you're still getting flash backs from Korea?

It's probably a mixture, a mixture of Korea, Malaya, Vietnam. Malaya was okay.

Hopefully we will have more time to discuss this more because of your experience towards the end of the interview but we might go to Malaya now because it's a unique experience

12:30 **that you had there. Can you sort of lead us into your involvement with Malaya and your deployment to Malaya?**

Certainly. My old Battalion Commander R.B. Ferguson got me the job in Malaya.

What was the job?

Instructor at the Jungle Warfare School based at Kota Tinggi which is about fourteen mile from

13:00 the township of Johore itself. There was a school set up to instruct all troops coming to Malaya. Malaya at that stage was about four fifths jungle and about one fifth tin mining, rubber plantations, pineapple plantations,

13:30 rice fields so it was very junglely country. Not so much now because it's all been denuded of timber, and so forth. Anyway the main function of the school was to train all the advanced parties coming to the country in techniques of jungle warfare and apart from that we used to train Special Branch people, Police people.

14:00 They then in turn would train their main bodies, when they arrived in Malaya, in all the techniques that we taught them. Now the beauty of that sort of set up was we only had one training manual which was called the ATOM plan, Anti Terrorist Operations Malaya, and the Special Branch used it, the Police Force used it, civilians used it, the Home Guard used it, the British Army people used it,

14:30 so we were all working under the one net. We had one common bible, one common set of tactics which proved highly successful. This was under the Briggs Plan. The Briggs Plan at that stage in Malaya was to get all the little villages around the place and put them in to one big hamlet type of thing. Put a big fence around them. Indoctrinate them, give them our type of propaganda, films

15:00 train their own, train the people in Home Guard duties so that they would resist any Communist Terrorist forces and denude them from food supplies. It took ten years or so but it was highly successful.

Was that similar to the strategic hamlet programme in Vietnam was it?

Yes they tried that but there were so many different bods in charge over there it sort of fell in

15:30 disrepute I suppose, lack of attention, lack of control. Sir Robert Thompson was over there. He was one of the key figures in the Malayan campaign he tried institute the strategic hamlet situation, but the control was where it fell down.

In Malaya, on a day to day

16:00 **basis, what was your day like?**

In Malaya, right, if the course had started we'd be involved in demonstrations, teachings, lectures and then we'd take them out into the jungle for a couple of weeks where we would teach them patrolling, ambush techniques, setting up camps, ambushing,

16:30 tracking and so on and then come back and do some more lecturing and sand models attacks and so forth, and so that was our weekly our three weekly programme involved in that and then when we had no courses on we used to go and

17:00 become attached to the British Forces operating in Malaya. So you'd spend another 2 or 3 weeks in the jungle either with the Ghurkhas or some other British unit on operations. So to keep up to date with what's going on in the field. So if you come across any good ideas that they're using you'd bring them back to the school and bring it into the teaching.

Can you tell us about

17:30 **any actions you were involved with when you were out on patrol with the British?**

No, every time that I went out there was no action because at that stage 1955 to 57 the war had been winding down slowly and in the State of Johore it was virtually clear of Communist Terrorists at that stage. The only fright I ever had was at the Hampshires I think.

18:00 we'd set up Base Camp and, when you set up Base Camp for the evening you're in a defensive situation and you get rid of all wet soaking clothing and put on dry clothing and then you make yourself a brew and cook your curry or whatever you want to cook. And of course you've got sentries posted out the front, and

18:30 at this stage I was down to my sort of jock strap virtually. I had all my clothing off and my dry clothing by my side and a shot rang out about 50 yards in front and I didn't know what to do put my boots on, put my shirt on, pick my weapon up or what. But what happened was that this sentry had been armed with an Australian Owen machine gun. 'Cause we had a lot of these that were distributed

19:00 to the British units during that campaign and he hadn't been trained properly in it's use, because when he bumped it on the ground the bolt came back down and picked up the round and fired it 'cause it had

a fixed firing pin. And that caused a scurry right throughout the camp. Another situation there was a Kiwi who was dragged out of his camp by a tiger.

19:30 Grabbed him by the head and started to pull him out. He yelled out so loud that the tiger let go and scampered off. The Kiwi was sent home of course, his nerves were no good after that. But close calls, it was a fairly safe situation. You still you know, had to keep an eye out.

20:00 **What was the situation militarily and more particular from the Australian point of view and in particular your point of view?**

The Special Branch had a big role in that campaign. They were like part police. They'd get all the information from the villages and movements of terrorists around and there'd be a daily conference between the police, the military

20:30 Home Guard people, and so forth. To review the situation in their state. So each state had its own sort of war council and from those meetings decide on what tactics they would use. So everybody knew who was going out where and so forth. So it was a pretty controlled well oiled operation, the whole war. The, what was

21:00 going on at that time was Mao Tse Tung [Mao Zedong] was sort of fostering this movement you know. Phase one was to infiltrate the trade unions in Malaya, Government positions, infiltrate agents, get local villages on side so they could ensure getting a food supply out to them.

21:30 Intimidating people carrying out some slight acts of terrorism. It all came to head I think in 49 when they assassinated about 5 or 6 English plantation managers and that's when the State of Emergency was carried out. I think the philosophy at the time; the Domino Theory was that the Communist system wanted to control South East Asia. They wanted

22:00 to get rid of the French out of Indochina, the Dutch out of Indonesia and the British out of Malaya and bring in the Communist system so that it would become a Communist area, and that was how I was told what the situation was and why the Brits agreed to give them Independence which they did in 57, in Malaya, and became a

22:30 non Communist government. The same thing was started in Vietnam, the same thing in Indonesia, so it was part of the free stage approach of Mao Tse Tung, supported by Russia at that time.

So the Australian Army had moved on a bit from National Geographic...

The biggest problem for the Australians at the moment

23:00 I think is the lack of language training. I think it should be compulsory that maybe a dozen or so of selected people in a battalion or unit should learn say Indonesian. I think that would be a start off point because the biggest problem when we got to Vietnam was the language situation and the biggest problem for the Americans was the language situation. You can't advise

23:30 people if you can't speak the language, can you. It was a big problem, having an interpreter you don't know what he's saying anyway, unless you're visually seeing that they're doing the wrong thing when he explains things, yeah.

How difficult did you find that in as a barrier, a language barrier in Malaya?

Malaya wasn't too bad because most people there in charge

24:00 had good English. The Malays had a reasonable standard of English. The people in charge, the Special Branch, the local police and they had a lot of British police also in charge who were doing a tour for a year term in Malaya. They had to have a basic grasp of the Malayan language also. Most of the CTs [Communist Terrorists]

24:30 ninety percent, were Chinese at that stage.

Were you able to - were you operating with the Australian Air Force which was also over there in Malaya at the time? The Australian Air Force was over there I think too at the time. Were you operating with them too?

We had a Lincoln Squadron there but they were British when I was there.

25:00 I was lucky to go on a flight on one of those because they wiped out a complete platoon of CTs in the State of Johore. There was a patrol discovered this particular camp, four man patrol and they pulled back and they sent up a marker balloon up through the jungle canopy which is a big plastic balloon, you carry crystals of carbide add water to it and it forms a

25:30 gas and you tie a big long string and up it goes. They radioed back saying on a bearing of say 85 degrees, 600 yards there's a big camp. Bomb it. And the whole squad with 500 pound bombs flew over it, and I saw the photos later on there were bomb marks every

26:00 20 or 30 feet apart, it wiped them out completely. It was one success the air force had over there. But

we used helicopters in our training there. We used to cut patches out of the jungle, bring choppers in, 'cause sometimes they were needed to carry out dead bodies of CTs so they could be identified. We carried thumb print identification

26:30 material, cameras to photograph them. They were sent back also. That was part of the teaching at the school.

Were you developing these techniques as you went along like the balloon thing, where did that come from that idea?

I'm not sure; it was there when I was there. So I don't know who the original inventor was.

27:00 **What was it like working with the Gurkhas?**

Gurkhas, great, great soldiers and I liked working with the Brits too. The Brits would take it easy and you know don't rush it, take your time and very lackadaisical but they still get the job done. Whereas we tend to panic a little bit too much at times according to the situation. They were very good to work with.

27:30 **Is that some sort of stiff upper lip thing?**

I think so yeah, yeah. It's was quite amazing in the middle of the jungle to watch not only the Gurkha but too, an English officer with them a platoon commander and he'd just stand there and the Base Camp would set itself up and a couple of, like the Raj

28:00 of the old days. But they were great soldiers, very silent and quiet and very obedient, good discipline. We had a platoon of them as a demonstration platoon also at the jungle school. We used them as acting as enemy in a lot of occasions.

What was the outcome of the involvement or the Australian commitment there?

28:30 We still kept sending people out to the school and it probably finished about 58 or 59. I'm not sure if the school kept going. Yes it was still going because when we landed in Singapore going to Vietnam we sent our people up there for the day to have a look at the school. Yes it was still operating, The Dog Wing was operating also.

29:00 **What's the Dog Wing?**

The Dog Wing was used for tracking purposes. Labrador dogs pick up scent trails through the jungle, follow people, people especially trained to be trackers.

What was your involvement with the Dog Wing?

Well we used them as part of our teaching. Explain what their role was and how to use them and so forth. We had Ibans from Borneo, we used them as trackers.

29:30 They were very good at tracking. Quite funny people they had gaps out of their teeth with toothpaste handles sort of stuck in as decorations with ear lopes down to here. Real wild men.

Did you personally work with them?

Oh yeah.

Can you tell us about a day's training with the Ibans?

Ibans, oh we lay a trail, get somebody to walk

30:00 through part of the jungle and get the troops to say, "Can you see anybody there. Can you see anybody?" "No I can't see a thing." You'd get the Iban guy and say, "You show, you show." And he'd point things out like there's a heel print there or there's a broken twig there or there's a scratch mark against the tree there where somebody's leaned against it. Or you go into a camp area and he could tell you

30:30 how many people had stayed there that evening by maybe rope marks around trees where they'd slung hammocks, that sort of thing. They were quite good.

Australia has a reputation for jungle warfare, what's the secret of jungle warfare?

The secret of jungle warfare is to, don't treat it as your enemy treat it as your friend as a start. Be aware of

31:00 poisonous plants, how to treat leeches, watch out for leeches and how to use some of the food which is available. What animals could be in the location? How to read tracks, always make sure you drink the right water. Make sure you put tablets in it.

That sounds more like survival,

31:30 **what are you - how were you tactically operating? What's the secret to tactically operating in a jungle against a...?**

Okay, you may be given a, you know what map squares look like I guess, you may be given a project of searching this 3 or 4 map squares. So you set yourself up somewhere on the edge of this map square on your map and you can send out - several ways of doing it, fan patrolling where

- 32:00 you send out 4 or 5 patrols, that goes on that bearing, that goes on that bearing and that one goes on that bearing, so that that area they go out on, search, then they do a left turn and come back on a reverse bearing. So they searched that area come back and search that area in between and this one does the same, and this one does the same. And you either travel for say maybe, depending on the terrain,
- 32:30 you can do it on a map reference point or you can do it on a time period. You can say, okay search for 3 hours and then come back and you might strike a camp you might not. So once you've done that area you move further and do the same thing again. Or you can do single patrolling or ridge line patrolling or cross ridge line
- 33:00 patrolling you know. There's all sorts of tactical ways of doing it. I've still got my ATOM Plan it's just outside there.

I'd like to have a look at it. Is it out of date do you think or still the bible?

No, no, it's still the bible. It covers first aid, it covers the use of artillery support, it covers liaison with other groups, all the

- 33:30 tactics to be employed, it's quite comprehensive.

Where did that manual come from? Was it an Australian input or was it...?

No it was British - evolved in Malaya.

So you were also contributing to the writing of this manual were you or...?

They updated every year or so. If there was a better tactic they'd put it in.

- 34:00 **Is it still taught in jungle warfare training?**

Yes the one I've got is 1959 so it was still being taught in 62 when I passed through Singapore.

Tape 6

- 00:36 **Joe, you mentioned that in Korea you did work with some Americans, what would you like to tell us about that?**

Probably the closest I guess would be American truck drivers because we didn't have transport of our own and one particular occasion I remember very well was New Year's Day 1951 where we had

- 01:00 to go up this valley and try and contact the enemy. We knew they were around somewhere. So we went on a tank patrol. Climbed aboard these tanks, 4 or 5 tanks, a whole platoon of us, and we were going along this particular road and we saw lots of movement on either side of us going the opposite way. Somebody said, "Oh they're only South Korean troops probably moving back to a position." In actual fact they were

- 01:30 Chinese. Of course we soon realised this as we started to get peppered with shots from both sides of both ridge lines. We quickly got off the tanks and got onto the road and the snow was fairly deep. With the old measure about a foot deep. And the tanks sort of went one way and we were sort of stranded, cut off being fired at from both

- 02:00 sides. So we sort of burrowed into the snow to make us less visible. There were these trucks coming, GMCs [General Motors Corp.]. And they were driven by American drivers, black drivers, American blacks because at that stage I don't think there were any black units in the army serving in Korea. So they

- 02:30 quickly turned around and we decided that we wouldn't get on the trucks we would hang on both sides so that we were only getting shot at from one side of the area and you were protected from the other side. We told these drivers only go up the road at running, jogging pace, and within two seconds they probably hit 60 kilometres or 80 kilometres an hour and took off and fire went off

- 03:00 left right and centre and I lost one of my guys, was hit pretty badly, chap by the name of Mitchell. And we got him organised and he was carried out by about 4 or 5 blokes and we stumbled back to a rear position. So that was the closest I've got to Americans.

What was the cause of that, was it just a miscommunication do you think or...?

What us going up the valley?

03:30 **No the reason the Americans took off too, rather than...**

No they were just frightened because they were getting shot at too. And I think that was the first time the transport unit, their transport units' don't normally get shot at. They arrive somewhere with stores or something, drop them off and go back to their nice little area in the rear restaurant. And suddenly they found themselves up at the sharp end of the situation and they just panicked and took off.

Were you able to talk to them after that?

No I never ever saw them again.

04:00 **There must've been a fair bit of bad feeling towards them then?**

Oh no, we just sort of realised they panicked and that was it.

You mentioned it was New Year's Day?

Yes.

Was there any sort of celebrations for New Year's Day or Christmas Day while you were on...?

I think the only time we had a celebration was Thanksgiving Day. The American one where they gave us turkeys which was very nicely, well appreciated. Christmas Day,

04:30 I'm just trying to remember where we were Christmas Day, I don't think we celebrated it. I think they sent some beer up in bottles and unfortunately they cracked with the cold so I ended up with a beer iceblock. And if you tried to melt it, there's nothing worse than a melted beer.

We'll continue on that then, let's talk about the cold in Korea because I don't think we've talked about it very much. How did that affect you, the intense cold, your experience up there?

05:00 In some of our defensive positions we got so cold some of the Second World War chaps that we had with us, of a morning at stand to, they couldn't move, they'd frozen up. We'd have to lift them up out of the foxholes and walk them around so they got more mobile. They were the worst affected. The younger persons, like myself at that stage was okay, but bloody cold that's for sure and the worst thing about it

05:30 was digging in because you had this permafrost, depth of solid soil that took you about half an hour to dig a little hole which would be about the size of a milk bottle to penetrate the surface and dig both sides and then crack the surrounding overhanging bits until you eventually got a foxhole. That

06:00 would take approximately 4 hours. You'd do that then somebody says okay move. That was the worst part. But the coldest period I think was just before the snow came. It was really, really cold. A few people got frostbite.

How did you get frostbite? What sort of conditions would lead to you getting frostbite?

Just damp boots,

06:30 damp socks and cold feet. Nobody in my section got frostbite but there were quite a few within the company that did get it.

What about dealing with your metal weapons and machinery how did the fair in the cold?

They'd freeze up naturally. There were tales that if you put your hand on metal it'd stick to it and it'd tear skin. That did happen on a few occasions.

07:00 You had to keep working, moving your working parts closely and sweep your weapon close to your body to keep it warm. It was a bit hard with a Bren gun or something bigger like that.

Were the clothes that you described before like long johns, were they efficient at keeping out that cold?

Not really no. Better than nothing anyway. Better than what we arrived with. We weren't prepared

07:30 for winter warfare or nobody expected it anyhow.

When did you get resupplied with new gear?

I'm just trying to remember now, probably shortly after Pakchon and probably on the onset of winter, American equipment.

Were there any home grown solutions to any of the problems you encountered with the cold?

08:00 You'd go to your slit trench and you might light a little hexamine tablet and squat over it and let the heat permutate around your body. That was about the only way. If you were in the reserve area, we were at Uijongbu at one stage where there was a village close by and we managed to

08:30 pull down a two storey school building to keep warm. Blackboards, chairs, you know, huddle around this

fire, people going 3 or 4 kilometres back picking up bits of timber. If we didn't have that we wouldn't have survived I don't think.

What about things like going to the toilet in that freezing weather?

A very quick job.

09:00 **I can imagine you wouldn't want to spend too long. Showering and stuff in the reserve lines?**

In some areas there were but they were only very small shower units and by the time you tried to put the whole battalion through some would and some wouldn't have.

I think you were explaining before about the reserve lines but you didn't quite finish maybe telling us a bit about what happened back there when you weren't

09:30 **on the front line.**

Well the funny thing happened was that we picked up a film from some Yank. We gave him a slouch hat for it or something and this particular night they were going to show a movie sitting around in a rice field with a big screen.

10:00 The only comical incident in the reserve area that I can remember is that we picked up a film from an American, we swapped it for a slouch hat. We didn't know what was on it and it looked quite old in an old tin can, and that night there was an American film unit arriving to show a movie. I forget what the movie was anyway and everybody assembled down in the paddy field, the commanding officers, the unit padres and some visiting Yanks and the whole battalion

10:30 was sitting there. And I went up to the film projectionist and I said, "Look can you put this on before the main movie. We don't know what's on it. It might be of interest." And the Yank said, "Oh sure guys, sure." Darkness descended on the paddy field and this black and white film came on and all the diggers said boo, boo, boo take it off we want to see a good movie and suddenly it turned into a pornographic film.

11:00 It must have been made about 1928 I think it was. It was filmed in Paris, a couple on the bank of the river there, and they were in to it and nobody said stop the film or anything. And I'm sort of shivering in my boots because I could see myself strung up by the you know what, in the morning by the commanding officer and the padre there, and there wasn't a murmur or anything and it went forever and very pornographic.

11:30 It finished and then the main movie came on. And it was shown for the next two nights. Anyway we sold it to the American film crew that was there. It was rather funny that they didn't say anything about it.

It was the kind of entertainment that the troops got in Vietnam all the time wasn't it? The slouch hat was that

12:00 **a prized commodity amongst the Yanks?**

Oh yes, anywhere.

Why was that?

Oh it's just unusual, unusual shape, good wearing, keeps the sun off your face.

Did you trade any other gear?

Shuftie Frazer, my mortar man, he went back with some sort of injury and he ended up

12:30 at hospital, he got fixed up and then he went to a sort of waiting unit to be transferred back to the front line where we were. And somebody yelled out for the 27th, because we were in the 27th Brigade, so Shuftie said yes, so he hopped onto the truck and a lot of other Yanks hopped onto it and he said, hello I wonder what they're coming up to our unit for. But it was a 27th 'Wolfhound' Regiment, the American unit.

13:00 Anyway they adopted him when he arrived there as a sort of Aussie mascot and when he eventually did arrive back at our location about a week and half later, he came back with American shovels which were loved, American jackets, a pile of caps and so forth, so that was quite handy.

Was it known that the Americans were better supplied? Did they have a reputation for...?

Oh yes,

13:30 they were well supplied, the Yanks, there's no doubt about that. They were prepared and they were better equipped than we were. We eventually caught up.

Did that cause any tension between the different armies?

Not that I'm aware of, no.

What about the Kiwis, your artillery regiment? What were they like?

They were good but you know the normal Aussie Kiwis

14:00 relations you know, a bit of mud slinging at one another, but you know we were good pals.

How many of the other nationalities that were fighting as part of that UN Force did you come into contact with?

There was only the American MASH hospital that I was mixed up with and that's about it I think.

No Norwegians or Indians or anything?

No.

One thing I was going to ask you while we're on Korea you mentioned prisoners of war

14:30 **a couple of times. I mean there were the Chinese guys who helped you off the mountain. In the Apple Orchard engagement you said there were hundreds of prisoners of war, what happened to them?**

They were North Koreans at that stage of the war and I'm not sure what happened. They probably went back to a staging camp somewhere and put in a cage I guess.

Were you involved in capturing anybody during your time there?

North Koreans, not North Koreans, no.

15:00 **And the Chinese later on?**

Only those two prisoners I spoke about.

How were the prisoners treated by the UN Forces?

I think the Chinese were treated pretty well. I'm not sure about the North Koreans; they were sort of a different breed.

What was so despised about the Koreans?

Well I think that it was a hangover from the Japanese

15:30 prisoner of war camps when they had North Korean guards. It sort of flowed over a little bit from there.

What was - what sort of arrangements were there for capturing prisoners and where did they go from the front line?

Well I'm not sure, we just passed them on.

Passed them on to who?

Battalion Headquarters and then they'd pass them on to whoever.

16:00 They would've been interrogated somewhere along the line.

Did you hear stories of the allied prisoners of war in Korea while you were over there?

No, we didn't hear too much about that at all, not until the war was finished and then they told their stories in book form, yeah.

Alright I think we might move on, Rod might come back and ask you a few more questions about Korea later on because we have a lot of Korea to get through so

16:30 **I want to talk about some other things as well. Before you went to Malaya you were involved in training National Servicemen for a couple of years. Can you tell us about where that was and what the set up was?**

Yes, Ingleburn from 52 to about 55, 13th National Service Training Battalion. The duration in those days was three months of training. It was

17:00 job satisfaction in that sort of thing because you could see a complete change in people from the time they mastered their two left feet and not able to polish their shoes or make a bed or hygiene etcetera. Bully boys brought back down to earth, mother's boys brought out to become outspoken young guys. Even though we only had four weekends off out of every fourteen

17:30 it still gave us a lot of job satisfaction doing it and it was worthwhile and I think that should be happening today.

How did you adapt to that training role because that was the first time you'd been put in that role?

Yes, you do a lot of courses. Used to go to the School of Infantry which at that stage was based out at Seymour in Victoria where you do a

18:00 Junior Leader's course, or a Platoon Weapons course or a Potential Warrant Officer's course, Mortar courses, and other courses and you sort of developed if you showed any potential.

How did you affect that change you just spoke of from a two left footed person to a competent soldier in a matter of months?

Oh by training I guess. Training

18:30 and actual experience on the job, education, practical activity, promotion, 'cause each step in rank you had to do three types of subjects - Military Law, Weapon Training, Tactics, etcetera, before you were eligible for promotion.

19:00 So each step in the NCOs' ranks you had to undergo these courses.

What were the biggest problems you had with those type of recruits and training?

The National Service the biggest problem? I couldn't see any problem really as far as the young Australian 18 year old goes.

19:30 He adapted very well. He could've been a pacifist or Seventh Day Adventist or whatever, but the knuckled down. There were a few that managed to buck the system but they were quickly moved out.

How would they buck the system in what respect?

Oh probably refuse an order whatever the order may be. Non co-operation,

20:00 but that was few and far between.

Would you have been happy to use those soldiers in an active engagement?

Yes, my word, yeah. The Australian is very adaptable. I'm not sure how the mix would go today with our multi-cultural society, how they would adapt, but I think that they would.

Did you see any

20:30 **later on, any National Servicemen going to Vietnam or anybody involved in that conflict?**

Did I see where?

Well you weren't training Australians in Vietnam but did you come into contact with any National Servicemen that served over there?

No I didn't because we were the first ones there.

You would've been back in Australia at that time?

Yes, yes, when we arrived we had to split our 30

21:00 up into four areas of South Vietnam. Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh, Bien Hoa, Saigon, they were about the main places and the original intention was that they would help train the advisors in these various training units. They were all training units staying with us at that time before our people

21:30 took on a different role 6 or 8, 9 months later where they were seconded units and operated on active service.

Let's lead into that then because I'd like to know a bit about what you knew about that conflict before you, 'cause you were one of the first Australians to arrive into it. When you came back from Malaya what happened to your - what was the next step in your career then?

From Malaya, 57

22:00 2 Battalion at Holsworthy where we operated in Battalion Tactics and exercises and a big exercise up in Queensland and then I was posted to the Infantry Centre to the depot company where we trained reinforcements in the various battalions in Australia and from there I went to Vietnam. That's right.

What did you know about the conflict in Indochina?

22:30 Didn't know too much about it, I don't think many of us did. We went to the Intelligence Section at Middle Harbour in Sydney, we had lots of briefings, we studied the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. Lectures about the customs of the country, each of us at that stage didn't know where we were going to go to. What part of the country or how

23:00 we were going to operate. It wasn't until about the last week when we were told where we were going. And I was told I would be staying in Saigon with Colonel Serong and Colonel Mann and Major Fitzpatrick and do sort of admin work for the whole team. That job entailed travelling all over Vietnam, hitchhiking. You'd go to the airport and find out what plane's going

23:30 where and say can you give me a lift and you hop aboard and away you go, and you do the same thing on the way back. So there were no sort of Qantas or Ansett flights going here or there.

Was your involvement at the beginning, Vietnam, the first time that this team came into existence or had it already been used?

It was the first time the team had been organised as such,

24:00 for a specific purpose.

Were you aware of the politics surrounding that, at the time?

Not so much, none of us knew what was going on. We were all sort of selected for our expertise, in my case jungle warfare training as most of the team members were, they'd passed through various schools, Canungra jungle warfare schools and service in Malaya,

24:30 there were a few experts in signals also attached to the team.

Was it a fairly elite unit to be part of?

It was very elite, it was the most highly decorated unit in Australia's history over the 10 years.

But you didn't know that at the time, it was only forming up, but the people in it were pretty distinguished at the time?

They were all good at what they were selected for, yeah.

25:00 **Were you proud to be asked to do this job?**

Yes, yes, first in, another chance to see a different country and participate in whatever the Australian Government wanted us to do. I didn't know I was going to be selected for Saigon until the last day but my tour was to be six months only and then

25:30 I was going to be thrown out to one of the other establishments in the country. But I ended up staying 12 months because I don't think anybody wanted the job. Nobody liked Saigon to be quite truthful, because in many cases it was far safer because Saigon itself was - as we said there were no front lines and cafes were boarded up with chicken wire to stop

26:00 grenades being thrown in. I was put on the assassination lists at one time because I used to go jogging around with an American provo marshall of Saigon, of a morning. I used to go jogging at six. He called me up one day and said, "We've got to cut out the keep fit nonsense because I've received word that they'll hit us one morning as we're going around through the streets." which were deserted at that time of the day anyhow.

26:30 Another strange story was under the Colombo Plan, the Australian Government donated millions of dollars to start up a dairy farm in Vietnam. 'Cause milk is scarcity in that country. So they exported a herd of dairy cows, Jersey cows, into Vietnam and they set up this 'you beaut' dairy farm

27:00 with people running around in white smocks and so forth. We flattened sort of rice fields to grow grass and it was at a place called Bien Hoa which was south of Saigon down in the Delta area, and I was asked to escort our Ambassador, Ambassador Hill, because he was going to do the official opening on behalf of the Australian Government. Well we arrived there, went down by chopper

27:30 and there was a South Vietnamese band there and all the dignitaries and the ribbon was cut and the speeches were made and - have you ever seen unhappy cows?

They're not easy to deal with.

There was this whole herd, they looked very forlorn and unhappy standing in these rice paddies. Anyway when six months - no it would've been about nine months it all disappeared, you could smell

28:00 barbecued cows all over South Vietnam. The Viet Cong got in there and helped themselves and I think some of the locals did too. It was just a sheer waste of money.

Did it seem like that to you, being sent down to see this thing?

Oh yeah it looked foolish right from the start.

It's not a well publicised piece of Australian Government involvement.

No definitely not, it was quite comical.

Were you

28:30 **aware of the mechanisms behind it, as to why they'd set it up?**

It was part of the Australian Government under the Colombo Plan to donate money to the South Vietnamese Government. And the South Vietnamese said we'd like some milk, some cows and that sort of thing. And so they probably decided oh we'll give you a full dairy, milking machines and the whole box of dice. Yes it was a pity. Pity for the cows.

29:00 **Just going back to the very beginning when you were told you were going to be part of this team and you were going over to Vietnam, was it obvious to you that you would be the start of a larger Australian involvement or was it...?**

No at that stage we weren't aware of any movement of sending battalions over there or National Servicemen as such. We were the only contribution at that time. The Americans were

29:30 trying, you know - a policy of 'many flags' so they don't appear being imperialists and they tried to get as many countries into the show as possible.

How do you feel about Australia's position in that kind of American scheme?

Well, I don't - you can always look back in hindsight and be wise about things, but from the first week that I was there

30:00 I could see that this was a poor government, not popular at all. The people weren't pro government. There were lots of factions. There were Buddhists, there were Catholics, there was the Chinese element of Cholon, a large area just outside of Saigon- and there were little rival party groups sort of making their

30:30 feeling. They tended to blow up things in the cities and leave lots of leaflets around. The Buddhist monks would burn themselves to death pouring petrol over themselves. There was a lot of unrest and it didn't look too good. And plus the advisory role, looking at the Americans, the

31:00 Americans at that stage looked at their posting as a hardship posting because under the American system they would have some good postings and some postings they'd have to go to which were classified as hard postings. And there quite a few that I stumbled across, Americans who I'd ask, "What's your background experience?" "Oh sending up missiles, silos, for two years. Got a finger ready for the button." "And what do you know about jungle warfare

31:30 or war?" "Oh not much but I'll soon pick it up." So as far as the training of the American advisors go, it wasn't up to standard of what our people were. And strange to say that book that I spoke about the ATOM Plan, Anti Terrorist Operations of Malaya, there was an American ranger captain came into my office, just arrived in the country and he says, "What have we got about patrolling

32:00 and ambush, and any materials." I said, "Oh you can borrow this." So he borrowed that and I'd forgotten all about it until about 9 months later he stumbled into the office and says, 'Great it really worked wonders I knew what I was doing.'

We'll get onto your role there in a minute but can you just tell us to begin with your circumstances with which you left Australia and the trip over to Vietnam? Can

32:30 **you tell us about that trip?**

The trip to Vietnam, yes. We snuck out of Sydney dressed in civilian clothing and it was August, or October, August, I think, 62. We landed at Singapore in civilian clothing, booked into a hotel and the rest went up to

33:00 Kota Tinggi where the jungle warfare school was for the day, to have a look around, and I tried to work out some arrangements of money to pay our people. And we found out we'd have to be paid in American dollars because that's what the currency was used in Vietnam. So the Australians at Singapore headquarters said, "We've got no dollars."

33:30 And we said, "Well how are we going to pay our guys?" And they said, "Well you're going to have to go down to Change Alley." Now Change Alley is a - in those days, it's gone now, it was a little laneway full of moneylenders and shops, cheap, a place where you buy cheap souvenirs. So we walked up to an Indian, we had a briefcase full of Australian money, thousand of dollars - thousands of, what was it pounds or dollars in those days 62?

Still pounds.

34:00 Pounds right, thousand and thousands of pounds and we said to this Indian guy we want to change some Australian money for American dollars. He said, "Yes, yes, how much have you got?" We mentioned this thousand and thousand and his eyes rolled around like pinball machines and he said, "You wait there I'll be right back." So there we were kneeling down in this Change Alley sort of counting our money on the pavement on the gutter. So he was satisfied with what

34:30 he got and we were satisfied with what we got. Next morning we took off for Saigon on an American aeroplane. Hopped aboard in civvies just as we were nearing Saigon we all went to the toilet one at a time and changed into uniform and the hostesses were wondering what was going on. Till finally we were all dressed and that's how we disembarked and we were met by the Saigon

35:00 press and the Chief American Advisory General who was there at that time. We had a reception then at the Ambassador's place and then went to the hotels for the night and then we explored Saigon that evening, and the next morning people were transported to Tan Son Nhut Airport and flown to their respective training establishments.

Can you

35:30 **explain to someone who doesn't know about it that the need for the civilian clothing and why you weren't allowed to go in uniform?**

Well one thing was probably trying not to upset the Singaporean Government to be accused of being a staging camp for transporting troops, I think was the main thing. I'm not sure why we left Australia in civilian clothes I could never work that out.

36:00 Maybe the less Press the better, the government felt about it in that way.

Was there any Press about it at the time?

Back in Australia, when we left, I'm not sure because I didn't see the local papers naturally.

When you arrived in Vietnam?

Vietnam the local Press, yes, we made the front page and everybody was glad about it.

Glad?

Glad, yes for the assistance and

36:30 so forth, yeah.

Was that the tenure of your reception in all respects when you arrived, gladness and...?

Well gladness on part of the Americans. Not being able to converse with the Vietnamese Government people at the time, I'm not sure what they felt but I'm sure they would've been welcoming of us.

Saigon was to be your new base for awhile?

Mm.

37:00 **What were your first impressions of it?**

Noisy, bustling, busy, there was no entertainment allowed, there was no dancing allowed. There was an order put out by Diem's sister who was said to have a tight control. The idea was that we shouldn't be celebrating whilst there was a war on so that sort of

37:30 stopped much of the activity in Saigon. There were the bars naturally where you could have a drink, that was about the only thing going.

What different nationalities were represented in Saigon at that time?

CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], American Advisors, BM that's the British Advisory Mission who were in charge of the Strategic Hamlet

38:00 Situation, Australian Embassy with a colonel and sergeant there on staff. There was the French I think, they had an Embassy there also. That was about the sum total of it, yeah.

Where there relationships between these different groups and the local people showing signs of tension at all?

Not that I was aware of,

38:30 no. The Embassy people tend to stick together themselves, or the other Embassies, wherever they had functions you'd see the same faces there all the time. Not many Vietnamese.

You mentioned the CIA they had a presence there obviously, but was that an obvious presence to anyone who looked?

No, because they were dressed in civvies clothes working for the American Information Services

39:00 or some other group. But I made friends with a few of them and one chap used to fly over North Vietnam and drop money to agents, as he said to me. And they used to employ these formation pilots who used to fly unidentified aircraft around the country.

Tape 7

00:33 **What briefing did you get from the Australian Embassy Security or the Intelligence people?**

We didn't get any briefing from the Australian Embassy at all. Most of our briefings were done well beforehand. The only briefing we had was amongst ourselves prior to moving out the following morning. Where to be and what time

01:00 we were getting up and where we were going to be heading for but as far as the briefing of the situation in Vietnam on arrival we didn't get anything I don't think. It was only until once we settled into Saigon with Colonel Serong and Colonel Mann and Major Fitzpatrick that we used to go to the Advisory Meeting every morning and they'd

01:30 give us an update at what was happening in the country as far as enemy action goes or what was happening.

What was your understanding of the purpose of your mission to Vietnam at that time?

Our purpose was not to win the war for them as to help them win the war. Train people; assist in the training of their own people.

02:00 That was our whole idea. It was not to do any fighting ourselves. It was just to help people to train the trainers sort of thing.

Who invited you to go to Vietnam? Or why were you going to Vietnam?

Well you can read lots of political books about this. I think one story was that [Prime Minister] Menzies invited himself when he was in power and he had to do some

02:30 quick phone calls to the Vietnamese Government to say, quick give us an invitation.

How much planning and lead time was there before your departure to Vietnam?

It was very quick really, I think we were only at North Head, at the Intelligence Centre sorry, a few weeks and the rest of the group went up to Canungra and did a course up there for a couple of weeks. And we all assembled

03:00 back again. Had a bit of leave and then departed. So it was fairly quick.

What was your understanding of "what winning the war" meant?

Our understanding was that under the Geneva Accord was it in 1957, I think it was, that the country was partitioned with the Communists taking the Northern part and

03:30 the Catholics etcetera would have the Southern part. Then there was to be an election the following year or the year after that, 58 I think it was, about reunification of the whole country but President Diem declined to have a countrywide election. From then on, that's when the North started

04:00 to do their insurgency attacks and infiltration into South Vietnam as a consequence.

What sort of war did you think you'd be fighting in Vietnam?

Well, none of us thought that we'd be fighting. We knew what our role was before we left Australia was to help train the trainers over there in various training establishments.

But you must've

04:30 **had some idea of the war that you would be training these people for. What was that sort of war you thought you'd be training them for?**

Well we were all sort of jungle warfare experts in the field but not knowing lots of ...South Vietnam there is a lot of jungle country in there providing that we used the tactics that we were trained in but there were that many different types of tactics, the Americans had one sort of

05:00 dogma to follow, the South Vietnamese had another. There was a lack of co-ordination and lack of total planning, I think.

You're no longer the 17 or 18 year old who went to Korea, you're a very experienced military professional, what was your opinion about the objectives and the likelihood of success of your mission when you departed for Vietnam?

I didn't have much hope

05:30 for it really, once I arrived there and sort of sized the situation up and talking to people and finding out what was going on, an unpopular government, Americans not liking probably some of the South Vietnamese leaders, which proved to be quite right because Diem was eventually assassinated as leader and they

06:00 probably thought they had a better leader in his place. So the whole thing was just a bad mix up of politics and strategy and different cultures, lack of language understanding, lack of communication. It just didn't look too pretty to me. Not like Malaya.

What do you think?

06:30 **I've heard it said that people fight wars on the basis of the previous war not on the current war? Like the First World War they start off with the Generals trained for people up in the Second World War and it's a completely different war and Korea's fought on the basis of the**

Second World War and it's another war. Is that, was that, what was the situation you were going into?

I think that the Yanks had a lack of knowledge of our Malayan experience. Malaya proved to be a winner. The way they went about

07:00 winning the hearts and minds of the people by the tactics and policy and integration of police and army and military working together towards the same common goal. That didn't eventuate and the Americans thought they'd do it their own way, the way they always fought wars. You know large numbers, race into a certain area, conquer it and then

07:30 come back again. And people would just infiltrate back after they'd left. Or people were underground and they walked all over them and didn't find them.

This certainly wasn't like that, you said you're going in to train people to fight their own war. How quickly did you run into odds with the American approach?

Well, knowing our philosophy

08:00 the way that we would fight a war in that sort of country was far different to the way the Americans were tackling it and the South Vietnamese were tackling it. It was far different to what I thought should've been the right approach.

It's easier to look back in hindsight and say but it would be really interesting I think to know if the inklings and the foreboding of what did eventually turn out to be a

08:30 **very messy situation for everybody involved. How much of that was in place when you set foot in there and how much did you think, this is really different, I've got myself into a... We've got ourselves in hot water here?**

I saw it straight from the American advisory position the way they were handling things. They tend to train people... In training establishments

09:00 in the Australian Army there would be one trainer, one instructor to about ten people. The Americans would set up a stand and one chap would do a demonstration and there would be about 250 trainees looking on what was going on, and that's not training, and a lot of that went on and not very effective.

What is your philosophy of training a fighting man?

09:30 You've got to train in small numbers. You've got to train them well and you've got to train them the right tactics for the country that they're going to operate in. Most of the Americans wouldn't know a piece of jungle if they fell over it when they arrived there.

Is a fighting man born or made?

10:00 I think he's made. I could make you a fighting man.

Okay. What secrecy conditions were

10:30 **you put under when you departed and when you were there?**

Well we were located out in the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Big Barn we'd call it. It was just like a big warehouse with partitions and there were Americans, Vietnamese typists and so forth, so as far as secrecy goes there could've been agents in there for all we knew. And

11:00 that's when they tried to blow us up one particular day. I didn't tell you about that did I.

Well you can.

They loaded up several bicycles full of satchels of high explosives, and they leant them against the brick wall near our office building, and they let this charge off which blew the wall down and caused some horrendous

11:30 casualties amongst the children who were on the other side of the building, but as far as casualties inside there was just a few minor scratches, flying bricks etcetera. Another time, on our way to lunch in Saigon they had a big army display on with helicopters, set up in stands and the Viet Cong got in and threw a satchel

12:00 of explosives into the helicopter but the chap inside the helicopter threw it out again, and it went off and it killed quite a few South Vietnamese onlookers who were looking at the display. So all this was sort of going on and it wasn't a very safe city to be in. Ray Simpson, one of our VC winners came up to spend a week's leave in Saigon

12:30 and I took him out a few nights and he said I want to get back. He said I don't feel too safe here, and he did go back after two days and two nights.

What was his role up there?

He was one of the advisors in one of the training establishments up country.

You were the first 30 advisers into Vietnam, was that right?

Yes.

What was the,

13:00 **I guess the scope of your mission? You know, did you know how long you were going to be there for instance and who you could talk to and what areas of operations you could and couldn't get involved with?**

We had a couple of our, 32 guys who became part of the CIA establishment in Saigon and they

13:30 went and done their thing and that was highly secret. I think Operation Phoenix arose out of that. I'm not sure if you've heard of that one. It's common knowledge nowadays I think. Where they adopted the Vietnamese, Northern Vietnamese, tactic of assassinating head chiefs of villages and teachers, etcetera. So we did the reverse, of

14:00 getting locals to identify communists and advise us and they would quietly disappear overnight over a period of time. So both teams were playing the same dirty tactics.

How close were you involved with Operation Phoenix?

I wasn't involved at all.

Not that you can tell us.

No, I was trying to look after myself.

Were you, was it a survival issue for you?

Pardon?

14:30 **How were you surviving?**

In Saigon?

Were you running on your wits or adrenalin or ...?

It was the trips in aeroplanes which frightened me. We were coming into Tan Son Nhut Airport on a Flying Box Car, you know that's where the back opens up and they load trucks and things on. And we were coming into land and he pulled up sharply, and I was with Major Fitzpatrick at that time,

15:00 and the pilots offside came in and said, "We can't get the wheels down." We looked at each other, and he said, "We'll try a few tricks so hang on tight." And so we went up to a reasonable height and then he did a big dive and then pull up sharply to try and force the wheels down out of the compartment. He did this about three times without any success.

15:30 This time we were looking down below us at the airport and there were fire engines and trucks racing up and down preparing for a big catastrophe as we came in, and eventually the pilot's offside came back with a big screwdriver and he started to undo the floorboards of the aircraft, and he disappeared into the bowels down where the wheels were, and he was there for about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes and he came back and said, "I think it'll work

16:00 this time." So he went back and joined his fellow pilot and we came into land and luckily the wheels did come down. And the major was going grey and I was probably going grey too after all this. That was another situation with the colonel, landing in a helicopter. We were coming back and I looked around

16:30 and the colonel went grey and I thought I hope he's not having a heart attack, and he pointed down to this leg and a bullet had come up through the floorboard of the chopper, went through his trouser leg and then up through the roof. And I can understand why he turned grey. Somebody from down below fired a 40 calibre round at us and it was just sheer luck that he wasn't hit.

17:00 So airflight had its problems.

How much, how far did you roam around the country in South Vietnam?

Right up to Hue, Da Nang, Nha Trang right up to the north, right down to the Delta area, so I managed to see all of the country I guess.

What part

17:30 **of the country did you like the best?**

Probably Hue, it was an old temple, the Emperor's Palace was there. It was very old and historic which was very interesting to see. It got battered around a bit after the Tet Offensive I believe, but they've probably fixed it up now. Da Nang was a nice place; it used to be a resort area

18:00 in the French heyday.

To what extent did you lay the ground work for the escalation and troops going to Vietnam by your presence? For training terms presence?

I don't think I laid down any ground work. Colonel Maher left, Major Fitzpatrick left and I was left by myself. And then my replacement arrived in Saigon.

18:30 And then Colonel Maher's replacement arrived. So it was just a handover, a normal handover of duties and responsibilities.

But the increasing involvement of Australian troops especially the commitment of ground troops there, they must've asked the training team, maybe not you specifically but the training team must have been advising or providing some recommendations to the army

19:00 **and what the likelihood of this would be and you'd be given options. What sort of advice were you giving?**

Well, we had people coming and going all the time from Australia, military people. They'd fly into the country and we'd send them off somewhere, north or south, or wherever and they'd spend a week or so there and then they'd come back to Saigon and then they'd go back to Australia. So they would've been picking up information about conditions and problems.

19:30 I guess that they would've been involved in briefing of senior management or senior officer group. They were responsible for organising the troops for Vietnam.

What advice were you giving?

I think my advice would've been just sort of stay in the area, control it well, look after yourself because

20:00 we're not big enough to do anything. We're not strong enough in numbers. Not like the Americans.

How much did you have to do with Phuoc Tuy problems?

Not much at all. That wasn't sort of - that was just a province in my time. There were Viet Cong there

20:30 and that's all we knew.

How much did you know of the resistance to the French - the French in the Delta area?

Only from reading the 'Street of No Joy' [actually Street Without Joy] which detailed the French period in Indochina and the fall of Dien Bien Phu. The tactics of the Vietnamese in overcoming the

21:00 French and the French tactics which failed.

The Viet Minh were I guess, the precursors of the Viet Cong, were you aware of those guerrilla tactics and how close did they match what you had in your terrorist bible?

Well I think a lot of them matched the stuff which they used in Malaya except in larger numbers of course.

21:30 And I think... 'cause they'd been fighting the war 20 years or so, the majority of those people, and yeah they were professionals. Whereas the people flying in from the hardship postings in America, sitting behind silos and that and suddenly called upon, how to advise these people how to fight a war, without knowing the language or able to communicate too well with them

22:00 it was a pretty hopeless task.

You mentioned before language as a barrier to communication between the advisors and - can you elaborate on that even to the point to take it to a bigger picture of people of how that may have caused, exacerbated problems and...?

I mentioned previously that what our policy should be at the moment is that we should have language training

22:30 for our troops and not just rely on the Aussie lingo when we move overseas in any country, whether it be Indonesia, Malaya, Borneo or anywhere. You've got to be able to speak a reasonable amount of English to be understanding of what people are saying to you or passing information on to you, where you are asking the right questions about the situation in their area.

23:00 If you don't know the language you're behind the eight ball. Now Point Cook had a Vietnamese language course run for a small number of people. There was one chap Ron Cook I think his name was, he was quite fluent in Vietnamese and that's the sort of road that we should be taking or should've taken.

How did that affect you, when you were there, inability to speak Vietnamese?

23:30 Well I didn't - most of my dealings were with American or British or Embassy people. I had very little to

do with Vietnamese. I just spoke to Training Team members that's all.

So where did your role fit in if you weren't directly training in - you were training trainers from those forces, is that right?

My role in Saigon

24:00 was mainly pay, administration, clothing arrangements, anything on the administration side even though I was classified as a jungle warfare expert. Somebody had to do it and I was plucked out from the team to do it. And I was only supposed to do it for six months but they kept me there for about 13. So as far as training goes, I didn't do

24:30 any training at all. I was in the position to understand what type of training was going on throughout the country. I was able to understand the problems our people were having in training in co-operation with the American system and eventually I think our guys were strong enough to take on the whole training responsibility in some of these training units. Take it away from the Americans

25:00 and they'd run their own show.

The Americans - our previous relationships with America have been that we've been very much the little fellow that tags along behind the big bloke and does exactly what we're told. How was your relationship there, did you feel you were a token involvement? There were only 30 of you, there weren't masses...

Yes, yes, we probably felt that way which probably made our guys

25:30 work harder and more professional at what they were doing. Just to prove a particular point. And our guys were highly respected by the Americans. Especially the chaps who had World War Two experience. Who understood what Australians had done during the Second World War and the Malayan Campaign.

But there is only 30 of you, how can that make a

26:00 **difference in a civil war between 60 million people? I don't know how many million people there was there then?**

Yeah, I see your point. We were sort of a drop in the bucket. But we were participating and I think it was part of the American plan of many flags in a country so they don't appear to be imperialists. So as far as the Americans

26:30 go they were glad to see Australia's name on the board as helping the Americans.

How do you think, given those bombs going off, they obviously don't like you being around. Did you feel in some way the locals; the man on the street might feel you are somewhat imperialistic?

As I said, I didn't speak to many Vietnamese.

27:00 The ones I did speak to had a smattering of English. I couldn't speak Vietnamese but the few Vietnamese I did get to meet I could talk to them and understand what their situation was. There was a big drive on in Saigon to teach English to Vietnamese and there were a lot of Americans earning extra cash at

27:30 night time running English courses under an American type programme. So English was the big push by the Americans to replace French. French was spoken almost everywhere because they'd been under French colonial rule for ages as the second language.

Did you go, have a

28:00 **drink at the Continental?**

Yes I sure did.

Could you tell us about the Continental?

The Continental Hotel, beer was expensive, more expensive than the little bars. It was an open bar all around, ground floor, French lifts which worked sometimes and sometimes they don't. They had a terrible

28:30 plumbing system in Saigon which affected the Continental. They had the sewerage pipes running alongside the water pipes which sometimes they both became corroded together. You don't know what you were getting. So therefore we used to get a bucket of fresh water each day, I don't know where it came from, which you were supposed to be able to drink and that was our water ration in Saigon. You couldn't

29:00 drink it out of the tap. The Continental, it was a popular hotel.

It was quite a famous hotel in terms of say the war correspondents and the Americans staying there. You were staying there as well?

No, I was staying in a one room apartment, it had a shower, and an American advisor with me.

29:30 I had a couple over the period I was there. And we were on an open sidewalk virtually. There were people going past all the time and all we had were some iron bars across the windows. So at any time anybody could've thrown a grenade in I guess, but it didn't happen.

What about - what did

30:00 **you learn about the Americans by going drinking with them at the Continental or elsewhere?**

Oh I've got so many months to go before I'm due home.

Missing the family?

Oh yes, yes.

What other places could you go to you know, if you got any time of - Rest and Recreation?

Recreation there was a Circle Sportif

30:30 Club which was French, French run. That was located on the Saigon River. And you could hire a speed boat there and do some water skiing and make sure you don't fall in the river and get a mouthful. That was the only entertainment around Saigon. There was a restaurant down the end of the main street near the

31:00 Hotel Majestic where you could get a reasonable meal but the Viet Cong ended up blowing that up. They set off two charges, one which blew up quite a few people and then they set one off when the people suddenly evacuated the flaming restaurant and killed a larger number also.

Were you there at that time?

Yeah, I wasn't at the restaurant though.

31:30 **How was this affecting your opinion of whether you should be there or not, or how you might fight the war?**

A couple of warnings, assassination list warning. One night I had to...

32:00 a chap from the Australian Embassy, he and I had to go to the Ambassador's house, while the Ambassador evacuated and went somewhere else because there was a planned attack on his house. So we stood to, all night with our weapons ready to repel any Viet Cong but fortunately that didn't happen. So, you're living on a knife edge.

32:30 **Can you tell us a little bit more detail about that particular incident?**

About the Ambassador's house?

Yeah and the assassination lists and the fact that he had to evacuate.

Oh that's when I used to go jogging in the morning with the American Provost Marshal in Saigon, and we were doing this for several weeks and suddenly he called me up and said, "We're going to stop doing this Joe because I've got word from the Special Branch that

33:00 we're going to be knocked off. They know our movements." And so I gave up being a fit young man.

That's quite intimidating especially when you've got a family back in Australia; you must think twice about what you're doing and question whether this is worth it?

Looking at past wars, for instance

33:30 in Korea, you knew where the enemy was all the time, they were out in front. They weren't behind you. Whereas in Vietnam you didn't know who the enemy was. Could've been the chap that just brushed past you in the street. Or you're sitting in a café having a coffee and this chap looks at you and you don't know what he's going to do next. You watch where his hands are going and then he walks past

34:00 and you finish your café. So it was hard on the nerves.

What did you have to do with the media especially the Australian media during this time?

We didn't meet any Australian media while we were in Saigon. They probably came later when the battalions...

34:30 People like Pat Burgess, other famous reporters. I don't think there was much interest shown in us at that stage.

But you all were not supposed be there? Or how widely do you think it was known that what you were doing in Vietnam broadly in Australia?

Well we didn't expect to make a big splash with the general

35:00 public because there was only 30 of us. We were just a little elite unit. And we weren't going to make history as such, it was only until the end of 10 years when you look back and when you read that book up there called 'The Team' and you go through and read the exploits of our people who passed through over those 10 years time, that you can see what sort of impact they've made. But in our first

35:30 year we were there we were finding our feet and slowly developed into an operational team.

As a group, as a team did you ever get together as an entire group and discuss what was going on?

No. The whole 12 months that I was there we never had the team together. It wasn't until the later years that they established a place called Australia House

36:00 up in the northern part of South Vietnam that team members were able to get together after operations and amongst themselves, and have a beer and treat it like a bit of Australia. But prior to that, our people were just operating by themselves in groups of 10 or 9 or 2, depending on what part of the country they were in.

36:30 **You said you were doing a fair bit of movement in helicopters, was there any indication how important the helicopter would be at this stage?**

From our briefings there was because that was the habit of the Americans when depositing forces of South Vietnamese troops in certain localities where they would then disperse and do their own patrolling

37:00 and investigation of villages or whatever. Then they'd probably come back and pop back after a period of time, could be a week, could be two weeks, could be two days. And then they would go back to their own battalion areas. They were in control of the country which was the unfortunate tactical blunders, I suppose.

Sorry what was that?

37:30 **They were...?**

They weren't controlling ground. They'd go in and hit something and move back out and the Viet Cong would then come back in, and infiltrate, and control the villages again, and get supplies, and indoctrinate people, and gain sympathisers, and dig all their underground trenches and hospitals and storage areas, and use the

38:00 Ho Chi Minh Trail and bring in their big guns and so forth. You just weren't controlling ground.

At that time when you were there, was that the situation?

Yeah, of course. At that stage the American Army wasn't there in full strength or anything, it was just the South Vietnamese forces.

How big was the American presence in your eyes there

38:30 **at that time?**

The Advisory Group was fairly big. I can't tell you what numbers they were but they just kept rapidly getting bigger and bigger through my 12 months, expanding. That's all I can say about their size.

Tape 8

00:31 **Can you tell us a bit about the other two people you were working closely with in Saigon?**

Well, Colonel Serong, I hadn't met Colonel Serong before because prior to that he'd spent a lot of time in the Far East, Burma, etcetera. He was ex-commandant of Jungle Warfare School at Canungra in Queensland. He knew a fair bit about the Far East, and the first time I met him

01:00 was when the Team was formed. He kept pretty aloof from us. He left us alone so there was only Colonel Mann, Major Fitzpatrick and myself operating in Saigon. He used to go and do his own visits throughout the country keeping his finger on the pulse. Sending back reports and so forth. And that was also the role of the Military Attaché who was attached to the Saigon

01:30 Embassy. They kept the finger on the pulse in what was going on in the countries and they'd be sending back reports each week on what was going on, what was wrong and what was right, back to military headquarters. Colonel Mann was my battalion commander at Holsworthy, 2 Battalion. So I was his white haired

02:00 boy there. So that's probably why he picked me to stay at Saigon. Major Fitzpatrick I hadn't met before, he was in the Intelligence Corps. I think he mostly operated up in Queensland. His son had also joined the army. I'm not sure if he's still in the army now or not. So they were three people that I worked with.

02:30 I nearly fell out in the first month with Colonel Serong. We were coming back from the airport in Saigon and we picked up two American nurses who'd arrived in the country and they'd spent their leave somewhere and they had a flat in Saigon, about 7 storeys high. They were right up near the top floor.

03:00 They invited us in for a drink you know, because we gave them a lift back from the airport. The three of us, the four of us that's right, went up and at that time you couldn't dance, you couldn't sing songs, you couldn't play music, I suppose you could play music but you couldn't dance to it. So they had a portable gramophone player there

03:30 and I went to put on a record. I said, "Do you mind if I put on a record?" to the nurse. "No go ahead." I put it on and then asked one of them to have a dance. And there was Colonel Serong, Colonel Mann and Major Fitzpatrick sitting there. They didn't give me any dirty looks or anything so I was having a nice dance with some American nurse. Then we said our goodbyes and we went our separate ways. Next day in he officers'

04:00 mess in town Colonel Serong was at the bar and he saw me there and went, "Come here Vezgoff." And I said, "Yes Sir." And he said, "Don't you ever do that again, dancing. Do you know what could've happened?" And so I suddenly twigged and I was thinking to myself we were right up on the 6th floor nobody could see in through the windows or anything. And he said,

04:30 "You know we could've been expelled from the country. You know what that would've meant to my career, your career, Colonel Mann's career, Major Fitzpatrick?" "Yes Sir." "Don't you ever do that again." He gave me a really good dressing down. So that's the way entertainment went in Saigon.

What was that all about? Did you understand the reasons for that?

Oh Madame Nhu was the power behind the throne and her philosophy was whilst there was a war on people shouldn't be enjoying themselves.

05:00 It was as simple as that.

Where there any instances you saw that edict being enforced?

As far as entertainment goes no, no. You didn't see any dancing anywhere that's for sure.

What entertainment did the people in Saigon make for themselves?

Oh social, cocktail parties, standing up talking, chatting, no dancing.

05:30 **Is it fair to say you began to move within a bit of an ex-pat[riate] scene in Saigon at the time?**

Oh yes, I got to know people in the British Embassy, people in the Australian Embassy. Of course I used to go to the Embassy everyday, the Australian Embassy, to collect mail or deliver mail, and British Advisory, I had nothing to do with the French

06:00 Embassy. Although I met a few French people. So they were a pretty tight community group. Entertained amongst themselves. Cocktail parties, of course whisky, they'd get it through diplomatic channels. In today's currency a bottle of whisky would be worth about two dollars. It was safer drinking that than the water

06:30 really.

Looking back at that time now, it's become sort of anthologised as a fairly romantic era in a way because of the danger involved. Did you feel that sense of sort of romance and adventure again being in Saigon?

Yeah there was a - it's a real sort of French city, Saigon, laid out nicely, wide streets,

07:00 nice colonial architecture, French lifts again, French plumbing, French restaurants and a little bit of French wine, mm.

All in the middle of a South East Asian war, I mean did that change your ability to have fun or did it heighten it in some sense

07:30 **if knowing that there was a danger around?**

Well you let yourself go. You know if you were going to worry about walking down the street or sitting in a restaurant or somebody going to throw a grenade in, or whatever the case may be, or shot down a helicopter or an aeroplane or - see you made fun while the sun shone.

What was your main avenue for letting yourself go then when you had the chance?

08:00 Cocktail parties I suppose, that's about it.

Were they hard drinking cocktail parties?

Some were, yes. But the Australian one was pretty prim and proper. Very pukka [proper] English, mm.

You mentioned the

08:30 **buddy system the Team worked in, can you explain that a little bit?**

Right it was felt that you'd be safer with somebody from your own country in a tight situation because quite often South Vietnamese troops would bug out and depart quickly, and you'd be left there on your own.

09:00 So you relied on each other to, if one was wounded, for the other chap to help him out. That type of situation and also if they're conferring or discussing things with the South Vietnamese commander, there's strength in numbers I guess. And if one chap couldn't get his point across the other one could maybe do a little bit better.

The Team had been spread all around

09:30 **Vietnam but you as a Central Administration role must've had a fairly good idea what everyone was doing?**

Mm.

Can you talk a little about what the different operational task of the Team were at that time you were there?

Well from the training side I can. There was one training establishment which trained the Home Guard. Defensive type people in tactics, weapon, firing, counter ambush drills,

10:00 rifle range firing. Then there was another group who trained Rangers, South Vietnamese Rangers and another group trained the ARVN [Army of the Republic of (South) Viet Nam], Regular Army South Vietnamese Government troops. So it was a mixture of roles and

10:30 they were given separate wings, weapon wings, tactics wings to control, and at that stage the Americans were doing this sort of thing when they arrived. So they had to sort of feel their way when they first arrived there. So instead of rocking the boat straight away they just saw what was going on and what was right and what was wrong, and then slowly they start to exert their own influence in how the training should be done

11:00 until eventually in a lot of the training establishments, they end up running their own shows.

How difficult was it for them to exert that influence, as we mentioned before, this was a small Australian contingent in a mainly US operation?

I think it was political for a start so you had to be careful about saying your guys aren't good enough to train,

11:30 whereas our guys are more professional than your advisors. So I think the understanding came into being with the Americans in charge that yeah, it's the right philosophy that they run their own show and let our guys run their own show, sort of thing. So there was a separation of powers in that instance. I think that would've been done on Serong's side of things. But he didn't confide in us

12:00 what he did and what he didn't do.

Is that what you thought though, unofficially, that we don't necessarily agree with you, we can do it better?

That's what our guys thought anyway.

You mentioned one US idea of training men as talking to them in a seminar that you disagreed with. What was the Australian equivalent that was better?

The Australian method of training is

12:30 training in small numbers. You get more effective training. For instance if you're learning how to assemble a weapon and disassemble instead of 200 people watching somebody do it, that's a skill to do that, you're not in a position when there's 200 people watching, that they can put their hands on it and do it. So that's one form of maybe what the Americans do, they have

13:00 a demonstrator and an instructor talking to the group. "Now watch how he does this." That's not really training. What training is, you get a small group of 10 people and they all take a turn each at doing it. That's more effective training. It takes a lot more instructors to do it but our - the Australian Army corporal is trained to be an assistant instructor

13:30 to instruct people whereas maybe, I'm not quite sure what the American system is at the moment.

What about the British what was there...?

Very similar to our style of training because I think most of our training was adopted from the British. It was adopted in Malaya. We followed their Anti Terrorist Operations System there. The Second World War we followed the Brits there.

14:00 **I don't know how true it is but there's a tradition of egalitarianism in the Australian Army that is supposedly not the same in Britain. Did you sense that in one way or another?**

In what way?

Well that there is a much stronger officer class in the British Army and a much less...?

I didn't find that in Malaya in 55 to 57 and I came across a lot of our British - most of our pupils were British officers who passed through there,

14:30 and I found the British officer quite likable, easy to talk to, a real gentleman and easy to follow.

What rank were you at this stage?

Where at?

15:00 What war?

When you went to the Team. When you were under Colonel Serong...?

Oh I was a Class 2.

Did you get promoted during that time in Saigon?

No, as I left Australia, yeah.

You mentioned your role had to do with administration, pay and clothing arrangements. Can you talk a bit more about that detail? What were you doing on that front?

Well the pay situation

15:30 was that they would be paid in American dollars from the pay book and they would then pay for their food and lodging. Eventually what happened was that there was some sort of system that they hardly got paid at all really. They managed to live on the American rations and South Vietnamese rations

16:00 and they just needed a bit of money to buy the odd beer. So a lot of them saved quite a lot of money over there.

So where would their pay go?

It would stay in their pay book and time to go home, you make your entry each fortnight, total up, total up, total up and they look at their pay book and say, oh I've got a lot of money.

Clothing arrangements,

16:30 **what were they?**

Clothing arrangements was pretty poor. Our arrangements, we were supposed to get clothing from Singapore. Sometimes arrived, sometimes it didn't. Until eventually a lot of our people wore a mixture of clothing. Australian clothing, Vietnamese clothing, American clothing but they still wore the slouch hat.

Is that to say they were not in uniform?

17:00 When you're on active service you can sort of wear whatever fits you. In that situation in Vietnam.

Were you in uniform?

Yeah I was in uniform the whole time.

What other little administrative tasks did you have to do on a day to day basis?

Oh fill the roll in.

17:30 Send signals off, answer signals, enter signals in log book, collect mail from the Embassy, deliver mail, go up country, go on trips here or there with Serong or Colonel Mann or the Ambassador. So that was basically it.

18:00 **Go up country? Where would you go up country?**

Oh where our main training establishments were - Phu Bai, that's about 14 kilometres south of Hue. It's all - you had to do everything by thumb you know. Go to an airport somewhere and find a plane which looks like loading and say where are you going, how about a lift, yeah hop aboard. I nearly

18:30 got a plane to myself one time, if I'd answered the right question. I walked into this little hut and I said to this guy behind the counter, "Look I want a plane to take me to Saigon." He said, "Oh yeah fill in this form - name, rank, destination. What time do you want to leave? Yeah okay. How much luggage have you got? Yeah, yeah, yeah." Answered all the questions. And the last question was how many gallons

19:00 of fuel do you want. I said, "What's this for?" He said, "Aren't you a pilot?" If I'd answered that I could've walked off, that's if I could fly a plane of course. I could've ended up with a nice aircraft. Very haphazard.

I was going to say were there many incidents of that haphazardness?

That was the main one that I struck but you - an Aussie could go to any

19:30 American store and get what he wanted. He's got that habit of sweet talking to people and the guy would say of yeah all right. Because our Q [Quartermaster] system is very tight in the Australian Army because if you want a pencil you've got to sign three forms.

What would you get from the American stores you couldn't get otherwise?

Oh, if you wanted to go water skiing you'd just go up

20:00 and say, "Could I have a swimming belt and a couple of water skis?" "Oh yeah, okay," you know. "I'd like to get a radio," "Oh sure yeah, here's one."

But not in the Australian Army?

No definitely not.

How frustrating was it for you who'd been trained in Malaya as a trainer in actual jungle warfare to be doing this kind of work?

I was

20:30 prepared to sit it out for 6 months which I was told that's how long you're going to stay there and I think it was Brian Quee[?] who was a member of the Team who was supposed to replace me but the powers to be said, "No, Vezgoff, you've got to stay another 6 months," so I couldn't argue.

How did you feel about that though?

I'd settled into the job by that stage and it was neither here or there.

21:00 Was there a time that the job got significantly more dangerous?

I think it was dangerous all the time. I can't think of any period where it was more active. I think towards the end when they started blowing up statues in the city, they blew up the statues of the Trung Sisters, Trung, T-R-U-N-G, who were heroes

21:30 of Vietnam when they repelled the Chinese from invading Vietnam. Only because they said they modelled the face on Madame Nhu on the statues. They just took a dislike and just blew it up.

How often were there bombings in Saigon at that period?

Oh, once or twice a week.

What was the closest you can to these, the one you've

22:00 already mentioned?

I never witnessed any explosions myself.

What about the aftermath of those explosions?

Aftermath, I raced out - when they blew up the statues, I think I was with Bob Philips who was the Intelligence Sergeant, at a party, and I raced down the street to where the statues were lying down and there were leaflets flying everywhere, all in Vietnamese which I couldn't read naturally. So

22:30 I picked up half a dozen of those and next day took them up to the Embassy so that they could read them and probably file their reports on what was going on, based on those leaflets. It was some anti government group which was spreading a message of down with the government.

What did the blast site look like?

Oh, twisted masonry and leaflets and dust, people appearing from

23:00 everywhere.

Injuries, were there injuries?

No, not that I could see. It was round about 11 o'clock at night about that time.

Was that common practice for the bombings that would occur to be accompanied with leaflet drops?

That was the only instance that I knew. Common practice was burning yourself to death. That was done by the Buddhist monks who were

23:30 protesting against persecution.

Can you tell us a little bit more about that? You mentioned it briefly before.

Yeah, I didn't see any of the actual burnings but I saw them in the paper next day. It didn't explain the philosophy of the Buddhist monks because again it was censored naturally, by the government who controlled the Press. They just said

24:00 another monk burnt himself to death.

When did you get the news that you were coming home? You were there more than 12 months in the end. What was the situation with which you finally got back to Australia?

What was the situation - well I knew I was only there for 12 months like the other team members and when my time actually came

24:30 I had about 4 or 5 farewell parties and I was pretty hung over at that stage you know, given by Yanks and Embassy people and I'd bought myself a nice silver opium pipe in the markets, a beautiful thing it stood about a foot high and tassels on it, finely engraved

25:00 and it was an antique. So when I landed at Mascot I was in civilian clothes and the customs bloke was going through my case and he said, "What is this?" And I said, "It's an antique opium pipe," and his eyes lit up and he picked up and raced down the hallway and the next minute there were about 8 or 9 custom officials led by a high ranking customs

25:30 officer and they said, "If you want to see this again you can see it in our museum thank you very much." And that was that and I thought well this is a nice bloody welcome home. If I'd just said it was an ornamental vase or ornamental silver piece I probably would've got away with it.

Was opium common? Would you see much of that in Saigon?

No not at all. It might've been in

26:00 the Chinese section in Cholon which is a fairly big suburb attached to Saigon but we hardly ever ventured in that area.

When you got back to Australia what was your new posting then?

My posting was to the Officer Cadet School at Portsea. This was where we trained young officer cadets. They did 12 months

26:30 and graduated with one pip as second lieutenants. So I stayed there for about 6 years which is unusual because army postings are normally two years. I passed through a few jobs there. Weapons Instructor, Drill Instructor, finally

27:00 WO [Warrant Officer] Training, in charge of all the training programmes putting out three programmes a week. And then from there I was posted to the Army Headquarters Methods of Instruction Team which was responsible for training of all instructors throughout army schools in Australia plus young junior non commission officers and officers, in techniques of instruction through the army.

27:30 So I was there for 2 years then my time came up to call it a day.

While you were at Portsea, Australia's contribution to Vietnam expanded, was there ever any talk that you might have your skills used back over there?

A few of our guys did go back on second tour of duties. I didn't go back

28:00 because I was still there and the new posting I got was quite a good one. I was very fortunate in my career because I got a lot of good postings. You know the - Korea I suppose that was just an average posting, everybody went there at that time. Malaya was a prime posting. First Training Team was a prime

28:30 posting. School of Infantry was a prime posting. Methods of Instruction Team was a prime posting so I was fortunate that I was moved along the [(UNCLEAR)] line of prime important postings, let's put in that way.

You were in a very interesting position to see the Australian involvement of Vietnam expand, how did you view that at that time?

What from back home?

From back home, yeah.

29:00 Well I still had the same opinions as I had when I first arrived there that it was an unwinnable war and when they decided to send troops I saw it purely as a political move. I didn't see it as a way of winning the war I just saw it as a political effort.

29:30 **What about the officers you were training, did they end up in Vietnam?**

A lot of them did because we had a memorial put in towards the latter part of my stay at Portsea and the dead were given a plaque and put on that particular wall and there were quite a few. There were 6 or 7 I think when I left.

How did you reflect on sending men off to this war?

30:00 I sort of treated it like a soldier. That's what they trained for, that's what they joined up for and it's just the luck of the game isn't it? There's more people killed on the roads than killed in Vietnam if you look at the period of time. So maybe whilst they were in a foreign country fighting but maybe a lot safer in many ways.

30:30 That's a brutal way of saying that but...

There was a whole new aspect to war in Vietnam though that hadn't been seen before in Australia and that was the public response to it.

Mm.

How did you experience that as an army officer in Australia at the time?

Well, I thought it was a propaganda war which was lost by the Australian Government in many ways

31:00 and I looked upon it that the public weren't really informed of the original cause of the war, how it started, how it was going, why we were there. It wasn't sold and that being the case people were sitting in their TV lounges watching what was going on, maybe hearing the odd atrocity which was

31:30 occurring over there by American troops. We just lost it and I think our people went the same way as the American people did. I don't think it was sold over there either, by President Johnson.

How could it've been sold in your view because you didn't necessarily agree that it was a worthwhile thing?

I think the history of how it started and why we were there from the

32:00 Peace Accord, the Geneva Accord, the breaking of that Accord. I think there were faults on both sides because Diem didn't want to hold elections to reunify the country and I think there was a political element involved at that stage, the domino theory. If

32:30 Communism takes hold in South East Asia it would come right own through Malaya, sorry, Indonesia and those places and we would've lost it. So the whole thing's political, everything's political anyway in war. Sometimes you're on the wrong side of the political fence and sometimes

33:00 you don't hear the full facts of the case, but I think we could've sold it a lot better than what was done.

Did you feel in some way that those soldiers were killed that you were putting up memorials for at Portsea had been betrayed by the Australian people or their Government?

I did because there were some useless strikes which went on at times yeah. Stopping mails, stopping supplies, wharf strikes that type of

33:30 thing. And for instance when one of the battalions when they marched through Sydney and the lady smeared herself with red paint and jumped on to the commanding officer as he was marching in front of his troops, that type of thing and a lot of pseudo conscientious objectors also

34:00 was wrong. They should've been weeded out properly.

Did you cop any flak personally being in the Australian Army at that time?

No, I didn't, because coming back from Vietnam and moving down to Portsea, which is right on the southern peninsula of Port Phillip Bay it's like Devil's Island you know, you're sort of segregated from - a long way from Melbourne

34:30 and your hours are long, you work lots of weekends there at Portsea. You do lots of exercises, so you don't mix much with the outside general public or you didn't.

Did you have much cause to go to Melbourne at all?

Not really.

What about the effects of that war in Vietnam on the soldiers that came back,

35:00 **that was not a new phenomena as we talked about in Korea there were incidents of but it was a new name, it was a new thing to be recognised. What did you see of that at the time?**

I thought it was wrong, based on my experiences of suddenly being in a war zone and then suddenly landing in Australia without any debriefing, any welcome home, pat on the back, welcome home, dance, which we used to do in the Second World War.

- 35:30 Welcome back the returning diggers in our Balgownie Community here on the south coast, and when I read and saw that servicemen were coming back I could understand from the Regular Army side because they moved back into another Regular Army unit somewhere and they were amongst their own peer group again. Whereas the National Serviceman was probably given leave and then discharged and just thrown out
- 36:00 to the public and I don't know if there's been a study made of the effects of Vietnam on National Servicemen as compared to the Regular Army guys. I don't know, I'm quite sure that the finding would probably open up people's eyes that people do need debriefing, they do need counselling and nowadays when you read about accidents or fires or
- 36:30 something or car accidents or problems at school, you get counsellors coming in and debriefing school children and teachers and so forth. So I think public are becoming aware that this is a requirement for anybody that has been through some sort of trauma and he should be counselled and eased back into the community.
- Did you see counsellors appear in the Australian Army at the time?**
- Did I see any?
- Mm?**
- No.
- 37:00 **What about your next posting, who were the people you were training in that Training School?**
- In the Methods of Instruction Team, they ranged from Officers to NCOs, School Instructors, Battalion Instructors, Corp Instructors a variety of people.
- 37:30 **Was there any emphasis on particular types of training or were you just training to train in general?**
- No, I think our training programmes sort of covered techniques of instruction which basically was a question technique, preparation and planning, assessment, giving lessons, assessing people
- 38:00 you know sort of developing a teacher, a soldier into a teacher. Preparing lesson plans, delivering lessons, giving lectures, lecture techniques, weapon lessons, field craft lessons, all types of instructional techniques.
- Is there a role for a compassionate counselling figure in that soldier term teacher?**
- 38:30 I think that on NCO training or officer training there should be a segment on counselling yeah certainly, very important because in industry when I was a training superintendent, I was to teach counselling techniques to mangers and foremen in factories that
- 39:00 they have to listen to people if they've got a problem and try and help them work out their own problem with a little bit of assistance.

Tape 9

- 00:32 **Just to go back to Korea and looking at how things eventuated there and reflecting on perhaps from your point of view having experience almost four active service regions if your paper boy, if the air way board. But Korea is especially for you, you saw most service,**
- 01:00 **in it, is still going on, it's still a stalemate across the 38th parallel. You fought up and down up and over it and back again. How do you come to feel about that situation now looking back what you scarified there?**
- Well it was one of those worthwhile wars
- 01:30 I think it was because there were about 21 nations contributed to that as part of the United Nations Force. Going back to Korea in 2001 I wouldn't have recognised the place. The city of Seoul is an amazing place. It's huge, hustle and bustle, very
- 02:00 prosperous, people are well clothed and well fed. The road systems are tremendous. There are about 21 bridges across that river now whereas when we crossed it there was only the one bridge so that just gives you an indication of how much has happened since I was there 50 years ago.
- Were you also struck by what hasn't happened?**
- 02:30 What hadn't happened? What do you mean by that question?
- Well you've still got a divided country. Effectively the war goes on.**

Oh yes, yes, yes, okay well that's how the peace terms were settled that that division will stay there and that will be North Korea and that will be South Korea. It's like probably parts of Europe that have been changed many times with lines and boundaries

03:00 and they're the same today as they were a couple of centuries ago.

Those lines and boundaries why are they so worth fighting over though? Why does that still exist up there?

Well when Korea was fought we had the big red peril, you know, communism was the enemy of the Western world and when North Korea

03:30 invaded it broke one of the principles of what the United Nations was formed for. You know, prevent aggression by one country against another and that's how we ended up with 21 countries contributing forces and either medical side or fighting side into that conflict.

But it wasn't one country invading another, was it?

Yes it was. It was North Korea invading

04:00 South Korea. North Korea being a Communist country and South Korea being a supposedly democratic country.

How much do you think you could cast that in terms of a civil war and their business?

Sorry?

Do you think looking back it would've been possible to think about that as their own business as a civil war between two essentially political parties?

Well I guess if you look at Africa today,

04:30 I think in one country there over 8 million people have died which is a type of civil war that's why they have some form of United Nations Forces trying to control the thing and bring peace and stability. That's what United Nations is for, is to stop that sort of one country taking over another country. It's like

05:00 the world police force if I can put it in those terms. Like Bosnia, what happened there - United Nations.

Essentially yes, I agree but would you say that a war is essentially a failure of democracy? What is the UN's role then?

As far as democracy goes?

05:30 **Yes, as to prevent war which is essentially what wars are usually fought - certainly the First and Second World Wars were fought to prevent ongoing wars yet war still goes on. You had firsthand impressions of the UN and the ideals of what they were fighting for. Do you still think they hold true?**

I think they've lost their will a little bit along the way and I think they've become too political in a

06:00 way whereas they should be more of a governing body making quick decisions and countries supporting those decisions. I think a lot of that support has fallen by the wayside in many ways and a power of veto by some countries prevents probably good actions to be carried out.

06:30 I think there's got to be some power in this world to prevent war if possible. Now if North Korea is developing atomic bomb capabilities, they're having talks now at the moment and if those talks fail what will the United Nations do? Will they be game enough to say okay dismantle your

07:00 atomic capabilities, if not we'll send over flights of bombers and blow them all to pieces. Which is probably the best of way doing it anyway.

Is war possible when atomic weapons exist?

Oh yes, yeah. It depends on their missiles. If their missiles have got long range capabilities you've got a problem. If they can land missiles in the States from North Korea

07:30 I don't think they've got the capability of the number of bombs at this stage to do that type of thing whereas America has. And if you have a nation which builds up a strength of atom bombs, why is it doing this? Is it to conquer South Korea or what?

Has the root cause of the

08:00 **Korean problem gone away on that visit when you went back? Has anything changed really from that point of view really?**

No, I stood on the demarcation line and looked across the border and there were angry looking people on the other side looking back at us and we were told don't make rude gestures at the opposition which we didn't. It's still there and I think the most recent incursion by North Korea

08:30 where they built these big tunnels into Numba into South Korea where you could drive a train through, in the end they were discovered and they were blocked off.

How did that make you feel looking back towards I guess, your former enemies, perhaps they're still current enemies for South Korea?

Would I fight again over there?

09:00 **Would you fight?**

No I'm too old. Thank God.

No, how did that make you feel? What memories did it have for you?

I think wars have been fought ever since the world was formed, amongst one race against the other. It'll never go away, there'll always be wars. The progression of soldiers will never die out. Man is evil; he's got an evil nature in him. There's

09:30 good and bad and evil, yeah.

What memories did it recall for you when you went back on this visit 2000...?

Just the progress of the country I don't think it's a full democracy. The reason I say that is that all the building and road building going on and I asked this

10:00 South Korean businessman, I said, "Do you have shares in this company or are there are many companies who have shares which people can buy into?" And apparently they haven't and it's done by a minority of rich people. That's the feeling that I got I'm not sure if I'm right in that.

How were you welcomed there?

Very good.

10:30 The veteran community treated us very well put on some good entertainment, good cocktail parties, good speeches. The visit to Kapyong was memorable. Of course a lot of their soldiers were there as spectators. So all in all they treated us very well.

11:00 **What was the purpose of the visit?**

The 50th Anniversary of the end of the Korean War when we went across.

You mentioned that it wasn't so well know in Australia when you came back here, how do you feel, has that situation changed at all? Or how do you feel now people regard the Korean War?

I think people know a lot more about it. I think with the - published in newspaper around

11:30 Anzac Day Korea gets a mentioned quite often. The series 'Australians at War' has got a Korean segment in there and that was put on ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation]. So I think people are becoming more aware of what type of war it was and it evolved and what occurred.

What lessons were learnt from the Korean War?

12:00 Manpower I supposed. Manpower weaponry, when you had this mighty strength of the Chinese Army and you were trying to push them back - virtually

12:30 impossible you can't beat manpower. That's the main lesson and I think that, who was it [Field Marshall] Montgomery, El Alamein, he said there are two lessons in war, I'm just trying to remember what they were, one was 'Never March on Moscow' and 'Never fight on the mainland of Asia'. I think he was right on both accounts.

13:00 **That's good I haven't heard that before. What lessons did Australia learn generally do you think, now?**

If you're talking about conscription or the Regular Army, if conscription came in to fight overseas I think there would be a lot more resistance unless the cause was just.

13:30 If we were threatened by invasion but it's got to be a pretty strong argument nowadays I think.

But what lessons from Korea because there wasn't conscription?

Oh Korea, Vietnam...

Specifically Korea because I think Vietnam there was conscription?

There was no conscription in Korea. We were all Regulars or people signing up for two year terms, K Force etcetera. Well

14:00 we didn't have the manpower. You can only raise that manpower by conscription but the cause has got to be just, that's the main thing.

Did it have any effect on the way training was run in the army after you went back or went into training?

What the Korean War?

Yes.

The Korean War was the last war where you had a front line. So

14:30 it was something like the battlefields of Flanders or something like that in France. But Korea was the last front line. There are no more front lines and I think when I spoke to Lieutenant General Cosgrove about two years ago at the Kapyong Parade in Holsworthy I said,

15:00 from my experiences looking at the training at Wagga where 1 Recruit Training Battalion is, they should teach all recruit infantry tactics, defence, patrolling, doesn't matter if they go to artillery, RAEME [Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers] or armoured or any other corps because in future there'll be no front lines. It's

15:30 what the Yanks are experiencing now in Iraq, no front line there.

Do military people amongst your colleagues and perhaps yourself look back with nostalgia at a, what I guess is the last pure war of the great armies attack...

Not seriously, we just talk about funny incidents or tell jokes or thing of the happy times. The mind's

16:00 got a habit of wiping out bad memories and you only remember the good times.

I'm thinking though, do you miss I guess the simplicity of having a uniformed army against one another there's no civilians involved, there's no other complicating factors of guerrilla warfare. Is this a sort of ideal for military?

Yes, it's an ideal war but wars nowadays are very dirty, yeah.

16:30 Not a gentleman's war.

I just mentioned to you then a lot of troops were used as bargaining pawns for the peace negotiators including yourselves in Maryang San, how did you feel about that or in reflection how do you feel about that?

Well at the time you didn't realise that. All you realise was that you've got to straighten up this defensive line.

17:00 We've got to capture that line of hills and as a soldier, as a private or a corporal or a sergeant that's all you were told. You weren't given the picture, okay you guys you've got to take this because we've got to meet the opposition and talk about a peace treaty. We've got to have bargaining power and we will be much stronger if we've got a good defensive line in that area. You're

17:30 not told these things. You're told capture that hill and as a soldier you just go ahead and capture that hill.

What about with the magical benefit of hindsight? What do you think now?

If we hadn't been successful, it probably would've been better in the bargaining position, better in the 38th parallel I guess if that line had been held, if it hadn't been lost in those last weeks. I don't know

18:00 it's just a piece of ground isn't it?

It's a piece of ground on which people died and...

That's right, yeah.

And yet it was a bit of a futile action that one. I mean you were injured in that battle.

Yeah.

Does that futility ever gall with you at all?

No, I sort of look - that was my job. I was a soldier, I had to do what I had to do and I did it. I didn't get into the political argument and I guess that's why they have political officers in the

18:30 commissars in the Russian Army or they did have. Who are there mainly for the political side, to explain things to the soldiers that they got to take this because of this and this and this and we didn't have that.

You saw the Australian soldier change over your military career, do you think that the unquestioning soldiers in Korea and the soldiers perhaps today who are being sent off to war in the Middle East are prepared the same way or are the same?

19:00 The soldier today is better trained than we were in our particular time. They've got new weaponry, better equipment, better transport, better tanks, better wireless communication and better trained

leaders I would say.

One of those leaders, General Cosgrove, has come out and said in hindsight his view on the Vietnam conflict

19:30 **how did you respond to that?**

Well he's quite right in hindsight, everybody can be probably wiser in hindsight but at the time and at the place and when the words were spoken at that time were correct because you didn't know the results, the end results but in hindsight when you know the end results you say, well we shouldn't have been there.

What about putting aside your own...

He was right too.

20:00 **Putting aside your own military career at all just in the private sense of today, how did you feel about the most recent conflict in Iraq?**

In hindsight again? Knowing all the political aspects?

A month or three's hindsight, yeah?

Yeah, well the hindsight of the weapons of destruction, it was a balls up right from the beginning,

20:30 it shouldn't have occurred. You know those people are used to dictatorship and maybe they should've left it the way it was.

Do you have any inkling of where that conflict might go now?

The conflict now, not from hindsight or anything but what's going on, you've got that many diverse cultural groups living

21:00 in that country. Religious groups, all vying for power, fighting amongst themselves. One race reckons they should have more power than the other race, any division of labour or spoils or power. It's a mess and the only way it was controlled was by a

21:30 dictatorship. And I think Churchill once said 'Dictatorship is the worst form of Government but there's nothing better.'

Nothing more efficient...

Or nothing more efficient.

We'll leave that aside for now; I'll go back to the personal reflection on things. When you look back at your experiences in the various conflicts that you've been involved in perhaps most

22:00 **prominently Korea 'cause you were on the front line there, when you look back at those things what images still stick in your mind this far after the event?**

I feel that I belonged to a very special elite group of soldiers and I'm always proud to link up with them on ceremonial occasions, Anzac Days or reunions and looking back that

22:30 I did something which I thought was well at that time amongst a good group of guys and a lot of good guys that didn't make it also. And you've got to reflect on that.

What about regrets? Do you have any?

Regrets, about having served in the army or...?

About to do with you

23:00 **entire military career?**

I would've stayed on longer if there was another war. It's the only regret. But once you get a bit older what they normally do is post you off to an Army Reserve outpost somewhere and I wasn't prepared to do that so I got out while I thought I was still able.

23:30 **Was there something a bit unworthwhile about an army that's not in wartime?**

Unworthwhile?

That's a bad word but is there something wrong with that?

If there's no wars and what's wrong with that, just imagine yourself on a freezing cold night, the rain beating in, you're sitting in a hole and you're shivering, and this is part of training, and you go out on a midnight patrol

24:00 and attack a fictitious enemy and you come back soaking wet and fall into the hole, and you're up again at stand to and you say to yourself what am I training for, there's no wars, there's not going to be any

wars for a long time. If you train for something it's got to have a special purpose. And I guess keeping the troops amused or trained is a very difficult

24:30 occupation in peacetime. You've got to have a firm objective, why have I got to do that, what's the purposes of doing that, when am I going to use that technique. That's when people start leaving the army because they can't see what am I doing this for.

You mentioned that you've had dreams about Korea,

25:00 **what sort of dreams are they?**

They're not quite specific but the body reacts, my legs start pumping. I nearly kick my wife out of bed occasionally and when I wake up she says, "What were you dreaming about last night?" And it's probably not related to a war time action. Dreams

25:30 are very hard to relate and remember at the time but when you analyse something which may have a civilian connotation where you're running up a street and you come to a cliff or something and you feel that you're falling how do you rate that, well do you say that was part of the wartime experience. Can I claim a pension on that? Surely not. So I don't claim a pension. The only pension that I get is for hearing loss. Which can be measured.

26:00 **Are there any traumatic images that you have remembered that come to you?**

There's only two which I've mentioned, one was seeing our first dead, our own troops lying under the ground sheets and the second one was the Northumberland Fusiliers rotting away. Some in their sleeping bags,

26:30 flesh falling off their faces, maggots everywhere and the unbearable stench of death. They're two images that I'll never forget.

Have you smelt that since?

Not death, no.

Not in Vietnam after a bombing and so on?

No, no, no, Vietnam was very hygienic. It was done on the assembly line. Because I knew a chap that worked on the assembly line in the

27:00 mortuary. And when the dead used to come in they used to string them up by the heels on racks and chains, Americans, and hose them down with a high powered hose and then put them in their coffins before they were sent home. It was just like a slaughter house.

I'm sure he has images that stick with him?

Yes, I think he'd probably have some sleepless nights.

A horrible job. To

27:30 **finish up I'm just going to ask a couple of questions about yourself. You're in the bracket of the young lad that joined the army in 1950 the man that left and the man you are now, what changes have taken place?**

It made me a better leader; it made me a better person. It made me better at probably understanding humans. How to control,

28:00 how to work with them, how to understand them, it gave me education which helped me in my civilian life so I wouldn't have missed it for quids. I'd do it again - if I knew I was going to survive.

And when you're not such a young man that's not taken for granted so much anymore?

No,

28:30 probably not.

What about the country that you joined up in and the country that exists now? How do you comment on that in the way it's changed?

Australia, when I joined, inflation was very low, I think the basic wage used to only rise about 1 shilling or 2 shillings a week. There were a lot of strikes going on at that period of time. Communists dominated, unions

29:00 ruled with a lot of power. It was the period of foreplay rather than sexual activity. Things were very staid. It was a staid society. Men were more gentlemen than they are now. Women weren't outgoing as they are now.

29:30 The pace was slow. There was no TV. You had the radio where you'd sit up at night time and listen to the cricket when they were playing in England. You used to listen to the radio on Sunday, radio players, Pick A Box or Jack Benny - not Jack Benny, Bob Dyer. Yeah

30:00 just sports. It was pretty – it was safe. You’d leave your backdoor open. There was hardly any crime and if there was a rape anywhere it’d take the first two front pages of the paper. Nowadays it’s a small paragraph somewhere. Yeah it was a quiet time.

What about today then? What about the Australia of today

30:30 **by comparison?**

Australia today by comparison, in my opinion I think we’ve lost something of our young people that is employment wise, opportunity wise. Going back to the early days you’d take on a job and you could say if I want to stay here the whole of my life I’m quite safe. But nowadays

31:00 okay we’ll employ you for a year or two years, or we’ll employ you for six months and see how you go, or we’re only offering part time or casual work and it doesn’t give any stability to that person. You can’t plan on marriage as easily as you did in those early days. Rents are too high, housing is too high, I don’t know how in hell they can afford to get married and buy a home nowadays.

31:30 So it’s all – not as good as it should be. Crime.

Are there any changes for the better?

Any standards which are better?

Yeah, anything about Australia that has improved through the course of your life and the conflicts that you fought in?

Religion’s gone downhill, crime has gone downhill, police have gone downhill,

32:00 politicians, a lot of the politicians have gone downhill. Education, religion of the young people has gone downhill. There’s no standards given nowadays to follow. But you want what standards have improved don’t you? That’s a hard one, I

32:30 can’t think of any at this moment. There probably are.

On that note then how do you feel about the future? This archive is being put together for distant years a hundred years time perhaps, if someone was watching this in a hundred year’s time would you have anything to say to them?

A hundred year’s time?

Any message from your life that you could give to someone?

Once again that’s a very difficult question.

It’s the most difficult because we ask,

33:00 **we ask everyone you don’t have to answer it or I can give you a couple of minutes to think about it if you like.**

A message to the people a hundred year’s time?

A message to the future in general not necessarily exactly a hundred year’s time.

Learn from the mistakes of others.

What mistakes have you learnt from in your lifetime?

What mistakes have I learnt from my lifetime – mistakes in marriage, mistakes in

33:30 organising certain things, I can’t think of any mistakes, I’m nearly perfect I think.

What about on a society level? Mistakes of international conflicts perhaps?

Mistakes of international conflicts? Well the present one in Iraq is a prime example of mistakes. They probably – us following blindly in Bush’s

34:00 footsteps. Relying on false information and not really understanding the situation of what can happen once you occupy a country. A big mistake, you’ve got to know the Eastern culture pretty well.

Well thank you very much for being nearly perfect today. And as those certificates say for all that you’ve done for this country in the last 50 years.

The pleasure’s mine.

INTERVIEW ENDS

NB. This transcript is of an interview filmed for the television series, Australians at War in 1999-2000. It was incorporated into the Archive in 2008.

Tape 10

- 00:23 Right, the year was about 1942, and I'd decided as a young fourteen year old lad to join the national emergency service. I was based in Waterloo, living with my parents there. And the national emergency service actually were air raid wardens, and I was an air raid warden's
- 00:43 runner. So I had my gas mask, tin hat and I felt real good about it and we used to run around the suburbs putting lights out - it was wartime. And I guess the highlight of my little service there was when the Japanese submarines came into Sydney Harbour. That was some night, because there weren't many high rise buildings in Sydney and the noise and the explosions sort of came right across Waterloo where we were.
- 01:13 Plenty of searchlights. There was a plane flying around and this happened - the night before there was a plane flying around. And it was great excitement for a little fourteen year old lad.
- Talk to me about the time that you were a miner and what you remember about the miners' strike, it may not cover directly that area**
- 01:43 **but we're interested in that because we are talking about**
- Well, as a young teenager I was living down the south coast, Wollongong, and I worked at the Keiraville Colliery and in those days it wasn't mechanised. There were pit ponies underground, and miners at the coal face working with shovels and picks and filling skips and so forth, very dusty. And there was a lot of strife at that time about dust in the mines. And we seemed to be continually going
- 02:13 out on strike and this happened very frequently and I found that I couldn't sort of live on the wages that I was living on at that time, because I was boarding. And I kept chasing different jobs and different money, and eventually I left the mines and moved up to Bowral.
- Talk about your perception of Communism at that time, just what you would have viewed and**
- 02:43 **if you'd listened to any of the politicians**
- Now the Miners' Federation was a very, very powerful union in those days, and miners used to do whatever union leaders told them to do, you know, pit top meetings, and out we'd go. One hundred percent majority, vote, hands up, and off we'd go for a day, a week, three weeks. And then we were living on nothing, and the miners' wives used to get
- 03:13 together and the union leaders and they used to supply potatoes and onions, which you'd meet once a week and go down to the local hall and fill up on your vegetables and things and try and eke out a living on those particular goods.
- Tell us about what you thought about Communism at that time, whether you were aware it?**
- 03:43 Whilst in the mines, I realised the power of the unions, Communist led unions and I started to get a little bit disenchanted I think with the whole set up. For instance I think the turning point for me was when somebody in Argentina was imprisoned as being a union leader and there was a vote taken at pit top and suddenly there we were, a day's strike
- 04:13 in sympathy with the people over in Argentina. That, plus the other stoppages we used to have - the conditions were hard and I believe that what they were fighting for, the dust conditions and safety issues in the mines, were quite valid, however it was a very heavy handed approach.
- Just tell us about**
- 04:43 **your perception of Communism, just the general feeling of Communism at that time, but particularly what you thought, were you aware of it? I mean was that something that had anything to do with you going to Korea and joining the army?**
- 05:13 Well, the union leadership of that time was providing leadership. The government of the day didn't seem to be doing much about it, management didn't seem to be doing much about our conditions. Therefore there was a great solidarity amongst the mining workforce. And we used to go up to Sydney on trains, the trains were provided and paid out of union funds and we'd go up and march up in Sydney - storm outside Parliament House.
- 05:43 And as a matter of fact I think I had my photo in The Telegraph appear, myself and a few of my friends hanging off the railings, which I still have at home. The reason I joined the army I think was at that stage, I still
- 06:13 was in the mines, but they were in Bowral at Berrima Colliery and I fell into the same trap, strikes again and I was boarding. And being an adventurous sort of chap, one day I thought - saw this advert saying join the army, go to Japan; join the British Commonwealth Occupational Forces. And I thought that sounds a good idea to me. So I joined on 13th January 1950. Underwent my recruit training,
- 06:43 and then posted to 1st Battalion at Ingleburn. Then from there the great adventure started. The Korean

War broke out, and we were the first plane load of reinforcements to go to Japan to join the battalion, 3 Battalion in Kure in Japan. There we underwent more vigorous training, and then embarked for Korea.

Can you talk about

07:13 **arriving at Korea and your feeling because you were involved in ...**

Having arrived in Kure in Japan, we did a lot of training, re-supplying of equipment, a lot of weapon firing readjustment, tactics, and so forth. And then the time came for us to embark

07:43 on the Aiken Victory, which was an American ship. So we boarded that, I think it was drizzling if I can remember correctly, the day we boarded and then we sailed to Korea. And we arrived I think it was the next day at Pusan, and we disembarked there, there were some bands playing music and 'If I Knew You Were Coming I'd Have Baked a Cake' was one particular tune I remembered.

08:13 Then we were put onto big trucks which looked like cattle trucks to me and they shunted us off to the railway station where we boarded trains to go to, I think it was Taegu, if memory serves me correct. And there we were in Korea, wondering what in the hell was going to happen to us. It wasn't long before we were to find out.

Talk to me about the first time you set eyes on [commander] Charlie Green and also around that period of time.

08:43 Well there was a lot - whilst we were in Kure there was a lot of reshuffling of officers around different companies, some didn't want to go, some new replacements came in, new platoon commanders came in to take over various groups. And the first we knew of our CO [commanding officer], his name was Charlie Green. Now he moved around

09:13 and we got to know him, he didn't mix greatly with us at that stage, because he had enough problems of his own, training his own company commanders, etcetera, etcetera. But he started to get a good name amongst the fellows - he's a good guy - he served in New Guinea - he knows how to talk to people. And this was the sort of thing which impresses soldiers and we set off on the right foot with a good CO.

09:43 **Continue the Charlie Green story through Pusan and just give us a description of, just your perception because what we're talking about is the impact on the people of Korea, the war and everything else, but give me your initial impressions?**

10:13 Well when did arrive at Pusan we noticed that there were a lot of South Korean ladies dressed in the national costume, they looked quite attractive. I can't say that I liked the costume but it did look nice I suppose and they were all there beaming and smiling and so forth. But we didn't stay there too long, because suddenly we were hustled off and put aboard our trucks and sent off.

10:43 As far as civilians go, there seemed to civilians moving backwards and forwards all the time because at that stage there was a lot of toing and froing between the north and south and so forth and nothing was settled. So there were a lot of refugees moving down south at that particular point of time. And there they were, laden with carts and children and their bullocks and so forth

11:13 and it's a sight which we probably saw all the way up, right to near the Yalu River and back, eventually, all the way down to where we finally stopped. We did feel sorry for them; we didn't have much to do with the civilians at all. By the time we'd passed through a lot of the villages they were normally emptied, or burning, and the only ones we saw were when we were going past by trucks or on foot.

11:43 But most of the time we were up on the high ranges, climbing hills, so we were kept away from civilians to a certain extent. Our first few weeks in Korea were spent mainly in the rear areas of the forward troops where we were mopping up guerrillas, which were enemy left behind on the distant, on the hills. So

12:13 we were climbing these hills, which [Sir Edmund] Hillary would have been proud to have climbed really, they were horrendous mountain ranges. And eventually we got caught up into the front line action and our system of moving forward was in rotation, one company would take the advance one day, then the next company would leap front the next day. Company would be about a hundred odd people in strength. And we'd just keep advancing until we struck enemy and

12:43 I think that the first time we really struck a large force was when there was an American airborne group who were surrounded by North Koreans. And as we were advancing, I think we must have caught them by surprise, because we really hit them - they had their backs to us really, if you could paint a picture that way and it was a place called the Apple Orchard. Now at that stage I was just in charge, I was a lance corporal and I was in charge of a two inch mortar and

13:13 by the time I got my number one on the mortar to empty his mortar out of cigarettes and socks he had stuffed in there, and old letters and pencils and biscuits and whatever - he used to use it as a carrying case instead of keeping it clear. But anyway we set the mortar up and we saw some enemy in the distance, so we started lobbing these mortars on to the enemy. But unfortunately these mortars that we'd been carrying,

13:43 somehow the cartridges in the base of the mortar had become affected by damp. So when we put the

first one in, there was - instead of a bang - there was just a pop and the thing just fell out, out of the mortar and just below us, between us and the enemy, was our company commander, of all things, talking to an American tank commander whose tank was there. And the mortar landed about ten yards alongside them. And the tank commander yelled out,

14:13 "God damn, the gooks are mortaring us!" So he shut his turret down, the tank went east, our company ...

Tape 11

00:36 I guess our first major action was a place called the Apple Orchard. At that particular time there was American paratroopers who were besieged by the North Koreans. Of course we didn't know too much about the history of this, or the facts about it until after it was all over. But when we ran into the

01:00 enemy at the Apple Orchard we disembarked quickly and the platoon commander, Morrison, yelled out 'Prepare for battle!' And suddenly it was all real, you know, prepare for battle, you know. The hairs on the back of our necks stood up, everybody fixed bayonets and they moved off in their platoon directions and under the leadership of various people. And my little mortar crew occupied a little feature overlooking the road. And in the distance we could see enemy

01:30 crisscrossing across the rice fields, so I said to my number one mortar man, Shufti Frazer, who was a Second World War soldier, I said, "Okay, Shufti, quick, get the mortar out. We can see some enemy." So Shufti took the cover off the mortar, tipped it upside down, out fell pencils, toilet paper, letters, what have you. He had stacks of gear shoved down his mortar. And this took a few minutes to sort out and to my amazement we

02:00 got a few mortars ready and we put one in the tube, but unbeknown to us at that stage, we'd been carrying these mortars around since our arrival and we'd been caught in the rain and so forth and the charges had become somewhat dampened. So instead of going boom out of the mortar, it went pop and instead of travelling two hundred and fifty yards or metres, or whatever the case may be, it travelled probably about fifty. Now that's okay,

02:30 but unfortunately in front of us was our company commander, Arch Dennis, talking to a tank commander, an American, about where to place his fire from the tank and some of this mortar rumbled out of the mortar and landed about ten yards from Archie. Now the Yank tank commander yelled out, "God damn, the gooks are mortaring us!" And Archie said, "By God, they are too!" And the tank commander slammed down the lid on his turret,

03:00 he went west, Archie went east, and we went south. And to this day, somebody would probably find about eleven mortar bombs on a little knoll up there and wondering what they're doing there because we just discarded them, they were useless for any further action. But in the meantime our platoon was going into action with the rest of the platoons in the company, charging up the hill through the Apple Orchard and defeating the enemy left right and centre. And I think the

03:30 final tally at the end of that afternoon was probably about a hundred and fifty odd enemy killed and about two hundred and fifty prisoners and I think we had about three or four wounded which is statistically unbelievable. And that, I think that was the first major action of our battalion, at the Apple Orchard.

Good ...

Well, whilst our little mortar crew was on this little hill,

04:00 and the rest of our company was sort of hitting the enemy from the rear, the enemy, although they were dug in facing the Americans, the biggest mistake they made, they hopped out. Of course the surprise factor must have hit them so hard; they jumped out of their fox holes and started to run. Well this really was like shooting pigeons I guess to our people as they advanced through the Apple Orchard and, up with the rifle fire, reload, up with the rifle fire,

04:30 Bren gun firing, and in the meantime, the North Koreans were so surprised I think that we did catch them unexpectedly and they hadn't expected us to run. I don't think the Americans had expected us, because they were in pretty dire straits at that particular stage and though I personally didn't come in contact with that group, members of the other platoons sort of did speak to them. But then we were quickly moved back down to the road and continued

05:00 our advance later on.

And just tell me how you felt, you and your comrades, at the end of that - your first taste of real battle?

I think the pleasant thing about our first action was the lack of casualties, and this really surprised us with the amount of fire power which was going on, being fired at us and we firing at the enemy and so forth. And it was a sort of a rush

05:30 of adrenalin in everybody, and the success of that particular battle really bolstered the morale of the battalion, knowing that they were good and better than the enemy by what they did on that particular day.

Now about Charlie Green?

06:00 I think that the command structure and control on that day was terrific, especially our company commander, Arch Dennis, and also by our CO, Colonel Green, Lieutenant Colonel Green. He controlled the battle from just slightly to the rear,

06:30 he was in contact with our company commander right throughout the whole action and I think having a person of Charlie Green's character guiding us was our first realisation of how effective he was.

And just while we're talking about Charlie Green, what was your assessment of him, you would have seen him later on or around or whatever, you saw him in Japan - just tell me a little bit about Charlie Green?

07:00 As far as our CO goes, our commanding officer Charlie Green, he was a clean cut, clean living sort of guy. The ideal leader, handsome, served in New Guinea, very popular with his officers and very popular with the troops and we greatly admired him for those particular qualities that he had as a leader.

What about his death?

07:30 Our furthest point we arrived in Korea was probably about fifty miles from the Yalu River.

Is that in North Korea now?

Yes, North Korea.

08:00 We were deep in enemy territory at this particular stage and we'd reached a place called Pakchon, which is probably about fifty miles in that term which we used in those years from the Yalu River. And we went out one day on a particular patrol, our platoon, under Lieutenant Morrison and there was a tank, a

08:30 couple of trucks, and off we went. And we're touring up the road, enjoying the sunshine, and realising that most of the enemy had crossed over the river, and suddenly we were ambushed and our leading truck was machine gunned right from front to rear without hitting anybody. Now I can tell you, it's very difficult, whether you jump out first in that situation or jump out last, you're between

09:00 a brick and a hard place sort of thing, because if you jump out first you're going to have twenty other guys landing on top of you, but if you jump out last you might get shot. So it's a judgement, immediate judgement you have to make at that particular point of time. But anyway there was a few enemy up the hill, so we managed to engage with mortars and the tank fired on the hill and we raced up the hill, in an extended line, bayonets fixed, and caught about four

09:30 or five, killed them. Our orders were not to do anything further, so we came back to the trucks and continued on our little advance for another few miles, and then came back. Obviously they were just a rearguard party trying to hold us up for a little while. Anyhow, we got back to Pakchon and that afternoon there was a few shells fired, passed over our particular positions and

10:00 exploded to the rear, just the odd couple. And I'm not sure if it was that night or the next morning we were told that our CO had died. Now this sort of caused a great amount of gloom right throughout our particular platoon and I guess throughout the company. And to see a man of his calibre die by that one or odd shell which came over a ridgeline and landed in

10:30 battalion headquarters was a terrible shock to everybody concerned Whilst we were still deep in North Korea,

11:00 just below Pakchon, we had to take up a defensive position guarding a road junction, and several companies of ours had to occupy a high ground to our right and we thought, 'Oh well, this is just a normal dig in, and wait and see what's coming.' and it sure did come. This is our first encounter with the Chinese. Many bugle calls, tracers being

11:30 fired at us, and one of our chaps who said he was a retired Catholic, an RC, a retired Catholic mind you, was wounded. We were in paddy fields at that stage, dug in and he crawled into a stook of straw, a stook is a big bundle of rice [straw], to get warm, it was fairly cold and he was wounded at that particular stage. So he wasn't a retired Catholic any more, he started to pray -

12:00 he thought his end was going to come. With the bugles and the firing and so forth and companies on our right withdrawing through us into new positions, there was much confusion that particular night. And however, his stook caught on fire, an incendiary bullet and he must have - he said later on - he must have prayed too hard because instead of being warm, he was nearly roasted. And somebody pulled him out and we got him evacuated. But that was our first encounter with the Chinese.

12:30 The next day we assumed the offence again and moved forward to see where they were, but they had

withdrawn, we managed to kill a few and that's about all that occurred on that particular day and evening.

Talk about the size of the army and what you were actually up against.

- 13:30 Right - and that particular night, after Gerry Wallace, the chap who was wounded, who was the retired Catholic, was evacuated, we started to realise that boy, we're fighting against the Chinese Army. And somebody was saying, how many in the Chinese Army?
- 14:00 And somebody said millions and we said, 'Well we're only a thousand strong here, how are we going to go against millions?' And we started to hear reports about on the east coast of Korea and how the Americans were getting mauled and so forth, with the advance of the Chinese push and this information was coming through our orders group. We used to have an orders group each evening with the latest information of what's going to happen next day. But the word, China was very, very strong in
- 14:30 our minds.

Just give us what the estimates were of the force you were against?

Well there's only one ethnic group, that's China, Chinese...

- 15:00 Well we didn't know, we knew there were a lot of them, that's about it. And it wasn't until the war was over that we realised how many divisions or how many battalions were there, there, there and there. You know, military history sort of things, but all we knew was that there was a lot of the buggers. That's about it.
- 15:30 Well, sometimes troops have to rest, and we were pulled out of the front line on this particular case, and just before Anzac Day, and we were quietly settled in this little, pretty area and there were films put on and so forth. We were able to shower and wash clothes and - which we always liked to do. And [Captain] Reg Saunders who
- 16:00 was my company commander, he was the first Aboriginal officer in the Australian Army. He served in the Second World War where he was commissioned and at this stage he was my company commander. And Reg was very popular with the troops, a down to earth guy, calls a spade a spade and so forth. And on Anzac Day we were supposed to link up with the Turks and have a social, play a game of soccer or football, whatever, and get together and celebrate Anzac Day together.
- 16:30 Once we were foes, now we were fighting on the same side. However, just prior to Anzac Day we were told to prepare to move, which is a dreaded word, because we expected to be there at least a week. So we said, 'What's going on? Oh, we've got to go up north again.' and so okay, we packed all our gear and hopped onto trucks and off we went, up the road. And as we were going up the road, we saw these South Koreans troops on
- 17:00 either side of us, going south. We said, 'What's going on?' They were divesting themselves of their weapons, throwing them away, taking off their military boots, putting on runners and so forth and away they went. And this is not a very pleasant feeling to have the South Korean Army, who were on our side, naturally, going the opposite way to where we were going. Anyway, that afternoon we arrived at our destination and were told what hills to occupy,
- 17:30 B Company on the left, A Company to our front, and our company was in reserve and a reserve company has the situation where if a forward company was overrun, they'd do the counterattack, and we'd take it. So our company was in reserve. D Company was up on the higher range to our right. That night, all hell broke loose and we knew that the Chinese were there. Bugles, whistle blasts, they became -
- 18:00 they started to attack our forward companies. It was very interesting as a bystander, because that's when I felt as a bystander that particular night. We were on the ridgeline, we couldn't dig in, the ground was too hard, so the only protection we had was to get rocks and put rocks just in front of us. And we had a couple of probes ourselves that night, so we threw a few rocks at the enemy blowers, mixed with a few grenades, you know, which is
- 18:30 conservation of ammunition. And a rock sounds like a grenade tumbling down the hill. But to see traces fired on your left flank and right flank straight up in the air made us wonder what they were doing. Then we worked it out, they were using that as an axis of advance. So they'd line up in their hundreds, and move forward to our position. They'd look over their left shoulder and right shoulder, keeping their tracer lines, bullets
- 19:00 being fired in the air, as a means of navigation. Then they'd hit us. Our companies managed to repulse them right throughout the night, they were attacked several times and right throughout the night there were these damn bugles and whistle calls and tracers and mortars going off and artillery and so forth. Us and our reserves thought, well it won't be long before we're called for to retake a position, whatever.
- 19:30 What a way to celebrate Anzac eve.

Talk about Reg Saunders involvement.

The following day, on Anzac Day, Reg Saunders was our company commander, as I think I mentioned previously. He did move around our platoons

20:00 to see how we were going and holding up and getting information of what was going on, which was supplied. And I think somebody mentioned to him that, I think it was one of the platoon commanders - I just forget his name now - who said to Reg, "This is no place for a bloody white man." and Reg said, "It's no bloody place for a black man either." And we thought this was quite comical, which we were told later on.

20:30 But anyway, on the second day on that late afternoon, we managed to do a staged withdrawal, we were hotly pursued by the enemy right throughout, but managed not to sustain any casualties and eventually the whole withdrawal process back a few miles was accomplished without any great loss of life.

Can you talk a little bit more about the battle and that this was part of what you were setting out to do, why it happened.

21:00 Whilst we were on position at Kapyong, we were told that the entire South Korean ROK [Republic of Korea] Division had collapsed, hotly pursued by

21:30 Chinese. Now a size that big, which is about nine times bigger than our force, we had to plug that particular hole to stop the Chinese rush. So we thought, 'Well this is some ask, this is. This is going to be -' we had the Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry on our left flank, a bit further away, but we were widely dispersed, you know, widely, widely dispersed. And how

22:00 we held on for so long, which enabled the Americans on our right flank to pull back, otherwise they would have been cut off completely. We were there sufficiently long enough to save the American division on our right flank and that was the main effect of Kapyong for which I think the unit got the Presidential Citation awarded to it for that battle.

22:30 **Tell us about the bugles and whistles from a more personal side.**

23:00 Whilst we were on the ridgeline at Kapyong, that afternoon after having moved in and trying to dig in on the spur line, which we couldn't dig in, and our only defences were rocks which we sort of used as a protective cover. And the first indication

23:30 was late, probably as darkness descended was to hear the bugles, the whistles and the feeling I guess was, 'Boy, this is it. This is going to be the night when they're going to hit us really hard.' because the sound of these whistles and bugles, you could pick it up from a fair distance on the left to a fair distance on the right, so you knew that there were many,

24:00 many people there. And the whistleblowers were the platoon commanders, so you just imagine that they, between each whistle you heard, there would have been about maybe thirty, forty men in each group, and multiply that probably about twenty or thirty or forty times, plus the bugle blasts, how many people behind each bugle blast I've never worked out. But the feeling was very strange really. It was just sort of, I don't know, you were just waiting for the

24:30 inevitable. You were either going to stay there for ever on that hill, or you might survive; it was a very, very strange feeling. Eerie, very eerie and of course, it's like an orchestra of sound, you know. You're sitting there, you're listening to all these noises of rifle fire, grenades going off, artillery shells going off, the whistle blasts, the

25:00 bugles, the screams. Chinese sounds, some noise below, the clattering of rocks, people climbing out. You throw a few grenades, but it's the noise, it's like, it's a symphony of war that particular night I think our next major battle was Maryang-San,

25:30 it's a range of hills, or a big hill, which we had to attack and the operation was called Operation Commando. So at that stage I had over twelve months in Korea myself, and I should have been out and home by that stage, but I was entering into my thirteenth month. And I thought, 'Hello, hello, I hope I get out of this one.' So we were told to

26:00 pack up from where we were and move to a certain position, so get to the start line and advance to attack. So I was the lead section and we had to attack a feature called 220. They named hills according to the height they were. And it was about four in the morning, misty, very misty; you couldn't see the hand in front of your face really.

26:30 And I was the lead section of our platoon; I had to navigate to the base of this particular feature we had to attack. In our system of operation you leapfrog one another eventually, so eventually after getting to the base of the feature, the next section passed through us, and then the next section passed through. And we got half way up this particular feature and my platoon commander, Maurie Pears, handed me an air panel and he said, "Look,

27:00 lay this out, because when the mist rises the aircraft who may be coming into support us won't mistake us for the enemy." An air panel is a very bright fluorescent orange in this particular case, which can be seen quite well from up in the sky. So the other two sections pressed on and they ran into the first fortifications of the Chinese on this feature. But in the meantime, I think the mist had cleared,

- 27:30 and the Chinese managed, I believe to this day that they saw this air panel where my section was clustered around, and they ranged in with their mortars. And the first indication was a mortar exploded about five metres away, and I felt my head jolt, and I was wearing a slouch hat at that stage, and I took it off, and I saw the pumps of blood coming out. And I thought, 'Hello.' so I put on a first aid bandage
- 28:00 shell dressing. And next minute another one landed another ten feet away, and hit me again, this time in the hip and ankle. By this stage I was out of action, you could put it that way, because I couldn't stand, I couldn't hobble around, and in the meantime there were a couple of prisoners sent down to us, and I said, 'Okay, boys.' And I looked around and I found that all the rest of my section was wounded, so the whole
- 28:30 seven of us were out of action. Just you know, shrapnel wounds of mortars. So I organised the two Chinese - I was probably the worst out of the lot - to carry me out, followed by the rest of the walking wounded. So as we were going back through the paddy fields down at the base of this feature, the Chinese followed us all the way with their mortars. And the funny thing was that these two Chinese chaps were muttering to one another ...
- 29:00 they were supporting me and they were going crook [getting angry], I would gather, about their own people shooting at them. And I thought this if rather funny. On one of our moves up north, I was the lead section - we were very high up in the mountain ranges, and my forward scout poked his head up
- 29:30 over this little ridge line and he got scalped, virtually, a burst of machine gun fire creased him. And next minute there was a rain - and it was a very, very steep approach - and there was oh, an avalanche of grenades started to fall around us. They were like the Chinese - sorry, like the German - grenade, you know, with the long wooden handle with the metal on the end.
- 30:00 And one landed between my feet, now if Fred Astaire [dancer and actor] had saw me tap dancing there he would have signed me up straightaway. But I managed to sort of tap around and kick it out of the road, and it bounced off down the side of the hill. But anyway it was getting quite late, so I pulled the rest of the guys back and then we continued our advance in the morning. So that was one close call. Another situation that I can
- 30:30 recollect was, one of the chaps called Duke King, he was my forward scout. And it was wintertime and the snow was about nine inches deep, freezing cold and we're trudging along this ridge line and Duke calls me up and he says, "I think I saw some movement ahead." And I said, "Oh, all right." So I crawled up to him, and I was carrying an Owen gun, Owen sub-machine gun at that time. And I said, "Where is it Duke, where did you see the movement?" He says,
- 31:00 "Over there." So I said, "Look, take my Owen gun, give us your rifle. That way was it?" So I put the rifle up on my shoulder and I took careful aim at this particular bush, and I went bang. And you know what happened next? The bang from that end hit me on the pack... hit me there, picked me up and threw me down the side of the hill. If his aim had been about that much slower
- 31:30 he would have got me between the eyes. So I said, "Come on Duke, let's get out of here." So we scrambled back around the reverse slope of the ridge line. And that was the time I experienced, first time I ever experienced shock. Shock had set in. I didn't know much about shock, but I think I had an indication, because I snuck away from the rest of the group, got my blanket out and scraped a hole in the ground
- 32:00 and I stood there and I just shivered. Probably the realisation that I was just, you know, a few centimetres and I wouldn't have been there. But I allowed myself time to sort of compose myself and then I went back and rejoined the troops again. That was shock.

Tape 12

- 00:44 I guess that after a time in Korea the high authorities decided to give us some leave and after, it worked that after three months you were entitled to five days leave
- 01:00 in Tokyo and after eight months, three weeks. So I managed to do my five days and three weeks in Tokyo. I'm not sure it's a good idea, because suddenly you become used to living in a hole in the ground, you start to get used to being shot at, shelled, and getting used to the conditions of cold and summer and so forth. And suddenly you're transported to Japan
- 01:30 where everything is provided, you divest yourself of your dirty clothing, you have your first good hot bath and wash that you've missed for a long, long time. And the leave tended to, I think, demoralise people when they got back, because suddenly they found themselves back into the situation which they'd left and it took a little while of readjustment again. But the leave was good, because you could
- 02:00 enjoy the good things of life in Tokyo. But I won't go into those to any great deal, because this obviously hasn't got an R classification.

- 02:30 Now Korea had very extremes of climate - below freezing to very, very hot. Well during one particular period, in the middle of winter, we were stationed on a ridge line, covered in snow six to nine inches deep and we were living in holes in the ground, waiting for whatever may come along. And the only way we could keep warm was by either
- 03:00 exercise or light a fire on the rear slopes. Now, just below us there used to be little village at Uijongbu, a two storied wooden school building, unfortunately we had to demolish this building for firewood to keep ourselves warm. And I often wonder what the effects on the South Koreans were when they did
- 03:30 come back to that little village to see their schoolhouse demolished. Probably may not have realised that we ourselves had demolished it to survive, this we had to do because it became so cold on occasions we had to lift people out of the foxholes and walk them around. They were frozen up, and it was all a matter of survival, of keeping warm.
- Were you involved in the trench, sort of**
- 04:00 **trench warfare, I know this was very much a static war or a stalemate but did you have recollections of being down in trenches?**
- Well, the trenches came later, I suppose. We were in foxholes.
- But would they be called hootchies as well, I know that there was a formalised**
- Well mainly in the rest areas you'd put up your tents and things, but most times you were living in a hole in the ground.
- 04:30 **Just talk to me about the public perception of the war at the time, how you felt about that?**
- As far as public reception of the Korean War, I think we were kept fairly well in the dark. We did see the odd correspondent, and I think I got my photo in The Sydney Morning Herald where we were - I think at this stage,
- 05:00 in North Korea. The food supplies hadn't caught up to us, so we managed to liberate a few chickens from one of the farmers and there we were, three of us, Duke King, George Long, myself, barbecuing a chicken over a small smouldering fire, just before we had to move off. So we had to cook very quickly. And this photographer came along and took
- 05:30 this particular photo of us having a barbecue, barbecued chicken. It was very nice. The time that I was in Malaya,
- 06:00 I was attached to the British Army for two years at their Jungle Warfare School. It was hard work, but it was very enjoyable, it was a different sort of war. There were - whereas in Korea it was a frontline war all the time, no enemy behind you, all the enemy was in front. Whereas in Malaya it was more of trying to put all the civilians in strategic type hamlets
- 06:30 which denied the enemy from getting any food supply and the main tactics in those days was navigation, patrolling, ambushing, in the jungle. The climate seemed to be the same all the time, hot, sweaty, leeches and the odd elephant encountered, the odd tiger. As a matter of fact, one of our New Zealand people, a tiger came into the camp, one base camp, and started to drag him out by the head and of
- 07:00 course he was, fortunately he was rescued in time. The tiger got away, but the chap was a nervous wreck and they had to send him home.
- Do you want to talk about the patrols, or whatever you did there?**
- Our main objective in Malaya was to train all the advance parties of British battalions who were coming into Malaya.
- 07:30 The battalions would send probably thirty or forty of their top people and we'd run them through jungle warfare skills. How to survive in the jungle, how to navigate, different types of patrolling, liaison with different civilian groups who were protecting the villages. So that was the main, main role in the Jungle Warfare Training Centre,
- 08:00 firing weapons, night ambushes, learning how to use shotguns, learning how to use torches on weapons at night time and so forth and it was a different sort of style of warfare compared to Korea.

Tape 13

- 00:41 The Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam, we assembled at Mosman for indoctrination and background of what Vietnam was going to be about. I think the term Australian Army Training Team was a misnomer because eventually they ended up at the sharp end of things
- 01:00 but initially the intention was that they would be around various training centres throughout Vietnam. It was an elite and unique team really because, elite because three quarters of them had previous jungle

warfare experience through the Malaya campaign which ran for about twelve years and two thirds of the team had this experience. The other third were specialists in artillery and signals

- 01:30 and intelligence. Unique I think because they had four VCs [Victoria Crosses] and about a hundred and ten other military decorations which signifies that they weren't a training team really, they were in the thick of things most of the ten years that the team was there and I think we had about nine hundred and ninety odd people pass through the team in that ten year period.
- 02:00 When we arrived at Mosman we didn't know where we were going, what part of Vietnam, what our role was and it wasn't until each of us had an individual interview with [commander] Colonel Serong we found out what our postings were going to be in the team and we found out there were four training centres where our people were going to be allocated to and a group in Saigon. So when my turn was I thought well my two
- 02:30 years experience of jungle warfare attached to the British Army I thought I'll be in the thick of things somewhere. But anyway I was told, 'Joe you'll be in Saigon.' I thought, 'Oh God!' but anyway I had to work with Colonel Serong, Colonel Joe Mann and a Major Leo Fitzpatrick, and I thought well this will be probably a cushy job while the rest were probably doing the hard yards up country and I found out ...
- 03:00 When the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam was first formed it was composed of probably an elite group of regular army soldiers who all, or the majority had experience in jungle warfare conditions mainly from their experiences in Malaya. So two thirds
- 03:30 had that experience and the other third had the experiences in specialised fields like artillery and signals and intelligence. When we formed at Mosman we didn't know where we were going until we had our final meeting with our commander who was named by, the name of Colonel Serong and he briefed us individually and told
- 04:00 us where we were going. There were about four training centres scattered throughout Vietnam and our main role was training Vietnamese soldiers. I think this was a misnomer because eventually the training team became very active in being with the forward battalions of the South Vietnamese Army units right throughout Vietnam. This probably occurred probably about six months after we arrived. Now I was stationed in Saigon
- 04:30 and I had a good opportunity of travelling up and down the various training centres throughout Vietnam and I was working in Saigon but I had my own fun and games there because Saigon wasn't a safe city at that time. Probably the first week I was there, when the President of South Vietnam and his motorcade went through the main streets everybody had to face the wall and I thought this is rather strange because
- 05:00 the police were running up and down 'turn around, turn around, and face the wall' and I thought this doesn't appear to be a popular sort of government because shortly after that there were various protests going on within the city, there were bomb outrages. There was, all the cafes and bars had wire netting over the shop front windows to prevent grenades being thrown in and we had to keep looking over our shoulder all the time.
- 05:30 I used to run through Saigon with an American provost marshal of a morning, about six in the morning to get fit and he called me in one day and he says, "Joe we've got to stop running because from our intelligence sources we heard that you were going to be assassinated with the colonel, you're going to be ambushed." So that was the end of my keeping fit, gave that away. The other time, the Australian Ambassador there at the time
- 06:00 was also going to be assassinated so he was evacuated out of his house and a chap who was attached to the British, to the embassy, he and I occupied the house that particular night expecting somebody to come bursting through and so we were sort of lightly home to try and prevent that but fortunately that didn't occur.
- 06:30 I guess the reason that I was selected for the Australian Army Training Team was the fact that I had served in Korea and also the fact that I had two years with, attached to the British Army Jungle Warfare School in Malaya. So I guess those two factors stood me in good stead for the selection process and I think most of the guys also had this
- 07:00 practical experience in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency. Now the training team title I think was a misnomer really because in actual fact they ended up fighting with alongside South
- 07:30 Vietnamese soldiers right throughout South Vietnam and I think that the records show that they had four Victoria Cross winners and a hundred and ten other Australian Army decorations over than ten year period. I think this was at the cost of about thirty-three dead and a hundred and twenty-two wounded in that time period.
- 08:00 My main role in Saigon was in the administrative role which involved pay, clothing and other matters which arose from the various members of the team,
- 08:30 monthly reports etcetera, reporting back to Australia, liaison with the Australian Embassy, the British

Advisory Mission which was located also, Sir Robert Thompson who was on loan to the South Vietnamese Government because he was one of the architects of the success in Malaya, strategic hamlets etcetera. So I had a lot to do with mainly communication and liaison within Saigon.

- 09:00 This was - in between times there was a bit of fun going on, I think there were assassination plots against me and the American colonel, the Australian Ambassador. There was a big statue in Saigon which was blown down which was called the Trung Sisters, who were ancient heroines of South Vietnam mainly because it was based on the likeness of Madame Nhu [sister in law of the president]. Madame Nhu was very unpopular because she banned all
- 09:30 forms of entertainment in Saigon such as dancing, parties and so forth which made her very unpopular. Also there was a very strong undercurrent of religious wars really. The Buddhists, the Vietnamese, there was a Chinese element in Shaolin and a lot of Viet Cong sympathisers throughout the country and this created tension within the city so
- 10:00 there were bombs going off left right and centre. There was one particular instance where we were going off to lunch and they blew up an army exhibition. A helicopter was parked in a square, various other pieces of army equipment and there were numerous dead lying everywhere and wounded and it was just chaos. Another instance they blew our barracks down. They put a couple of cycles against the
- 10:30 wall loaded with heavy explosives and the next minute we knew this tremendous explosion, blasts everywhere, 'What the hell is going on?' and we raced outside and the only casualties they caused were to the South Vietnamese themselves, mainly children who were playing around that area so I managed to get a few photos of that particular incident.
- 11:00 When I arrived in Saigon I soon found it was not a very safe place, most of the entertainment places were barbed wired and wire netting over the window screens to prevent bombs being thrown in. The government
- 11:30 I felt was very unpopular and I realised this one day when I was walking down the street and suddenly the police, military police came along and said 'face the wall, face the wall.' I said what have we done and the civilians were told to face the wall and the next minute the motorcade went past which was President Diem and this happened on about two or three occasions when I was there and I thought this is a strange way for a government to behave.
- 12:00 Then I found that there was a lot of unrest because there was, the government was Catholic, there was a Buddhist religion also in operation which were against the government, several monks burnt themselves, poured petrol over themselves and lit a cigarette lighter and up they went, big fire which was a very sad sight to see. There was a bomb outrage
- 12:30 when we were going to lunch one day in Saigon where there was a military display going on. There was a helicopter there and various other pieces of army equipment and this Vietcong agent threw in a satchel of high explosive charges into this helicopter which ended up killing numerous innocent South Vietnamese people who were looking at this exhibition. When I arrived there, there were dead and wounded lying all over the place, blood, people screaming,
- 13:00 dead being carried away and I thought it might be safer up country. At that time I was doing some running through the streets of Saigon early in the morning prior to breakfast with an American provost marshal and we'd been doing this for several weeks and one day he called me up, he said, "Look we've got to stop running, I've just had intelligence reports that we're going to be assassinated." So that was the end of my running career through the streets of Saigon
- 13:30 and put that behind me and did other things. The other thing was that they blew up a big statue of the Trung Sisters which was based on the likeness of Madame Nhu. Now Madame Nhu was very unpopular with the local people because she had banned dancing, any forms of entertainment within South Vietnam and this didn't make life very pleasant for anybody in Saigon and when the statue was blown down
- 14:00 I think the crowds around were cheering and so forth and there were leaflets scattered everywhere which were in Vietnamese which I didn't understand but I managed to gather a few up after the explosion which occurred about seven o'clock at night and I whizzed them up to the Australian Ambassador's office for intelligence purposes and what he did with those I'm not quite sure but they were probably forwarded to Australia.
- 14:30 One particular week I was called up by the Australian Ambassador and he explained to me or he asked me to escort him to a place called Ben Cat and I said, "What's happening there sir?" and he said, "Well under the Colombo Plan the Australian Government has donated a herd of Jersey cows and a full dairy industry." And I thought okay, so we hopped on the chopper and went down there, arrived, there was
- 15:00 a military guard of honour and an army band and many government officials there so the tape was cut and the whole project was handed over to the South Vietnamese Government. And I looked at these Jersey cows and they looked so out of place, they were standing in these level paddy fields and normally a cow has got a happy face but they didn't look very happy at all but anyway after all the official thing was done we hopped on the chopper and returned back to Saigon

15:30 and I guess that within nine months the biggest barbecue in South Vietnam occurred. The Viet Cong got in amongst the cows, the locals got in amongst the cows and you could smell burning steaks right throughout the countryside. It was just a complete waste of value the whole project.

What about the 'many flags', the US idea of having

16:00 **not just themselves there ...**

When the team arrived in Saigon from Australia we were met by many high ranking American officers who were very pleased to see that they had some buddies, which is their term, joining them in helping the fight in South Vietnam. The other group that I can remember

16:30 was the British Advisory Mission, there was Sir Robert Thompson who was the architect of the victory in Malaysia who tried to implement the strategic hamlets concept in South Vietnam. Probably in the Delta area mainly but that sort of fell apart eventually because it didn't have the required support either by the South Vietnamese or by the Americans. But when, it had started off it was quite successful. I think that Field

17:00 Marshal Lord Montgomery of El-Alamein said I've two rules of war, number two is don't fight on the mainland of Asia and number one is don't march on Moscow.

INTERVIEW ENDS