

Australians at War Film Archive

Johanna Van Valen - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

- 00:35 **Thanks Jo. Can I get you to please outline just briefly about your life and where you were born and so forth?**
- Well my name is Jo, or Johanna as I was christened. I was born in Holland, just south of Rotterdam in 1942, and my parents
- 01:00 eventually came Australia with us four children in 1954. I was 12 years old and we came out to Australia, and my father and mother wanted to come to Australia because you know post-war in Europe was very difficult and it wasn't very conducive to good management for children so we came out to Australia. My father
- 01:30 became a dairy farmer and I went to secondary school in Australia, and then when I, I wanted to go nursing once I finished school, so I went nursing at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne and I was there for 3 ½
- 02:00 years. When I finished my General Certificate I went to Tasmania and I did my Midwifery Certificate, so I was a double-certificated nurse at that stage. After that, I went on a working holiday to New Zealand for 9 months, oh nearly a year. When I came back I became a theatre sister back at The Royal
- 02:30 Children's Hospital and this turned out to be the love of my life as far as work was concerned. Really, it was something that, I suppose you could call a destiny in a sense. It was something that I really enjoyed doing so I was there for about 4 or 4 ½ years. During that
- 03:00 time, it was a time when there was a lot of unrest in Australia about being involved in the Vietnam War and there were many marches, many protests by a lot of youngsters about being involved in the Vietnam War, and it wasn't something that I wanted to be involved in - the
- 03:30 actual protest - but I didn't like war itself, so I thought a long time about it and the, excuse me, the way that I could protest actually to the Vietnam War was to actually go and do something about it. It was then that I saw an advertisement for nurses to go to Vietnam
- 04:00 and actually work there, and I thought that that was the best way that I could protest according to what I believed in, and that's what I did, and I was accepted and I went to Vietnam for 6 months. It was something that changed my life. It made me...when I came back, I came back to the children's hospital but I found it difficult to fit in
- 04:30 the way I used to fit in, and it lasted another year and then I changed direction and I did another certificate. After that I spent a year working with underprivileged children in a day
- 05:00 care centre type thing, what it used to be then but I enjoyed the theatre too much not to go back to it, so I then left for England for a holiday. Once I was over there, I decided I would stay, so I spent the next 7-8 years in England, in London, working at the Hospital for Sick Children there, and eventually I
- 05:30 ended up in administration, administrator of all the operating theatres there. While I was there in 1978, I was diagnosed as having Multiple Sclerosis. I
- 06:00 worked for another year until it came to the stage where I could no longer physically do the work, so I came back to Australia at the end of 1979. I had a rest for a while and stayed with my parents, and then I tried to find myself a job
- 06:30 but I found that a lot of people, when I went for jobs, for nursing jobs, said, "Oh, you're over qualified. We think you're better off doing something else." So I had for a long time been interested in the welfare of my, the people who worked under me, and
- 07:00 **Where's that, in Vietnam or here?**

Well, everywhere. You know, when I was in this situation of being in charge of a theatre or all the theatres, my staff's welfare always interested me, and also the fact that I had a spiritual way of looking at things, so it was the fact that their welfare was of

07:30 concern to me so I started at university.

Would you like me to get you a tissue?

No, I'm fine thank you. I started at university to become an administrator of the Uniting Church. While I was there during my first year, I,

08:00 my MS [Multiple Sclerosis] really got...I had a very bad year and I couldn't go out a great deal, to go to university lectures and things like that, so I did a lot of thinking and I did a lot of talking to the Church and they said, "Well we can't have you...", because I wanted to become a chaplain which,

08:30 meaning that I wanted to work with people in hospital rather than become a minister of a parish and they said, "No way," at that stage would they allow me to do that. "You do 5 years in a parish first and then we'll see if we can..." So I sought to see if there was another way that I could become a chaplain without having to go through the Church's

09:00 way of having to do things, and there was a way of doing that and that was the practical way of learning chaplaincy and so one of the centres that was running a course like that was Mount Park Hospital and that's where I went,

09:30 and that's where I was for the next 10 years. It was a wonderful place to me. It was a place of sanctuary for many people, especially for the clients and patients who were admitted there, and it also allowed me to work when I could, and there were times when I couldn't work of course with my MS attacks,

10:00 but they became fewer and fewer luckily for me, although they've left their residual problems. I lived there, I was a resident, the chaplain there at Mount Park Hospital, and

10:30 as I said I was there for 10 years from 1993 until the government closed down Mount Park Hospital and had all the clients - they'd go out into the community, which I thought was a very bad idea for the clients because I always felt that they needed a place of sanctuary, where they could come to themselves if they could.

11:00 So, when that happened I retired after that. I was 50 years old then and my health was steadily deteriorating, not badly, but just little bits at a time, so I retired. I went back to Holland to see some extended family for

11:30 6 months or so, and came back and I've been retired ever since and lived in East Ivanhoe for 7 years, 8 years, and moved here to this complex just about 6/8/9 months ago, since November last year so...

Great, thank you.

There it is.

Blew straight into action there, very short and straight to the

12:00 **point. No, it's very nice. I might start my questioning from your pre-war, pre-Vietnam War era. Now, how old did you say you were when you came from Holland?**

12 years. In 1954, I was 12 years old, so just at a stage where I was beginning on my teens.

Yes.

12:30 **Can you tell us about your upbringing in Holland, the first 12 years there?**

You know it's something I have very little recollection [of]. Occasionally, flashes come to me of what it was like, or where we lived, or what we did, or the people that we met, but very little.

13:00 What I can tell you is things I have heard from other people, from my mother, my parents. My father, during the war...I was the third of four children, I had three brothers and I was born, as I said, in 1942, and my father was taken away by the Germans in 1944.

13:30 Towards the end of the war, the Germans were rounding up all the men to go and work in factories, either in Germany or in Austria and in places like that, and my father, in the immediate area where we lived all the men were rounded up and my father was one of them and...

It had nothing to do with political...?

No, nothing. It was not army, it was just

14:00 one of those things that was happening at that stage, when I think the Germans realised that they were losing the war. They just wanted all the men out of the way so to speak, and my father was taken away. My mother didn't know where he was, or where any of them were, or whether they would ever come

back, but eventually, about 6 months after the war

14:30 ended in - what was it? May of 1945 - my father did come back with the rest of the people, you know, within the sort of district that we lived in. What had happened to him was that they were taken to Germany, they were taken to Austria, then eventually they were rescued by

15:00 the Russians from the German Army and ...

Were they used as military labour?

Well, I don't know whether it was military labour, but certainly they were used as labour everywhere because they would never know what they would be asked to do, because they moved around quite a bit. But in the end they were "rescued" so to speak

15:30 by the Russians, and my father always maintained, he spoke very little of that time, but he maintained that they were the worst aggressors in...

The Russians?

The Russians were worse aggressors than the Germans were, yes.

Why does he think that?

Oh, he had a terrible time under the Russians. He didn't speak at all well of them, but he

16:00 spoke very little of it actually. He preferred to keep it... he was a very silent type of man and he spoke very little of that time. The only thing I ever remember him saying was, "They pinched my wedding ring." He'd say, "And one day I'm going to go back and get it." But he didn't like that time, what they did, and he became very ill

16:30 under that time with the Russians. They slept in barns, you know. I really don't know a great deal about it, but I think it was an awful time for him, and eventually they marched them all down to the Black Sea where they then caught a ship back to England. And that's where

17:00 he was put into hospital where he recuperated from whatever it was he was suffering from. He was very dehydrated, He was very...you know, he'd lost a lot of weight and his legs and lungs were bad when he came back, but he eventually came back and resumed his life, but that was about...

17:30 he'd been away for almost a year I think. But again, as I said, I have no first hand knowledge of that time. He never spoke of it really, not to me anyway. Well, I was only a couple of years old...I was about 2 or 3 years old when he returned and had been very upset that my father

18:00 had gone away, and now he was back again and I very wary of this man who had come back.

Did you ask your parents how they looked after you during the war?

My mother of course had three children to look after. There was very little food in Holland. They were helped by some of their family - my father's family and my mother's own family - but everybody had a hard time getting

18:30 food during World War II. I became very ill and they despaired of my life apparently, and the only thing that kept me alive I was told was that my grandfather found on the black market some rice and they boiled some rice and used the rice water just to feed me, just to

19:00 to give to me and keep me alive that way. But I remember my mother saying, she said, "I was so afraid that..." you know my father would come back and not find his daughter alive because being the only girl she was really afraid that I would die but I didn't. It took some months before I was well again

19:30 apparently, and then my mother's family took over and took me to the country, and that's, you know, when the family helped each other out and fed me up and yeah, I became well again, but my mother had a very difficult time during... World War II was really, because we were actually,

20:00 the country was under the rule of the Germans, there were things you couldn't, most of the things you couldn't do or you couldn't get. She has no fond memories of that war, believe me.

Was she affected badly by it?

She was, became very thin, she was, I think, what did it for her

20:30 though was she always had a fierce determination to survive and with three children. That's what kept her going. I think without the children she would not have had that fierce determination to make the best of what was. you had things like coupons

21:00 so that you could actually go to these centres and hand in the coupons and they would give you some food for children and for the family, and quite often there wouldn't be enough of course but they didn't have it alone. Everybody else was like that. What of course was upsetting to a lot of people was there were always people who would profit

21:30 by being in the war, and coupons would disappear, and I know, I suppose those kind of things really upset her very much and she was determined that they weren't going to not survive the war, but it just dragged on and on and on, and I think my father had the same kind of determination, just in a different way, that he would survive

22:00 for his children. Of course, he was ill as well, and I suppose many years later these kind of things can spur a person on, to greater heights in a sense of surviving something that really is very bad or makes them survive something with the determination to do so with the belief that it will get better.

22:30 Cross fingers but...

Was your father involved in the First World War?

No, he was only 7 years old; well, he was only 3 years old. He was born in 1910 so he would have been what, 4 years old when it started?. His own father, my grandfather, died at the end of the First

23:00 World War, so he was not a soldier. He died in the flu epidemic.

Oh yeah, the Spanish Flu?

The Spanish Flu, and that really devastated much of Europe. So he was only 7 years old when that happened and his father died, but no he was not involved in the First and nor was he involved in the Second World War, except you know, he was not a soldier or anything so...

23:30 he just kept on working, which was very difficult for the lot of men.

Did she have, what about your mother's side, did she have anyone in the First World War?

Yeah, I think her father must have been,

24:00 I really am not quite sure how he was involved in the First World War because he would have been not very long married. I think he married, my parent's parents, my grandparents on my mother's side were married just before

24:30 the First World War so...but I don't, he was not involved in a military way, no.

Was the Netherlands overrun in the First World War by the Germans?

It must have been.

I know Belgium was - Flanders and Belgium.

It must have been because it's all

25:00 so close together, and I mean Germany would have, as it did do in the Second World War, they overran Holland first before they moved down to Flanders and to Belgium and then France, because you've got Germany and you've got Holland on this side and then you've got Belgium down below and then you've got Luxemburg on that side and then you come down to

25:30 France and you've got the islands between all of that so, but it's not so, Holland is sort of to the side of... so no, I don't believe my grandparents were actually or my grandfather was actually involved in the War, the First World War anyway.

26:00 The Second World War, he was not involved in the military way, but he was involved in the sense of I think, the black market, let's put it that way. Not in the sense of running a big black market thing, but I think he knew how to get things from the black market, which I suppose a lot must, to get things

26:30 for your needs that they knew how to do it, they knew what to do and who to contact.

Were any of them in the Resistance?

My uncle's were, my father wasn't, but I had a couple of uncles who were, yes definitely.

Did they talk about it?

Oh definitely. I had one uncle who actually died last year. He was in the Resistance and he was, we lived in Rotterdam,

27:00 and he was involved in the defence of Rotterdam and the Underground in Rotterdam, and he was a publisher so you know he used to publish the Underground papers for the people, but

27:30 he used to tell some hairy stories about, you know, how they escaped the Germans at times when they were doing their searches and things like that. I don't remember a lot of it but I know he was very fiercely...

Was he patriotic?

Patriotic is the word, yes, about what the Germans were doing, and he never till the end of his life had a good thing to say about them,

- 28:00 about any of those Germans who were, who... in that, in those times you know, and what they did to the women, and even to the Dutch women who actually collaborated with the Germans, or if they didn't collaborate, at least, used to go around with the German soldiers.
- 28:30 And there was this one story about, there's this one story about... well it's not a story, it was actually true, and what the Dutch Underground or even the Dutch people used to do about the girls who used to go around with the Germans. They would take the girls and they would shave their heads off, shave
- 29:00 their hair off, and especially just after the war, they would round all these girls who were going around with the German soldiers, and I remember...no, I don't remember, I was told, when my uncle came back sort of, you know, after the war, he had no hair so,
- 29:30 I, as a 2 year old, I said to my mum, "Oh, did Uncle Herman go with the Germans?" because he had no hair so I thought having no hair, he'd gone around with a German, he had it all shaved off, so that's what the Dutch people used to do to the girls who went around... Just a shame I suppose, but these are all things that I heard from my parents more than...I don't remember
- 30:00 any of these things, of course. I do have a certain sense of...sometimes I get flashes that I remember. I was playing around one day and I was told by my mum... and then the bombers would come over and start bombing and start dropping their bombs, and instead of running to my home, I
- 30:30 ran into somebody's shed and I was missing for a couple of hours before they found me, and I had this sense of being in a place where there's no, I didn't know anything and there was this dark little place that I was hiding in but that's about the only memories I have. I don't have a definite memory of any of these things, of the First World War. Nothing else really,
- 31:00 and post war, I don't either really...I have very few memories.

Do you remember seeing lots of burnt out buildings or the remnants of the war, the Second World War?

In Holland, no, not really. Although I've seen in pictures of course and my uncles had quite a collection of their pictures

- 31:30 of what it was like, especially the bombing of Rotterdam and the place where I was born, Dordrecht is just something like what-20 kms south of Rotterdam, and in fact was the headquarters of one of the German commanders, so it was often attacked to, so you know
- 32:00 there would have been remnants of bombings and all sorts of things there, but no. The bombing that happened of course would have been coming from England, the Dutch wouldn't have any planes or any bombs or anything like that but, and when they were freed in 1945, they were freed
- 32:30 coming up from France so it was a gradual thing. France and then Belgium and then Holland and in fact my mother said that... the city we lived in was connected to the south, which was a lot of islands, and there was a huge long bridge and she said, "You know, the bridge was the
- 33:00 last stronghold of the Germans," and there was a lot of fighting going on and the city we lived in was very badly hit because they were aiming for the bridge and they destroyed the bridge, well, tried to destroy the bridge so the allied people couldn't come up from the south over the bridge. But eventually they did, of course.

What was the name of the town you were...?

Dordrecht.

33:30 Dordrecht?

Dordrecht (D O R D R E C H T) it's a very old town in Holland. It goes back to about the 1550s or something like that. In fact, that's where the canons of Dordrecht goes back to about 1415 or 1515 or something like that. Of church matters,

- 34:00 and it's a very, very old town, very old area. It's a beautiful place. It was surrounded by canals, not canals but rivers, so it was very strategic, but also it was always connected, you know, with bridges everywhere to everywhere else so it was a beautiful, it is a beautiful city actually.

- 34:30 So that's, I'm afraid, that's my own memories, but my mother's memories certainly were very vivid right up to the end of her life. She never forgot anything.

You can speak Dutch fluently now still?

Yes, I still - I did, I do. My, when we came to Australia, I always kept it up and when my mother got older, my parents got older,

- 35:00 there were times when you needed to express yourself in a language that you know, and they could do that best in Dutch so I kept it up. My brothers didn't, but I did.

Oh, your brothers didn't?

Well one of them did but the other two didn't. They didn't see the need, so they said they don't understand but I think they do. It's not something you forget, really.

- 35:30 I certainly... towards the end of her life my mother, she lived in a nursing home in the Hunter Valley where my eldest brother lives and she'd ring, you know, I'd speak to her a couple of times a week and it was always in Dutch and she'd rattle away. No, I kept it up because it's a good language,
- 36:00 so I enjoyed it.

What did your dad do for a living?

My father, when he was in Holland, was a master carpenter and a cabinetmaker. When he came to Australia, he wanted to go back on the land. His family actually came

- 36:30 from the land, so he wanted to go onto the land and the opportunity was here to do that, so he became a sheep farmer and dairy farmer and that he did till the end of his working life actually which he liked doing. Milked 120 cows and loved the farm, and that's what he did.

And your

- 37:00 **mother?**

My mum, she never worked in the sense that she had a job, but she, when my father went dairy farming, well, she worked alongside of him and worked the farm alongside of him. So just the two of them worked the farm and worked very hard she did. She was a very spunky lady, she was.

What was your mother like

- 37:30 **personality-wise?**

Personality-wise she, how would I describe her? There was nothing... my father was a very soft man in many ways and a very silent man, but my mother had a lot to say about things, not that, it wasn't opinionated,

- 38:00 but it was more she had, she would tell it as it was, she would tell it straight rather than you know...but she would fight for things if she didn't think something was right, and she always had a soft heart in many other ways. I remember being in Vietnam, asking her if she would send me a lot of clothes for the children in Vietnam, and you know, this is what she did. She went back to the community and gathered clothes and made

- 38:30 clothes, and we'd send them all over. So she cared a great deal about people, but she wasn't always - how do I say - the softest to speak to, she would just say how it was and there it is. No she, I enjoyed

- 39:00 her company a great deal, but there were times... she was a feisty lady, let's put it that way.

She was quite strict?

They came from a very strict era of religious ways in Holland, especially in Holland.

What is your religious background?

It...

Is it Protestant there?

It is Protestant. It's

- 39:30 Dutch Reformed, which is very strict. It comes from...very strict. Some of my mother's family, you know - now this is something I actually do remember. When we would visit them, they would go to church and the sermon would last 3 hours, and if

- 40:00 you moved you'd be castigated from the pulpit and...

Now I understand why they call it Dutch Reformed.

Absolutely, and believe me in those days... in these days it's nothing like it of course, but in those days, yes.

We're going to have to stop there and change the tape.

Sure thing.

Thank you.

Tape 2

00:33 **Can you tell us about your, I don't think we got it for the camera before, about the Dutch Reform Church practices and your parents?**

Yes, well there were two sections of the Dutch Reform Church, one of them was slightly more relaxed about things and the other one was very strict. You had to know the Dutch language to be able to

01:00 say which one was which you know. I can't, both of them you would translate as "Reformed" but in fact they're different and one's more very strict, and my mother's family, they're very strict and going there was an absolute nightmare, apparently. Going to church for 3 hours

01:30 and being castigated if you moved or fiddled or wanted to go out or, the other thing was that if by any chance somebody had done something that wasn't according to the Church's moral code, then they would actually be castigated from the pulpit about what they had done, and what

02:00 horrible people these were, and what devils they were and all this kind of language was in the Church at that time. Of course, it has changed a lot. I'm not saying anything about it now.

It's reformed itself again?

Yes, oh definitely, and it's reformed its way to the other end of the spectrum so to speak. It has, it's swung the other way...

02:30 **It's more lenient?**

The other way is, I'm not saying both arms of the Protestant Church are as lenient, but certainly one of them is, to the, as you well know, to the point of allowing things like euthanasia and all of these things, so they've swung the other way about the Church's leniency

03:00 and also about the moral value that people have these days. But it was very, very strict in those days. My mother could have told you lots about these things, but anyway they, my parents themselves weren't that strict, weren't that strict. I mean they were strict enough but not that strict. When we came to Australia

03:30 my father joined the Presbyterian Church because that seemed to be the closest to what he was used to, but they always held a fairly narrow point of view as far as religion was concerned in the place of a person's life, in a place of his life, in a place of our life, our lives and I think coming to Australia,

04:00 that eased for him, he, their attitudes changed a lot and I think they needed to change, but they became a lot more inclusive about what they would let into their lives and what they could believe and what they could accept and about faith and what it meant and what it did to them. I think the Second World War had a great deal

04:30 about that, to do with that as well you know. They, you lose a lot of faith in people when you see horrible things like that being done to, like it was in the Second World War as we found, as what I found out when you go to things like Vietnam. It changes you, there's no way it cannot change you. Of course it does.

What,

05:00 **what's Dutch culture like, family culture you know, relationships between brothers, mothers, fathers, daughters, how does that function?**

I can only tell you from my own point of view,

Sure

from my own family but because I was 12 when I left, I didn't really experience a great deal

05:30 of culture in the sense of what it meant and I don't remember a great deal about it beforehand. My family were, or are - how should I say - not isolated but they weren't very profuse in their

06:00 feelings, not like they say, the Italians, who will come up with a lot of feelings. They weren't, they had a lot of feelings but they just never expressed them a great deal and that still occurs within my own family. My mother could never understand people hugging every 5 minutes or kissing every 5 minutes and

06:30 it would not only embarrass them, but it would be something that just wasn't what they would do, and I don't know whether that was just them or whether that was part of their culture, and I suspect it was a bit of both really. She was brought up that way and, my parents were both brought up that way and they came from that kind of era

07:00 where you just didn't do these kind of things and she never really got used to it. It wasn't until about the last year of her life that one day I rang her and I ended up saying, "I love you Mum," and it just, it just, I mean I had said it before but it just got to her

07:30 that somebody would actually say that to her and from then on she would say it every day, every time I rang. She would say it but she just wasn't used to it. Being told or said that you can actually say these things but...

So before that, you couldn't really approach her and say those sort of things, like as forthright

08:00 **as you just said?**

No, and I mean if I was for instance leaving, you know for Vietnam or leaving to go overseas, I would say, "Here, great, I love you Mum," or I would write to her and that was acceptable. If you wrote it, that's fine, but to actually say it or do it. And yet I have an aunt and I have other family over

08:30 here, and they're different and their all over each other, so I suppose it's just part of my family rather than - or it's just part of the way they were brought up and that's, they just carried on and I sort of think we all tend to do that, we just

09:00 carry on the way we were brought up so we carry that forward to a further life until somebody changes it for us.

What was your relationship like with your father?

I loved him dearly but he was a very silent man and he was very difficult to get to know, very difficult and towards the end of his life, he became even more silent,

09:30 but again that might have been because I was his daughter rather than because you know, he would go out and towards the end of... when my mother could no longer go out and she was confined to a wheelchair, he would do all the shopping and

10:00 yet he would communicate normally with other people, perhaps on a fairly superficial level but that was still, he could do that very well but on a deeper level, I think he was a very reserved man but a man who was very religious, whose concern was for the welfare of other people and I think that's part of where it came through to me as well

10:30 and he...

Was he an affectionate man with you, being the only girl in the family?

You'd think so wouldn't you? He certainly, occasionally, I would get the idea, I remember

11:00 once, of the 7 years I lived in England I came back every year or so or every two years or so for a holiday and he certainly was affectionate then, when I actually arrived but not on a daily basis, you know. It was not something that was in his nature, or in the way he acted every day, but

11:30 I never had the idea that he didn't love me. I mean, no, I mean I always knew that he did but it just wasn't something that was expressed you know, either verbally or in action but yeah,

12:00 I'll never forget him, he was a - I always wanted to be like him and in many ways I am I suppose. Yeah. I often wonder how much the Second World War had to do with his

12:30 silence. I suppose in many ways I've often wished that I'd, we'd got to the stage where we could have talked about that and what it is that he felt he couldn't talk about after the war,

13:00 but he didn't.

What about your brothers?

Ah, my brothers. I have two elder brothers and one younger one, so the two elder ones lived through the Second World War like I did. They take after the rest of the family in their

13:30 fairly distant sort of relationships. You know, distance type of relationships, well not close in the sense that we effusively hung onto each other, but I've always found all three of my brothers, if I was in trouble they'd always be willing to help but there was, that was always there but not otherwise.

14:00 You know, I don't see them year after year, I don't have much contact with them but,

So are you saying the relationships you had were on a formal level rather than an intimate...?

More or less, there was very little intimacy really. My youngest brother probably, at the time when we were going to school would have been perhaps a little more intimate, but certainly not my two other brothers, especially not my eldest

14:30 brother. He was very formal, very distant, very...authoritarian in a way, brilliant but very, very far away. He has changed quite a bit of course but not with me.

Were the boys brought up

15:00 **in a stricter way to you?**

No, I think we all were. I don't think, I think the boys were singled out as being brought up stricter. In fact, in some ways they were allowed to get away with some things a lot more easily than I was, being the only girl there were very strict

15:30 guidelines as to what I could do and what I couldn't do, and of course being my own person, I always went my own way mainly and that would get me into, not into trouble, it just would not sit well with my family to, that I would have my own ideas, and I think that came from, that was a cultural thing.

16:00 You followed the example and the advice of your elders in that culture and you just didn't deviate from that, and of course I deviated quite a bit in many ways and sometimes my family found that very difficult, sometimes my brothers found that very difficult. I remember once I did something that my parents didn't approve of

16:30 and, this had to do with going out with a person they didn't approve of, and they told me so which was fair enough but they left the decision to me when I - but my brothers were told that they weren't to have anything to do with me until I'd come to my senses and that's what happened.

17:00 It wasn't until a few years later that they came around so they too were under the constraints of a cultural...

So would you say generally the Dutch culture is fairly...?

It was.

It's a, it's an imposing culture?

It was. It was an imposing culture then. I think it's changed to the other extreme these days. I think it doesn't happen anymore.

Yeah, it's quite progressive.

17:30 Absolutely.

At least in Amsterdam.

Absolutely, and in fact mainly in many ways, family life has changed a great deal in Holland a lot more, let's say, than it has here. It's swung to the opposite side of the spectrum and I think what they allow now is way beyond than what they, what we allow here, and so they...

18:00 **How would you compare differences in Australian Culture, I mean you were up in Yarram was it?**

Yes, Yarram.

A country town so how would you...?

Very strict actually, well strict - no, 'strict' is not the word. Colloquial perhaps, and very much, you know, "This is my backyard and there's nothing outside my backyard..." and that's what I found very difficult,

18:30 because I found that stifling. I found my family's religious limitations very stifling. I found their little circle of religion very stifling, and also cultural and very stifling. You know, what you could and could not do. I found it

19:00 stifling in the sense of, not so much that I was told what to think, but if you thought outside what was acceptable then it just would become - you just weren't, it just wasn't an acceptable thing to do, and I don't know why there was just, I was almost born with a universal-type of

19:30 mind or feelings or whatever it was, but I just could never, it was not something I could not bear. I just, it was something I, I needed to get away from and so I left school. Well, I did my Leaving Certificate and I left to go nursing, but I couldn't do that quickly enough, and it didn't

20:00 have to do anything with my parents as people, in the sense that it's not that I didn't love them or anything, but I just wanted to get away from that stifling attitude and allowed the freedom to be who I was or to evolve as I was, and I was just glad to get away into my future, into my destiny...

It gets like that, doesn't it?

Into my destiny so, and,

20:30 I was just very relieved when I actually left and went... I mean, I loved my parents, and I went back to see them very often and I kept in touch with them much more than my brothers did, but I wanted to be free to be who I was and to think what I was and to evolve as I was so...

How old were you when you left your home?

21:00 I was 17½, 17½ when I went nursing so that was in 1960.

1960? So where did you study to get your qualifications?

I went to the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.

Right.

21:30 In fact, that wouldn't have come about either. I wanted to go nursing and my parents were ok with that, but there was a hospital very much nearer in Taralgon and I said, "No," I wanted to go to Melbourne, which was a long way away, but I put my foot down in the end so, well, as

22:00 much as I could of course and I can be very stubborn if I have to, so I did and I went to Melbourne instead, and I was ever glad I did. Mind you, I had a great interest in children anyway so I wanted to go to the Children's Hospital, but I also wanted to get away from being too close to anyone else in my family.

Right, so yeah, ok, so that must have

22:30 **really, I gather that it must have impacted on you fairly significantly for you to leave at that age, there must have been considerable pressure on you?**

To leave?

Mm. I mean, for you to experience something for you to leave that sort of environment?

The pressure I felt was from my own inside. I guess I grew up with a sense of

23:00 I knew what I wanted to do. How I was going to do it was - that's not what it was. I knew what I wanted to do and I did not want to be stopped doing that by anyone, to do that, not even my parents. Now I'm not saying my parents actually stopped me a great deal, but I'm just saying that a lot of obstacles were put in my way by

23:30 people, and I was going to follow my own inner destiny, which,

Sure.

which I have always followed right from the age when I was a little child and that to me was more important than trying to please my parents or trying to please anybody else.

Can I ask you, what was your, you came here in 1954...?

Mm.

From '54

24:00 **to 1960 where you chose to do nursing, what sort of changes took place when you came to Australia within you and your family generally, being migrants? How did you adapt to Australian culture and society?**

Of course I went straight to secondary school when I came here. There were lots of changes because it was the era of a lot of migrants to arrive

24:30 in Australia and I don't - to me there was a great deal of difference between Holland, where I'd been educated and the education I was getting here. It seemed

25:00 a lot more free, although I don't know whether it was, but it seemed a lot more free. It seemed - I'm not sure if I can actually remember. I think I was just starting to spread my own wings at that stage, because I remember reading a magazine, I don't know, Women's Weekly or something,

25:30 and they were having, used to get people writing in letters to the magazines and I remember there was an article about New Australians and they were called "New Australians" and I got very incensed with that because to me the idea of New Australians always had a connotation that they were...

26:00 So, I wrote a letter and it was published and that to me were things that I had not experienced before, that I could actually do these things and I was in a place where I could do these things, and I was in a country where you could actually express your opinions and not be held

26:30 back from expressing strong opinions of your own and that appealed to me, you know. And that appealed to my sense of, I have an inner sense of knowing or an inner sense of where I want to get to and it's alright, I can trust that and the changes that were going on in Australia at the time were all to do with New Australians making their mark.

27:00 My parents coming from a Dutch culture actually worked, the Dutch culture has more, we're better at integrating with the culture than other culture's were, so they were never insistent that we stay Dutch in the sense of you know, "This is our only way of doing things..." and they adapted

27:30 well, too, so I think it was a matter of adaptation and we just all fell into that pattern of adapting to

whatever was going on and to the culture, the Australian culture, and I have never felt an outsider except when things like, "You're a New Australian," and I'm not, I'm an Australian now and I'm here so

28:00 we just adapted.

Why did your parents choose to go to Yarram?

My father found a farm that he wanted to work on and that's where we, that's how we came to end up in Yarram.

Did you come, well, did you stay in Melbourne firstly?

We stayed in Melbourne. Well, I already had an aunt and an uncle in Australia at the time and, but

28:30 in fact the day after we arrived, the day we arrived there was an, people from the SEC[State Electricity Commission] in Moe which is in Gippsland, came to meet the ship because they wanted workers for the SEC, and my father said, "Yes." Well, he was willing to try anything, and so he became a,

29:00 so he joined up and they took us down to Moe, actually. We didn't stay in Melbourne at all, and we lived, they gave us a house and we lived down there for about 18 months before my father decided that the SEC was not where he wanted to work and he would prefer to go back to or to try the land, and he had seen or had heard

29:30 or had come in contact with someone who had had a position in Yarram or near Yarram. We lived in, around the Yarram area, and that's where he went. He moved from place - he moved from first of all being just a worker on a farm and then he became a sheep farmer and then he owned his own cattle after that and

30:00 so there was a couple of different places he moved, but it was always the same area anyway, around about the Yarram area that he moved.

So did you find yourself integrating into society quite well?

Absolutely, not a problem.

Not a problem?

No.

So you spoke English...?

Strangely enough, I didn't speak a word of English. Well, I could count up from 1 to 10 but that was all when we first came, but within a very short time - it's amazing how as children you

30:30 do learn very quickly, and I remember being at school, the kids at school would take you into hand and show you things and tell you this is the tap, and this is the water, and whatever, and, oh no, I learnt very quickly and within 6 months I sat an English exam and got something like 67 percent, so you know, it happens very quickly at that age. I think you have to be the right age too,

31:00 like, I think my eldest brothers, elder brothers found it a little bit more difficult, but after that, I have never had a problem learning, and I settled in very well, no problems. I think the only thing that I really found difficult was my parents were having problems settling into

31:30 their different church and I think I found that a difficulty as well.

When you say different church, are you...?

A different section of church, I mean they joined the Presbyterian Church when they came here thinking it was the closest to where they had come from, and of course, I got to the stage where I didn't want to go to church at all and I think this is where my

32:00 difficulty came in, not with the church itself, but that I went through that stage where I did not want to have a formal church or whatever you call it, but being the dutiful daughter of Dutch parents, I went of course.

Where you religious at that stage, did you believe in what you were, I mean I get the impression that you weren't entirely

32:30 **believing of the doctrine or the Bible?**

I didn't. No, I didn't, but. I did believe in obedience to one's parents while I was under their roof, so I had, there were yeah things that I believed in that transcended my own

33:00 well, discontent, let's put it that way, with the organised church. So I did those things because I believed in other things like, you know, like as I said, being a dutiful daughter and I still believe in some of those things. You know, you don't upset people just because you know

33:30 you happen to believe differently and I think that way. I learnt a lot of discrimination about how I acted

and how I reacted and I never did or, I have upset my parents at different stages of my life, of course, when I needed to do so for very strong reasons but never intentionally hurting them just because they believed different to what I

34:00 did, but I've never taken over their very narrow religious roundabout so...

How did they view you having boyfriends?

They weren't awfully keen on that at all. I think there were things within their coming to Australia and this society that they took a,

34:30 a lot longer to intergrade and boyfriends was one of them, and I didn't have many while I was at school and I think that was part of it. And then, of course, I went away to Melbourne and I was out of their reach and I was out of their, out of their, well I didn't know

35:00 what I was doing and after that I, you know, I just would not say anything. I would not tell them things, not anything that they would not understand.

So they, was their view, so if you had a partner it would sort of be like an engagement then a marriage, sort of? More old-fashioned views on relationships, that's what they thought?

They had their own views of

35:30 what was acceptable and what was not. Now for instance, Holland in those days, Protestants and Catholics you did not mix, you did not marry. In fact, I remember my mother once saying, this was way back when she lived in Holland, she said she walked past a Catholic Church and heard some beautiful singing and she said, "I would have loved to have gone in to see," she said, "but you just don't do those kind of things."

36:00 So that if I had a boyfriend that was Catholic you know, that would have really upset the apple cart. Not that I did, but I had a boyfriend that my parents did not approve of and they really felt that they had to say that, and say, "We do not approve and you break it off or otherwise..." "Otherwise what, Mother?" In fact, it got

36:30 to the stage where I had a boyfriend of whom they did not approve and when I refused to give him up or give up the relationship, they said, "Well in that case we will not...we will have nothing to do with you," and that's what happened and that lasted for 2 years and the relationship didn't last, and I

37:00 think I knew that, but the fact that I had actually disobeyed such very strong feelings of theirs - yeah they did not speak to me for 2 years.

When was this by the way?

Mmm?

What year was this, did this take

37:30 **place?**

Oh this would have been 1963, I just finished my nursing training when that happened.

Ok.

And...

That took place in 1963, so you didn't talk to them till about 1965?

No.

Ok.

I did tell, and that's when I went away to do my midwifery in Hobart,

38:00 so they knew where I had gone. I mean, I told them where I had gone. It wasn't as though... I let them know, but no, I didn't, until I came back. It's true and in the end I had to say, I was the one that had to make the move to say, "Let's finish this. This is no good for me, for you or anybody else."

Sorry, are you speaking about your boyfriend?

No, no I mean that had finished for some,

38:30 that had finished. That didn't last, it wasn't that. It was the fact that I had not followed their advice.

So I take it he was Catholic or...?

No, no he belonged, I think he... no, no, it was nothing to do with Catholic. It was something that they just didn't like in him. Well it was, they didn't like him for a reason but the fact that I had disobeyed or that I had not followed their advice, let's put it that way,

39:00 really upset them, and that's not what a good Dutch girl would do, so no, and as I said, my brothers

didn't speak with me for either of those years.

So there's a bit of a split in your family between you and the rest?

Mm, definitely.

And all your brothers, was it?

All of them.

Ok.

And so I,

39:30 I made the move in the end because I thought, "If they're not going to do it, then I am," and that was fine a couple of years later. But that was the biggest, and I think these were things that I needed to do for myself anyway, to say, you know, like, "I will not be...I live my life and you may not like it but..."

40:00 **We'll stop and change the tape there.**

Sure, what's the time anyway?

Tape 3

00:35 **Yes, we left off basically that was an important period from 1960 to '63, '65 where a few important changes took place...**

Yes, definitely.

in your life. Yeah, and I wanted to see, like, ok, there were family issues there that were clearly one of the major motivational factors, but you did mention that you

01:00 **already, your viewpoints on life were different and you were starting to embrace this and what I want to know is, the 1960s also was a major social change in Australian society...?**

It was, yes.

How did you, how did that impact on you, these changes?

Well, it came with a lot of other changes because I'd left home. I went nursing, so that was one huge change. Of course, that was in 1960 itself, so

01:30 that was a huge difference for me. I mean yes, I wanted to get away from where I was before and I was growing up. I was 17, and I was on my own so to speak, so that was the biggest change. Of course, that started it off and the changes in and I think,

02:00 the change in society itself reflected what I was going through. It was growing up, let's put it that way, and making adult decisions, so and I think this is where, when the Vietnam War started back in 1963, it was also generating all these feelings within society itself.

02:30 I'm not sure that I'm explaining this properly.

Now you said that you, ok, you'd left for Tasmania. Were you financing everything yourself?

Yes, definitely.

Ok, so you were an independent...?

Completely independent. We at that stage had a - the hospital system was that you went as a student nurse and you were paid this tiny little tuppence, I think it was

03:00 6 pounds a week, 6 pounds a fortnight, or something. It was just miniscule it was, but yes, completely independent of my parents and any other family member so...

That's quite impressive, even for that period. Was that common in that period?

That's common in those days.

Ok.

But to me

03:30 that's the way it was. I mean, I had grown up with the ideas, once you became an adult and you started your adult working life that you were on your own in the sense that you were independent both financially and in other ways, and I did not, there was nothing that I wasn't expecting it to be. That's how I expected it to be and that's the way it was and I

- 04:00 did not grouch against that or something. There was no...that's the way it was. That's the way society was. That's the way I was in those days, but that was the early 1960s. Jobs were plentiful in those days and I was training to be a
- 04:30 useful member of society as well as training to be what I felt to be a part of my destiny, which was to go nursing and looking after people and taking care of people, and that's what I felt I wanted to do. Yes, I was independent, 17. The only thing that my parents helped me with, I remember, was in those days I lived a long way away from them coming to Melbourne, and they
- 05:00 financed me with a car, not the whole car, just the deposit on the car, and after they'd paid the deposit I used to pay the rest of every week. I had this little VW beetle Volkswagen. It used to choof along and that's the only thing that my parents financed me with,
- 05:30 and after that, I was completely independent on my own and society was...didn't expect anything else and I didn't expect anything else.

So there were a lot of women in that sort of position?

Absolutely, and a lot of the girls that I worked with and trained with all came from country areas like me. They all came

- 06:00 and we all lived in the nurses home and we all had a very communal life in that sense, and it was good. I enjoyed it. It taught me a great deal of things that I had never experienced before, because I came from, you know, just a family and now there was this bigger world out there, and to me it just seemed right you know,
- 06:30 that with, I seemed to be progressing stage by stage where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do and when something felt right within me then I was very happy doing it, so we were all in the same position. We were there for 3 years, had 3½ years and when we'd trained, we finished our training at the end of 1963,
- 07:00 just when President Kennedy lost his life. I'd finished just a few days before.

Were you a politically conscious person?

No. I was well, conscious yes, interested no.

What do you mean by that?

I was aware that these things were happening, that

- 07:30 that's the way life, for some people, it is important to them to express things politically but it wasn't for me. I did not, wasn't very fond of politics because I felt, as I still do many times, much of the time that while
- 08:00 it's very important to be politically conscious but to say that's the only way life can be lived or can be expressed or can be - it wasn't something that was for me, so I could read, I could judge,
- 08:30 I could discriminate what was happening, but I needed to do my part of life within another area rather than politics, let's put it that way.

So why, oh, ok, I suppose I'll get to that later. Why you chose your profession, what did you understand about previous wars, like I mean, you already gave me some,

- 09:00 **some understanding of your experience in World War II, but overall understanding, what did you understand about the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency, all these sort of wars that were starting to take place when you came to Australia as well?**

I don't know that I would have understood it then the way perhaps I look at it these days. I do think conflicts happen when certain basic elements are present within a society and unless

- 09:30 we learn to live along certain lines in life about how we feel about other people, how we live alongside them, then conflicts will happen and I think these are inevitable. It's not as though we can prevent a lot of wars. I think a lot of wars are inevitable because we need to
- 10:00 learn through these wars, and through these wars we will learn from that to be the kind of people that we, and society that we want to be in the end, but I don't think we can do it without a lot of these conflicts happening. Now I'm not sure I wouldn't have understood it then. The way I felt then, that's how the way I feel now, but whether I had a sense that certain
- 10:30 things need to happen or certain things will happen if we don't change our way of behaving or the way we relate to somebody else or we relate to a different country or the people that belong to that country, then we will never learn and we will keep having wars. Now a lot of these wars, if
- 11:00 they don't teach them anything then they're useless, well they're useless in the sense that they will

reoccur.

Do you think, do you think people do learn from wars?

Some people do, but I'm not sure whether the majority do. I have to wonder, I mean, you keep thinking what's happening now and you think, "Well, how many people will actually learn to live alongside another person and see life not

11:30 from their own little tiny backyard perspective, but from a wider point of view?" This is a world where, so to speak, everybody is a neighbour rather than this parochial attitude for nationalism, or you know, this pride, for

12:00 instance, this is just an example, nothing to do against Americans what they have in themselves, but it militates against being able to live alongside somebody else who has a different point of view in peace and in harmony and a lot of people, we're not learning this are we?

What was your understanding of Communism?

At the time, I'm not unsure that I understood

12:30 except I found it to be a distortion of the Christian idea of brotherhood and a distortion in the sense of, they proclaimed brotherhood, but they also repressed the ability to speak freely or to think freely or to plan things for themselves so in a sense,

13:00 basically, some of their ideas are ok, but you know, the way they work it out through repression has the opposite effect to what they're aiming to do. I mean, if you're aiming to produce a society that has brotherhood as its main focus and then repress everything else that is human in a person, then you are going about it the wrong way, but I'm not sure that I saw that in those days, that I

13:30 could have put it in those words.

Did you see Communism as a liberating force for women?

Not in those terms. I would have to say "no," that I didn't, but then I didn't see...

Like if you see, say for instance, seeing women actually fight along men, was quite a different idea?

14:00 Absolutely.

How did you, you must have known about that earlier in regard to Vietnam at least, that women were fighting, and there were also women in leadership roles, did that impress you?

No, because to me freedom comes from within anyway. It's not something... and for me a

14:30 woman is free without being set free by a man or by any male society, and I don't believe that has ever changed within me. I don't know whether that answers your question, but I saw people fighting now, if that's what they needed to do, this is women, if that's what they needed to do, then that's where they are

15:00 at this stage of development. That's fine, but I don't need someone else to tell me I'm not free because I am, within myself, I have no need to do these things that...that's why I didn't join the army. Now the pressure, not pressure, it wasn't pressure... my brother was an officer in the army, my eldest brother,

15:30 and I thought very seriously at one stage about joining the army. This was before I went to Vietnam, but after I finished my training, until I realised the kind of experience that I would have had in the army was not what I needed for myself, and I needed to be free as a woman, and that in the end I didn't join the army.

Did you find

16:00 **the army to be repressive at that stage?**

At that stage I thought they were to some of their people, yes. I don't know particularly to women because I didn't know very many women who were in the army, but yes, I did, and I think that was part of the thing what I saw in my brother was partly why I didn't actually join the army.

So which brother was this?

My eldest brother, my brother Peter, he was the eldest.

And he was, what rank was he in

16:30 **in the army?**

He became a major in the end, when he left he was a major.

And he fought in Vietnam?

No, he was due to go about the same time as I was, but he was on manoeuvres in Northern Queensland in preparation to go to Vietnam and he caught double pneumonia and was ill for quite a long time so they didn't allow him to go out

17:00 to that, and they thought it wasn't safe in the kind of climate that Vietnam was, they didn't think it was safe for him, so he didn't go in the end.

Was he eager to go?

He was, yes. He wanted to prove that he could... I suppose like anybody, he was trained for that and being the rank that he was, he would have, he would have wanted...yes, he did want to go, but he didn't and I think that

17:30 disappointed him about his own journey that he would have liked to have gone and done the things that other people, but anyway that's the way it worked out for him.

What about your other brothers, were any of them conscripted?

No, no, my second brother never had any interest in, or, no interest in the army or anything to do with the Vietnam War or anything. My youngest

18:00 brother was, no he wasn't conscripted, well he wasn't - he was going to uni at the time, so I'm not sure whether he was ever interested in doing anything like that, but he didn't anyway. The only person that did go was a cousin of mine who was regular army, he was in the first battalion that went to Vietnam

18:30 and he was killed 6 days after he arrived.

6 days?

Mm.

That's very quick.

Very quick. It was an accident and a mine went off. He was loaned to the American...

It would have to be the Americans wouldn't it?

Americans and they were unloading some mines or something and

19:00 a mine went off or whatever it was, it went off at the airport and he was 1 of 5 killed in the accident.

And there were 5 other Australians who were killed in that accident?

Mm-hm.

I see, ok. How did that affect you?

I didn't know him. He and...

What was his name by the way?

His name was Ari or he was known as Harry actually... Harry Van Valen

19:30 and his father was a brother of my father and they had come to Australia and lived in Western Australia and I didn't know them. I knew he had, I didn't know he had died until a couple of years afterwards, so I knew he had died by the time I, I mean he died in 1965, so it was you know, years before I went and so,

20:00 he, but it didn't stop me from going if that's what you mean.

It didn't have really a big impact on you at all because you didn't know him?

No, I didn't know him and I know just from my father actually saying well, you know his family was very upset of course, but he was regular army so he always had been expected to go, it wasn't as

20:30 though he was a conscript or anything, but my own brothers had no input into that war at all.

Now, you said something before about why you actually

21:00 **became a nurse and you said it's something to do with, and we were talking about female liberation and the communist movement, you said something, "not being under a male...not needing a man to feel any..." sort of, I'm not sure exactly what you said, something like "...needing a man to feel liberated" or having that sort of guidance, you said "it came from within."**

Well, I don't need a

21:30 male society to liberate me in an outward way from freedom, because that freedom comes from within, that's what I meant. If perhaps not even a male society, but if society says, "You can only be free if you do certain things," if for instance, if you go to join the army as a woman, I don't need, you don't need those

22:00 kind of experiences to feel free, to free from whatever it is. I've never been under a communist government, but I presume you can still be free even if you live under that regime.

Did you, would you have considered yourself to be a feminist at that period?

No.

22:30 Not in that term, no. I have never considered myself a feminist. No.

You've never considered yourself a feminist?

No.

May I ask why?

Because to me it's a confining - it's a perimeter. It puts you in a situation you are,

23:00 you're confining yourself to a certain area. Now I have the freedom outside feminism.

How would you define feminism in your experience?

Well, I presume the way it's used is that you are a woman who uses her sex as saying I'm free from male domination, I presume that's what feminism means. I really don't know what it actually means.

23:30 I've not had the, I don't have a problem with considering myself a woman. I don't have a problem considering myself working with a male-dominated society, which I did much of the time say in the operating theatres with a lot of them being male surgeons, but I was always myself and a woman in all of that without having to feel that I

24:00 have to put myself forward as a feminist. I never quite knew what it actually meant to somebody, what it means to be a feminist.

So, you said your friends who were doing nursing as well were also independent like you were, what did they discuss, you know, when you got together and socialised in this regard?

I don't ever remember them saying that they were feminists. I don't remember it ever coming up

24:30 that we considered ourselves to be feminist. The first time I heard of that was Germaine Greer and her book,[The Female Eunuch] and I think that was the 1970s and I don't remember anything much before then about it being discussed as an issue. It certainly was never an issue with me.

Now the 60s also being a very expressive era in regard to sexuality, how did that impact on you and your friends, being

25:00 **independent women?**

Well, it meant to us that you could choose your own partners and the way you related. Now for me, what it meant was coming out of a very repressive religious background, so I had to find my own freedom within that which was acceptable to me. It didn't really matter whether it was acceptable to, what was acceptable to

25:30 society, but what it mattered to me was, was this acceptable to me with what I believed and could I live with myself this way. That's what it meant to me. I experimented and I made some mistakes. Oh, perhaps mistakes in the sense that I learnt from what I experimented with and

26:00 found that there were certain things that I didn't... that's not the way I wanted to live and that's not what I found edifying to me and sexual freedom to me was not having a lot of partners and that wasn't very important to me, and it didn't, it just wasn't something that sat well with

26:30 me, but I learnt through all of that to express what I wanted for myself really, what I found important.

Were there any partners you had that actually changed your view on life, in any specific way, before you went to Vietnam?

I had a

27:00 couple. In fact, I was engaged to be married when I went to Vietnam but he changed my point - well, it changed my point of view in that I did not marry him when I came back but it had more to do with me and what I felt.

27:30 He was a very nice person, but I just didn't feel marriage at that stage was in my destiny, so to speak, or that it was for me, so I didn't marry him. So perhaps he did change my mind, but changed my mind about marriage anyway or about sexual...I just didn't want to get married.

This is after you came back from Vietnam?

Yes,

28:00 but it was while I was in Vietnam that I decided I was not going to come back and marry him, but I had known him for years before that so...

Right, had this had anything to do with the concept of marriage that you were against or just in that instance, you preferred not to marry?

No, in me. I think in me, this wasn't right for me.

That particular relationship?

That particular relationship wasn't right for me. No, I believed in marriage and

28:30 I believed in a lasting relationship if it was the right one, but that wasn't it, and I'd had a couple before then and they didn't really work out and that was fine with me. They were, not so much experiments, as I needed to know that these things were right for me and some of them weren't. No. So

29:00 they went by the board. So, no I could see what was happening as far as people expressing their sexual freedom, it just wasn't for me that's all, and it was more a sense of I wasn't all that interested in a sexual relationship, just from a purely a sexual relationship.

Would you class yourself at that period as more of a,

29:30 **a more thoughtful person?**

Yes, very much so.

You preferred substance rather than...?

Always at that stage, well any stage I suppose. It always made me think and I always looked at life as living under the, in the light of spirituality and of what things meant, the meaning of life and what things meant to me and just all the things that

30:00 are happening with me always, I looked at life in that sense, so it was always, "What does it mean for me?" and, "What did life mean?" and "Was this right in a sense of living life to the fullest of human being?" and "Was I doing that and was this right for me?" That's the way of always thought of life. Well, not always, but since I was old enough to think I suppose.

Are you a bit of a philosopher?

30:30 I'm afraid so, and I don't think sometimes this is what's put me at odds with my family who are, my father and mother perhaps were, but the rest of, the boys weren't and they all thought me an odd bod [quirky] and so be it, you know if they still do think that, but yes, I am a very thought, well,

31:00 thoughtful person in that sense. I always like to look behind at what is reality and why is it so and what makes me react and what, what is 'human' and how do I react, how do I react to circumstances? I guess the war was like that, you know. What did it mean, and what was the meaning about it, and what meaning could I find in all of

31:30 that, and what could I do for other people.

It makes perfect sense why the war affected you, then?

Absolutely.

Yes, since you did say that you were coming out of that religious repression, did you still believe in, I'm not very knowledgeable about the Dutch Reform Church,

32:00 **but did you still believe in Christ, did you still believe in basic Christian concepts?**

Oh definitely. Perhaps not in the way that the Church presents it, that's all, and when I say "the Church," I'm not talking about the organised church thing...

Institution?

Institutionalised church and I have changed a lot in that sense. I

32:30 dislike the institutionalised church even though later on I joined. Oh, I mean I've been in part of the Church for donkey's years, but I later on, you know, as a chaplain, I joined. I was working with the Church but I believe in different ways, perhaps let's put it this way. I believe in the Christ spirit and I have my own thoughts about all of this, which

33:00 the institutional church will shoot me down for, but still that's the way it is.

Ok.

I'm not particularly worried about what the institutional church...

So it's sort of like, you've taken the good points of what you believe and moderated them for

the way you see it...?

Well, let's say I have evolved my thoughts about the Church and spirituality and the Christ spirit to where I'm comfortable with

33:30 living with all of that and the way it is right. I'm still evolving. I'm not - I haven't finished yet. I don't think any of us have.

Would you consider yourself a Christian still?

Yes, I'm basically a Christian, but there are concepts within the institutional church that I would not adhere to, don't adhere to anymore.

Did you go to church, that is, after you left

34:00 **your parents, did you still frequent church?**

Yes, perhaps not quite as often, but I did for a few years, yes, for, probably for another 6 or 7 years, yes.

Do you still?

Well, when I was at Mount Pike we used to have services every week and I used to

34:30 do my own funerals and things like that, yeah I did. I don't anymore, no. I'm afraid the institutional church and I have parted ways, but I, you know, I think they are just at a different way of learning than I am, that's all. I have learnt to be on my part of the road,

35:00 whereas they're on their part of the road. I've got nothing against them, but it's not for me right now, let's put it that way.

What about Buddhism, that, did you take a liking towards...?

I do, I did, I like Buddhism. In fact, the one I like most is called Taoism, which is the Chinese. I like both of them. I

35:30 do tapestries mainly these days, and a lot of them are of that particular imagery.

You've done that?

Yes...of imagery of that particular Buddhism, eastern philosophy, let's put it that way. A lot of them, and I like doing that, and I'm doing a big one at the moment which is of those kind of philosophies that I think have a lot to teach us. They don't have all the truth,

36:00 nor does Christianity have all the truth, but I think we each have got to, we each have something to contribute to humanity as far as beliefs are concerned.

Where did you get introduced to Taoism? Vietnam was it?

No, yes, actually yes, because a lot of that was animal, animal worshipper, an animalistic worship, ancestor worship, I should say.

36:30 When I was in Vietnam, I had some, we had some interpreters who sometimes we went to their homes and they had the ancestor worships, and yeah, that's where I got introduced to them and I really very much enjoyed learning about all of that when I was there. It was good, and it makes you much more inclusive. You accept lots of other people who

37:00 have different beliefs. It's wonderful, and I think we could all do with a little bit of expansion within our own little backyards about other people and you know. Sri Lankan, I've got Sri Lankan friends that I worked with in England and they've told me a lot about what they believed, so its, we can learn from anybody and everybody.

37:30 But to me, it adds to what I came from which was the Christian background, but I don't believe the Christian background has got all the answers and they don't have all the right answers either, so...

I would like to, I would definitely ask you more about your encounters with Buddhism when we go into depth with the Vietnam period.

38:00 **I also want to know, you said you "felt like you wanted to help people" and you chose nursing, but where did that actually, where did that "want to do nursing" stem from - to want to help people?**

Oh yes. Well, I don't know where it came from originally. To me, it almost seemed inborn when I first came across it. When I was a very young child, what we did have was

38:30 books, and I read about Albert Schweitzer. Now he was a figure that really caught my imagination. This was, you know, way back when I was a young girl and for some reason or other, he always stayed in my mind as the person who best embodied helping another person of another race of another completely different background and

- 39:00 social, economic, everything was completely different and somehow or another I thought, "This is what I'd like to do, both medically and also from a, just from purely helping another person along the path of the road. Like people have helped me along the path of a road but that came from way back when I was a youngster and when I went, when I was leaving
- 39:30 school, I had a headmaster who said, "You'd make a very good teacher." And I said, "But I'm going nursing," and he said, "Nursing's only second class," and I said, "Whatever it is, that's what I'm going to do." But I wanted to be a doctor and I couldn't do so because there was no money to educate me as a doctor, so the next best thing was nursing. So that's what I did.
- Why did they see nursing as second class?**
- That's what he
- 40:00 said. That's not what I said but...
- What about your parents?**
- Oh no, my parents were fine with that.
- Oh, they were?**
- But this was the headmaster of the school. But he...anyway, so I went nursing. I don't know, originally I don't know where it came from, it's almost inbred in the sense that it's almost like a, a sense of needing to walk a certain path in life and that's the way.
- 40:30 **So you'd, from a very early stage, established that you wanted that?**
- Mm.
- That's quite incredible.**
- And this is why, something like eastern philosophy, would it be Buddhism or Taoism, they sort of feed in within the way of the path of life sometimes we need to walk, and I have had that sense for a long time.
- Mm. We've just run out of tape.**
- Ok.

Tape 4

- 00:57 **Alright, I wanted to ask you first off just about,**
- 01:00 **I know you've spoken a lot about the earlier years in Holland, but I wonder, I mean apart from the war, you must have had some memories of family life and actually just growing up, the things you did for fun 'cause you didn't leave until you were 12...?**
- Yeah, and it's almost as if my life started at 12. you know, there was,
- 01:30 there's a sense that whatever happened for, I know of course I was 12, but there is so little to remember and I often wonder what might have happened during those years that actually made me just forget so much or just didn't register anything that was happening during those years. There were bits and pieces...
- What about school life?**
- Yes, I
- 02:00 mean, I went to, I went to, in those days you started school at about 4, but I could never distinguish whether what I remember or what I was told are two different, I think they might have been, two different things. My mother talked a lot you see, so she would tell me a lot of things that happened during those years,
- 02:30 but I don't know if they are my own memories. I, certainly, when I was a youngster at 4 years old, had a good voice and used to sing at school concerts and things like that, that's what she told me. I was taught by a blind man to play the mandolin, which I did for a long time until my fingers no longer worked, and school sports because
- 03:00 we have photographs of me doing school sports, but that's somehow the extent of my memory. I find it hard to believe that I don't remember anything about those days.
- Do you remember any friends from that time?**
- Not even aunts and uncles. I mean I know these aunts and uncles were part of our life but...I

03:30 do remember one who got married and I was part of their wedding, but that's, they're all isolated incidents rather than a general sense of being part of a community. Yeah, I suppose you could say it didn't feel like there was a big community there, or it wasn't a community life, and that might have had something to do with the Dutch culture at that stage. I mean, it

04:00 was a community of course, but not like these days. Community life is so different and so inclusive, perhaps, than it was in those days.

What do you mean about the Dutch people?

You were more of individual families rather than you were part of a huge community, although we were always part of the religious community, that's true.

Do you

04:30 **think Dutch people are a bit distant from each other or...?**

I think they were but again, you know I would have to question my memory about that. They were, they seemed to me in those days - perhaps it's just me, perhaps I was just the odd one out, that was all.

You mentioned about your father being often silent and fairly non-demonstrative, I suppose. Did

05:00 **that, you must have met other Dutch people, did that sort of fit in with their personalities as well?**

I know several, quite a few, like my eldest brothers. My brothers are exactly the same, so I'm not sure if it was just me. I think it was partly a trait, certainly within our own family anyway, but whether that's so in other families, I really couldn't say. We didn't have a lot to do with other

05:30 people as I remember, but again, when I go along and think back to my own extended family, some of them I like and some of them weren't - but part of my father's family were certainly all in that

06:00 mode, you know, they weren't demonstrative and they weren't in that sense outgoing in an affectionate type of way and...

It sounds a bit like my family actually and it's often thought of as the way that a lot of Australian and New Zealand people are, particularly the males, being very sort of restrained.

06:30 **Did you find that a contrast or that was considered quite normal when you came here?**

Well, I didn't see a great deal of difference when I came here actually to tell you the truth, so may be that was part of that, it was, that restraint was also here that we brought with us, but that was also here as well, and of course it didn't help that we lived in an

07:00 isolated sense of "on the farm." We weren't part of an immediate community in a town or anything. We lived well out of the main, the nearest town, and we didn't have a lot of social life because you know, my father and my parents were always busy with the farm and we as children couldn't get anywhere without them taking us, so again, you know we lived

07:30 in a situation where it was fairly individualistic and we didn't have a lot of community input so I didn't see a big change I suppose. The big change for me came when I went nursing and then leapt straight into a nursing community and that was quite a change for me.

Ok, I'd like to talk about that a little bit later, I was just wondering

08:00 **what your first impressions of Australia, when you first arrived? Do you remember the trip?**

I remember the trip because I was very ill. We came by ship and I was ill. I was ill quite a bit well, certainly for the first fortnight.

Just seasickness?

Mm?

Seasickness?

Yes, seasickness. It was nothing else,

08:30 but otherwise you know, from what, the few photographs that my mother had we must have had quite a, sort of a good time onboard and...But I think what stands out for me, and I think I had that just before I left, was the fact that we had this huge move from one country to another and one culture to another,

09:00 not that I suppose I saw it that way, but it was I was afraid. Afraid of the future, afraid of leaving the known things behind. I had remembered...I had said to my parents before I left, "Leave me behind, and when I grow up, I'll come and see you," because I did not want to leave something that was safe,

09:30 and whatever I experienced in Holland, it still felt safe, but here...

Did they give you a great deal of explanation as to why you were leaving?

Only that life was very difficult and money was very tight and there were no prospects really, and we'd have better prospects in Australia where the future was, more jobs and we accepted

10:00 that. I mean we could see at least, well, we must have because we accepted that as that's the way it was.

So, when you arrived...?

We arrived and I think the first thing I went straight into school I think because it was towards the end of the year and they gave us, a name of a school to go and I went straight into school

10:30 and being taught English by the students who were sitting next to me and there was a Dutch Community at that time in Moe so we weren't completely cut off from the Dutch language so. I suppose it's the only way I can say, I suppose I had a sense of freedom

11:00 even then. There was a "Freedom from..." whatever that oppressed me, oppressed us or whatever had not been free. Because we lived in Moe and you could run, you could walk you know, you could do anything and it was, yeah, I think I enjoyed it. It's just an essence of what I feel rather than actual memories

11:30 of what those days were like really.

Did you fit in well at the school?

I don't seem to remember not doing so, but then I've always found it difficult to fit in anywhere immediately. It takes me quite a while to find my feet or to at least feel free enough to let go.

12:00 **You spoke a bit about the differences in Australian and Dutch schools; you felt that it was generally a bit more free. Did you find the children different? Do you have any impressions of...?**

Well, yes.

12:30 I did find, well, the impression I get - but it's a very vague and general impression - but, for instance, we had to travel to school on buses, and I found them a lot more boisterous and free and being able to do a lot of things that I found, that really set me

13:00 back. Well, not set me back, but sort of opened my eyes and say, "Good heavens, is this how these people behave?" But then, there was nothing wrong with it, when I look back there's nothing wrong with it, it's just that it was so unusual for me to experience that, but I become very wary until I know what's going on, I became very wary of letting myself be who I am or let go.

What sort of things would they do there?

13:30 Well you know, we used to have to travel 20 miles on a bus and they'd be throwing things around like kids do on buses, and I suppose in a sense to me you didn't do those kind of things, you behaved yourself. But again, that was me expressing my background rather than, you know, what these kids were. But

14:00 in that sense, kids were different, yes, than I was used to.

But, you found that a bit of a relief or exciting?

Both, I suppose, in the sense that it was unusual and a bit daunting for me to see that,

14:30 and I suppose I was a bit disapproving in that day and age that they behaved like that, but also it taught me, well, it taught me I suppose that I didn't have to be this repressed, not that I would be throwing things around, but at least I could be a lot freer than I was and I think I just learnt that I could do that, I could be freer within myself without stepping outside the bounds that I was

15:00 used to.

So did you enjoy going to school?

Yeah, I did and I enjoyed learning. I've always enjoyed learning. Oh, I got into trouble with some teachers, but that was mainly because I'd be stubborn about certain things and because I enjoyed certain subjects and not others. I loved mathematics and arithmetic and all of those things I enjoyed

15:30 very much. I enjoyed sports, yes, at school. Not that I was particularly good at it, but I didn't make very many personal friends. I always put that down as my reserve, that's my father's reservedness coming through. I remember winning

16:00 the table tennis competition, the women's table tennis competition, and I was up against a young woman who had won it for the last 3 years and I won it just by sheer fluke I think, but it really upset this girl and anyway, but yeah.

Ok, we'll pause it there.

16:30 **Ok, I wanted to ask you apart from kind of your personal experience going to school and so on, but in the 50s, what was your general impression of the times? I mean there was a lot going on. There**

17:00 **was Sputnik and Communism and rock'n'roll. There was a lot of, it was a fairly influential time I suppose?**

Mm.

But at that time to you what are the things you remember?

I'm not sure that I registered my own personal reaction to, except for various things like as you say, Sputnik or

17:30 whatever, Communism, but I'm not sure that I know how to answer that one. It was, for me, a period of great learning, not just at school but about life and about all the changes that were happening in my life, and also changes happening with us coming to Australia, but in many ways I suppose

18:00 I took life just as it came so these things happen, I don't know. I don't know how to answer that one. By the time the 60s came, of course, that changed because I'd started a career and I'd started my adult life so to speak, and the 50s were just a period of big change, big changes

18:30 of coming into my late teens and having fights with my mother and...

What sort of fights would you have?

The usual 16 year old fights with her mother who says, "You should be doing this," and the 16 year old saying, "No, why should I?" but there was nothing, I didn't see anything different than

19:00 you know, any friends at school were having with their mothers as well.

What sort of things did you do socially?

Nothing very much, that's what I said before. We lived fairly isolated on the farm and we didn't get out because my parents didn't get out or were able to take us anywhere, so we didn't... the big deal was going to, shopping on a Friday, because my parents went shopping, and Sunday because my parents went to church and we went with

19:30 them, or I went with them and that's about the only social outings that we had.

So what sort of things did you do after school?

I don't remember, to tell you the truth. It would have been coming home and helping milk the cows. Otherwise, it would have been just learning,

20:00 doing homework, but there was no TV, at least not for us, and I didn't register what was going on too much at the time as far as me personally was concerned, or what was going on in the world as relating to just a typical 16 year old I think.

How did you adjust to life on the farm, milking

20:30 **cows and such?**

It was very different. My parents were extremely busy because we had a big farm, big in the sense that my parents were milking 120 cows and we had pigs too. My father produced cream, so we had pigs who drank the skim milk, so we had pigs as well and then horse riding of course, and we helped our parents with

21:00 haymaking and all those things that you do on a farm, so free time wasn't really free time. Well, nothing that you could say you could call your own.

Were there a lot of chores?

A lot chores, yes.

It must have been a big thing for your father to have come from sort of, well the struggle of life in old Europe and coming to a place where he could actually

21:30 **own or lease land and have a farm of his own?**

It was, and I think he was a hard working person anyway and he just worked very hard at it and everything that was done... I think he had a sense where he, he came from a childhood that had very little and having no father of his own, that he wanted to provide for his children and he worked extremely hard at it and

22:00 he did, and from the day, the minute he got up till the minute he went to bed, but he liked it and never

complained really and I think it suited his introverted nature to be working on his own and, as I said, he liked it, loved it and didn't want to give it up either, then he

22:30 had to in the end, had to give up, but my mother of course was a little different. She'd like to talk and liked to see people but she very rarely got the chance - typical farmer.

So the 1960s were for you, a big time change...?

Absolutely. Both, you know, for me and for all the social changes that were happening and the freedom that a lot of youngsters gained during the

23:00 1960s. The war was happening and the things that were happening all over the world. All the protests that were going on and...but it was a period of great freedom for many people. There were lots of jobs around so people could move around a lot more freely. I certainly never had any problems after I finished training to get jobs and

23:30 there was no constraint on giving up one job and then going for another, because you could always get a job somewhere else.

So what sort of changes were you seeing for the general population?

I think just this type of freedom that people could do that and that made them a lot easier to live with because they weren't,

24:00 this problem that you have today, you can't do something because you've got to keep to the job you've got to fight for the job you've got, and if you don't fight, then you're the one who's going to lose out. There was less of this...

Insecurity?

Insecurity and also less of wanting to sue somebody because, you know, your security was being threatened, which wasn't quite, you

24:30 know, the obvious thing, because it wasn't...you could always do something else and you could move around, and I think these days people do things because the insecurity that surrounds them.

What about some of the personal freedoms - the 'pill' coming in and a lot more drugs around...?

Absolutely, and we had ourselves as far as drugs and marijuana of course was the one that

25:00 was rife at that particular time, more so than drugs, other drugs I mean, that came later. But I was never, although I smoked, I was never quite tempted to try it, marijuana, until I went to Vietnam actually...But it was going around, and people were trying it out. It was more a period of trying things out and seeing whether

25:30 you wanted to do it or not, but it didn't have the feel, "You've got to follow your peers..." because it was just starting in those days and also 'flower power' and all those things were just starting to come in, so I think that all came in because people were trying to think new things and they had the

26:00 freedom as youngsters to, or young people, to want to try it and have the freedom to do it.

So did you buy into 'flower power' at all?

Not the 'flower power', it doesn't quite suit my personality I suppose, but I certainly tried marijuana when I was in Vietnam. I didn't like it, but I tried it. There was a lot of it around of course in Vietnam, but

26:30 very easy to get.

You mentioned before about the Kennedy assassination. Do you remember where you were?

I was working at the time actually. I had just finished my training and I was working in a small country hospital in Yarram for a few months before I was going away, and

27:00 when I came home and somebody said he'd been shot. So our next door neighbour had television, which we didn't have, so we went over there and watched all the hullabaloo on the TV and we were shocked to see what had happened and all the, what was going on in America and the shock of the people over there.

27:30 That they could do this to their president, but I think I remember: (a) because of who he was, but more to the point, because I'd just started a new part of my life and that's something I do remember in 1963.

So when was it when you first moved out from home?

28:00 Oh back in 1960, that's when I first moved away.

And you were studying for 3 odd years, weren't you?

3½ years yes. He died in November and I'd finished in October, yes.

So, after you finished studying, well actually, whilst you were studying, I mean, could you elaborate a bit more on what it was like to

28:30 **come from a small town, a country town and just move in with all these nurses? I mean, they're notoriously a bit crazy.**

Absolutely. Excuse me. Yes, it was quite a shock to live in a community, and of course, we lived in a nurses' home, which means that there were four - not just our group - but there were 400-odd nurses in there and

29:00 that was really a shock to live communally. Go to meals communally, work and... I think I didn't, the first 6 months, I really didn't integrate very well. It took me quite a while, but I enjoyed the work, and of course I was studying so I sort of threw myself into that and I was learning new things, especially about children,

29:30 and that interested me and I think the interest got me through rather than the communal life, which I wasn't really particularly keen on, and I'm still not awfully keen on communal life. But look, the nurses...we used to do some really stupid things sometimes.

Like what?

We'd get up to all sorts of tricks believe me.

What sort of

30:00 **things?**

Well things like having to be in by 12 o'clock, and if you weren't, the gates were shut and if the gates were shut, well you'd have to find a way to get into the nurses' home without having to ring the bell, because if you rang the bell then your name would go down and you would be hauled over the coals and...

So how did you get around it?

Oh sometimes we'd stay out

30:30 all night because we couldn't get back into the nurses' home because the gates were very high and we weren't always successful in getting back in, but...

So sometimes you'd climb over the gates?

Oh yes, yes. Definitely. We'd always try to get in anyway, and there's no way you could circumvent that, you could try and get through the hospital and underneath in the tunnel,

31:00 but then the tunnel door would be shut and you'd be still outcast. You just made sure you were in on time if you...but I do remember being out one night all night because I couldn't get back in.

Where did you go?

I just stayed in the car and that was it. It's about all we could do.

So where did you go until midnight?

I don't remember that particular incident but

31:30 there were occasions, but I wasn't and still not a party girl, but there were occasional parties around that would go beyond the time you were supposed to be in at and it was strict curfew. There was no such thing as being in at 1 or 2 o'clock but you know, it was 12 o'clock and that was it. Yes, we did get up to tricks at times. We weren't, you know,

32:00 just typical young girls I suppose. Excuse me. I went, I remember as a group of nurses we had to have a particular essay we were set by a particular sister. Now in those days, we had, we were brought up in the old, traditional, old

32:30 sister's school of nursing and some of these battle axes of old sisters really made life very difficult for you and we had this one who set us a very nasty exam, just when we were all supposed to be going to 'a do' one night and she said, "It has to be in tomorrow morning," so we all

33:00 went out and none of us, we all made a pact, and none of us did it, and we didn't hand it in the next morning so we were called up before Matron who said, "You either do it or you're out. You are off our payroll." In those days, there was no such thing as having a union that could fight for you,

33:30 so most of us did it - a couple didn't.

Did she threaten to fire you if you didn't do the test?

Yeah, in those days they could do that. Well, you didn't have anybody to say, "You can't do this, Matron,"

but she did, and she fired two of them because they didn't do it, but you know sometimes it was typical rebellion or sometimes we

34:00 had just cause. Some of those sisters were brought up in a very old school and were rather nasty, but on the whole, it was a good way of training nurses. I'm not sure that the modern day of training nurses comes up to what we went through. It taught us a great deal more than I think

34:30 college education for what a nurse does these days.

What sort of things?

Well you had, it was all practical nursing, so that much of the time you were so short-staffed that you just had to cope on your own and you had to cope and what you learnt, you had to practise what you learnt and for us this was the best way of learning, and I still think

35:00 in many ways is the best way of learning and it gave us a practical grounding in nursing that I think is in my mind is better than the college one, but that's just maybe...I have no experience of the college training, of course, but this is my opinion.

Was there a lot of drinking

35:30 **on campus?**

Well, they weren't allowed to. They searched our rooms and did all sorts of things, but of course it did get through at times. I wasn't aware that there was a great deal, but there might well have been secret cupboard drinkers, or people who had it stashed away, but I wasn't - not being a drinking person myself, I wasn't aware of it anyway -

36:00 that there was anything like that going on. There probably was. There certainly was a lot of pressure on people too...they would have had to get rid of that pressure somehow, so drinking probably would have been, yeah, one way of doing it, or smoking...I certainly started smoking when I went. That was my way of coping with the pressure but,...

36:30 **So how old were you then?**

18.

18 - So, did you start to make friends after the first 6 months or so?

Yes, I did. More particular friends rather than a group, we went into groups you know, you came in as a group of 24. I think we ended up with a group of 12 by the time there was...natural (UNCLEAR)[?] over the years but

37:00 and I think most of us remained friends during those years because as a group you sort of stuck together. You did your lectures together and you had the same, at least the same time of holidays and you went to other things together, so it was always as a group that you did these things and that kept up your friendship and I certainly kept up certain friendship beyond

37:30 when I left. Not many, but we all went our own way mostly.

Did you have difficulty at all in being away from your family, you talked about...?

I did for the first 6 months or so. After that, I think I just gave myself permission that it was ok, and I felt relief at being where I was and that I was,

38:00 I was having a good time and that I was a grown up. And I guess that's when I allowed myself to grow up and say, "It's ok." But I suppose I felt a bit guilty.

What was it in particular that was so, almost repressive about living with your family that made you want to leave?

It

38:30 wasn't, yeah, there was a repressive element but it was more than...I just wanted to get on with my life and that life, or my destiny, or the path that I wanted to walk, and that path wasn't something that my family, well not so much they didn't approve, it's just that they went their own way and I went mine and I,

39:00 I guess I just have to accept that we just went our own way, and that I wanted to go a different way to my parents and that was alright, I suppose in the end I had to say to myself, "That's ok, you don't have to feel guilty about that so..."

So what would they rather you have done?

I think they would rather, at that

39:30 stage not, they would have rather I'd been closer to home and that they would have had a little bit more

input as to what, in the years that I was doing my training. They wanted me to go to a hospital closer by and they would have felt the necessity...

40:00 and I'd come home every weekend, or whatever it is, or days off, and it was that kind of thing that I was glad to get away from. I felt so far away, and not having any transport, there was no way I could go home.

We'll just pause there. We're at the end of the tape...

Tape 5

00:35 **After you, after you left college, you went and did residences or sort of working at different hospitals for a while...?**

Well after my first certificate I then almost immediately did my second in midwifery, which I went away to Tasmania for a year, but after that I had a holiday, a working holiday

01:00 in New Zealand for 9 months, and, but then I came back and sort of went to theatre then, yes, and then that's the sort of serious start of my career then, because I realised then that's what I wanted to do within nursing itself, that's what I wanted to do.

Whereabouts in New Zealand were you?

Well, we started off in Wellington for 3 months and then we were in Central Otago, in the

01:30 South Island, for 3 months. Yeah, we must have been, what, about 6 months, 6 months we were there. So yes, 3 then 6, and we travelled around during those times we worked.

When you say we, who do you mean?

A friend of mine and I, who I had done midwifery with, we went over there for 6 months, 6 months or was it 9 months, and we just had a holiday and worked

02:00 as well. It was easy.

How was it?

Oh, I enjoyed that.

What sort of things did you do?

We did midwifery and in the meantime we just, we used to go around all the places and look at things and holidays and on our days off and climb mountains, climb the Milford track, walk the Milford track I should say, and

02:30 so, it was just a typical working holiday. It was good.

What was your impression of New Zealand in the 60s?

I shouldn't say backwards, it wasn't backwards, it was just a little bit different to what I was used to, especially the South Island. I felt the people...oh that's who they were, it was a little bit difficult to...

03:00 so we just enjoyed ourselves and forgot the rest, that's all.

So you thought they were...

They were very nice people but they were just

...it was a small country town?

It was a small country, it was a small country, it was...with some of those attitudes that go running around small country towns, I should say but it was a spectacular country to see, and

03:30 we enjoyed it very much, and it was good because we worked in situations where we were on our own and so we gained a lot of experience.

When you say on your own, you mean delivering babies on your own?

Well, we were in little country towns, hospitals, little country hospitals and so half the time I was on my own delivering babies and that teaches you more than you can ever know about

04:00 delivering babies than if you're in a big hospital, and it really was good, and I enjoyed it very much, but that's what it was, a working holiday, and I knew I had to come back and tackle something different, something serious.

Yes, and then you got into theatre?

Once I was

04:30 in theatre that was it, I knew I'd found what I wanted to do within nursing, and that's what I did.

What was it that attracted you?

Operating theatre?

Mm.

I liked its technical side strangely enough more than anything else. I had enjoyed nursing and contact with people but I liked the technical side and I liked the,

05:00 the urgency of things that you sometimes have to deal with operating theatres, and I like having to organise it and I found that I was a good organiser and I found a lot of talents that I had that I didn't know I had or at least that I needed to develop and all these

05:30 parts of theatre that I really did like, like running theatres and organising everything and the technical...I liked areas, different areas of theatre. I liked doing heart operations, and I liked doing brain operations and found that I was good at doing both, so that was,

06:00 that was a great thing to find out. It just gave me a sense of having found my niche within the nursing world in the operating theatres.

I guess that's an area where you've really got to be on your toes?

Absolutely, and you've got to use your brains and you've got to learn to look ahead, you've got to learn to look sideways, you've got to learn to do 6 things at once and

06:30 lots of things, and by the time I got to Vietnam, I needed all those skills to cope with what was going on there.

Did you enjoy working as part of a team?

Very much so, absolutely.

Had you done that much before?

Well, I mean nursing was part of a team and always you were, you know if you weren't there someone else would take over and you need to be able to take over from someone else

07:00 at a moment's notice, so that had always been part of...and that was so different for me from my personal life, you know. I'm fairly solitary as a person in my personal life, but I found that I could work as part of a team, very much so in the practical sense and theatre taught me that much,

07:30 more even than the ordinary nursing did.

You must be, as opposed to nursing, it must be as you say "much more urgent" and in a sense sometimes you have to read people's minds?

Absolutely, I do. And I found early on that I had a good amount of intuition, and that's what you really do need in a place like that or situation like that, especially some of these surgeons.

08:00 Once you get to know them then you can read their minds in that sense. You always know, have a pretty good idea what they need and what they need now or what they need in 2 minutes' time, and not just what they needed then, and it's quite amazing how quickly that you can develop that or I could develop that. Yeah, you become very necessary

08:30 to them because they need to be able to rely on you to do things, like reading their mind. And if they can, then you've got a tremendous working relationship with your surgeons and,

It seems to be so important to keep words to a minimum...?

Absolutely.

...and to develop a kind of shorthand in language, did you find

09:00 **I guess working in close proximity in a smallish room, did you find that difficult to adjust to?**

At times it was, yes. I mean personalities come into the equation sometimes and some personalities are very difficult to work with, especially in a small confined area like that so you learn to keep your own

09:30 personal things out of the equation. It doesn't always work of course, and some people would just remain impossible to work for and some surgeons would be - oh, you could just about strangle them - but oh, you just had to learn to do it, and when you have to do it, then you can do it, and you have to let personal things go and that I found a very good thing to learn,

10:00 although it was the most difficult to learn.

So you did that for 6 months?

No, no. I did that for... that was in the middle of '66, '67, '68. By the time I applied for Vietnam was the middle of 19, was towards the end of 19...I did that for

10:30 2 years and then applied for Vietnam but when I applied for Vietnam I didn't leave where I was, I just applied for leave, that's all.

Ok, so just thinking about that decision to go to Vietnam, you've said that you "were fairly against the war." What made you

11:00 **against the war?**

Well, I'm against any war, I mean, in the sense that I'm against any acting out of aggression against another human being, but that doesn't mean to say that sometimes it's not necessary, that it becomes necessary that it happens. There are reasons why wars happen

11:30 which we have no control and they have their origin, let's say, from years ago, so it's, and sometimes they have to resolve themselves through war, and there can be no other resolution. It doesn't mean to say I don't agree with the acting out of aggression on such a massive scale.

Did you ever take part in any protest activity?

No.

Not at all?

Not at all.

12:00 **What was the feeling amongst people who you knew?**

Well, they certainly...I knew people who did of course, and when I was asked to do so I said, "No, that wasn't my way of doing things," and I was castigated for it, I suppose, for my point of view.

From your friends?

From my friends, yes. My work

12:30 mates but that's...everybody's different and not everybody joined in the protest meetings, the protests that were going on. I just didn't believe it was me, and I found I wanted to find out another way of saying, "Look, I don't believe in acting out aggression or warlike behaviour between any

13:00 people, but if it has to happen let me do something practical," and I just didn't see protest as a practical means. So, next thing I knew, I saw the advertisement for nurses in Vietnam, I thought, "That's the way I think I could go and satisfy my need to do something," and, and this is what

13:30 offered itself...the opportunity offered itself to me and this is the way I went.

In what way were you castigated?

Well, I was told, "Why aren't you coming to protest?" and I said, "I do protest." "But you're not protesting walking out in the streets," and I said, "Well, that's not my way of doing it," so, you know, I was told off so to speak for not

14:00 letting other people know how I felt, but I said, "I'm telling you now." "But you're not telling the world." I said, "I will tell the world or other people in my way when I find a way to do it," and I don't believe one should follow everybody else just blindly just because they are doing it, so I didn't and I wore the brunt, I wore a brunt. No, not

14:30 everybody said that of course, and not everybody protested in that way or joined the marches or whatever. A lot of younger people did actually, and I don't always believe that their motives were always pure anyway. I think half the time they were just itching for a little bit of, I don't know, exhibitionism or

15:00 wanting to be seen to be joining protest marches whatever rather than just purely being against the war and of course, a lot of it was purely against the war and good for them but it just wasn't for me.

Being, I guess in Australia

15:30 **we have a lot of, we've been bombarded with a lot of information and images from the American type of war but not so much as what you're on about what happened here in Australia, of you know, public reaction to it, and you're speaking now about sort of, your friends and people that you knew, but what was your impression of how the general population**

16:00 **in Australia, how much they knew of the war and how they felt about it?**

I don't think they did know a great deal about it, especially not the older type of person. I think the only time that a person really came in contact with some of these things was if somebody personally joined

either to protesting group or somebody personal went to Vietnam, and that's how they started to know, but I didn't know a great deal about what was going on in Vietnam myself. I,

16:30 I might have been against the protest marches for me, but I didn't know a lot what was going on in Vietnam except what I read, and what I heard. And I know sometimes you can't always trust what you see and hear. Having said that, of course, I had already had one cousin killed in Vietnam, so I knew first hand that these things do happen.

17:00 My brother was due to go so it was a personal worry, or wonder what was going to happen to him when he went, but I think generally not a lot of people knew to tell you the truth. I'm not sure that the ordinary person really knew what was going on except towards the end, when things weren't going well, and

17:30 when America started to pull out and started to protest, and that's when Australia followed suit and protested and all this business about, 'all the way with LBJ' [former American president Lyndon Baines Johnson] started to happen, but it started to heat up a lot, but...

Was there much information on the news at that time?

No, not that I saw or heard, but

18:00 there could well have been but...

You were still pretty busy?

Still pretty busy, yes. I'm fairly single minded, so if I'm involved in something then I, perhaps I was not quite sure or aware what might have been going on with the general population as to how much they knew what was going on in Vietnam, until such time when

18:30 things really started to go wrong and everybody jumped in on the bandwagon to say, "Let's do something."

So then you answered the ad in the paper, tell us about the process of joining up?

It was a very quick process to tell you the truth. I seemed to remember the ad came out something like September or October and it said,

19:00 and then you had to go through the selection process and by that time it had happened and you were selected and due to go by the end of January, so it was very quick in the end, the whole process of what happened.

Were you fairly clear on what it was going to involve?

No.

19:30 What I did know, and of course I went to an information night, which they did hold in which they told us which hospital we would be working at, I knew that it was going to be for 6 months. I knew the

20:00 reasons why this had been set up many years beforehand, or that we were there both to operate on people. War casualties, civilian casualties, you know, in the town itself due to accidents, whatever. Occasionally, Vietnam veterans, or sometimes Viet Cong.

20:30 Never Americans, because they had their own Evac hospitals [evacuation hospitals] and that we would be looked after by the Department of External Affairs, which it was then and really, we didn't know a great deal. We weren't told a great deal, but that was about it, and that we would be in a hospital that had been originally

21:00 built by the Americans back in 1963 and it was reasonably equipped which of course it wasn't, and yeah, that's about as much as I knew, which isn't a great deal.

So, when you arrived, what were your first impressions?

It was steamy hot.

21:30 Unfortunately, the night before we had, we'd been flown to Singapore and we stayed the night at Singapore. We'd had a meal on the plane and it contained fish that...bad fish, and half of us were very ill due to whatever had gone off and

22:00 I remember very little about being there that night in Singapore. The next morning, we had to get up early to catch a plane to Tan Son Nhut Airport and we were still, a couple really, were very ill and had to be hospitalised for a couple of days, a week or so when we came to Vietnam. Anyway, I remember a little bit about, I remember nothing about the

22:30 flight, but I remember arriving and it was just so hot and I was so sick but there was just masses of people in the airport. It was like a cattle gate, you know, there was just people everywhere and I just felt so sick being among so many bodies. Anyway, we were just,

23:00 the Department of External Affairs people just whisked us away into the cars and took us away.

Were these Vietnamese people or...?

Yes, this was the main airport in Saigon, and there were just masses of people in there. I don't know whether they were getting out or coming in or whatever but they wouldn't have wanted to get out yet anyway, because it was 1969,

23:30 but I just remembered it being so hot, and anyway we were all whisked away into the cool of some of the offices and then they drove us 20 miles to Bien Hoa where we had our own accommodation,

24:00 and the first night was so oppressive, and I was feeling so sick and we all needed medication... so the first day was really very much a blur as far as I was concerned, and I don't think I got out of bed, but the next day was alright for me. Some of the others were in hospital for a lot longer than I was, but I'll

24:30 never forget that: "Don't eat bad fish." I don't know what it was. The oysters, or whatever it was, but something, something really...

Was it a Qantas flight?

Yes, it was a Qantas flight.

It must have been strange, I mean they would have gone to great lengths to...?

They flew us first class, they flew us first class too, and oh, believe me...

As I say, they don't give you oysters normally?

25:00 No, no. Well, I don't know whether it was oysters, but it was some fish anyway, whether it was a cocktail or whatever it was, but it, oh boy...

Did you have a lot of shots before you went?

Oh, about a dozen or more. In fact, we had to have shots for everything including yellow fever, and in those days everything, yellow fever, and we had to get them in a very short time so you know, I was,

25:30 I was pretty knocked out before I went because we had to get into, you know some of those you can only have a week or two weeks apart or something, and that really knocked me out.

No shots for food poisoning?

I wish they had.

So once you recovered, were you straight into work?

26:00 Yes, yes. We took over from a Queensland team and they sort of overlapped by about 3 or 4 days or a week, so it was virtually straight into work and they showed us the equipment of what little there was and how things worked and the routine so then it was, you know,

26:30 get on with it and that was that.

Did they have a decent surgery?

We had two operating theatres with windows that rattled whenever a B52 [bomber] went over because B52s flew over us a lot of times.

27:00 The thing about Bien Hoa is it was the largest air base in South Asia at the time. There was the big American air base was half a mile up the road from where we were, so there was flights coming in every 8 minutes or every 6 minutes or something, I've forgotten what it was it was some phenomenal

27:30 time that flights were coming in and out of that American air base, every day, every minute of the day, so not only was it so busy with the American comings and goings, it was very busy for the Viet Cong, you know, aiming to get at the Americans and quite often therefore you'd have mortars going in and

28:00 out and trying to get into, trying to overfly us and we were in between. There was the South Vietnamese on one side, then there was us and then there was the Americans and the Viet Cong trying to overfly us with these blasted mortars, and that was going on most of the time, so it was a very busy area

28:30 and we just worked at the local hospital.

So, what were your first impressions of this sort of war zone that you'd come into...?

Absolute chaos.

Yeah.

Absolute chaos, but I suppose I was surprised how quickly you adapt. "This is what it is, and you get on with it," and therefore you adapt to what

- 29:00 is and you get on with what you're supposed to be doing. It was chaos. There were no roads so to speak of as far as bitumen was concerned. The hospital grounds were all dirt and dust, and once I suppose I got used to hearing
- 29:30 shots firing backwards and forwards sometimes at night you know, somebody would start shooting and you didn't quite know whether it was the Americans on one side or whether it was the South Vietnamese on the other side or whether it was the Viet Cong popping their heads up out of the tunnels. You knew who was shooting by the tracer bullets at night that were flying around but you found that you know, the
- 30:00 Americans and the Vietnamese were shooting at each other because no one knew who was doing what or where. So in that way, it was chaos because I got the feeling sometimes no one really knew what they were doing but it was no picnic. About a month after we came to Bien Hoa we had an invasion of Viet Cong.
- 30:30 They popped out of their tunnels they'd been, they've always been digging into tunnels and lying low into tunnels, and they'd been digging tunnels heading for the air base of course, naturally, but they didn't quite get there as far as getting as far as that, and they had started shooting mortars at the air base and the
- 31:00 Americans got into the act of retaliating and then they found out that these Viet Congs were popping up out of their little tunnels. We were, I'm not quite sure whether it was a weekend or not, but we were prevented from going to the hospital because it was just too dangerous. It was in fact, where they were popping up was just in front of us, in
- 31:30 the field in front of us, and so the Americans got into the act and they brought in their fighter helicopters which are specialists, little helicopters which are very thin little helicopters, one man helicopters, and they used to have a great big huge beam on the end and they just, especially at night, would shine these beams everywhere you know, and they
- 32:00 could see these little heads, well these people popping up out of their tunnels, and they would just shoot and kill, and it was about, it must have been 2 or 3 weeks before we were allowed... well, we were allowed to go to the hospital everyday, but we were on curfew, but we had to be escorted there by the Americans every day and every morning and then escorted back and by 6 o'clock at night they would
- 32:30 say, "Pack up. Stop." Drive you back now and that's it, and if you were in the middle of something that was too bad and if you had a dozen patients waiting, that was too bad and that went on for weeks and then we just stood on our balcony and watched them shoot down people in front of our hotel.

So your hotel, how far away was that from...?

Oh about,

- 33:00 well, it would have been about quarter of a mile the other way from the hospital, the air base hospital, then us and then the other South Vietnamese on that side, so it wasn't all that far, but we just weren't allowed to go by ourselves, that's all.

Did you feel safe in the hospital, in the hotel?

Well, we had guards on the roof, but there weren't many.

- 33:30 We lived in a compound of Americans and they were American psych-ops [psychological operations], they were psychological operations, they were all detectives and things like that and they were all armed of course, but nowhere was really safe. Anybody

- 34:00 could just take a pot shot and pop you off at any time I guess.

That would have been a tricky situation to be in being, staying at the same place as the Americans.

Mm, it was.

The hospital may have had some neutrality, but being over there with the Americans definitely put you in...?

Absolutely, that's why we had people on top of the roof supposedly

- 34:30 to guard us and to warn us. We did have 'escape holes', an escape hole which really was just a hole in the wall and out the back of it would have been, was a helicopter pad so that any evacuation - in fact, it got to one stage where we were to be evacuated because things got very heated and very bad. It was just a matter really of popping downstairs into the hole
- 35:00 and out through the other side into a waiting helicopter but we persuaded them not to which is probably just as well, because they'd shoot down helicopters as well so it wasn't that safe to assume that you were going to, but on the whole it was safer to go by helicopter or by plane than it was to go by road. By road anywhere was hazardous.

35:30 **Because of bad driving?**

Bad driving. People taking pot shots, I mean they would just pick off every second driver or every third vehicle and we know several people who were killed that way because they would be travelling in convoy but they would just, every so often they would pick off one and ...

36:00 yeah, so no it wasn't safe. Nowhere was safe.

A fairly fragile existence?

Absolutely, and I think these things if you look at them from the point of view of teaching you something then it will teach you a great deal of that the fragility and the nature of man sometimes, about what he can do and what he does to his, does to another person,

36:30 and sometimes the most horrendous things that the person you didn't think would have that in them would do it to another person, and I know some of these psych-ops people next door, sometimes some of the things they did to their own, not their own, but to make some people talk, you know what they did was just... teaching about humanity or human nature, I should say really.

37:00 **Did you have much experience in that or did you talk to them about that?**

Oh yes, and I suppose what they needed to do was to talk about these things, that's why quite often that's what they would do. They would tell you what they did. Not to boast or anything, just to, what I later learnt in my psych lectures is that you need to get rid of these things and you need to talk about these

37:30 things and I remember one fellow saying, "Well, they wouldn't tell us anything so we took them up in a helicopter and threatened to push them out," and one or two who didn't want to say they did that, they did exactly what they did so they needed to be able to relieve themselves of that knowledge of what they have done, but it's not nice to know that these things happened,

38:00 to what you think is a nice sane American soldier but that's what they did do.

So generally you thought they were sane, nice chaps?

No, not really, on the whole they were OK. I mean they were, I have never been awfully overly fond of Americans, but we found a lot of them just ordinary people who did the best job that they could.

38:30 They were in an invidious position, they were told to stop the aggression, but they weren't allowed to do anything back to them you see, which was...

Tape 6

00:36 **You were just telling us about living with some of the psych-ops (UNCLEAR). Did you ever go over to where they were working?**

Oh, definitely yes, because they had a big barbecue there and well they used it actually not just a barbecue but they used it also to burn all

01:00 their marijuana because they collected all the marijuana from (UNCLEAR) and things and they'd burn it every Saturday night. They would burn all the marijuana before they had a barbecue, so yes, we quite often went over there for a social evening as well as...

But they were confiscating marijuana?

Well yes, and you could smell it everywhere when they burnt it of course. Yes, they confiscated all, well most of

01:30 the drugs, but there would have been a fraction of that was used by the American soldiers so...

Did they smoke it as well?

I suppose some of them probably would have, yes, I wouldn't have been surprised. Yes, we did and we got to know them quite well as people rather than as soldiers but they needed to unburden themselves little,

02:00 little realising sometimes that they burden somebody else in doing so because we can do without this kind of knowledge, well some people can anyway.

Mm.

Knowing what goes on from a first-hand source.

Did they talk much of their techniques?

Not really. They just hated being where they were in the sense of having to fight a war and not being

able to retaliate and this

02:30 was their grief in many ways, not just the psych-ops people, but a lot of the soldiers. They were not allowed to be so aggressive and retaliate. They had to sort of sit back and wait until the Viet Cong came and popped, you know, and came to them rather than to be able to aggressively go out and... they could aggressively bomb them with

03:00 B-52s but that's about all, they couldn't do very much else and they felt very frustrated about the way they had to fight this war.

You mean they couldn't go on the attack?

No, a lot of them couldn't. I mean they would go 'search and destroy' and of course they would, but on the whole they felt that they would have been better off than getting a carte blanche being able to do anything they liked, which of course I think

03:30 would have been disastrous anyway, but I think they were very frustrated, the Americans and I think they protested about having to be there. Very volubly.

They protested to their superiors?

Yeah, about having to be there.

But only,

04:00 **do you think only on a, on the level of, they didn't like the way they were fighting the war, or do you think they were actually against the war ideologically?**

Oh no, I think the way they had to fight for the war, not about having to be there. This would be the paradox about the Americans, they have this

04:30 sense of superiority in many ways about being there and doing the right thing by other people, and that was their so called task in life, and yet they could never see that what they were doing half the time was invading somebody else's privacy and doing things that, and not questioning their own real motives

05:00 behind all of these things, which was the real pity about some of the American involvement about all of that. It was almost as if they had a blind side to themselves and what they were for, and the way they were acting, the way they were acting, which was a real pity because a lot of them were very nice young men, but a lot of them were just pitched into that of

05:30 course, by their government and I suspect that the Australians were the same.

Did you meet or know many Australians?

Not a lot. They weren't in the area that we were, in which they were more down south, across country, but they did occasionally come through and we'd meet some of them, but we'd

06:00 hear quite a bit about or from, for instance some of the people who were writing about the war, they would come through and tell us about what was happening down south, about with the Australians and of course there was a hospital which was

06:30 in Vung Tau, which was staffed by another team but not ours, and that's where all the Australians were, so they had a lot more contact with the Australians and with the Australian soldiers than we did, and we were not in that area at all because that was down south on the coast, so we had very, only the Americans we had in our area...

You didn't treat Australians

07:00 **at all in that hospital?**

No, no.

Did you do much actual organised social activities with the Americans, or was it just sort of casual, just barbecues and so on...?

No, just barbecues and things. We did perhaps more with the Vietnamese rather than the Americans. The Americans themselves were good at organising things and occasionally we'd

07:30 be invited to them, but I know quite a few of the nurses did of course attend, but I think we had more to do with the Vietnamese than we did with the Americans.

What sort of things did you do with the Vietnamese?

We had Vietnamese interpreters and we had things to do with them and the mayor at the time would, you know,

08:00 get some lunch for us or something and we'd attend sort of semi-official 'dos'[functions], which gave us contact with them so that we could reciprocate the appreciation that they felt for us and we for them because they helped us a lot, a great deal as well.

Did you get invited to dinner or anything like that?

Oh, at times

08:30 yes, and not a lot perhaps, but yeah, at times. We met some really nice young people in fact, I'm still in touch with one of them after all these years. Well, I should say, one I'm now in touch with again after all these years and she was a very good interpreter and they suffered a great deal after we left, not after us but after the Australians left, because

09:00 then they were targeted as collaborators of course, and having been interpreters for the foreign occupying powers and they had some hard times.

Did you get a sense at that time that they were caught between worlds,

09:30 **do you know what I mean?**

Yes, I think they were, and I think they felt that too but like anybody else, you found your work that paid you enough to feed your families and they were no different and many of them were very intelligent people of course, why not? But they were often caught between

10:00 how they really felt and about some of the things that they knew were going on.

Like what?

Well, they didn't always agree with the way we as a society did and that they would accept that we were different and we had a different

10:30 way of looking at things. Now this, for instance, we were supplied with a lot of things from the American Army because otherwise we couldn't have worked now. For instance, we needed oxygen, which was the main stay for our party and we needed blood and both of those things came from the Americans. What was I going to say?

11:00 Goodness me, I've lost my train of thought.

Some examples of things that the interpreters didn't agree with?

Yes, that's right, so we tried to set up, not just us, but the teams before us as well, to set up a kind of a blood bank thing so that we'd have some stocks of blood that we could use, and it's against whatever they believe in, which is fine, well it's fine in

11:30 the sense that this is what they believe in. They don't believe in that kind of thing, you know, they believe that blood is sacred and so you, we got nowhere and neither did the teams before us get anywhere because of that, so that they were often caught in a moral and ethical dilemma for themselves as well as you know sometimes we were an occupying part that they didn't really want there.

In

12:00 **hospitals, what did they do when someone needed blood?**

Yeah I know, but...

So, in what way do they believe blood is sacred? I mean it belongs to one person and no one else and...?

In some ways, some religions or some sects believe those things and that's the way they believe and all you can do is accept that's the way things are.

12:30 **Well with say the stories from psych-ops or rumours or stories that you'd get, news from the war, the South Vietnamese must have been bothered by a lot of aspects of the war, the way it was being carried out?**

Absolutely.

Did they speak to you about this?

Not a lot, no. I think they kept a lot of

13:00 these things to themselves because they quite often didn't know who to trust anyway and you can't really blame them. They didn't know who to trust in amongst themselves either because they never quite knew and we never quite knew who was a Viet Cong and who wasn't. There were times when certain people who were nurses disappeared from,

13:30 I remember one or two who disappeared from the children's ward and found out they had been arrested for being Viet Cong. So, now if they can't trust their own, they didn't always quite know who to trust.

The children?

Well no, the nurses.

Oh ok, sorry.

They didn't quite know who to trust amongst their own, and they didn't know who to trust on the other side as well, so,

- 14:00 and with the Americans it wasn't always what they said that or who they said that they were, you never quite knew what to believe what they made us so, they were a funny bunch. They were very nice, but they were a funny bunch at times. They were so effusive as in giving things, but they needed to be seen to be giving things.
- 14:30 Some very odd people around, but with the Vietnamese, you could see they were quite often caught in a bind and so it would have been very difficult for them, but there were other things. For instance, their attitude towards
- 15:00 children and towards elderly people are almost completely opposite or were, almost completely opposite to what we believe in. You know, we give the elderly due care but we believe children have priority and you should take any child over anybody else, but there, the child, it's seen as a blessing most of the time. If it's sick then,
- 15:30 if it was sick, then quite often children would disappear in the night. If you try to find out what happened to them the next morning they say, "Oh baby die, very sad," and that's the only answer you would ever get and you would never really find out what happened to it.

Children in the hospital?

Yes, yes. A sick child not a well child, or sometimes we've known children

- 16:00 to be found on the (UNCLEAR) you know, sick. There were a lot of children that were half-caste, children of the offspring of South Vietnamese women and the American soldier that were not accepted into their society. They had many orphanages there that were set up to care for these
- 16:30 children, but their care left much to be desired. We did as much as we could to try and provide clothes and other things to keep those orphanages running. They were run by nuns usually but they had very little and certainly from a moral point of view, they were not accepted into society
- 17:00 of Vietnamese people and there were times that they would just disappear those children, especially if they were sick, which was a real shock to me anyway that these things could happen but it does.

Was it the parents that took them or one of the...?

Quite often, even the parents would just

- 17:30 either just want to get rid of them or to just not be seen as having to care for them or something like that. I'm not quite sure sometimes what went on in their minds, but it wasn't the kind of attention that we would give a sick child or a child that, or we think any child is mostly special, or at least, you know,
- 18:00 has a need, not only a need for care but it deserves the care that we can give it, but it wasn't quite like that, it might have changed., I've no idea why, but I know that was something that really did upset me a great deal coming from a nurse all my life was something that was close to my heart
- 18:30 anyway.

I've never heard that before and it's pretty disturbing. At the time, did you try and stop that or...?

No, there was nothing much you could do. This has to do with people's belief system and something as strongly ingrained as a national almost religious belief system, then

- 19:00 there's nothing that you or I could do about it. You could just say, which I did, this is what I believe, whether it has any affect well you don't know, well I don't know. I do remember one odd case which in some ways it was funny, but it wasn't of course, but there was a report in the paper, in the Vietnamese paper, and
- 19:30 somebody, one of the interpreters interpreted it for us and it said, "A little human pig was born.". What had transpired, and in fact the child did come to us in the end, that the child had a cleft lip...

20:00 Hair lip?

Cleft palate and hair lip.

Yeah.

I should say, had been born and some of them have a double cleft, I mean I've nursed children here, in the children's hospital here and they have a double cleft and what happens then is the nose and the cleft, it forms almost like a little snout and somebody had seen this and thought it was a little pig because of this little snout, but it was a tiny little child. It did eventually come to us and of course,

20:30 we did have a plastic surgeon with us from New Zealand and he ended up operating on the child. Unfortunately it was so malnourished by the time it came to us and things... infection set in and it wasn't the most

21:00 sterile of places that you could actually do this, but we did our best, but the child died in the end. But it was just, it was these sort of the superstition ideas, when you see something like and the superstition takes over sometimes but...

So it had been malnourished because it had been abandoned?

No, and yes, because it couldn't feed properly, which was one of the reasons why it was malnourished, but a lot of children were malnourished because there

21:30 just wasn't the food around to feed them. Mind you there were some groups in the country that really took great care of their children, some of the mountain people. They used to come down for certain operations and things like that and they really took very great care of their children. It wasn't everybody. It was just what they believed in but it was upsetting.

22:00 The orphanages of mixed children were full of these children, and they were the most beautiful children. They were, but they were full of all these kids that were born to these liaisons.

Yes, a whole generation of war children?

Absolutely. I often wondered what's happened to them now, what happened to them afterwards,

22:30 after they...

They would have a, you know they'd have a stigma of collaboration.

That's right. All of them, and it wasn't their fault, but just to look at some of them, they were the most beautiful looking kids I'd ever...

So, did you have much sort of official dealing with the orphanage?

Not a lot. We helped,

23:00 I helped a lot or we helped a lot, and suddenly I did a lot to write back here to my family who motivated some people and they sent a lot of parcels over and, which really brings me to another subject that really made me very angry, because they have so little you know, pilfering and stealing was rife. We

23:30 had to keep such careful eye on our medical equipment and anything that could walk or anything that could move that they would steal, and you'd find it down at the market the next day, but I remember this day, I had boxes and boxes of things that my mother

24:00 and friends and people in Australia, had sent, in her community had sent and we had a station wagon and we put everything in the back of the station wagon and we were driving over to one of the orphanages, which was a little bit out of town, and on the way there, they ran, they jumped on the back of the station wagon and stole half the things before

24:30 we even had time to stop the car and of course a lot of things were gone by the time we got out of the car.

Young kids?

No, adults, anybody. Anybody who could, in fact, no more adults or more young people, rather than not kids. Not always kids, because they were the ones who could sell things down at the markets for whatever they needed.

25:00 In some ways, it's understandable of course, but it just made me very angry at the time. I thought, "Well, here you're trying to help some of them and then it gets stolen right from underneath your nose."

Well in a sense, they are taking it because they need it but you were trying to help the least fortunate?

The least fortunate, but then you see

25:30 they wouldn't have seen it that way either you know, they would have said ^*^*%^ to these youngsters anyway, to these young babies anyway you know, not being accepted they wouldn't have agreed what you were doing anyway, but it wasn't just that we, we had incident that will never leave my mind

26:00 and it was not something that I think that within years of mine and even now, with the psych-ops people, they would occasionally hold a party on a Friday or Saturday night, and one of them said to us, "We're going over to Long Binh" which was the American PX [American canteen unit] which was the huge American stores that they had, and in

26:30 these stores you could get anything, you could just about buy a white elephant in there if you wanted to and, "Would you like..." and they asked whether we would like to come and I said, "Yes," and one of my friends said, "Yes," and one of the nurses said, "Yes," and the two of us went with them. Now, two of the

psych-ops people, one of them driving and the other one riding shotgun [seated next to the driver while bearing a weapon] were in the front and two of us were in the back and on our way back they bought

27:00 whatever they did for the party, but there was a whole box of booze in there of course, and on the way back, these two Vietnamese people, they could have been Viet Cong for all we knew, jumped on and held a gun to my head and the other one held a gun to Thelma's head and they forced the driver to drive down an alleyway,

27:30 I thought my life was just about to end, but in fact they just wanted to booze or wondered what was there and when they (UNCLEAR) and that they let us go. But it could have easily been the Viet Cong I suppose, but I should not forget that soon enough.

So, it was South Vietnamese?

28:00 I presume so, yes. I would say so, yes. The thing about it, the American PX was a little out of town and that was the only thing that was out there so they would have known we were coming from there, so anybody who had a ... would put 2 and 2 together, would think we're coming from there especially when there's two Americans and

28:30 two women in the jeep, they probably would have put 2 and 2 together but I did not relish having a gun put to my head for whatever reason.

It seems to be one of the sort of main misunderstandings or difficulties with the war was that

29:00 **because this was essentially a third world country...?**

Mm, that's right.

...so even your friends or allies were incredibly poor and would do terrible things to you anyway...?

That's right, absolutely. For no other reason maybe because they wanted to go out and get something to eat for themselves, or it may be for drugs but I doubt it, and it might have been just for to buy their own food, but yes, they would do that to you because they had, their

29:30 need at this stage, they felt was greater than ours or whatever, but I suppose I'm looking at it from a point of view, "What does it do to a person when a gun is held to your head?" I sometimes think now even when you, watch something on the news and somebody holds a gun to somebody's head and I remember that and I think what does that do to that person for whatever length of time you know,

30:00 you don't forget that kind of thing. But mind you, the upside of that one, well I wouldn't say it was an upside, but it amused me because the reaction of the two psych-ops people was priceless in the end, because to be held up and their booze (UNCLEAR) really did, did really dent some of their, some of their

30:30 pride a little I think, not that I blame them, but anyhow...

Did they have a similar reaction to having a gun to their head though?

Well, the guns were put to our heads. That's what made them drive down the alley. If they had have done, if they'd put it to their own, I don't think they would have...I think they would have fought, but the guns were held to our heads so that they had no option but to, you know, to

31:00 I guess to drive down the alley.

And did you meet many other Americans apart from the psych-ops guys?

A few of the higher brassy ones sometimes, yes, they would come to lunch or we would go to a function where they were at. They would hold some

31:30 function themselves which they invited us to, so you met some of the, I don't seem to remember having had too much to do with many of them outside, you know, the people who lived within our range or within our compound or to the people who came to visit the

32:00 hospital, yes they knew and sometimes would meet other Americans, but it was mainly the Australians who came to visit the hospital and see, because the, I think it was the Lions Club of South Australia who was rebuilding the hospital or some parts of the hospital, so they would come and inspect things like that from...

You said that a lot of things

32:30 **you needed such as oxygen and blood came from the Americans, were all of these things got legitimately or...?**

Not all of them, no. In fact, I think it really annoyed the heck out of us that this had to happen and we blamed, unfairly so it comes out later on, that we had to do this. We had to wheel and deal half the time to get what we needed

33:00 and in fact I remember very distinctly some of the higher Australians from the Department of Foreign

Affairs saying, "Well, if we can't get it for you, you go to the Americans and you do your own wheeling and dealing," which we did and that wasn't always legitimate. At least, I didn't find that so,

33:30 but, now this is where there's a strange sort of coincidence comes in, back in 1995, which is what - almost 30 years after I was in Vietnam, well 25 years - I moved to Ivanhoe East and when I met my neighbour I found that he was the very

34:00 person who had set up the teams and who had compiled drawing up all those documents, which was the strangest, the most peculiar coincidence that I've ever found. Now, in talking with him, I found that the original documents stated that all of these things would be provided by the Americans, now we didn't know that. Now I didn't know that, so it was something that

34:30 was actually set down and had actually been discussed and it was agreed with the Americans that they would supply a lot of things to us as a team, to the teams anyway, I mean we've had teams before us and teams after us so...

So it's the Americans who were actually making you unfairly wheel and deal?

Yeah, yeah.

So when you say wheel and deal, what exactly do you mean? Did you have to bargain or...?

Yeah, we'd have to bargain,

Bargain?

Yeah, quite often they'd,

35:00 well, when I say quite often I know a couple of incidents where they would bargain with things that I would not bargain with, but some other people would.

Right?

Your company, but you know that's just maybe. It was not something I was ready to bargain with, but that's not even for,

35:30 well not for anything, but that's the maybe that others did what they needed to do.

Did that happen only in very extreme cases?

I would say so yes, I'd only heard of it once or twice, but it certainly was made known to me and it was made clear to me by, very clear to me by someone in

36:00 the American Army and you know, you make your choices, and as I said, you live with your choice and I'll live with mine. But yes, it was not a very nice situation to be in, but you know that's, in many ways that's, one would say that's war but to me that's not cricket. I'm afraid it's not something that I was willing to

36:30 contemplate, but I wasn't always the one having to deal with this. Sometimes my superiors would have to deal with it but what they had to do I don't know, I couldn't tell you and I wouldn't want to know to tell you the truth. What they might have had to do.

So, it was fairly difficult getting things from the Americans?

It wasn't very easy, but on the whole what they did if they had it, often you got the answer, "If we ain't got it,

37:00 we'll steal it for you," but it wasn't always the case of course. But they had a great deal of, a great many supplies. I mean their supplies were phenomenal what they got so what they would give you in fact was just a miniscule of what they actually had themselves.

That they were using for their own...?

That they were using for their own military purposes and for their own military hospitals and things like that. Their

37:30 Evac hospitals were spotless and absolutely stacked with everything that you could ever imagine you would have to do, and when I think back with what we had to work with, it was just pitiful. You almost had to go and beg and if you struck the right person you were, it was

38:00 great that you didn't then, there was some not very nice people anyhow.

What sort of things would you have to do to get by without certain drugs or certain...?

Drugs sometimes, you didn't have things like...quite a lot of our work in the end, even in the beginning and in the end also was of road accidents,

38:30 so that you needed things like plaster of paris to set bones, all of those things that you would actually

need to do on an ordinary trauma cases that you would strike in a casualty here that you would need dressings and all of the things that you would need to deal with a lot of ordinary broken bones, and they used to have these little Lambrettas, you know like motorcycles with

39:00 you know, about four seats, four people sitting on the back or something and they'd have so many accidents and they'd be horrific accidents, and they would come in and you'd have a lot of those to do, So you would need plaster of paris to set broken bones, and so we needed all of those things.

Well yeah that's right...

Tape 7

00:36 **Can you tell us more about how being a nurse in Vietnam had caused, I mean how did that impact on your work, you know when you came across soldiers, American soldiers, yeah that sort of thing, how would that relate to you generally, how would they look at nurses?**

01:00 Well, we didn't treat American soldiers because they had their own Evac hospitals, but as far as the general attitudes of American soldiers towards nurses was, they had a healthy respect actually for the nurses. It was in some ways different to what you expect it to

01:30 be you know nurses being, or the reputation that nurses have, not always (UNCLEAR) but you'd expect them to be playing up but on the whole, most American soldiers were pretty okay at you being a nurse. Some of them tried it on, of course they would but if you knew how to deal with that then they would pretty well

02:00 respect you for the way you felt or if you said, "No," then they would respect that. There was no hanky panky that you didn't want, and if you didn't want it then that was fine too. Mind you, half the time if there wasn't hanky panky they'd soon turn around and go somewhere else anyway, but no, it surprised me in some ways that their attitude was as respectful as it was at times.

02:30 **Can you tell us more about any incidents you had experienced?**

Well, if somebody came up at the party and said, "I wouldn't mind, come outside," or "How about going off to this?" and you said, "No." Then you know they would say, "That's okay," that they accept that's what you wanted and that's the way it was but some people thought they would try it on but on the whole...

03:00 I found it, whether it was just me or whether it was just the people that I met, they were okay with that. Some of my friends or some of the other nurses had a different reaction. I remember one of our teammates was a very pretty and vivacious redhead and she

03:30 attracted a lot of attention, and she often said attention she didn't want, but that's just may be, but she learnt how to deal with that as well. I think that's what you do, you learn how to deal with it and you either make your wishes very clear, or you give in to what you would like to see happen and it did happen to other people, yes.

Some nurses went along with it of course?

Yes, of course they did.

04:00 I mean they're human beings and it was a war situation. Now, a lot of people would say well, it shouldn't make any difference, but it does being under a lot of pressure, being in a situation where sometimes your life was at stake brings out in some people a reaction that

04:30 they want to take advantage of every moment of happiness, or whatever it is they think they want to happen. And it's understandable and if you can understand them then you can learn how to deal with any advance so to speak because you get a lot of them yes, that's true.

Did you see the Americans as being oversexed?

Yes, in many ways, but I also saw that that was part of the,

05:00 partly some of the arrogance that they have, partly too I think more to do actually with the situation which they were in. They were in a very difficult situation and they needed an outlet, and they didn't always get that outlet anywhere else so they sought it many times with local women and that went on all the time.

05:30 Those of them who would try it on either their own women, but there weren't very many or for us for instance, our team or other visiting women. They would try it one. It happened quite often at least the initial contact happened quite often, whatever happened after that, I don't know.

Were you warned about this professionally,

06:00 **like, briefed about it or spoken to by your bosses?**

I don't believe that we were briefed about it, but I certainly knew about it and I sort of expected that that would happen and that we would have to deal with it and I would have to deal with it and thought long and hard how would I deal with that, when and if it happens, and I think if you're prepared then you can make the

06:30 appropriate responses. Some nurses, yes they went off with the soldiers and that's what they wanted to do. That's fine. I had no problems with that, but it wasn't always easy.

So how did you deal with the strain?

The...?

The strain of the job?

The strain in the job?

Yeah, how did you take time off or whenever you

07:00 **could, how did you alleviate your mental...?**

Absolutely, yes.

... mental strain?

I guess that goes back to the way I've always dealt with any mental strain that was difficult, which is, and still is in fact, to go inside myself and find my world so to speak inside. I find a way of,

07:30 not a way of, but I have an inner world and I escape into that. That has to do with my faith, it has to do with the things I believe in, that's the way I think about things and I escape into, escape perhaps is not the word, but I visit that world quite often and that's what I did in Vietnam because it was very difficult to

08:00 stay in the outer world in Vietnam all the time without finding some way of alleviating without going to the extreme of using drugs or the extreme of going with a soldier or any other extreme I

08:30 suppose. It's something that I've always done, though I suppose it's part of my make-up that I am able to do that or have developed that way of coping with the world.

Did you have any relationships with soldiers there or anyone there?

I did. Yeah, I had a deep friendship with one of the soldiers, two of the soldiers we had, my friend and I. We

09:00 went around together. It wasn't a physical relationship, but then he told me that he was married and he didn't want a physical relationship and was I satisfied with that and I was quite happy and satisfied with that. It wasn't something that I wanted, but I don't know what would have happened if he hadn't been married. Maybe I would have, probably. I

09:30 wasn't against having a physical relationship, even though I was engaged to be married when I came back. It wasn't that that held me back, but it just, neither of us wanted that so, but we did go around, well the little time we had of course, we went around occasionally go to

10:00 Saigon, or the four of us went for drinks or something like that.

Okay. So you became very close friends.

Well, yeah we were close friends, which was nice. It was nice to be able to talk to somebody outside your own area of work because whenever we were with the team members of course that's what you would

10:30 talk about was work, work, work and what had happened during the day so it was really nice to talk about other things or go to the party next door - whatever.

Were these the same chaps from...?

Yes, they were next door.

Psychological operations?

Psych-ops, yeah.

Ok. How did you initially meet all these people, initially?

Well only because they were in the same compound as us and they were a sense, they

11:00 were responsible for our safety in the event that the compound was attacked, they were responsible to take us out of the escape hole into the helicopters, so we had to get to know each other anyway too, so that we all knew where we stood, what to do in a time of emergency.

And they were in military attire always?

No, in fact they didn't, they never, they were like undercover

11:30 cops, so to speak they didn't, but they were very nice, ordinary men.

What would they talk to you about in...?

About their wives and their families mostly, and their dreams, you know what they will do when they got back. I remember my friend's, the other fellows

12:00 got her to, when she came back home, got her to buy a kangaroo skin coat or something like that or a kangaroo skin for his wife and things like that. No, mostly their families really and their wives, because that's what was happening most in their minds how much they missed them.

Were these officers by the way?

Yeah, I

12:30 suppose they were. No they weren't, I beg your pardon. No, NCOs[Non Commissioned Officers], what's that?

Non commissioned officers.

NCO. NCOs, yeah.

Like warrant officers, or...?

Yes, or something like that. I don't know what their rank was, but I think they were NCOs. I seem to remember that designation.

Did they have a view that the war was going to be won?

No, they didn't,

13:00 but by this time it was 1969, so I think though quite a few of the Americans had the idea that there was something about this war that they couldn't do, or couldn't win, or couldn't do anything about it. I think that's why they were so volatile sometimes about not being able to do something. If they felt they'd been able to do something they might have been able to

13:30 have a different outcome but...

Yeah. Now did you say, I think you said before that the Viet Cong had done some sort of attacks?

Mm.

I mean there was regular sort of, occurrences that were taking place around there?

No, that one wasn't. The last time before we'd happen, that had happened, the year before it had happened and that was the Tet

14:00 Offensive, and we came up the year after and it was the same and it was something to do with February being some month of celebration and that's why they did it, and that's why the Tet Offensive and the year we were there was exactly the same in February as well that they came and attacked us, or attacked the area and the base, so I don't know whether there was some idea in the Viet Cong's mind

14:30 about something about February, but that's when it happened. We had only been there for about 3 weeks.

And that's when you said that they were building tunnels...?

Well, they had been building tunnels for a long time, but that's when they came up anyway and one of the awful things about it was when that happened and the Americans shot most of them dead,

15:00 they had nowhere to put these bodies so they put all the bodies into the hospital ground. I mean, we had no spare buildings in the hospital so they just put them on the ground on stretchers, in the hospital ground, and left them there for days and days and days and the stink was absolutely horrific after a while because it was so hot and we complained bitterly

15:30 because it was both unsanitary and it was a terrible sight. There must have been about 200 or so of them, bodies and...

200?

Yeah, and the other thing that got to us was that the Vietnamese people brought all their children, all their school children around and

16:00 marched them past these bodies, two by two, having a look at the 'enemy' and giggling and carrying on.

In some ways understandable, but you know rather shocking to have this done, to bring your kids around to have a look at the enemy lying dead on the ground, but that's what they did.

Did you witness this battle?

Mm. Well, we saw...

Aspects of it?

16:30 Aspects of it, yes.

Which parts did you see?

Well, what we could see from our balcony, and it wasn't a battle where you have soldiers in the field and they shoot them dead. It's only when they pop their head up and they came running across the field that they would actually shoot them and mostly at night because that's when they could aim their very huge powerful beams from the helicopter on these Viet Cong

17:00 coming out of their tunnels and that's how they could shoot them and they'd had these huge, the helicopter had these machine guns of course, and they had these huge 16mm bullets. I remember this was what we took out of the patients sometimes you know, they were huge, they were about that big, the bullets that you would take out of these patients too, you know

17:30 the few that survived and we would operate on the ones that survived.

Any VC [Viet Cong] that survived, were they there?

All the time, had VC coming through our operating theatres which survived, and they had these huge bullets in them.

How long was the battle there for?

Not for long, about a week or two or 10 days. Well, 10 days that we were incapacitated about not being

18:00 able to go freely to the hospital, except under strict guard and strict curfew.

Did many Americans die in that battle or so...?

No, I wouldn't have thought so. I mean it was done mainly by helicopter, you see and except that I don't remember any mortars being sent off at that stage but it might have but I doubt it very

18:30 much, it was all done by helicopter and mostly at night.

The province you were in, was that, how far was that from Phouc Tuy Province where the Australians were?

I don't know about 50, 70, 80 kms, 100 kms probably. This was north, Phouc Tuy, which is down south on the coast and we were,

19:00 we were 20 miles east of Saigon so...

East of Saigon?

East of Saigon, yes. No, west of Saigon, I beg your pardon.

West?

It must have been west.

Near the Cambodian border?

Well no, not that far. No, it's only about 20 kilometres or so, that's not very far, about 15 miles, so it wasn't that far inland but,

19:30 it was, took you about 20 minutes to get to Saigon, so it wasn't that far.

Did you ever want to go and look after Australians, rather than be in the position you were?

Well, we weren't really there for any Australians. I mean, they were looked after, I mean the army was looked after by their own because down in

20:00 Vung Tau they had their own hospital, so they had their own hospital down there. So, we weren't really there to be looking after Australians at all. Much as you would have liked to.

You would have preferred to have done that?

No, but you know if we had to, we would have but we had enough with the Viet Cong and we had enough with the South Vietnamese people so,

You said about Vung Tau, Vung Tau was a fairly notorious place I understand?

Yes,

20:30 it was a beautiful place. It was right on the coast, a lovely place but very much in the French style. Lovely quarters, lovely gardens, lovely everything. I had a 2-day pass to a weekend down there, it was great just to have a break, it was a lovely place but...notorious. But it was just nice to be walking on the beach and it was very nice to have a little bit

21:00 of a rest.

So, what can you tell us about Vung Tau as far as its image was concerned?

Not at all, anything. I knew nothing about it except having to spend those two days down there, that's all but otherwise there were teams that had a hospital down there, and I don't know where those teams came from but I don't know anything about, and I know

21:30 nothing or very little about the area where the Australians were stationed which was very near there or inland from there anyway.

You say you never ran into any Australians?

No, not in our path at all, the Australians. But that's the way it goes. We were never

22:00 encouraged to travel except by air. A plane that flies too high for them to get at or by helicopter which could kangaroo hop over trees, and that's the only way that...it was safer to travel than it was by road and you weren't, if you were travelling then it was

22:30 always with the proviso that you travelled in pairs and the minimum pairs, if not three people. Never, never on your own. There was always these rules that you had to abide by. Mind you, we often not often but we sometimes broke those rules, not by travelling alone, I would never be a part of...I thought that was too unsafe but we were told

23:00 that there were times that if you were travelling with an American, an American always had to travel with a shotgun rider, which meant that they had to travel with someone who had the pistol, who had the rifle by his side and we weren't allowed to be shotgun riders and occasionally we'd done that, but you don't see it till later that we'd probably take a bit of a risk.

23:30 We took risks, I took risks, we took risks. I don't know whether it's being blase or not but it was, sometimes it was just a bit of rebellion against all the restrictions that we had over there.

Tell us about that leper colony you were

24:00 **talking about before?**

There was a leper colony, I'm not quite sure which province it was in, but it wasn't, it took about half an hour to get there by helicopter. Now, it was something that had been set up before we arrived, by other teams. It was not our doing to set it up, we just carried out the tradition of working at that leper colony once a week

24:30 on a Thursday morning, and to travel to that colony was too dangerous by road so we had to be flown in by, it wasn't the American Army because the American Army would be shot at if they flew us in, but it was a private helicopter company, well a private helicopter that flew us in, and it

25:00 would come, the helicopter would come at 8 o'clock in the morning and pick us up and would drop us and then strictly at 12 o'clock it would fly back in and pick us up again. It was too bad if you didn't finish anything, but you had to get out by that time otherwise the proviso, well the thing was that this deal had been done with the Viet Cong many years before and they would come in

25:30 and get you out so you always had to be very careful to get out on time. One day, no that was every Thursday morning, now we had a large team so we would have gone about 3, 4 or 5 times in the 6 months that I was there so, we just took it

26:00 in turns but one day we were running late and the helicopter pilot came in and landed and we were running late and he took off, took off too fast and it was surrounded by huge pine trees. They were just very huge pine trees or trees that had big tops on them and he clipped the top of

26:30 the tree and the helicopter came down outside the fence and, which was a very scary thing because outside the fence was VC country so, anyway they called in the American Army and the American Army came and sort of stood guard until they'd fixed the helicopter and it could take off again but it was a very scary thing to have happen. Not only did our backs

27:00 hurt like by the helicopter coming down but it was coming down on the wrong side of the fence was a bit scary. We did and we survived but it, one of the reasons why that place, it was called Binh Som it sticks in my mind because it was run by a French

27:30 priest and he had French nuns and also Vietnamese nuns, but it was the most peaceful and the most serene place in the midst of chaos in the case of war that I have ever been to. Even though the people

- that you met and the people that you were nursing and operating on were the most
- 28:00 marginalised and the most disfigured of all with the leprosy, it was a place that I, it's quite amazing that that serenity and calmness still sticks in my mind, having been there. It's quite amazing and I often wonder what happened to that place because again like
- 28:30 the children, the leper people as well were not acceptable in that society, which I suppose goes for a lot of societies, they weren't acceptable, but I shall never forget having been there nor ever regret having been there to a place like that. It was quite amazing. I shall forever be thankful that I did.
- 29:00 **What a strange experience?**
- Absolutely. In the midst of all that horrific chaos, yeah and there were quite a few people with leprosy there. I mean these days leprosy, well it's treatable. It's not curable but it's treatable anyway so...
- 29:30 **Did the VC ever come over there?**
- They did. Not while we were there but the priest told us that every so often the VC would come in and rough up the place and steal things but never to the stage of destroying it, but always just to see if they could steal something that they would need or something or if there was something harbouring there, that they thought maybe harbouring there but,
- 30:00 but you know the priest and the nuns just took that in their stride and they would go on the next time.
- What would be the difference between the VC and the NVA [North Vietnamese Army], as far as...?**
- Well the North Vietnamese Army was a regular army where the Viet Cong was more the rebels that came down from down south and
- 30:30 were more the 'underground-type' of people the Viet Cong, but in some ways, they were the same. They would call them Viet Cong because they were the Vietnamese, the 'Red Army', but there was a difference really.
- Did you learn how to speak Vietnamese?**
- We did learn a bit, yes. In fact that was part of what the Australians wanted us to do was to learn to speak some Vietnamese and we did.
- 31:00 I don't remember anything, but that's what part of our brief was, not just to operate and help but also to teach in the operating theatre or in the wars and to make friends and to help be a sort of a friendly face around the place and to that end, they gave us Vietnamese lessons, that's true. Mind you,
- 31:30 it's an impossibly difficult language. At least to me it was to pronounce. You might find it easier with your tongue than I do but...
- I don't know about that, a huge difference between South Asians and...?**
- But it's really, it was, oh I can never get my tongue around these things, but yes, I did but of course but you know, I guess we
- 32:00 stopped learning as soon as you leave.
- You said you also, if you learnt the language then did you take up any of the customs as well? The clothes, dress...?**
- Oh, I loved the clothes, I thought those, but I didn't really have the figure for
- 32:30 those kind of clothes. They were more for the very slim Vietnamese ladies, they were terrific. It was a beautiful country although it was ravaged by war at the time that I was there, but you could still see the beauty and some of those things but as far as anything else is concerned, no not at the time I didn't. I think I would appreciate it more today
- 33:00 than I would in those times, those years anyway but they had some beautiful hand work that I admired a great deal. Some lacquered work that I thought was absolutely superb. I remember going to one of our interpreter's home for dinner one day and she had these beautiful ornaments, she had an altar to her family,
- 33:30 and her family tree within her home and she had some beautiful ornaments on them. Absolutely superb to have such an eye for, their eyes for beauty and the way they made those things was just absolutely exquisite really.
- What did you think of the Vietnamese**
- 34:00 **culture, I mean I'm sure you would have known the impact of the French?**
- Mm, absolutely. It was everywhere and you couldn't escape it, you couldn't escape it in the buildings, in anything. The French had such an impact on the whole but the Vietnamese themselves,

- 34:30 I felt were in many ways a gentle culture but again, there was that other side to them which you know had a very vicious, which I think goes for all of us. We have our side that we don't like others to see well that is not so welcoming to many people but
- 35:00 I like the people very much indeed but they were living under such terrible, terrible times.
- What did you notice about the division between the Vietnamese?**
- I'm not sure what you're talking about.
- Well, I suppose did you understand the politics of the north and south?**
- Not a great deal.
- 35:30 **The Red Army and the VC?**
- Not a great deal. I suspect that it had more to do with what the French stirred up and what was started because of the French within Indochina but how right I was I don't really know. I mean I've never really delved deeply into why there was division between north and south or what made or what steered the north
- 36:00 towards Communism and the south in a different direction so I really don't think I wanted to find out. I always suspected that it was the French who had a large hand in all of that but how right I was I don't know, I couldn't tell you even now whether I was right or not.
- 36:30 **Was there much of a French presence in Indochina at that period?**
- Not in an immediate sense, but it certainly, in a cultural sense, yes. You could see French influence everywhere, but not in any other way there was not, no but there was, within the attitudes of the people there was because I remember well, I shouldn't say I remember but, I remember hearing a remark
- 37:00 by some of the Vietnamese to an American soldier or an American general or whatever, he was an officer and it was something like, "You really have no idea how to fight these North Vietnamese people. If you were more like the French you would have cut off their heads and stuck them onto poles
- 37:30 and that's what they understand more than anything else, but you really have no idea how to fight them or what to do with them," whereas the French did and they had more admiration for the French than they did for the Americans. Very few Vietnamese had any admiration for the Americans whatsoever unfortunately.
- Ok, on that note we'll just change the tape...**

Tape 8

- 00:35 **Yes, so we were talking about the French background and you said there was quite a few priests and things like that?**
- Yes, still there and they weren't hounded by the Viet Cong, but they were certainly raided and I know the priests said quite often that the hospital would be but they just took it in
- 01:00 their stride and they weren't hounded out of that anyway. Whether that was because he was a priest or whatever I don't know but,
- Did you know French by any chance?**
- No, I didn't.
- You didn't. So I would assume that a lot of the Vietnamese at least the middle class that...?**
- They would know French yes, absolutely. Definitely.
- Oh sorry, go on.**
- No, I was just going to say that the Vietnamese people appreciated the fact that we were trying to communicate
- 01:30 in their language sometimes, even though we were way off base half the time, but they appreciated the fact that we did whereas the Americans had the attitude, "If you don't speak English, then we don't want to know," so it was an attitude that didn't go well with a lot of the Vietnamese people unfortunately....
- How did you find, interacting with the Vietnamese middle classes, how did you**
- 02:00 **find that experience?**

Somewhat, somewhat like interacting with the French because they, probably more than anybody else would display the French influence of,

02:30 not saying that they had more than their fellowmen, fellow Vietnamese but they were perhaps less sympathetic towards their unfortunate lesser class of Vietnamese people. They were just a little bit higher minded at times I suppose and I include some of the doctors amongst them because they were educated in

03:00 that system and...

Can you tell us instances?

Well, just...

Specific examples?

Just a specific example I suppose being the person who was in charge of, the doctor who was in charge of the Vietnam Hospital, who was a very nice person, but he just had a little bit of a superior attitude towards some of the people who worked underneath him which I didn't, just didn't think helped and I think

03:30 it's...

How would he speak to them?

Well, as though they were lower class, which you know I don't think, not being brought up in a class system, it's noticeable when it happens let's put it that way.

In that context, did you start to understand or begin to sort of think about why Communism may have an

04:00 **appeal to the peasants?**

Of course, absolutely. It's very much a draw card that it becomes, when you have people like the French or the Americans start to act as though they're superiors and then the person who's got no power whatsoever then starts to look for ways of accessing something

04:30 that the communist will offer, so of course they do. Yes, absolutely, and a lot of it was drawing people like the peasant into that society of Communism and their allies and then, it's a bit like these days with the terrorism, you know, it creates its own culture then to,

05:00 to, draw those kinds of people to themselves or those kind of thinking people to themselves. The lower, not the lower class, but just the people who have got no power whatsoever and I'm sure that's how most of them would have felt at that time, so powerless.

How would you know the difference between, well I mean this is probably very difficult but

05:30 **the people who were attracted to the VC from the south, to their cause from your experience, or did you ever get a chance to meet prisoners or...?**

No, well we did have a prisoner of war... a ward full of prisoners, but we weren't allowed to work in there and I certainly wouldn't have wanted to, nor did I ever really meet one to talk with, if that's what you're asking, no I didn't.

06:00 We had problems keeping them alive at times in spite of some anaesthetist trying to kill them off.

Sorry, what did you say?

In spite of one or two anaesthetists trying to kill them off. We had one anaesthetist who, we were working on a VC at one stage and his blood ran blue,

06:30 which says that the patient is lacking oxygen, and he'd turned off the oxygen on the machine, so he really didn't, wasn't wanting this person to survive.

This was an Australian?

Oh no, we had some Vietnamese not doctors but anaesthetists, or at least technicians in a way who would help us, because we just didn't always have enough people to help us so and we had some Vietnamese

07:00 surgeons, yes and they were very good and we had some Vietnamese technicians who most of them were very good, not all of them though but most of them were.

How did the Vietnamese surgeons operate or were they impartial in their practises with victims?

The surgeons were more than perhaps the technician was, who was not quite so highly qualified as the surgeon might have been but yeah, but this particular technician

07:30 yeah, he tried to poison well, kill off this VC on the table, on the operating table by just turning off the oxygen, would have killed him fairly shortly if the surgeon, if my Australian surgeon hadn't noticed what was going on which was,

What happened to him, the anaesthetist?

He was reprimanded and said he would never do it again. Well, what happened to him after that I can't rightly remember, whether he

08:00 was arrested or not, I don't think so. You know, sometimes it was just a matter or a spur of the moment type of thing that happens with someone who is very frustrated with systems and you create things like this for people to be so frustrated that they will either go over to the other side or join the VC or NVA whatever they are and whatever. People get very

08:30 frustrated and were very frustrated in those days.

What sort of injuries would you have to treat generally?

A lot of them were war injuries but mortar attacks, a lot of them were mortars. They were aiming at the air base in the Vietnam villages south, which meant a lot of the Vietnamese people were injured so we would have to treat those.

09:00 We treated a lot of road accidents because of the chaotic road system that they had. You drove where there was a spare space rather than being on the left or right hand side.

Sounds like Sri Lanka, actually.

Oh I tell you what, it was horrific at times and we did some other normal type of work. You know, what would normally come into a

09:30 hospital so it was always, it was always busy. It was never not busy. There were times that we would do some elective surgery, but of course that didn't happen very often except for that little baby I was telling you before. You know that would be, would have been

10:00 an unusual type of thing to happen rather than the norm. We've seen some napalm, which was horrific to see, which I shall never forget.

Tell us about that.

Because it's something that just eats at the skin and just eats away and it was just oh, it's hard to describe what napalm does to your skin. It just gets under the skin and eats it away because there's no way that you can actually get it off. Just

10:30 rubbing it off is even worse and it's just so painful that you know, you...

So it's like acid, is it?

Yes, but it's even worse than that because it's more insidious. It's not just something that just blobs and the whole thing is just gone. It just slowly inches away and eats at you know, and it was just terrible to see.

Can you describe the type of burns we're talking about here?

Well, that's what I mean.

Like I mean...

It wasn't a burn that flames,

11:00 but it was like something very hot, it just sneaks along every inch of the skin and just crawls away and just eats away, it's just something that is so horrific.

So let me, napalm when it's dropped, is that like fuel air explosive? Napalm, it catches on fire doesn't it, it ignites, does it ignite?

Some of it ignites, but not all of it. I mean, yes, some of it does but some of it is actually like a jelly type of thing that

11:30 then will then form on the skin and slowly just eat away at it and it's so very painful because every inch and every square rather than one huge thing being, all of sudden going up in flames, it's just a slow burning thing that eats away at everything, it's just terrible.

So what about if it lands on your clothes, will it eat your clothes as well?

Yeah. It eats everything. It doesn't distinguish between clothes

12:00 and skin.

And how severe are we talking about like, some of the treatments you've had and...?

The full thickness of skin and everything, it just eats away and then it starts on whatever is underneath.

Could it go right to the bone as well?

I suppose it could if you didn't try and treat it.

How would you treat napalm?

I have no idea what you do these days, but what they did, no what we saw, would have been, by the time it was just too late

- 12:30 because you know, they wouldn't come to us until it was far too late and they'd come with these horrific huge burns with gaps everywhere and we only saw one or two there weren't very many, and they had to come from a fair distance away so you know, they would be in a terrible state when they got there. A lot of them didn't survive, well they didn't survive, it was just, yeah.

After seeing this so often,

- 13:00 **did you start to see the futility of this conflict?**

Absolutely, but that didn't take very long to see the futility of the conflict.

No but what I mean I suppose is that, did you start to get angry with the Americans?

I don't think I was angry with the Americans, I was angry with the futility of what

- 13:30 war does to human people and that goes for all sides, it wasn't just the Americans, it wasn't just the Viet Cong, it wasn't just the Vietnamese people, it was the futility of what a conflict, what in a conflict one person does to another. That for me was the basic, what it came to basically and the futility of that. What you do to me or what I do

- 14:00 to you, or what anybody does to anybody else. The futility of any conflict, what is one person does to another person when in many ways, we are one human family, well one human being and we all are part of one humanity and still we cannot learn to live with one another and we are in conflict as you see today, as you have done all the way through. From the First World War to, well

- 14:30 since dawn began we've had conflicts and we saw it in the First World War, Second World War, Korean War, Vietnam, Malaya and now all of this terrorism.

Did you see it as terrorism then?

Well we didn't use the word then, but I suppose it was. I think we just used different words for the same thing.

- 15:00 I don't believe this is a new thing. We use new words and it's easier to talk about terrorism other than war, but it's a conflict between human beings and there is war forever going on and we cannot learn to live alongside one another.

You also had to tend to ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] troops, the

- 15:30 **South Vietnamese troops that is?**

Sometimes yes we did.

Can you describe to me those, those days?

Well, we didn't have to tend to them for very long. It was usually just something in an immediate sense because they were near to our hospital then they would be transferred to one of their own hospitals for further treatment or recuperation or something like...only,

- 16:00 only if they you know, if they were in our vicinity and they needed immediate treatment, and then they would come to us but for the main part we were there for the ordinary Vietnamese person of the community rather than, occasionally, yes, we would have a soldier that would come under our care. Sometimes he would need some specialist treatment but we didn't have many specialists with us you see,

- 16:30 we just had general surgeons working on general things.

What about the different Vietnamese people who had Montagnards?

Montagnards, they were the mountain people.

Yeah, can you tell us more about them?

Beautiful people and beautiful looking people, and they were the people that, to me, took great care of their children, they loved their children and that for me, stood out with them and the mountain people, but they

- 17:00 would sacrifice anything for their family, which was just wonderful to see in that sense that they would walk miles and miles to get care for them or carry them on their backs or something and they were

lovely people and they suffered a great deal in that conflict, very much so but otherwise I don't know a great deal about them. But

- 17:30 they were strikingly looking people and they were different looking you know, they had different features and sometimes a lot of beads around their necks and things, but they were striking people, very great people. I have very fond memories of the few that I did meet, some of them under not very happy circumstances. I
- 18:00 remember having a mother being brought in and they had shot at her and her baby and left her for dead and she did die but the baby didn't but she, she was such a lovely looking woman. Some of these things stand out more than anything else in my mind
- 18:30 but they're quite a diverse people, the Vietnamese, the Montagnards.

Have you, when you were working in the hospital, how did you find the relationship was between your team members,

- 19:00 **the other Australians and nurses and surgeons and Vietnamese as well who were technicians assisting?**

On the whole it was not too bad, depending on certain people. I mean certain people didn't get on with them. I remember one of two people who found it difficult to

- 19:30 get on with all the Vietnamese, that's true but then I think they probably would have had problems getting on with people back here as well. I think some people found their personality a difficulty when they came to Vietnam. I think you had to have a fairly accepting type of personality when you got there because if you didn't have that then you might find you're
- 20:00 not quite in the right place to put up, to get on with people that's all. It was difficult for some, yes definitely but between ourselves, there were difficulties of course. You put 20 people together and put them together in a very short time and expect them to live together in
- 20:30 the one place and of course you have problems. There were problems between some of the women, there were problems between some of the women and some of the men, but I think no more than I would have expected to find between any group of people just thrown together in a short time. I mean it takes a while to get to...and then to have to work
- 21:00 under such extreme conditions at times is an added difficulty but I think on the whole, everybody coped remarkably well, really.

So overall you were there for 6 months. Can you walk us through your last week of your...?

The last week?

Yeah?

I was very sorry to leave and in fact I didn't want to leave. We,

- 21:30 of course we were expecting the new team to come and I think we were all getting ready to get everything ship shape for the new team to come. We had lots of little do's the last week you know, saying goodbye to our interpreters and their families and just generally getting used to the fact that we were going home and I don't know that there
- 22:00 wasn't one person who would say, "I really want to get out of here now today and not wait." I think that the person, certainly I am and my colleagues, the one's that I was closest to really felt very sorry to leave behind a beautiful place and people and leave behind some of the work that we'd done and
- 22:30 most of us felt that of the 6 months we were there all we could do was put a band-aid on a very deep gaping wall, and perhaps we didn't achieve very much but it was still difficult to leave and certainly for me it was, and while I was glad to be going home in some sense you know I was sorry in many ways.
- 23:00 It was another difficulty for me because I knew I was facing a difficult situation when I got home so I wasn't looking forward to that. A couple of us decided we would go and have a holiday in Hong Kong first, before we'd go home, just to spend a bit of money and get some clothes and then fly on home from there which we did.
- 23:30 But I shall always remember that I was not happy to leave. It had changed my life in many ways and I'll always be very grateful for having been there and having been there at a time when, which was both good and bad and,

- 24:00 **What was going through your mind when you were going up in the plane, when you were leaving Vietnam, can you remember?**

I don't remember a great deal, I just didn't want to go. I just thought I'd like to stay for another 6 months. "Give me another 6 months and then I'll go home." But I think I probably would have found it more difficult to leave if I'd done that. Some of me was glad of course, I was, I had lost a lot of weight and needed

24:30 a little bit of TLC [tender loving care] so to speak and I didn't mind leaving some of the nightly raids and shootings and everything like that behind and the mortars that were going over your head, but I didn't mind leaving those behind, but I certainly minded leaving Vietnam behind, yes I did.

Was it, did you like it because it was a bit of a crazy place? Is it, I mean, I know

25:00 **that say for instance when I go to Sri Lanka, it's absolutely crazy I mean it's disorderly, it's almost anarchical but yet there's something about it that's very attractive?**

There's something attractive and loveable and very deeply attractive about something that is as old as Vietnam, or as old as Asia, or whatever it was, and some of the beliefs were crazy and impossible to get hold of and yet

25:30 it was something that was alive, it was vibrant, it was chaotic, it was awful, it was horrific at times the war was but there was something very vibrant about that place that got into my being.

Extremes of emotion one could say?

Yes, absolutely.

Extremes of experience?

Yes that's right and yet it taught me more in those months that I was there than I

26:00 would have many years before then so it really did, it polarised me in the way nothing else could have done, experience that I would not have missed and I to this day, say I would never of missed if I'd had the choice again I wouldn't change my mind, I still would have gone.

Can you walk us through?

26:30 **I'm going to really crank you up here in the sense that I'm going to try and make you think hard, can you walk us through the actual flight, what were you thinking, how were you feeling? How did it impact on you, that flight coming back from Saigon to Australia or whatever, whichever area you came through you know, it's only a few hours and you're back in Australia?**

I know and it was like going to another world. That's the way I felt, as though

27:00 I was coming back from a - no I was coming back from an outer space sort of station to, or I was going to an outer space. I wasn't quite sure which was which. Whether I was coming back from the craziest of all places to the most sane or whether I was going from the most sane of all places to the most craziest because I couldn't tell the difference at the time in my own mind. I felt more,

27:30 I was crazy going back home than I ever did feel crazy about going to Vietnam. I really did not want to come back here. A strange odd feeling it was. I don't even know how to even explain that but it was a feeling of

28:00 unreality, as though I was leaving reality to go into a place that was really very unreal and there is nothing, I mean there is no way I could say my home is unreal, my parents were not unreal and yet I had this feeling of unreality. That I was coming back to a place that was going to be unreal, like I was coming, oh....

Were you disoriented?

Yes absolutely, yes, and I was for quite a while. It was very strange.

28:30 I didn't know what to do with that or how to say that to as there was no one here to listen to it anyway or how could understand any of that, not that I understood it either, but there was no one really who would listen to that at all.

What about the nurses that came with you?

They didn't. We all came home by ourselves and we all went our own way immediately afterwards. We just never, except for one, I never saw any of them again.

29:00 Not one, except for one and with her I kept in contact for quite a while until about last year and I think she died about last year.

So if you were disoriented, would it bring you to tears thinking about it?

Definitely, but there was nothing, there was no way I could express what I was actually feeling. I mean it just seemed so,

29:30 so ridiculous that I should be feeling that I was going back to an unreal place. That I should think of my home as unreal, here as unreal. That I would think that the way I was brought up... it was as if I was coming out of

30:00 having been in a chaotic place for the last 6 months and I was coming to a place that I really didn't, that I called home but was no longer my home. Home is what you call, is something that you know and this was something I didn't know what I was coming home to and it was that that I didn't know,

30:30 and yet for 6 months I'd been living in the most chaotic place ever, and yet I called that home, I could call that a place that I knew. I could call that something that I could get used to or not used to but accept and say yes, it's life. But I was coming home to something that I had no idea what it was and that scared the heck out of me when I came home.

You've got a big

31:00 **question mark over everything?**

Absolutely, over everything.

What about your relationship with your boyfriend?

Yeah.

Now you were corresponding with him I believe over in Vietnam?

I had been while I was in Vietnam and while I was there I realised that it would not be a good idea if I married him straight after, when I came back home because I felt that I had moved in a very different place to where he was,

31:30 and I had written to him about this, I was trying to explain and he had responded in such a way as to absolutely have no idea where I was, and mind you, I probably didn't know myself. That we just didn't see eye to eye to anything anymore and I thought that was the wrong way to start off a marriage so, no way I was going to marry him and so...

What was his profession?

He was working

32:00 for a firm in Melbourne, I've forgotten the name of it now.

He was just a white-collar worker?

Yes, he was just a white...well, not 'just', but yes, he was a white-collar worker and a desk job, and he liked his job, and he was a very nice person, but we had just, I had just moved so far away from where he was at that I couldn't see that at this stage

32:30 we had anything in common at all so I needed my space and I needed my time to see what was going on with me.

So this is all in a space of 6 months?

Yes definitely but I think probably you know I had my doubts, some of my doubts before that about that marriage that just made the... but definitely. That's what I mean about the changes that can happen so quickly in a place like that and to someone,

33:00 you know when something, when you open yourself to experiences like that, then changes can happen very quickly.

Why didn't you go back to Vietnam, there were a few opportunities to go back after the war?

There were opportunities but for the first year I didn't do that because I felt I needed to give myself space to come out of what I was coming out of because I was pretty depressed when I came back. I found there was

33:30 no one to talk with, no one who could actually sit still to listen and I thought "Until I get my head straight or my heart straight or whatever was going on, it's not fair to go back and just subject myself to that again because I'll be in a worse state if I do that when I come back again so, let me see what happens when I do this you know for the next year and see if I can

34:00 try and work out what had happened to me and all the changes and how have I changed and what's happening to me." and so I did that and for the next year, I withdrew more or less. I mean I went back and worked at the children's hospital, but I withdrew from most social contacts and

34:30 just to be by myself, and it did the trick. I felt that at the end of the year I was ready to come out of that and move on with my life but I needed all that year to...

What did you mean you withdrew from your social contacts? Your friends?

Yeah my friends and nobody wanted to listen what you had to say anyway. Most people coming back from Vietnam had that experience: that nobody wants to know what went on over there.

35:00 So, I never talked about Vietnam, I never showed them my slides, I never talked about how I felt or

what I was going, excuse me, so I...

You would have been about 26, 27 wouldn't you?

Yeah, I was 27 by the time I came back. Well 27, when I was supposed to have married and didn't and so, I spent the next

35:30 year virtually withdrawn, that's fine. I worked, I worked through it all, I mean I worked at the hospital of course but, and then after a year I was ready to move on and I left the hospital and went on from there, I went overseas then. No I didn't, I spent a year doing something else

36:00 in Melbourne and then I went overseas, but it took a long time and I know there would be lots of people who would say they've never really got past it and I, it's something I can understand as well because it changed you so much that unless you are willing to move on and say that I'm now in a different phase of my life and I'm having different experiences and

36:30 I am ready to evolve into something else then you might not get over it and that I can understand as well. I did come out of it and I did move on...

Have you actually spoken to anyone about your experience in Vietnam?

No, no.

So we're the only people?

Mm. Nobody would listen.

37:00 **You didn't seek counselling?**

No. One didn't in those...I mean that wasn't, counselling wasn't an option in those days. They weren't as readily as people are available here at counselling, you know. I mean, these days it's the done thing you know, you go to counselling. I was never debriefed, I was never...the department, never had any contact with the Department of External Affairs, no

37:30 one, nothing.

So, you just came back and were just thrown into society?

Yes, that's right, absolutely. We came back and in fact most people didn't even know I was back until the day I arrived back, the day I went back to work and no one ever knew I was back and...no. department, the government department or anything ever contacted you, contacted me and said, "Welcome back," or "How was it?" No, and my people would say at the hospital, said

38:00 to me, "Oh, it's nice to see you back," and the thing was, you know what you got was, "Now, let me tell you about my cat that jumped over the fence last week," you know, they are kind of...Nobody really wanted to know, so you learn very quickly, and I think other people have that idea, had that experience too. You learn very quickly not to say anything and I think a lot of Vietnam vets [veterans]

38:30 have that experience.

Yeah, yeah. Not just Vietnam vets, all vets.

Yes, but vets anyway...

Yeah, well okay that's good...

Tape 9

00:36 **I want to ask you about your, when you came back how your experiences affected your relationships?**

Yeah.

Like you know, it must be difficult for a woman, men tend to internalise...when a lot of war veterans came back, they wouldn't talk about it, only talk about it with their mates, but your, curiously your situation in Vietnam...I suppose

01:00 **I get the impression that you didn't form the type of mateships that soldiers would have?**

No, no we didn't, and I think that's because they were in a very different position than we were, the soldiers were in a different position. They were in a position where they had to depend on one another for their very lives so they formed such deep bonds, which is very different to what we had to do. Very different but mostly different to what we

01:30 had. We formed a bond but it was a professional bond really more than anything else.

Okay.

Whereas I think they would have formed a different kind of bond and that strengthened them together because they know they could depend on each other for their very lives, but it's still different to one we had but I talk to myself a lot so, all the time I have internalised

02:00 Vietnam, but in the sense that I can see the truth of what I saw and I'm not afraid of speaking about it if I have to, but I just don't talk about it to many people, that's all. But you know it's not I don't wish to talk about it, it's only because people on the whole can't hear what I have to say, which...

Yeah.

which is a different thing from not wanting to listen, but it's just they can't hear what I have to say.

02:30 I don't really blame them for that, but you know, that's the way it is. My parents were a little bit different. They'd been through one war, and while they heard a few of the things I had to say, I didn't really burden them too much with that.

Were they curious about your experiences, did they ask you?

They were to a certain extent but not to the full extent, not to fully hearing everything that I went through, no. And I didn't put them through that at all because

03:00 I understood what my father went through in his war and my mother through hers, and I thought, "No, I'll leave the rest," but I told them various things. Enough to satisfy them and that was it, and they were quite happy to leave it there and I was happy to leave it there for them. So it was for their sake that I, and as for anybody else well, leave it be. I have the experience and I can and...

Did you become a quieter person

03:30 **as a result of this experience?**

I've always been a quiet person but yes I did, yes.

More inward, more insular?

More inward, absolutely. Perhaps not insular certainly, no, I wouldn't say insular, but I became more inclusive, which is my way of saying I accept a lot more people into my conscious so to speak.

So you were willing to make friends, you were willing to engage...?

Oh yes and I still do in my, in

04:00 my travels I have, in my work I have but there are areas of my life that I keep silent and private about and most of these experiences, which very few people would understand, I don't talk about openly, no I don't.

Now understand your parents and your boyfriend, how did it affect you,

04:30 **I mean, you said you became a more inclusive person, now I gather that would have taken some time to sort out?**

Oh definitely you don't - revelation doesn't happen in one huge bit. It happens little bits at a time, so yes, I didn't realise a lot of these things till a few years later.

Few years, okay.

I started realising certain things at different times, sometimes...yeah, look, I've learnt that and I've included that in my consciousness and

05:00 you know, I've learnt and I've grown, yeah.

Because you said to me that when you came back, you sort of like wanted to stay away from your social contacts?

Absolutely, for about a year I did.

Yeah, but then after that you started to get back into it...?

I got back into that and I got back into other work. I took a different direction and then that took me overseas and that took me in another different direction so, it's taken me...it takes me in different directions every time I change so...

05:30 **So you went to London, did you?**

I went to London, yes.

How long after Vietnam?

Well, I came back from Vietnam in '69 and I went to London about 18 months later, so I went in the

beginning of summer in 1972 I went to London.

Why did you choose to go to London?

(a) because I had some family over there and (b) I wanted a holiday overseas and (c) because I,

06:00 having been born in Holland, I wanted to have an extended visit to Europe and see some extended family and once I was there, I found a job that I liked which was at the children's hospital in London and I loved it so much, I was there for 7 years or nearly 8 years, and it was really a fantastic job and it took me up the ladder of success so to speak, and I became,

06:30 head administrator for all the suitors through all the hospital, so it was really something I enjoyed doing until ill health stopped me in my tracks, so that's when I stopped. I was forced to stop and I stopped.

How did you find that as a result of the experience in Vietnam, if you went 18 months after to London,

07:00 **you would have obviously socialised with other men and had boyfriends or whatever, how did you find your ability to relate to other people, well in London since you were there for 7 years?**

I was and I had, in fact during my London period I had a long-term relationship for all that time so, you know, it wasn't as if I didn't have one, I did and it was just one.

For the seven years?

Yeah.

07:30 **Alright.**

And then that broke up when I became ill, so that sort of was for another reason why that broke up and then I came back home back to Australia. So my relationship, well, I wasn't gregarious. I've never been gregarious but I

08:00 had a long-term relationship over there for 7 years and then I came back here.

How did you find your ability to relate with him? I mean, why was he ever able to relate to you after you'd had these experiences because you surely needed that sort of lifestyle?

I did, and it was a very strange, well it wasn't strange, it was almost as if

08:30 it was that relationship that I needed at that particular time. It was a steady relationship that wasn't all personal because we had a professional relationship as well. So it was a mixture of the two and we made the two together and I think that's what I needed to be able to do and it was a total involvement in both of them that I needed to do at that time

09:00 and it was very good for me actually. I'm not sure that I would have been able to have a long-term relationship without being involved on a professional level as well, at the same stage rather.

In the same professions?

Mm.

Why do you say that?

Because it allowed me to share on both levels

09:30 and I found that a very satisfying way to share. I mean I'm not saying, "I couldn't have done both." Perhaps I should have said it, it was a satisfaction that really was total for me because I had it both ways, I had both the professional and the personal level involvement, and it was full on both sides

10:00 so it was a great relationship from that point of view for me and just what I needed at the time when I went to England. After all that, you know having been sort of withdrawn for a few years since Vietnam, that was just what I needed at that time.

So can I ask you or can you tell us, was Vietnam a defining point in your life?

Yes, definitely.

10:30 I don't think it's been the only one.

Sure.

But it's been one where I became conscious of the meaning of what life means to me and the purpose of what my life is about. Now I have a belief that each life has a purpose to it, a certain purpose to it, a particular purpose or a particular path that you walk

11:00 during your life. Now that is something I believe, it's not everybody's way of believing in things but I became aware of that purpose, of that particular life's purpose which my life was about while I was, not while, yes partly while I was in Vietnam and certainly when I became conscious of all these things and it

all came together from Vietnam

11:30 onwards, so Vietnam played rather a large part in all of that. Me becoming conscious of it, anyway.

So when you came back from London, obviously London played an influencing role?

Absolutely that was another one, yes that's right.

You've got your minis and your majors and...?

Well, that's right. And they are all part of the journey for me, so there is no stopping that journey. Or there's no saying, "This is where the journey stops,"

12:00 or, "This is where the meaning stops." So yes, London was another one that was the next step in that particular journey and after that, when I came back home, that's when the rest of it started you see and that's where the next step in the journey began and it surely did, believe me.

So when you came back from London to Australia were you contemplating, you said

12:30 **becoming a sort of chaplain...?**

Yes, I did.

Immediately after?

I was, I came back in the end of '69...ah...the end of '89...ah...end of '79. I had a year off, I spent a year at university and at the end of '82 yes, I started so I had two years off, that's true and that's when I started

13:00 to...no, I went to university first of all for a year and then I decided I wasn't going to carry that on, and that's when I started my practical training as a chaplain, at the end of 1982.

Yeah, what made you do that, that's...Was it because of your condition?

Because...? No, because I felt that this was part of the journey that I wanted to travel and this is what had meaning for me and I liked to...whereas

13:30 in my nursing career I was taking care of people physically and this way I was taking care of people mentally and spiritually, and this is what I felt very, it had meaning for me and I was in a position to help these people not only by my life experiences but also by the experiences I had in Vietnam, by the experiences I've had with my health and I felt that I would be able to help

14:00 some of them maybe and so I trained to be a chaplain and I became a Uniting Church chaplain then for the next 10 years at the mental hospital.

And Mont Park became...?

And Mont Park became my home, it became my home, yes.

So you got a lot of pleasure from working there?

Absolutely, yes I did. It was both, again it was a haven for many people who had the need to have a place where they

14:30 could just withdraw and even though they might have had a psychiatric illness, no matter what, they had a place to be outside the hullabaloo of life as they call it, so they need a place of respite from the world and I've never agreed with,

15:00 with the government's decision to close that place because I don't think a lot of these people are anyway served by putting them out in the community and making them cope with it all.

I think yeah, I've come across that myself. They've just been there too long.

Not that anyone should be institutionalised for long, for too long, it's just that being out in the community isn't always the best place for some of these people to be and I'm

15:30 of...

They'd find it very difficult to cope, they need our support.

Absolutely and so does everybody else as well too you know. It's not as, I mean they encounter so much trouble within themselves let alone from the outside world and other people that you can't cope with them.

Can I ask you now, where do you see your journey going now, today?

I really don't know, and my journey has forever been, I don't know what my next step

16:00 is and that there will be a next step? That I can assure you, there will be. I retired after Mont Park of

course and I have been fighting my battles with my health. My ember seems to be burning itself out, so my neurologist tells me, but I have other health problems so I think the next

16:30 problem, well not, the next step will be living quietly until the day I die and I'm quite happy to do that, and I'm in a place where I've got lots of people around me who can do with my help and my presence, my help and presence around here, not that I work here officially but, or do anything but,

17:00 I'm just a presence around the place.

Do you feel that life has gone very quickly?

Absolutely yes. But in many ways, time is a...the sense of time is an illusion because you know, one hour can be like 100 years sometimes but yes, it has gone very quickly. I mean I'm 60

17:30 years old and I don't know where those 60 years have gone, but I'm very happy to be where I am, let's put it that way.

I've got one more question for you, this is on a personal note, do you feel that whatever your goals have been since your youth and throughout your life do you feel like the questions you wanted to answer you thought you would have had answered by the time you were 60 or 70 whatever, do you

18:00 **sort of feel you're in a similar place, like you've come full circle?**

That's what life is about. Life is a spiral and a circle and I have come full circle, but I've come to a place where I know better than where I did before. Yes, I have come full circle but life is, it's not, life is what it is. It's not a place you actually arrive at. I mean, life is a journey so the journey is

18:30 what matters for me and the journey keeps going round and round.

But what about it's meaning?

It's?

Have you come to any different conclusion in its meaning?

But it's meaning changes as life goes on. I mean the meaning is what you make it. What you make of your life is what you make of it. It isn't what other people say is the meaning of your life it's what you make the meaning of your life and that's what matters, not anybody else's meaning so what

19:00 it means to me and my life and where I've come to is what it is and there couldn't be any other meaning than that one and it doesn't matter what somebody else says I mean sure, they may see other things but that doesn't make any difference to what I see or the meaning of my life to be and it's, I'm content to be where

19:30 I am and I'm happy to have lived that life and walked that road and to be where I am now and to just tread the next path when it comes and take the next footstep when it comes. I'm quite happy to be there. I don't know whether you understand any of the things I say but however, that's just maybe.

I understand some of it; I think it's very interesting?

I am

20:00 content. That's what I am, right now. It's not been an easy life but then, whose hasn't. Life, it doesn't matter whether it's easy or not it's how you've lived it, how you live it is what's important to me and to love your fellow man and to treat him with respect and I hope I've done that most of my life.

20:30 **I think I might...Okay, this is a bit of a grab bag of questions that have occurred to me as we've been going through...**

Of course, yes. I saw you scribbling...

I'm going to take you right back now actually, I'm just wondering exactly why didn't your parents

21:00 **approve of your boyfriend?**

He was married and my parents would never have agreed with that.

Oh, okay.

He wasn't married at, he was divorced, let's put it that way and my parent's at that stage didn't agree with divorce so they wouldn't have agreed to my marrying a divorced man. Just like they would not agree for me to marry a Catholic or anything like that, that's why they objected so much

21:30 to me.

Did they know him personally?

Yes they did, and they liked him well until they knew that he was divorced.

Okay.

Which they didn't know at the time and he hadn't told us, I mean I knew but he hadn't told my...so they really reacted rather...I expected them to do that, but to react so

22:00 vocally, but as I said, they hadn't learnt to look beyond their fairly narrow confines at that particular time. Later on my own brother divorced a couple of times, so you know, they learnt to accept that people, these things happen in modern life.

So they had an old-fashioned morality and it took a while to change?

It

22:30 took a long time for them to come to terms with some of those things.

So I mean you say you expected them to have a strong reaction but you didn't expect them to react quite as strongly as they did?

No, no I did not expect them to say, "You are to give him up or we don't see you again." I did not expect them to do that and that's why I reacted, too. To that I said. "Well alright, if that's your wish and if that's what

23:00 you're going to do then there you go. You choose and I choose my way."

And what came from that?

In the end, oh, what was I going to say? The relationship is the word, the relationship broke

23:30 up anyway, but that wasn't what broke it. It was a couple of years later that they just thought I should have listened to them anyway and in the end, I said, "Look this is ridiculous," and I got in contact with them and said, "Is this what you want to have for the next 50 years?" and it was just me making the first approach saying, "Look, let's resolve this." But then

24:00 we started to talk and we came back together again, but I had to make the first sacrifice so to speak to say, "Let's resolve this and let's not be stubborn about this."

Okay and so you were more or less

24:30 **engaged while you were in Vietnam, what was it like (a) for yourself and (b) for him to be away on the other side of the world, how did you cope?**

That's what went through my mind. I often wondered how much that had to do with some of the ways I thought at the time. It was very difficult for him, I could see that because

25:00 one of the things that I decided against marrying him anyway was he, again like my parents had a very 'small backyard' way of looking at things because before I went to Vietnam, he said to me, "Why do you want to go over there when there's lots of things to do over here. You could work anywhere in the world, why should you want to go to Vietnam?" and

25:30 that in a way I suppose was a valid question. You know, "Why do you want to go to war". I just knew that's where I wanted to go, but it was not something that he could accept and while I was in Vietnam he kept saying, you know, I asked him to help with certain things because he was in with a company that could help with paint to paint cots for the kids and little cots and beds

26:00 and things, and he said, "No, I won't do those kind of things," and so I found it very difficult then to relate to him on a way of "I like to help people and I can't understand your wish not to help people" and found it increasingly difficult then to look at him in the way that I look at people,

26:30 and what I like, and how I like to help people, and I found it difficult to come to terms with and in the end, that was part of why I broke it up as well as other things as well.

Do you think, I mean did he, was it because he had some kind of moral objection to what you were doing or was he just kind of spiteful that you'd gone somewhere else?

I don't think he was spiteful. I would think he was just...

Resentful may be?

27:00 Not even resentful. I think he was just a person who had just not grown beyond his own 'backyard' or to look at things 'beyond his backyard'. I mean, this is what I mean by inclusiveness, you learn to include other people and other cultures within your own consciousness and he had not learnt to do that that's all and then he became resentful that I should want to help people who were not of his own ilk, who were not of his own religion, who were not of, and race

27:30 and that I found difficult to marry with and then I found that difficult within myself and saying, "Well, can I live with somebody like this?" because that would really drive me nuts. You know, I mean I could I

understand he was who he was but on the other hand, I had to live with him and I find that difficult, I'm sorry, or I found that difficult to say to myself, "Well maybe this is not the

28:00 right person for me to be spending the rest of my life with."

Were you worried about him being at home here alone?

No.

No? Was he worried about you?

I don't know, I never thought of that. I think he probably was. I think from a personal point of view that I, you know I might have been hurt but if,

28:30 if anything, you just triggered my mind about something then, it was just something he wrote one day and I don't know why it comes up now but something about "...with so many men around, you might meet someone else," or something, so I think that might have been on his mind and that might have been something, that might have stirred some of his resentment or might have stirred some of his worrying about me or wondering

29:00 about me whether I might have met someone else or yeah, that's true.

So, this is a strange question, but I wonder about treating Vietnamese patients, a lot of them would have been pretty unused to dealing with white people, did they have a hard time being treated by a white nurse?

Absolutely.

Yeah?

Absolutely and

29:30 they, half the time they couldn't understand why we were doing what we were doing and why we were doing it, but I guess in many ways when I was in the operating theatre that didn't apply because they were unconscious, and it was only when they came out of the anaesthetic and into the recovery room and then you had the recovery room nurses and they had to deal with it, but I know a lot of patients...they had a very different way of

30:00 coming out of recovery and we didn't have the food to feed them, so the patient's family would bring in the food to feed them and very often it would be youngsters, their children who would come in and feed them food, you know, when they were in hospital. They would sleep underneath the beds these kids, they would get up in the middle of the night, get them bed pans, get them whatever,

30:30 they would wash them in the morning and they would feed them. They would do all the things that... we just didn't have the staff or provisions to do anything for them, and there were times that they didn't understand why we would do certain things for him. Yes, they had a different way of looking at life and their recovery but most of the times

31:00 they were very grateful for what you did, but not all of them were of course but, most of the time they were.

So they totally expected to do everything themselves did they?

Yes, they did.

Any small thing that you might do, they would kind of suffice?

Yes, absolutely, yes and especially, these kids were amazing you know. You had 4 or 5 year olds doing all these things for their parents and that's what I mean about these kids being just so amazing because this is what they expect of their kids to do for them and they

31:30 work.

You spoke a bit about napalm victims?

Mm.

You said you didn't see many?

No.

How many do you think?

Probably no more than 4 or 5 at the most because they always had to come in a long way from where they were.

So most would have ended up in military hospitals probably?

Yes or they would have expired. They would have, you know, died

32:00 before they got to us. We went, there were 3 teams in Vietnam, but I'm not quite sure where the other one... one was in Vung Tau, one was in Bien Hoa and one was up north a bit, and some of them might have gone there as well or, but we didn't see a great deal of it, no. It was horrific what we did see. It was something that you don't forget but a lot of them wouldn't have survived

32:30 because it was so painful that I don't think anybody could stand it.

You spoke about your work in the leper colony?

Mm.

What exactly were you doing for them?

Well, the only thing we could do was to clean up their wounds, to debride them which means we just clean them up and dig holes in them so that they wouldn't... You see with leprosy, it

33:00 just slowly eats away and you need to just keep cleaning it out otherwise it just keeps separating and pus keeps pouring out, or those sort of digits that were no longer used or had any function, you would have to amputate the toes. It starts at the extremities like the toes and the fingers and the hands or you would, the surgeon would

33:30 just operate because some of these would become like this because the tendons are like that and would just contract and he would just release some of these tendons and just straighten out these fingers so they would become at least a little bit useful to the patient, still, but there wasn't very much that you could do for them, but that's what we would do and that's why we could fit in 3 or 4 or 5 in the morning

34:00 in the time that we had to be able to do some of these things.

Now was this in Viet Cong territory?

Yes within the area that they controlled, and it was just that driving there was just too dangerous so we had to be flown in by the helicopter, but it was, yeah, Viet Cong country, yes. I can't remember how far away it was but it

34:30 wasn't very far, about half an hour by helicopter I suppose but it was such a lovely place.

Yeah, why do you say it was so serene and beautiful?

It was serene and also the whole gardens were laid out in the French style and it had beautiful gardens and they kept up the gardens, and not only was it physically serene, but there was also something serene about the spirit of the whole place, whether it was the patients

35:00 or whether it was, I don't know what it was, but there was something very tranquil about the whole place.

I guess the isolation may have...?

Yes, that's also the fact and the Viet Cong had left it mostly alone. I think they only came in and raided the stores a bit. I don't think they really destroyed any other... not at that stage anyway, you know they hadn't destroyed any of it so,

35:30 but to me, there was a tranquillity that I think one would be surprised.

Well I guess it's my last question and it's not really a question but I'd like to hand it over to you and this being an archive that's hopefully going to last for over 100 years going down to all generations of future Australians, is there a message that you would like to embark to them

36:00 **or anything more you'd like to say or just something you'd like to say about your experience and something for future generations?**

I think it's not just something that Vietnam taught me, but it partly, Vietnam brought it to my attention or brought to my consciousness is we talked a little bit about the futility of aggression and the conflicts

36:30 that rage in the wars in the world and may be at a future date when we learn to live alongside one another whether it's a white person, a black person or whatever you believe in Christianity or Buddhism or whatever, if we learn to do that then may be we can avoid some of these conflicts that create such pain and such havoc to people because I

37:00 think everybody, every person in the world deserves to be not only free but to be able to live alongside in harmony and I have a very strong feeling this world is supposed to be a world of love and harmony and not of conflict and hatred, and we waste so much time

37:30 and so much energy in doing all of that you know. Hopefully in time to come, 100 years time may be, maybe we've got a little bit further along the path of life to say, "Look, let's work very hard towards this and that we learn to live with one another." Perhaps that's my main message that I'd like to pass on.

That's great, thank you.

