Australians at War Film Archive

James Cruickshank (Jim) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:43 Well, I was baptised Andrew James Cruickshank, born on the 24th of March 1929, in Glasgow, Scotland, where my father at the time was a policeman with the northern division of the Glasgow Police Force. And I was

01:00 born at Mary Hill, which was not then a very salubrious suburb, but presently is. What else do you want me to say?

What are your earliest memories of childhood and growing up there?

Well my earliest memories of childhood in Mary Hill were of sheer tenement buildings really, and Glasgow in those days was a rather smoky, dirty place – I thought anyway –

01:30 and one of my earliest memories in Mary Hill is being taken shopping by my mother, and seeing a person on a motorbike knocked down and killed. Mum was very keen to shepherd me away from that, but I had a good look anyway. But we were there for – I suppose – two or three, no four years in all. There were two other siblings born in Mary Hill, and then we shifted to another side of Glasgow, to a place called

02:00 Carntyne where my father had been shifted in the police force, and that's where I started school at the age of four.

What did you think of school?

Oh, I thought it was great then, yeah. I recollect being taken by an older girl. Probably I was four, she would have been about six, I suppose. Taken by the hand and taken to the school. It was great fun.

02:30 But as a family we shifted very often, because of my father's employment, and we finished up going to a place called Moss Park, not far from where the Empire Exhibition was held in 1938. And we were there when my father was somebody dismissed from the police force, because he had given to a friend of his privileged information, which assisted this person in a court case.

03:00 And we as kids then all shifted up to the very north of Scotland with our grandparents, whilst mother and father got back into the real workforce. And we stayed in a place called Lybster in Caithness for about five or six months with my mother's parents, Ma and Pa Clarke, who were both from… Ma Clarke had been born in Wick in Caithness anyway,

03:30 Pa Clarke was from Inverness Shire. So they were well-versed in the north. We were there for five or six months, and then Mum and Dad came north and brought us back to Glasgow, and that would have been 1937, yeah 37. And we then shifted into an apartment in Pollokshields, which was quite a nice suburb in Glasgow: in fact, just across the road from where we were was the

04:00 Public Library and I was an avid reader, so that was great. And we stayed there right until the commencement of the Second World War, and my father having been alerted to the fact that war was imminent, piled us all into the car one day and drove north to Huntly in Aberdeenshire where his father lived, a widower. He lived with his

04:30 elderly sister Bella, Annabella by name, a vinegary lady, and we were taken there because it was thought that the Germans would start bombing all the industrial areas straight away. And we were there for, I suppose, three months, and as bombing had not eventuated we were taken back to Glasgow again and resumed school.

Can I just ask you – we've spoken to a few people who grew up in England and they said that

05:00 **when they were at school at that time they were actually being warned, you know taught in school about Hitler and what he was up to and can you recall anything like that at school?**

No, I don't, and in fact what I do recollect was that when Hitler invaded Czech [Czechoslovakia], our

next door neighbour, the lady, broke down and cried, obviously she could remember well the First World War, and she knew that the second was imminent. But for we kids there was a great sense of excitement –

05:30 you know – what's going to happen next? Returning to Glasgow, we went back to school. Obviously but not every day, and not for complete days, because the army and the fire service and so on and so forth had occupied most of the school. So you might go to school or indeed to a teacher's house for half a day each day, so that was great too for we kids.

06:00 Bombing did take place but mainly in the Clydebank area and the centre of Glasgow and this was another source of excitement for we kids – the next morning we'd be out there looking for bits of shrapnel and portions of barrage balloons which had been shot down and so on and so forth. But probably around 1941, my mother made the

06:30 determination that we should be sent to Canada, we siblings, we children –all bar the last sibling who had only just recently been born in 1940 – to our uncle and aunt who lived in Alberta. Now this uncle and aunt, Jess and Kate Bigelow, had been visiting with us in 1939 in fact, had come across from Canada, he Jess was a Canadian, but Kate was my mother's elder sister.

07:00 And they brought with them their two children, David and Doreen, who were about our – my age – and they had nicked off back to Canada as war was imminent on the SS Athenia, which you may or may not have heard of – the Athenia was torpedoed off the north coast of Ireland on the third of September, you know the day war was declared – boomp! – down she went, and Uncle Jess

07:30 for a brief period of time was quite a hero, because he not only saved his own children from between decks as the ship foundered, but saved his wife, then dived over the side of the ship and saved the chief stewardess who was about to drown. She was on her last trip. So, he was a great hero for a while, but anyway, we were going there and we'd had out inoculations and so on and so forth and then, you may recollect that recently on

08:00 the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] there was a program about an evacuee ship being torpedoed in the mid-Atlantic with a loss of great life. When that happened, Mum said, "Well that's it. If you're going to die you'll do it, die beside me in Glasgow." And that was the end of that trip, but she became quite ill and we, the three elder people, who was myself: I was the oldest, and my brother Allan, sister Irene, and

08:30 brother Bill, were all evacuated to a place up in Perthshire to escape the bombing and so on and get away from Mum's ill-health. And we were there for quite some time, in what was termed a boarding school. It was a large estate, having being taken over by the Queensland, sorry the Scottish Education Department. Balgowan was the name of the place, not that far from Methven

09:00 which is turn is not all that far from Perth. In fact they lie, Methven lies between Perth and Crieff in Perthshire and we were there for – oh for a long time – and we used to go to primary school in Methven, and then latterly to senior primary school at Balhousie Boys' School in Perthshire, in Perth. We were there for some time and eventually the youngest of the family,

09:30 Bill, became very homesick. So I hatched a fiendish plot, saved up our pocket money which my father had been sending to me each week, and one day I just took the other two boys up to the bus stop, not far away from the house, and got on the bus back to Glasgow and that was it. May I intervene here and say that sister Irene, at this point, had been shifted to another boarding school which was all girls,

10:00 she wasn't involved in this fleeing the scene. Well obviously, this wasn't received with great heart by our parents, although we were left there for a while and then we were re-evacuated to another place, further away this time, in Argyllshire, Loch Geer by name. Now this whole thing, all this evacuation would have taken place over a period of, I guess, two and a half years,

10:30 I can't recollect exactly. But Loch Geer was entirely different, that was a boarding school there was no two-ways about it. You lived there, ate there and were instructed there, and I did very well actually, in fact, I think we all did. But once again young Bill wanted home to Mum. So I hatched a plot, I'd torn a page out of an atlas and I considered

11:00 my position. I thought that the easiest way to get to Glasgow was, you see Loch Geer is part of Loch Fyne the larger Loch, I thought if we just constructed a raft we could nick across Loch Fyne to the other side and over the mountains to Glasgow, and yet to a schoolboy it looked easy. So we constructed a raft because not far from where we were the royal navy was preparing for the second landing, you see that landing craft.

11:30 And there were all sorts of oil drums and things, so we pinched a few of these and some rope and some timber and we, over a period of time, lashed this raft together. Now may I add that no-one had observed this, none of the teachers had. One day we decided to give it a bit of a trial run so we got on board three or four of us and we pulled out and the whole thing fell apart so that probably saved a mass drowning.

12:00 So back to square one, I saved the money up back up to the road and we took the bus to Glasgow. And my mother in particular just didn't have the heart to send us back, so we stayed in Glasgow, my father found a nice home at Cath, Clarkson rather, in the Cathcart region and we were there until at the age of

fourteen I went to work.

What sort of work was your Dad doing at this stage?

12:30 My father had been rescued, if you like, and he was – at this point – he was the assistant transport manager for Croft Body Building Company, which was an adjunct to Beattie's Bakeries which was of the largest baking concerns in, certainly in Scotland, and in the United Kingdom. Latterly purchased by J. Arthur Rank of film fame, you probably have heard of him.

13:00 So he was with Croft Body Building, and then after a while, he became the transport manager for Beattie's Bakeries itself, which extended right across the country. I went to work with a shipping company as a clerk, J.V. Watson and Company, Bothwell Street in Glasgow, and at the age of fourteen and this, well fourteen, that's 1943.

13:30 And I was there for about 18 months and I, you just wouldn't believe the sorts of things that one had to do, because all the adults were of course in the forces, or in prescribed occupations elsewhere. I'd be given these tasks to go down to the docks and get bills of lading from the skipper, from the chief engineer, and the chief officer.

14:00 And take these bills of lading then to the Ministry of War Transport, to a crusty old captain who would either sanction them or delete and make additions and so on and so forth. And then have them processed. And on one occasion, I would only have been fifteen I suppose at the time, was sent across to Edinburgh which I thought was a huge trip. We've been back since, it's only about sixty miles away from Glasgow but at the time it was a big trip. I stayed with my uncle and aunt,

14:30 he was bandmaster with the King's Own Scottish Borderers and was based in Edinburgh at the time. And went down to Leith docks and did the same thing there, bills of lading and so on and so forth. But after a while, I got tired of this indoor work and I secured a job at a nearby farm. May I add, we were living outside Glasgow at this point, in a village called Eaglesham, in Renfrewshire, more for my mother's health than for anything else.

15:00 And I secured employment at this farm, where we raised pigs and got very smelly – and was held in very low regard by the family generally – and then my mother got very, very ill and was sent north to my paternal grandfather's place. At this point I had left the farm, and secured a position with the Scottish Forestry Commission

15:30 as a trainee and was up in Stirlingshire working there as a trainee. Eventually I would have gone to Fort William, to the forestry school, but shortly afterwards my mother died and my father sadly took up with his secretary. I was then seventeen, I secured his permission and joined the Royal Marines. And after eighteen

16:00 months training, I was appointed to HMS Liverpool, a city class cruiser, and went off to the Mediterranean fleet. Now whilst I was serving out there, over a period of two years, my father had married his secretary who was only about eight years older than myself, a very attractive lady but we didn't see eye to eye, and he decided that he would

16:30 take a sea voyage, so he and his wife Frances, and my youngest brother Douglas – who was born in 1940 so this is forty-nine I'm taking about – they come out to Australia first to have a bit of a look see. And if this wasn't satisfactory out here, he was going to go back to Canada where he had lived as a young man after the First World War. But he secured a position in Sydney with a firm called

17:00 RG Hill and Company at Artarmon, real estate agents, and he worked for them for a long, long while until he in turn started his own real estate firm, which was very well known actually, and may still be in the telephone directory – Cruickshank and Company of Wahroonga in Sydney. But he's since passed on, as has my stepmother.

17:30 I'm racing ahead of myself here, in forty-nine he came out with his little family and I decided that I'd try and join them. I couldn't see the point of my staying in the Royal Marines and going home to the UK [United Kingdom] to no-one. So I applied for a transfer to the Royal Australian Navy, in fact, being a marine. And the Royal Australian Navy were not interested in ex-Royal Marines, they were after stokers and seamen and so on and so forth

18:00 so they suggested that I – that the Royal Marines – that I try the Australian regular army, which were then recruiting in the UK and this I did with the sanction of the flag officer who was on board our ship – Viscount Mountbatten – he sanctioned my transfer and that was okayed and in 1950,

18:30 our commission in the Mediterranean fleet had finished anyway. So we shifted back to the UK and I came out here.

Can we go back a bit and just ask you about the basic training you did in the marines? What that involved?

Very involved – in those days there were what they termed three grand divisions, Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth. Since then they've disappeared, but in those days the Royal Marines numbered

19:00 about 25,000 which was more than the strength of the of whole regular army here in Australia. I

enlisted on the 8th October, 1946 and was posted then to Deal in Kent which was the Royal Marine training centre and we were there for six months, and we did things like drill, and basic rifle work, and basic field craft, and gym work,

19:30 and they were taught to swim and all these other things over a period of six months – very, very strenuous, particularly for those who weren't used to it. Then after a time, we then shifted down to Bickley, sorry to Lympstone in Devonshire to the infantry training centre of the Royal Marines and we were there for another period of five months or so and we did advanced field craft training and we trained in

20:00 all the infantry weapons: navigation, nuclear, biological and chemical warfare, and more muscle toughening and digging holes in the ground and all sorts of things. Then after that period of time we went down to Bickley, again in Devon, not far from Plymouth to the

20:30 Royal Marine Commando Training Centre and we spent a month there. And I think the objective there was to separate those they considered were right to go to the Commando Brigade after further training, and those who should go to sea. Well luckily I went to sea. But after that month we then went to our grand division, which in my case was Portsmouth, to the Royal Marine barracks at Southsea [Eastney Barracks],

21:00 just outside Portsmouth itself. Where we were trained: firstly we went to HMS Vernon II which, in fact, was the old HMS Ramillies, the old battleship from the First and the Second World War. We went on board HMS Vernon II and we trained there in seamanship: rowing whalers and cutters, and tying knots and answering the bosun's call and listening to bugle calls and

21:30 God knows what. And then back to the barracks at Southsea, where we did Naval gunnery training on…. You'll have to stop. I'll have to refer to… We went back to Eastney Barracks for the naval gunnery phase which was conducted at, sorry, which was conducted at Whale Island we went there by bus or truck each day

22:00 and we were trained in the 6-inch armament, 4-inch and in the Beaufighters, pom-pom type guns. We did live firing out at sea on a couple of destroyers, and for the anti-aircraft weapons, we did that out at Fort Cumberland, not far from Eastney Barracks and that was it, and that took a total of almost eighteen months, the whole training,

22:30 at which point we were posted almost all of us to HMS Liverpool, then lying in Chatham awaiting commissioning to go out to the Mediterranean. So up to Chatham we went, and became part of the ship's company. Did a bit more training, very low key training, and then we sailed out to the Med [Mediterranean], and we were out there for a couple of years. Now when we first went, there we were the flagship,

23:00 Liverpool was the flagship for the whole of the fleet, and the Admiral was Sir Arthur Power: he flew his flag from the ship. Later he transferred to the Newcastle and we got Viscount Mountbatten, who had just returned from India as the last Vice-Roy. And because he was on board, we went everywhere that mattered: Greece, Italy, France…excuse me.

23:30 Nothing's free, is it? Where were we?

Once you were travelling around the world seeing all the sights….

Well in fact, I've got a map in there, that shows exactly where we went. But we went everywhere: we went to Egypt, and beat retreat for King Farouk on the wharf at Alexandria: we went down the Suez Canal to the Bitter Lakes, and those days

24:00 now I'm talking I went to Liverpool in what 1948, and in 1948 down in the Bitter Lakes in Egypt there were still literally thousands and thousands of German prisoners of war captured in the Africa Corps. They couldn't be sent anywhere, because the Russians had occupied half of Germany and the other half

24:30 occupied by the Americans and the Brits and the French and so on. Wasn't a very fit state for even dogs to live in. So they were kept there for a long while, and in fact our military police, British, used to patrol with two of the African Corps Military Police, you know, to make sure that there were no problems. So we went down, that was in the Bitter Lakes and then later we went

25:00 to Greece with Mountbatten because he was related to the King of Greece. And we, the King, and the Queen of the Hellenes, came aboard the ship and because of this, we had the Royal Marines under the ship searching for booby traps and God knows what because at the time, there was a civil war in Greece. The communists versus the royalists. And in fact when King and Queen came down from Athens to Piraeus to visit

25:30 they came down in a flying Phalanx, you know the royal car, preceded by armoured cars and like a travelling arrow – other vehicles behind armed to the teeth and almost shoulder to shoulder military and police on both sides of the road all the way from Athens to Piraeus. We went to Italy, we went to the south of

26:00 France where we were taken to the Italian Riviera. We were off shore, a group of us were landed on at

Mentone in the Italian Riviera and told to make our way to Villefranche. No money and no rations. Just make your own way there. So we, there were six of us, we landed and we just took off and we were passing

26:30 this vineyard still in the Italian Riviera, and there were a heap of fellows, you know, gathering the grapes for the wine, and one of them waved to us and said, “G’day Jock!” – or something like that – he had been an Italian prisoner of war, so he came down and fed us with the grapes obviously, stuck us in the back of his truck and took us up to the French border which we slipped across and then, we had money actually – we weren’t supposed to have – we

27:00 thumbed a lift to Villefranche, we were there before the ship, so nicely ensconced in a pub drinking the vin rouge and so on and so forth, great stuff. We travelled extensively right across North Africa, Libya, Tunisia, Tripolitania, Algiers, Tangiers

27:30 which was then a tripartite town, the French and a couple of other nations controlled it – I don’t know why but very similarly in the north of Italy, there was confusion between the Yugoslavs and the Italians over who should own Trieste and that too was tripartite, well they sorted the thing out. We went to Capri,

28:00 and that was a wonderful trip, got into the Blue Grotto underneath. Gibraltar, the number of places we’ve been to. In the south of France once, we were in Marseilles and… Stop. May I stop? I’ve got to check this, it’s not Marseilles, it’s either Toulon…

28:30 It wasn’t Marseilles, it might have been Toulon I think. Anyway, we had shore leave and we all come back on board the vessel and we sailed minus one member of the crew, this fellow just hadn’t turned up, and obviously it was thought that he had found an affaire de coeur: he had got off somewhere but that wasn’t true. He’d been done in, he’d been murdered. They found his body floating in the harbour and

29:00 out at sea going, I think we were heading towards Gibraltar in fact, and I can remember they had an auction of his personal belongings up on the fo’c’sle, with people bidding astronomical sums of money for these paltry bits and pieces to send on to his family and that was the way things were done in those days. Right where are we?

At that stage you’d become a bit of a world traveller, what were your thoughts on Australia, did you know anything about it?

29:30 I didn’t know anything about it at all. In fact, I’ll tell you something about Australia shortly. I had attained, I had been sent ashore in Malta to do an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] course, there were three or four of us, and Norman Chaplin with whom I still correspond. In fact, Norman left the Marines and became in many later years a regional Managing Director for Bass Breweries in the UK so he

30:00 did all right for himself. Norman Chaplin, Ginger Jennings and I went ashore and a fellow by the name of Hill to do this NCO course at a place called Ghajn Tuffieha in Malta, which was the Royal Marine Training Centre and I qualified, we all qualified and we were all eventually promoted. So that was a different kettle of fish on board ship, I was now an NCO, so I had responsibilities and what they used to do was change your employment

30:30 every three months or so, sometimes for longer periods. But I was a corporal of the turret at one stage of the game, and I had the Royal Marine turret to look after, maintenance and all that jazz. With a small group of fellows. On another occasion I was the corporal of the gangway which meant at sea I’d be up near the bridge somewhere, in harbour at the gangway with officer of the watch and other staff.

31:00 On another occasion I was corporal of the guard, which meant turning up each morning with a small guard and saluting at the flag and all this jazz. And then for extended periods I was coxswain of the ship’s number two motor boat which – there were two motorboats – and there was also an admiral’s barge on board. Number one motor boat was commanded, was all naval personnel. Number two motor boat was Royal Marines

31:30 and I was one of two coxswains. Ginger Jennings was at the other and we had the task of zipping about wherever we happened to be. You’d be called away in the middle of the night, you know – “Away motorboats crew!” – and had to walk out over the boom, and down the rope ladder to your boat which was an easy job if the weather was fine, but if the weather was

32:00 not fine it was quite a task, pulling it in by painter. So I had that task for quite some time and it wasn’t long before I secured my transfer actually. We’d been away somewhere, Greece or somewhere. We come back into Grand Harbour in Valetta, we were coming into the buoys and I was with the motor boat,

32:30 I was standing off the ship, we had been put into the water, the motor cutter had been put into the water and had got off on a task somewhere and I’d been given a task to do something elsewhere. When I returned I was called into the side of the ship, and the duty officer, officer at the watch who was a commissioned warrant officer, said, “The motor cutter has broken down, corporal, go and take it in tow.” And I said, “You know as well as I do, sir, that that’s not permitted.”

33:00 A motorboat is not permitted to undertake tow. “Do what you’re told,” says he. So in high dudgeon, I got down into the motor boat, the tugs were bringing us into the buoys, so there was a tug just ahead of the

companionway, and I was behind it. And I was in such a damned rage that I just put one clutch in reverse and the other clutch ahead and spun the motorboat out from the ship's side

33:30 forgetting all about this damned tug. There was a tug, the sheer nature of the tug, it requires a very large rudder so it can exert steerage way very quickly. And this large rudder coincided with my twin rudders and forced them up into the base of the motorboat, we started to take up water so I came alongside and I was pulled up,

34:00 and of course disciplinary action took place. I was charged with creating damage to this damn motorboat and I was in front of the officer of the watch, and then from the officer of the watch, remanded to the commander, who was the TAC [Tactical Coordinator] of the ship, and charged there, but fortunately my bowman and stern sheetsman had been in Royal Marine training with me, and they swore that as we took away

34:30 from the ship's side, the tug had come astern and collided with us. That wasn't really a lie was it?

What did the other blokes think of you putting in to be transferred?

They were very happy for me, in fact, very happy knowing that I was well – in fact I was escaping really – because when you enlist in the Marines in my day, it was for a period of twelve years from the age of 18.

35:00 Now I enlisted at the age of 17 so all that time up till the age of eighteen was buckshee: it didn't count. And twelve years would've seen me age thirty, so I managed to get out here when I was twenty-one, so I saved a wee bit. No, they were very happy to see me out here, but getting back to Australians and what I thought of them, I think you mentioned that a wee while back, when I was back in Portsmouth awaiting

35:30 the absolute mechanics of the transfer to come through, at the same time the Australian crew of HMAS Sydney were in town to pick up the new ship, the Sydney, and Portsmouth was blessed with a magnificent NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute] club where you went and sort of disported yourself. It had beautiful views and meals, and all the rest of it, and I was there with a couple of friends and a couple of girls

36:00 and the crew of the Sydney were there, and I had never heard such a raucous bunch of people in my whole life and I turned to my mate and said, "God, what have I let myself in for?" They were worse than Americans. I think they were just letting their hair down, and coming out here I had no trouble at all.

What ship did you come out on?

The Chitral.

Can you tell us about that?

It was,

36:30 a vessel owned by the P&O Line, which was employed on the ten pounder migrant trade – every English, and Scottish people, out here there's a refugee, migrants – so really there were hundreds of us coming out to the Australian Army on the Chitral

37:00 and we were, technically I suppose we were migrants, but we hadn't had to pay anything and we didn't have passports or anything like that: we were all enlisted members of the military and it was all right. It had a Goanese steward crew, Goanese deck crew mainly, although obviously the officers were all English or Scottish. It was great.

37:30 I was a member in a four-bunk cabin you know, with three other fellows that were coming out to the Australian Army. And we had – it was just like being on tour really, all your cigarettes and drinks and things and duty-free, you could have as much as you wanted. The meals were on the roster system and in great abundance and great choices, so I had no troubles at all.

Can I ask you there Jim, with the amount of fellows that were coming out

38:00 **to become members of the armed forces was three any regimentation of that group on the ship?**

Oh, absolutely nothing at all we were all civvies, we were all dressed in civvies rather. If I could just backtrack a wee bit now. And I had transferred into the Australian Army on the 17th of October, 1950 which was just a bit over four years with the Royal Marines, and initially I wasn't sent out at all, I was employed in Canberra House in German Street in London with the recruiting

38:30 staff. So here was I, recruiting other people for the Australian Army. Eventually I said, "Look, this is not good enough. I want to go home," so they got me on the Chitral and off we came from Tilbury dock. It was a good trip out, there were normal migrants there, you know, young ladies and young fellows and we had a merry time.

What your first thoughts of Australia when you arrived?

Fremantle was an education.

39:00 I just couldn't believe my eyes when we had landed there. Fremantle in those days was not as it is today. I couldn't believe that the electricity was strung on big wooden tree poles and what have you and so forth. And the pubs all had bat-wing doors, and the girls weren't very friendly either at the dances, you know. But we weren't there very long, we landed at Fremantle

39:30 or the ship tied up there. We in the army were taken to local barracks and given a barbecue, and so on and so forth. I think we sailed the next day for Melbourne then. Came across the Australian Bight and the whole contingent of a hundred landed in Melbourne, and were taken out to Royal Park in Melbourne which was then the personnel depot and we were outfitted as soldiers, you know given hats and tan boots which we had to blacken and so on and so forth.

40:00 And then we were split up and posted to our respective units. Some stayed in Victoria and went to 2RAR [2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment] at Puckapunyal. I was fortunate: my father and his entourage had settled in Sydney, so I was posted to Ingleburn to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, and I stayed with them until 1955.

Tape 2

00:33 Okay, I think I've mentioned that I was posted to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment which was then based at Ingleburn, just outside Liverpool in New South Wales. And I was posted to Alpha Company, A Company, which was then commanded by Captain CD Kayler-Thompson whose substantive rank was warrant officer class one,

01:00 and he had a wartime commission and he was, as I say, a captain at the time. His 2IC [Second in Command] was a fellow by the name of Waterton, who was also a captain and also ex-Royal Marines like myself. He later on won the Military Cross, with our 3rd Battalion in Korea, Waterton that is. Anyway, old Kayler-Thompson decided that myself and a couple of

01:30 others should go and be trained as NCOs, because coming across into the Australian Army I had dropped my NCO rank and I was enlisted as a private. So we went to an adjacent recruit training company, 1 Recruit Training Company, and underwent training as an NCO and subsequently I was made firstly lance corporal, and then corporal, and

02:00 to my great annoyance, was retained on the staff of 1 Recruit Training Company for a number of months. When I managed by plea and imploring and so on and so forth to get back to the battalion, to A Company…

What did the training involve?

Well we were trained in methods of instruction and

02:30 how to teach things like the rifle, and the owen machine carbine, and the two inch mortar, and field craft, and map reading and so on and so forth. Well this was comparatively easy for me because I had been an NCO so it was pretty easy. Returning to A Company, Kayler-Thompson had gone at this point – posted to Sydney, I just forget who the officer commanding

03:00 was when I returned but it didn't matter. Because I was then posted as a reinforcement sergeant to go to the 3rd Battalion in Korea. Myself and my buddy Jock McDonald, we were both to go and these posting orders were countermanded by our commanding officer. So with high dudgeon we demanded to be paraded to him: "Why are you doing this to us?" "You've been selected to

03:30 go to the machine gun platoon, the pair of you, and you'll get your promotion there." So we went to the machine gun platoon of 1st Battalion, then commanded by Captain Colin Hewitt Albert East, CHA East, Cha-cha East who had served right through the war in the 2nd 9th Battalion, a Queenslander, who will be well known to all of you because you've heard of McDonnell and East? Well he was part of the East

04:00 clan. He had served in the 2nd 9th Battalion, and his father and his uncle had both served in the 9th Battalion AIF [Australian Imperial Force] and landed at Gallipoli. And in fact, his uncle was the state president of the RSL [Returned and Services League] for donkey's years, but that's by the by. So we went and we were trained by Colin East and a fellow by the name of Rusty Churches

04:30 who was a machine gun sergeant. He had been in the machine gun platoon of the 2/13th Battalion in the Middle East and in the islands and they trained us very well. And so we were more than adequate in our job, and then the time came and we were warned, for the battalion that is, was warned for service in Korea and we duly sailed in 1952 in March

05:00 on the troop ship Devonshire. From Sydney, from Circular Quay it went via Manus Island for refuelling and watering to Kure in Japan.

05:30 So we went to Kure in Japan, and the battalion disembarked there and we were taken then to a place called Kaitaichi which is between Kure and Hiroshima, Australian, and it's where the Australian forces

were during the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] phase and we were accommodated, the battalion was accommodated, on the hard standing – because the buildings had mostly disappeared on which they had erected tents,

06:00 you know, twelve by fourteen tents. Cold, I'd never been so cold in all my born days. Used to sleep with a greatcoat on. And from there we were taken by companies up to the 1st British Division Battle School at Haramura, which is up in the hills outside Kure. And we were indoctrinated there by a mad British Colonel, Lonsdale by name. He was as mad

06:30 as a cut snake. But he had been to Korea, and he finished up as a major general later on, I don't know why.

Why do you say he was mad?

Oh, he was just mad. He would do things like this, he had a large Japanese staff, groundsmen and so on and ladies who did the dixie bashing, and he would line them up in the morning and march them up and down the street. Or he would get in his jeep

07:00 and appear and say, "Right. I will have an 'O' [order group] group of my staff on top of Dick's Delight," which was a large mountain, you know a couple of miles away. "The time is now 9 o'clock. I expect you'll up there at 9.30." and he would drive up there and get up the top and all these, his staff – Australians and Canadians and Brits all pounding, Kiwis, getting up there to meet him. As I say he was mad.

07:30 Yeah, Lonsdale. So we all trained there as companies, and we were kitted out at Kaitaichi with various bits of equipment. You know, cold weather equipment, rifles and we in the machine gun platoon with Vickers, British Vickers machine guns, which had a longer range than the version we were used to back here. And then we –

08:00 Stop. I have to put my glasses on. I've got to research this damn … Sailed from Pusan to Korea on the Empire Longford. So that was from Kure to Pusan, and then Pusan the whole battalion disembarked, an advance party had gone ahead obviously. But the battalion disembarked and we went by troop train up to the divisional

08:30 railhead at Tup Chon, which is north of Seoul, but just south of the demarcation line as it is now. And from there, we went then in battalion transport up to near a place called Kamak San, a big mountain where we were in divisional reserve, and we sort of trained and got ourselves ready to go out and fight the enemy. And so we were there

09:00 from the end of March until, I guess, the end of May. Now in this interim period, two of us were selected to go back to Japan and do a fire controller's course again at Haramura with this mad Lieutenant-Colonel. So Gunner Stevenson and I went back – he was a sergeant at the time, I was still a corporal – but had had a sergeant's appointment. Gunner Stevenson, Ray Stevenson had

09:30 been captured as a POW [Prisoner of War] in Malaya and had been of course, in durance vile [a bad place] in all sorts of places, including Japan itself. And then much later on he served in BCOF. And anyway he and I went back and we did this course which was two weeks duration I suppose, and then returned to the battalion just in time to go up into the line. Now what happened was, was that

10:00 prior to the unit actually going into the line, a number of us were selected from the various rifle companies and support companies to go up and be with our opposite numbers in the 3rd Battalion, which were then in the line, on active duty. So I went up, in my particular case was attached to a platoon, in Charlie Company 3RAR, which had a machine gun section attached to it, and George Grieg was the name of the section commander

10:30 there, 3RAR. So I was sort of attached to him, watching what went on. The platoon location in which his section was, was commanded by a mad Polish officer by the name of the Zwolanski. Quite mad he was, equally as mad as this British half colonel. He used to go out in the night and shout imprecations at the Chinese across the valley and do silly things like that. Anyway we

11:00 enjoyed our time there. We learned the ropes and what the routine – the normal routine was.

Could you explain what the normal routine was each day?

Well the routine, I'll speak mainly of what our routine was subsequently, but we obviously learned a lot from these people. The routine basically, would be that at night

11:30 you would be on fifty per cent stand to, so in the machine gun section which numbered only half a dozen, let's see, eight people. In the machine gun section there'd be fifty per cent of you on stand to at any given time during the night, so that occupied all the dark hours then stand to in the morning. After stand to in the morning, after the threat of attack has dissipated,

12:00 there'd be a case of washing, cleaning you know shaving, cleaning of the teeth and all that and then maintenance of the guns. So one gun would be stripped down for maintenance whilst the other remained on duty and you would also, fellows on lookout with the binoculars looking for any enemy movement. When I say fifty per cent stand to during the night,

12:30 of course, that didn't mean we were just sitting there watching, but you'd be firing on defensive tasks or defensive SOS [distress signal] tasks which you as the section commander had mapped out. I mean to your front you would have your own arcs of fire, and within that arc of fire, out to the maximum range which was obtainable, just over 4,000 yards with these machine guns Mark 8Z ammunition,

13:00 there'd be certain targets which either you would select yourself or had been selected for you by the commanding officer who would say, "I want you to pinpoint that, that and that." And you'd be tasked to fire on those intermittently during the night. So this was the reason for cleaning the guns in the morning, you see. And then, of course as sleep was at very much a premium during the night, you'd have to get your head down during the day, so there'd be a bit of sleeping going on. And then you might be called upon,

13:30 they might contact me and say, "Sergeant Cruickshank, I want you to provide three or four men to go and check the minefield fences at this particular point," because it's been broken down by shellfire or whatever. Or, it's time – you're all very smelly – so the time you went down and had a bath you know you'd sort of walk thousands of meters down to the bottom the Hill, and then have a bath and walk all the way back up again and be just as dirty and smelly at the end.

14:00 That was the sort of routine that we observed in the 3rd Battalion. Then we returned to our own unit and then later, I think it was in June of fifty-two we relieved, we went into 29 British Brigade and relieved the 1st Battalion, the Royal Leicester regiment, which was due to come out. Again some of us were sent out in the advance party and I was horrified to get up into this

14:30 position on Hill 210, it was to the 1st Battalion in the Royal Leicester, and discovered that in this company position, they had a canteen, a wet canteen functioning at night, you know with booze. Didn't happen in our battalion.

Did any trouble come of that?

Oh no, it was their routine, they would only dispense beer of course. And we were quite happy to join them, but of course it wouldn't happen in our day.

15:00 And while we were there, it was quite interesting and in fact, it was the first time that I actually had someone fire at me because we, I say we, this machine gun section of the Royal Leicester's was given a task of going forward of a hill called 159. Into sort of pre-prepared positions with two machine guns and to stand by and

15:30 support an attack by a troupe of tanks, British tanks, Centurion tanks across the valley floor up onto an enemy position. And so we were there doing that, firing away, and old Charlie took umbrage and he fired a recoil-less rifle at us. Ah! Whooscht! Cause you don't hear the damn things whatsoever, it's quite amazing.

Was anyone hurt or anything?

Oh, not from our side no. I hope some of theirs was hurt.

16:00 You know the machine guns were obviously firing in support to the flank of this troupe of tanks, and the Chinese took umbrage of this and sort of fired recoil-less rifle back. And then we with the Royal Leicesters supported an attack by the 1st Battalion of the Welsh Regiment from Hill 355. They came down,

16:30 and they attacked Hill 227 which was just to our front. We helped them support that. Okay they went, our battalion came in and we were there all by ourselves. Now the Hill 159 I mentioned to you was, to you before which we'd sort of front gone in front of to help this tank attack, was down here. 210 was just perched above it like so. I think Delta Company was in

17:00 159 and B Company was up here on Hill 210. And what Colin East had engineered with the CO [Commanding Officer] was to put sections out, one section out with 159, another section out with one of the flanking British battalions and then on top of Hill 210, a platoon position,

17:30 a machine gun platoon position, that is, two sections of machine guns side-by-side, four guns. Sighted under his control and with sergeant Rusty Churches, you know the platoon sergeant. Now that's 2-, 159, 210 and out of our front was this Hill, 227, which had been attacked from by the Welsh regiment from Hill 355, which sort of overlooked the lot.

18:00 Now, in the official history, the machine gun platoon is credited with the opening of bowling for the 1st Battalion, and that occurred when one of my lookouts observed movement on Hill 227, a Chinaman had come forward, and he was doing some sort of work. So very quickly I got Rusty Churches on to one gun and Jock McDonald on to the other and with me

18:30 correcting fire, we engaged him. Now whether we got him or not – but he got a hell of a fright – and we got the kudos in the official history. We were there for quite a while, a month or so I suppose, and in that time, the battalion was tasked with, given a task rather, of going on to Hill 227 and securing a prisoner, or prisoners

19:00 from the Chinese. A Company was given the task of assaulting, and obviously in the assault they would

be covered by artillery fire and so on and so forth. But the machine gun platoon company 1RAR , the two sectioned position was given the task of engaging the features to the west of Hill 227 to keep the enemy head down there whilst the attack went in:

19:30 so we were doing that. Now in fact, I think I gave you the wrong drum a second ago, about the disposition of the sections. I said one was up on Hill 159, one of the other sections was in fact located with A Company. Which was lower down than 210. And A Company prepared to go into the assault. Now obviously their position had to be filled

20:00 by something else, so they bought a portion of Charlie Company in to fill their position whilst they moved off. The machine gun section which was down there commanded by Sergeant Arthur Robinson, at this point I was a sergeant to, as was Jock McDonald. Arthur Robinson's number one section was there, they were the first casualties on the assault. Now whether they were hit by

20:30 Chinese artillery fire, or drop shots for our own, I don't know, but every man Jack but the sergeant was wounded and rendered, the whole section rendered inoperative. The A Company went into the attack, two platoons up, one in reserve and the headquarters in the middle, and with them there was a section of assault pioneers with beehive charges to blow the, the placements

21:00 in. And there was also number four section of the machine gun platoon with them, armed with flame throwers, commanded by Sergeant Ray Stevenson. So the modus operandi was supposed to be that in the attack they would get into the position, the assault pioneers would blow the top of the bunkers in and then they would try and eject the occupants with the flame throwers. Well,

21:30 sadly to say, not one prisoner was taken. They blew the positions in, they got in there and they hacked and shot but there were no prisoners taken. And we sustained a few killed and a few wounded. I don't know what the result was on the other side. But from the machine gun sections point of view we, two and three sections, we just continued to fire out to the flanks to keep the other enemy head down,

22:00 and that was it.

How difficult was it to get the wounded out when you were on those hills?

Well, it was very difficult, you'll appreciate in those days there wasn't the same sort of coverage as hitherto with helicopters and what have you. But it was the first time I'd ever seen a helicopter used for casualty evacuation, you remember the old bubble ones, the Sioux with the big bubble in the front. With panniers on the side.

22:30 Now to retrieve the wounded from the hill, it had to be done by stretcher bearers. The stretcher bearers in those days – each battalion had a band and the musicians were also stretcher bearers – so that's what they were doing, stretcher bearing. So anyone who was wounded, dead or wounded, would be brought back physically and to a jeep head and then loaded onto a jeep ambulance and taken down to the casualty clearing's section or to,

23:00 to the, we had a Nor MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital], you know the MASH series on television, well we were supported by NOR MASH, which was the Norwegian MASH and some of the wounded would go there and those who were very badly wounded, would be taken by aircraft from Seoul back to Kure in Japan. But we did have one sergeant with A Company who was wounded in the throat.

23:30 And he was on his second tour in Korea, he had been in the 3rd Battalion in the first tour. Well he was strapped into one of these panniers on the Sioux helicopters and taken off back to the rear somewhere. The story goes that when, he was certainly dead when he got the rear end, the story goes that claustrophobia had got to him, and he had torn the dressings from his neck. Because I mean these panniers, the pannier, you're in and they sort of put the lid down

24:00 on you, and I suppose it would be claustrophobic. Yeah, that was your question. How did we get the wounded back? Now we were in 29 British Brigade at this junction, and we were there I guess for a month or so, when this had all taken place and so on. As a result of the attack,

24:30 a number of decorations were awarded. Gil Lucas, who was the platoon commander who just lives up of the road here from me, won the Military Cross. He was a pre-war soldier, enlisted in 1938, he won the Military Cross. Squizzy, Corporal Squizzy Taylor got the Military Medal. Corporal Charlie Mene, a Torres Strait Islander, ex-second 33rd Battalion won the military medal. Corporal Harry Patch,

25:00 another Australian, won the American Silver Star award all for this particular attack. Anyway, we in turn were relieved by the 1st Battalion, the Black Watch, they come in the 29 Brigade, the proper place. We came back out into reserve very, very briefly and then resumed the position in our proper Brigade, the 28 Brigade. And in that we relieved

25:30 the 1st Battalion of King's Own Scottish Borderers. My uncle's old battalion. He wasn't with them, he had been put on half pay, he had served with the army for 43 years, and so when they went out to Hong Kong he'd been put on half pay. That wasn't a very happy experience actually, relieving the King's Own Scottish Borderers, because they, the position they were in, Yong-Dang I think was the name of it.

26:00 I think of it, I'll confirm it later on. The positions were not well-prepared. The machine gun section position I was allotted, relieving them, the tripods and guns were just stuck on the parapet out in the

damned open. The result of that was that one burst of shellfire from the opposition, completely destroyed one gun and

26:30 it was a bit unhygienic too, where they had prepared the position, the KOSB [King's Own Scottish Borderers], anyway Colin East conferred with the CO and determined that the machine gun positions we had occupied from the King's Own Scottish Borderers were not sufficient. So we, Jock McDonald and I were given the task of taking out machine gun sections each night at dark, as soon as we stood down, just

27:00 leave a sentry on our guns you know, to fire periodically and then go by vehicles some hundreds of metres to the east and prepare other machine gun positions behind the forward companies. We did this for weeks. We went out and we dug and we dug right through the night, we dug and we covered the spoil up with camouflage nets and bits of twigs and things, which to my

27:30 critical eye looked fine. And then when everything was right we did, we occupied, we did an occupation one night, got in, set up the machine guns, and were heralded by a furious burst of shell gunfire from the opposition. They had been watching us the whole time, nothing was sacred. Our camouflage could not have been too hot either, but anyway we were there and we were safe.

How did you determine where you should

28:00 **put your machine gun positions?**

Well, it would depend on the line of sight, the ranges. You see the Vickers is a great gun – it has a dial site. And you can actually fire the gun indirect. You can be behind a feature and fire indirect so that your fire is going over the crest of the hill without you being observed. I mean there are certain niceties to it. But I mean,

28:30 it wasn't a case of me selecting the point, or position or even to Jock McDonald. It would have been the platoon commander Colin East, would've been out there and selected the spot on the ground which was the optimum in his opinion to cover over the top of the forward companies into the enemy position. And to be able to give flanking fire where necessary so that we knew, those were the determinants. Really,

29:00 machine gun – machine gunnery should be – machine guns should be sighted so whereby you have the ability to fire enfilade. You know, the beaten zones across the front of your companies. Rather than firing sort of point blank, you fire point-blank: your beaten zone is like that, but if you're firing to a flank your beaten zone could be some hundreds of yards in length so all of these things were taken into consideration.

29:30 Enfilade. Yes. Well, we were there for some time, I don't know. We were consistently being shelled. There was no place in North Korea and the position we were in where the enemy couldn't see you. I mean he was to your front, and

30:00 the configuration of the hills was such that he might be to your flanks as well, so you were always in view. Now where we were in this new position I've just mentioned, to get to the jeep head you had to go across a spur line and then after a while you were out of sight of the enemy, you were behind the feature, and you could get to the jeep head. And we used to have to go there and get our resupplies of ammunition

30:30 and water and all the other things you get. And it was always like a shooting gallery, you would wait and run like the clappers, you know, to get there before he got you, because he would try and get you with his artillery. And I used to sit there and have a good cackle sometimes, at my own fellows you know, running like the clappers, bom bom bom behind them.

How did that affect the morale

31:00 **of the men just being so exposed like that all the time?**

Oh, it was all good fun. He's trying to get you, but you're going to get him, you know.

So did they just get used to that level of exposure?

Oh yes. I mean, we never actually had shells land on our dugouts. I think because he couldn't actually get, if not the range, the height to get to us, but there was

31:30 plenty of shellfire on the feature in front of us or on this damn spur line that I mentioned. We were there for long while, and then we were relieved by a British battalion, the Durham Light Infantry relieved us and it was a relief, a relief in place at night. Which means to say that, in the case of the machine guns, you actually leave your tripods, your tripod is left fixed where it is,

32:00 so that the incoming battalion just have to put the gun on top of the tripod and they're in business, because everything is set up for them. And I – my section was actually brought out the night before the relief in line, because my company commander Stuart Paul Weir MC [Military Cross], who was my task force commander in Vietnam later on, had decided that he wanted elements

32:30 of the company out to prepare hootchie positions in the reserve area. So I was taken out a day or so

beforehand with my section, and so the DLI [Durham Light Infantry] section that come in actually relieved us in the daylight, but the rest of the battalion was done at night, relief in place at night. And we went out to, I think Yong-Dang, I think was the name of this damn reserve area

33:00 we were in. We were there for some time, we set up a proper sergeant's mess, if you like, in a big squad tent. And for the first time we could all get together since we had left Australia, senior NCOs and have a couple of beers and tell lies and so on and so forth. And we were there for I suppose a couple of weeks and then it became our turn to go up

33:30 and relieve the 1st Battalion, the Royal Canadian Regiment on Hill 355 which was the tallest feature in our part of the line. Now prior to this, as we were there reserve battalion we also had a counter attack rule. And so I was given, my section was given the task of going out and siting a machine gun position to cover the flank of 355 in the event

34:00 that it was overrun in some way. So I did that. Now at this point this corporal Charlie Mene I mentioned before, the Torres Strait Islander, who won his military medal in that attack of 227, he had been, he was years older than me. He had been seconded to my machine gun section, because it was thought that he was getting a bit long in the tooth to be running about on the valley floor, commanding a section and he had been a machine gunner

34:30 during the Second World War. So I had Charlie as an additional corporal. Anyway we were out there preparing these, we were doing a little spitlock positions for the Vickers in this counter attack position and we had just finished doing them. And damn me, I've told you that we were always in sight, if he didn't engage us with a volley of shellfire. Well all I can say is that

35:00 Charlie might have been older than me, but he beat me into the trench. Although he made soft landing when I landed on top of him. That very same night, the enemy, the Chinese, attacked Hill 355 where the Royal Canadian Regiment – and they actually overran the forward company. Now what they had done, over a period of time, they had watched the Canadians who were pretty slack in the routine I might say, they had watched their

35:30 routine whereby at night, or just before nightfall, fresh rations were dropped forward to, into the forward position and the troops would all just leave their weapons and go back and feed. So over a period of time the Chinese, having watched this, came forward and built huge bunkers. And filled these bunkers with troops and then one night when the

36:00 Canadians were having their meal, all of a sudden hundreds of blooming Chinese were attacking them. So of course, we were in our reserve position, having a couple of beers, and the word went out, "Get ready. Counter attack!" So we got our troops ready, but fortunately the Canadians did it themselves, they counter attacked with their own reserve companies and took the positions back. So a couple of days later we

36:30 took over and I went up on to the very top of 355 with our Charlie Company, into a platoon location commanded by Lieutenant John Burns who was up here in Brisbane just recently for Anzac Day and the Canadians, as I said, had been very, very slack. They had lost all control of the valley floor to the Chinese.

Why were they so slack?

Just in their nature,

37:00 I think. The whole, was the bit of a slack time, a soda. I mean they weren't being – if they didn't go out pursing the Chinese, then they wouldn't come to harm I guess, that would be the philosophy. But our CO, when we first went up to Korea, our commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Ian Hutchinson DSO [Distinguished Service Order] MC [Military Cross] ED [Efficiency Decoration] who had commanded the 2/3rd Battalion

37:30 in the Second World War. Many of our officers and senior NCOs were also from the 2/3rd Battalion. They have been attracted like flies to a honey pot. But he only did six months and then when we were on 355 the CO there was Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice 'Bunny' Austin, and he commanded us for the second six months and through until we came back home again.

38:00 We were on 355, what have I done?

You were just telling us about how you went up to the top of 355 the next day…

Well that's right, the whole battalion took over, and then Bunny Austin, I was thinking of the valley floor actually, Bunny Austin made the determination that we would recover supremacy over the valley floor.

38:30 So, every night he just inundated the valley in front of us with fighting patrols, fighting patrol after fighting patrol, and they bumped the nasties off when they encountered them and standing patrols, so eventually the Chinese had lost control over the valley floor. It was once again ours. They, those bunkers that I mentioned into which the Chinese precipitated their attack on to the Canadians, our assault pioneers then commanded by

39:00 Gil Lucas, was it Gil Lucas? No, Phil Greville, Phil Greville was the assault pioneer platoon commander.

They went out and they were given the task of demolishing these bunkers and they, they found that they were just full of blood, so the Chinese had sustained a fair few casualties and so they just blew them in.

How long did it take to

39:30 **reclaim the valley floor and how difficult was that to do?**

Well, it was only difficult in terms of the effort of putting fellows out there all the time. I mean there would have been three companies up on 35-, two on 355 and one forward of it, so each company would have had fighting patrols out there the whole time so within the first couple of weeks we had it back it. It was ours then. And then standing patrols were

40:00 always out, put the standing patrols out, listening posts and all sorts of things. Talking about Phil Greville, commanding the assault pioneer platoon, he was, if I can explain that we had in support company, we had the machine gun platoon and the mortar platoon, then we had the anti-tank platoon and the assault pioneer platoon. The signals platoon which appears

40:30 in today's establishments in those days was part of headquarter company. But those two last platoons, the assault pioneers and the antitank were, in the case of the pioneers, almost totally engineers seconded to infantry because of the lack of manpower. And in the case of the anti tank platoon almost entirely gunners, from the Royal Australian Artillery. In fact Lovelock, and his 2IC were both gunner officers.

41:00 So the assault pioneers platoon was commanded by Captain Phil Greville – Royal Australian Engineers, second AIF man. He was due to go on R& R [rest and recuperation] to Tokyo, and he said to the CO, "Well, I'm off to Tokyo in the morning, sir." And the CO said, "Have you finished that task I gave you about the minefield yet?" "No, no I haven't yet, I'll do it when I come back," or words to that effect.

41:30 And he said, "No you won't. You'll do it before you go." So off goes Phil that night with a small patrol. And they went out through the minefield gap and they went this-a-way and they went that-a-way and they knew what had to be done. Came back to the minefield gap. Unbeknownst to them, the Chinese had closed it up. Reopened it somewhere else and ambushed them. He, the sig [signalman] with him had been my sig at one stage of the game and he was carrying obviously his radio set on his back.

Tape 3

00:34 Okay, now, so obviously they went to ground, there were a number of wounded. The one infantry NCO infantry corps lance corporal with the group, was badly wounded. I'll come to him in a minute. But the sig was there obviously with his radio on his back and the Chinese saw him and they grabbed him he was

01:00 going to be their prisoner. But at that split moment one of the other Chinese spotted Greville. Now whether he was wearing his badge of rank or not, I don't know but they obviously recognized that he was the boss cocky and he sung out and this Chinaman dropped the sig and they went and they took Greville and one other and vanished. They were prisoners of war for the rest of the war. The sig of course got back, the young

01:30 lance corporal was very, very badly wounded – he had taken the whole series of Burp gun, you know automatic fire gun up his back. Eventually he came back to us after treatment in Japan, but he couldn't lift anything so he was just destined to be a storeman for the rest of his service there.

Did Phil Greville survive?

Oh yeah, Greville in fact ended up as a brigadier. I think his last posting was as commander of

02:00 4th Military District in South Australia, Adelaide, that's where I saw him last, I've seen him since of course. He wrote the section on the prisoners of war for Robert O'Neill's official history of the Korean conflict. Coincidentally, Phillip Greville was the OC [Officer Commanding] of the assault pioneer platoon in the 1st Battalion, his brother Lee Greville was the adjutant

02:30 of 3rd Battalion. This was at the same time. And their father was Lieutenant-Colonel in the sigs back in Japan, so the whole family was involved. We're still filming, are we? Now what else happened up there? We took back the valley floor, yes, dealt with that, now

03:00 there was one very large attack, mounted by the battalion while we were there and that was a full company fighting patrol one night with the express purpose of going into the foothills of 317, Marion San, directly across the valley from 355 and their purpose was to get in there and secure as many prisoners as they could take. So away they went, it was a silent attack,

03:30 in this respect that my machine gun section was up the top of 355, as I said. We just fired our normal harassing fire task as though it was a normal routine while this company accompanied by pioneers and others, slipped across the valley floor and into the enemy positions. A fierce firefight developed. Very

fierce. And they didn't get any prisoners, and in fact they looked

04:00 as though they had lost one of their own. A fellow, I'll think of his name in a minute, Young, Private Young who finished up later in life as a sergeant in the Queensland Police Force. He was wounded and they thought they had lost him. And he was found the very next night by a patrol from one of the other companies. Young was trying to find his way back to the battalions so they brought him back. But during this

04:30 attack ,they didn't take any prisoners but by the living Harry, they made a mess of the Chinese. They killed quite a number. At this point, they were being fired upon by a heavy machine-gun from up the top of 317, firing down into our B Company attack force. Colonel Austin, the CO, phoned to me on the landline and he

05:00 said, "Sergeant," he said, "can you see that fire?" I said, "Yes, I can see it, but I don't have it registered," and he said, "Well engage it if you can." So I went out into the dark and using this silhouette business, I estimated what the range would be, using hand angles from what I knew to be a target, and we engaged this at the rapid rate and he just stopped firing. Whether we got to him or what I don't know. Whether he ran out of ammunition I'll never know. But he stopped

05:30 annoying B Company. They found their way back across the valley floor, carrying their own wounded with them, all except Young of course who appeared the next night. The other two things I can recollect from my time up there was John, what's his damn name, the platoon commander I mentioned a second ago?

06:00 Can you stop? Can you stop filming for a sec? John, Lieutenant John Burns who commanded the platoon in which locality my machine gun section was, was sent out on a fighting patrol to the east of 355 over the valley floor and he was to pass through another patrol commanded by Lieutenant Ewan Boyd from Delta Company,

06:30 I think. Anyway, there was a mix-up, and one patrol engaged the other and there was a furious fire fight between the two friendly patrols. And this attracted the attention of the Chinese of course, so both of our patrols withdrew, carrying their own wounded with them, hotly pursued by the Chinese. Now the only section which could fire in support just happened to be mine,

07:00 so I knew where they were, and I just adjusted. It was a perfect 'enfilade' position, so I adjusted the ranges of the guns to give me the perfect enfilade beaten zone. One superimposed on the other and as they reported their position, so I dropped the ranges behind them and kept the Chinese at bay. When they got back up the top of the hill one of the

07:30 soldiers says, "We love you, you Scots bastard." And so that was quite good. And then the only other occasion was: to our right flank, the flanking unit there was the 1st Capital Division of the Republic of Korea and they had sent a battalion

08:00 fighting patrol one night into the foothills of the Maryang San and when they got there, the position was occupied by the opposition, and there was a hell of the ding dong battle going on. Again, Colonel Austin phoned me and he said, "Look can hear the noise to your right flank?" and I said, "Yeah I can hear it all right – bloodcurdling." And he said, "Is it a target?" and I said, "Yeah I have that as a target." He said, "Engage." So we did. And there was lots

08:30 of sound thereafter, but I mean we could have been hitting both sides we don't know.

Were there many ambushes?

Of ours?

Of the enemy ambushing you?

I am only aware of two and that was the one I mentioned, you know Greville getting captured, the other one I recollect was from

09:00 A Company and again it was Gil Lucas' platoon. They were out on a patrol and they were ambushed. I don't think Lucas was there but Charlie Mene was commanding the patrol. This Torres Strait Islander from Badu Island. They were ambushed by the Chinese, so they just dropped and went to ground. And the Chinese came forward to take prisoners they thought, but old Charlie

09:30 was just lying on his back. And as the Chinaman came over the top of him, let him have it with his own machine gun and then got to his feet and they demolished the opposition. Charlie Mene was the smartest looking soldier I ever saw in my life, when he came back, when I was at Ingleburn he had been on leave from BCOF, he had been with the 1st Battalion up there and he'd been on very long leave, been up to the islands and

10:00 he came back and he was so, I'd never seen a smarter looking fellow in my life, you know the way his hat was, and everything was polished, the eyelets in his hat, the eyelets in his boots, everything, he just gleamed. And his black skin. Wonderful soldier, great friend of mine, I thought. He finished life, he married a Japanese girl and he finished his working life as a wardsman at Greenslopes Hospital, did Charlie.

10:30 Yes that was the only other ambush I can think of. So that's two: the Mene one which was successful, and the Greville one which was successful for the opposition. But obviously, there were others that I wouldn't be aware of. Yeah, where are we going now?

Tell us about the physical conditions in Korea and how the Australians and yourself

11:00 **coped with that?**

Well, it was bitterly cold during the winter but essentially in Korea, I think you could say that you have two seasons: very dry which is during the summer months, interspersed with monsoonal conditions occasionally, but you can put up with those. But the winter, just unbelievable, from Scotland

11:30 you'd think I'd be used to the cold, but when you consider that in Korea, the weather is compounded by the winds coming south out of Manchuria, and what with the natural cold you could get down to minus forty degrees. Even with the British clothing we had, you know, think underwear and string singlets,

12:00 there was a sort of battle blouse and over the top of that was a huge parka with a hood and gloves, ski gloves, and boots CWW – cold weather wet – with plastic insoles but even given all of that, I have been so cold in my feet during the winter on stand to

12:30 in the trench and what have you, I could honestly have cried. Your feet just feel as though they're too painful for words, you know with the cold. And of course keeping clean was another thing. In the cold weather, of course you're living in dugouts all the time, and we were comparatively comfortable in this regard. Because the Vickers

13:00 fire is continuous, strip less belt ammunition, which is heavy, heavy cotton we would use that heavy cotton belting material to make the basis for our beds so with a few star pickets and some cotton belting material we were right. Sitting back on top of that was like being at home. But it was so cold, you would have these trouveres as we called them, manufactured

13:30 heaters, space heaters made from ammunition boxes with dieseline sort of pouring in. This was all right once they were active, and on fire they were quite warm, but sometimes they would exude a sort of black bitumastic, almost like smoke. Now this compounded the problem because we also wore balaclavas you know to keep

14:00 the ears and things warm. And some fellows, unless I insisted they take the balaclavas off completely, you would sometimes be confronted when you said, "Off balaclavas," just a white oval. That's all they would wash, they wouldn't bother about the ears and the neck and what have you so there was a difficulty there. And of course keeping water up to the position too, when you consider that 355,

14:30 that's 355 metres not feet, so getting water up and down this fairly precipitous hill was a thing so we would make use of snow, you would melt the snow down to get water for washing and shaving and so on and so forth. And of course the Vickers itself is a water cooled gun, and obviously during the winter the tendency would be for that to freeze, so we used to inject into the water, oil

15:00 local test. Sorry, oil local test on the metal parts and in the water antifreeze, the same that you would put in your car. And that was the same for the vehicles, antifreeze, but in the case of vehicles and there were none obviously up the top of the hill, but they'd have to start them every half an hour or so during the night.

I've heard stories about fellows not having sufficient equipment to deal with the cold, did you ever feel that was the case?

No, that was never the case with

15:30 the 1st Battalion. It was certainly the case with the 3rd Battalion because when they went across to Korea it was as though they were still here at home. The old service dress and greatcoats and boots ABTS [Army Boot Tropical Studded], well, that's not suitable for the cold at all is it? But in the 1st Battalion we had all British equipment, so there was no great sweat. But the conditions were ferocious, certainly during the winter.

Can you also tell us about adjusting fire,

16:00 **when your machine guns are firing as long a range as they were. How do you adjust fire in that regard?**

Oh well, you would have to have a forward observer. We never ever used indirect fire in the line. We practiced it and we used it out of the line, but in the line: no. There was no need for it. But in the case where you had to use indirect fire you would have to have a forward observer.

What sort of orders were you giving

16:30 **to your machine gunner with the elevation and stuff like that?**

He would adjust for range and what have you, it would be the case of the senior section commander on the gun line to make any adjustments as to angles and so on in the dial site.

So there was an angle site?

Oh yeah, the dial site, just like an artillery piece almost.

Tell us a little bit more about the beehive

17:00 **charges – just explain those to us…**

Well I wasn't a pioneer, but the beehive charges, well it's shaped like a beehive, the old-fashioned view of the beehive – like so. And with the explosive inside so structured so that all of the force is downwards, nothing goes laterally, it's all directed downwards

So they were primarily used to blow bunkers?

Blow bunkers or things of that nature, yeah.

17:30 **So with the cold, I imagine the ground would have been rock hard. How hard was it to dig?**

Oh, you wouldn't. In the winter you couldn't, you couldn't. When it was necessary, well occasionally we'd blow it out, ask for engineer assistance to blow it. But our positions were all prepared anyway during the more tolerant months.

Can you continue on with your story?

Where were we again? Can someone brief me?

18:00 **You just told us about Charlie…**

Were we still in Korea were we? Now we're still on 355 now I actually left the battalion on 355 because a process started by Colin East and my company commander Stuart Paul Weir had been in recommending me to be commissioned. Now to do that, I had to do a number of things: I had to go and

18:30 be interviewed by the brigade commander, Brigadier Thomas Daly, an Australian, now Sir Tom Daly and he further recommended me and I went back to our Advanced Second Echelon in Japan to see Brigadier Ian Campbell and he further recommended me and I came home. There with three of us from the battalion: fellow by the name of Potts,

19:00 fellow by the name of Welsh, four of us: fellow by the name of Lucas and myself. Four of us went back. And also a gentleman by the name of Brissenden who was an Australian Warrant Officer instructor at the Canadian battle school at Uijongbu. We all went home recommended and the thing all was, we went home in January 'fifty-three to do a course which was of twelve weeks duration –

19:30 half of it at the School of Infantry at Seymour in Victoria, and the second half at the School of Tactics Administration, also at Seymour in Victoria. The first half, School of the Infantry, some fell by the wayside, but the rest of us went on and at the School of Tactics Administration or 'Tac Adam' as they called it, I completed the course, but I was not recommended to be

20:00 commissioned because I had a bit of a flare-up with one of my instructors in the last few days. Now I'm told, an NCO who was an NCO in the battalion, who was the mess NCO at Tac Adam who was listening in at the school, the committee which determines who's to go on or not

20:30 there was to be a toss up between Potts, Jack Potts, who'd been a sergeant pilot in the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] during the Second World War, and myself ,and the determination was that Potts go on and Cruickshank be invited to come back again. So with this news, I departed and arriving back at the battalion, Bunny Austin said, "What went on Sergeant Cruickshank?" and I told him and he said, "Are you going back?" and I said, "Not whilst my

21:00 fundamental orifice points towards the ground," I said, "after that nonsense," and didn't. I was enticed on a few other occasions but I wouldn't go back. So I'll tell you a story about Potts shortly, so that was it, I had left the battalion and I had completed my course. At this time the battalion had arrived back in Australia to Enoggera

21:30 here in Brisbane. The very first regular battalion to occupy 'the new barracks'. You know all 'chamferboard', and I joined them and became – because Rusty Churches was leaving, in fact most of the senior NCOs were leaving the unit – I became two things. One, the platoon sergeant of the machine gun platoon,

22:00 and secondly I was appointed by Colonel Austin to be PMC [President of the Mess Committee] of the sergeants' mess as a sergeant ,which sort of confounded me a bit. But the reason he had done this was that the 4th Battalion at Ingleburn owed our mess money for that Temprite system [beer cooling system], which hadn't been satisfied and because I knew of the transaction he made me the PMC. But strangely, I was in that position for 10 months even after the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] marched in.

22:30 Just one of those things. Back here in Australia, we just resumed normal peacetime soldiering, retraining again, because we knew were going back to Korea. In the interim I met Mavis, and we got engaged and married in January 1954, just a matter of weeks before we went back to Korea.

23:00 And back to Korea we went. This time on the New Australia troop ship, well it was a troop ship and also a migrant's ship – used in both capacities. Incidentally, the Devonshire which had taken us up on the first occasion, I thought had been scrapped afterwards, until I was reading a Scots magazine just a few months ago and discovered that in fact it was converted into a floating school, renamed

23:30 and was used off the coast of Scotland as a school for donkey's years. Anyway, back to the New Australia. We left Brisbane and returned directly to Pusan, on to that damned train and up to the Tok Chon then by a unit transfer this time. Of course the war had finished, to a place called Peace Camp where we relieved the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment

24:00 which in turn had relieved us previously. They came home and we went into the Peace Camp area. Now the second tour wasn't nearly as exciting as the first. Our task really was to patrol along the DMZ [demilitarised zone] or DM Zee as the Americans called it, to make sure there were no incursions. So after a while it was determined that Peace Camp wasn't for us, it was fairly restricted,

24:30 the companies were sort of parked up little re entrant. There was a sergeants' mess and officers' mess central but you had to sort of filter down from wherever you happened to be for meals and what have you so was determined by the then CO Lieutenant Colonel NAM Nichols, later was commissioner police in PNG [Papua New Guinea], that we would shift up to the bank of the Injin River and we did that.

25:00 In fact I was sent with the advance party as the acting CSM [Company Sergeant Major] of the advance party, and we actually constructed the camp. Although each company did their own thing with constructing Quonset huts provided by the Americans, and we established the camp then known as 'Gallipoli Camp' there on the banks of the Injin, and thereafter it was just a case of exercises, exercise, exercise. Now my platoon commander

25:30 on the first tour was Capt. C H A East. Halfway through the tour as the CO left so did he. He went back to Haramura as an instructor, and we got a Captain Harry Bowman as the platoon commander, ex 2nd AIF fellow, he lives in Canberra still. On the second trip up to Korea our platoon commander was Capt. JTD Stewart MC,

26:00 a north Queenslander who had got his MC with the Ghurkhas in Malaya and then came back home and joined the Australian Army again. He was one of those fellows who was invited into the British Army, into the British Indian Army at the end of the Second World War, they were scratching for people and they took a lot of Australians across. So Jimmy Stewart was the platoon commander but he in turn was detached off as liaison officer some damned way and I became the platoon commander.

26:30 Which was a bit of a pain because any time there was an exercise it meant you were with the CO in the headquarters all the time and that was a bit restrictive I thought. Later on, later in fifty-three, the 3rd Battalion was ordered out of theatre and back to Australia. They had been there continuously since 1950

27:00 on an individual rotation basis. So the battalion was ordered home by the government and 1RAR, my battalion, then assumed the individual rotation basis. Now what happened was they switched a number of personnel from 1RAR were sent to 3 [RAR], you know, people the CO didn't necessarily want, or people who had almost finished their time, and similarly we acquired

27:30 a number of 3RAR personnel including a platoon commander, his name escapes me, but he had a Silver Star from the Second World War as a coast watcher. And we just battled on, we did our thing and eventually came time for individual rotation for Cruickshank and back to Japan I went with almost my entire platoon. May I add that

28:00 this machine gun platoon, I had actually trained some of them as recruits. One of them was Ken Stoker, later on to win the distinguished conduct medal with the training team, another was Arthur Robinson who commanded one section of the machine gun platoon in fifty-two, fifty-three. He'd been one of my recruits, but he had also been in the second AIF, so he was an astute gentleman. Anyway, back to Japan we went and there were hundreds of us

28:30 there. There were people coming in to go to Korea and there were those of us from Korea going home and we were there for weeks. In the interim, of course, Mavis had given birth to our first child, whom I hadn't seen. After a period of time, and getting sick and tired of watching the World at War [TV series] umpteen times of an afternoon with the fellows waiting to RTA [Return to Australia] and sick and tired of route marches and what have, I went to the CSM,

29:00 Tony Dugan, and I said, "Just tell me what the hell's happening? Why am I still here? All my fellows are gone." And he looked up this chart and he said, "Oh, you're for re-posting in the Japan theatre," and I said, "Buddy I've got news for you: two years in Korea and a daughter I haven't seen. I'm home." So I was placed on a fairly quick trip by DC4 and away home I came, on the longest trip I've ever done in my life. We went from Iwakuni in Japan

29:30 to Hong Kong to Labuan to Manila to, up north here in Queensland, Cloncurry and then to Sydney. And on board the aircraft with us was a part-Aboriginal fellow, who had been with us on both tours in Korea from Cloncurry, but he had to go to Sydney the reason for that was that everyone had to be medically checked

30:00 to make sure that we hadn't brought any exotic diseases home. But that was the longest, and I said to the pilot, "Why in God's name Cloncurry? What was there?" Bullion apparently, they had taken on board, there must have been a gold mine handy and we were taking that through to Sydney. Anyway, so that was the end of my, one: end of my tours in Korea and secondly: the end of my time for the pro-tem

30:30 with the regiment because I came home, went on leave, I was on what was then called the X-list 1RAR which meant you didn't belong to anyone really. Just available for re-posting. And in the so doing I was posted or attached rather to headquarters First Military District Victoria Barracks. In the then termed A Branch, which handled personnel matters. And I was

31:00 there working for the staff captain A and the RSM and one of my tasks was to put into this large ledger of people who had just posted in or out. So I was there for weeks and weeks and weeks with no posting order for me, and I'd just happened one day to write down 'Corporal B Davies' in a Warrant Officer Class Two position in Toowoomba.

31:30 Now Davies had been one of my corporals in Korea, and here was I fully qualified for warrant rank. So I said, "Now what the hell is going on here?" And they said, "Oh you'll get a posting order soon." And sure enough it appeared – as a sergeant to 13 National Service Training Battalion at Ingleburn. I said, "No way. If need be I shall make representation. I've just posted one of my corporals into WO2 [Warrant Officer Class 2] slot and I want something better." So

32:00 they spoke to whoever they spoke with it and they said, "Yes you can have your promotion if you go to Papua New Guinea." So off we went to Papua New Guinea

What was your first thoughts when they told you?

Oh, Papua New Guinea? Oh I was quite happy as long as I didn't have to go anywhere near CMF [citizen military forces] or National Service or cadets or anything of that nature so I was posted to PIR [Pacific Islands Regiment], actually as a CSM but in those days most of the

32:30 platoon commanders were warrant officers. So for more than two years I commanded 11 Platoon Delta Company of PIR based in initially, Taurama Barracks just outside Port Moresby. And Mavis and Leigh, our daughter, joined me a few weeks later in married barracks. In those days there were no European quarters with the battalion. All the Europeans stayed at married barracks some miles away.

33:00 In fact there weren't many married quarters at all. Taurama Barracks, there were a few there for native sergeants but they were, I mean, you wouldn't, I wouldn't have put Pippa my dog in them, they were just tin shacks. And command 11 Platoon I did. We trained, I trained recruits out at the Laloke River for my own platoon and then took that platoon up in the first instance to Los Negros,

33:30 adjacent to Manus Island for a six months tour, and patrolled on Manus Island north to south, south to north rather. And then I, at the four month part, I came home to Port Moresby. Because what had been placed on the agenda was the presentation of colours to PIR by Sir William Slim, the Governor General.

34:00 Now they didn't have enough troops back in Port Moresby, so they took a composite platoon from each of A Company at Vanimo up on the Dutch border, and Delta Company on Los Negros, Nutt Point, Los Negros back to Taurama Barracks to make the numbers up. So I brought the composite platoon back very happily.

What was the makeup of the blokes in the PIR?

34:30 Well they were from most districts in Papua New Guinea except the highlanders, the Chimbu people, they weren't seen to be sophisticated enough. But they came from most other districts. A number of the senior NCOs had served with either the Papuan Infantry Battalion or one of the New Guinean battalions during the war, so they had lots of experience. But they were wonderful soldiers.

35:00 If you told them to drop dead on the spot: Yes Masta, they would do it. Once they got used to you that was it. They didn't see really past their platoon or company commander. Particularly the platoon commander: he was the boss cocky. No, they were great soldiers, they were easy to train. The lingo franca was Pidgin English or Neo-Melanesian as they call it now, although a number of

35:30 the battalion of course were Papuans. Therein lies the complexity of the whole thing because PNG in fact was two entities. There was the territory of Papua which was part of Australia, and then there was the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, which had been mandated by the League of Nations to Australia after the First World War to look after because the Germans had had it previously. And for ease of administration they were bunged together.

36:00 Now during German times, New Guinea was administered from Rabaul, but again for ease of administration they were bunged together as the territories of Papua and New Guinea and administered from Port Moresby. Now, technically speaking a Papuan was an Australian citizen, a New Guinean was an Australian protected person – APP, and I can understand why they allowed them

36:30 to remain together at the time they were given self-determination, because I don't think Australia would have wanted a million and a half Papuans coming south on to the welfare list. Perhaps I shouldn't say that. But no, they were excellent soldiers. I was very happy, I had wonderful times. We later had our time up in

37:00 Vanimo. I had a very, very long patrol out of there in which I went down over the Bowani mountains through the Green River patrol post onto the Sepik, which is quite a step. And by canoe, which we had had hired down, or canoes lashed together, down the Sepik past the junction of the Sand River down to the Yellow River junction and then came back across country

37:30 up onto the coast again near Vanimo. We were out for a month. And in those days, communication was this: if you had sick people if you were north of Bowani mountains, then you sent them back to Vanimo: if you were south of Bowani, you took them with you. We had a couple of cases, we had fellows went down with malaria,

38:00 and we just took their gear from them and they just walked with no gear in front of the patrol. It was interesting on this particular patrol: we'd got down, we were between the Sand and the Yellow Rivers' junctions and I was looking for a place to park this particular night. It was getting on towards dark too but we couldn't land anywhere because of steep cliffs on the side of the river, so I spotted a spot

38:30 with a sort of a shallowing beach and I said, "Right, we'll head for there," so we headed for there and with that a group of men came out and one came to the water and cocked his bow and arrow at us. And with this my platoon sergeant, Sergeant Esom Saki, heard him say, "Bren gunner load!" and I heard the Bren gunners load and I said, "For God's sake, unload!" I had visions of the Cruickshank court martial and I whipped my pistol out and said,

39:00 "Now, we won't stay here but if he shoots at us I'll shoot him with the pistol, okay?" And we went downstream and we found a spot almost on dark and we parked. We had no sooner put the hoochies up when I had a delegation come to me, "Masta… bai yumi kilem despela ol Kanaka nau planem long graun. Mipela no ken toktok."

39:30 And I said to myself, "Pigs! In a pig's ear you wouldn't! The word would be back in Vanimo before we were!" No. We'll just let them go. When we got back to my Vanimo, I was debriefed and the district officer from Aitape, Dick, 'Dirty Dick' Reed, I think his name came up and we briefed him and he sent a punitive patrol down to the spot and they arrested all these people and took them back to Wewak to be educated. They were

40:00 terrified. They would have been terrified seeing this bunch of armed people appearing out of the gloom, going to dump them all and all their woman or whatever. Yeah they were interesting times, interesting from the standpoint that you had to carry all your rations with you. For the native, that was all right, but for the European there was no sophisticated ration pack.

40:30 In my case you'd be issued with a one pound tin of Tom Piper Irish Stew. And I mean, what the hell do you do with that? Once it's opened its open that's it. I just existed on native rations which was corned beef, one tin between four men, and brown rice boiled, and whatever we could buy on the way through you know WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, or flying fox a couple of times, and a bit of pig.

41:00 **What does a flying fox taste like?**

Like WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK . They'd just sling it on the fire, same as the Aborigines do. Sometimes pigeon, mmmm.

Tape 4

00:33 Esom was my platoon sergeant for the full term I was up there and he was from the Moreby district. He was really, he should've been at sea in the navy or something: that was more his forte. But my batman was from Buka Island near Bougainville, and he was as black as your boots. He was one of only two in the battalion, Bukas that is. Masu by name and

01:00 one time he had displeased Esom. And Esom rounded on him, and he said, I can still hear it now he said, "Masu, skin bilong yu em I olsem has bilong suspan." which means 'your skin is black as the arse of a saucepan' you know. And on another occasion we were all on patrol, this was this big patrol and we had

01:30 crossed over the Bowanis and we were coming down towards another village, Mango they call it and it had a palisade all the way around it. So we got close to it. See, when we left Vanimo we had thirty-six soldiers and sixty carriers carrying the rations: we used to pre dump them on the way out and then pay them off either with razor blades or salt or shilling pieces or whatever

02:00 And we were close to Mango, and I stopped the patrol and I said, "Right now, centre section commanders envelop it." And then I went out with Esom and we had two policeman with us and well, it was like the Rape of the Sabines. All the fellows and the woman shot through, thought we were going to do them in. But the patrol calaboosed them from the outside and we got

02:30 them all in and we selected carriers with the promise of pay and what have you and so forth. Now the distances are fairly large too, but it was one group of people were terrified to go too far outside their

own tribal or sect area because of what they termed sanguma, you know, witchcraft, and the fact that some of these people, you know, they would eat you.

03:00 As soon as you paid them off they would run like hell north to get the hell out of it. This other group we took with them anyway, the story goes: we had also purchased a couple of WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s from this place and we stopped for the night and I said to Masu, “Right, kill the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s now and get them ready,” and I sat there and I was doing my patrol report making map traces and all this sort of nonsense, and after what I felt was a long while,

03:30 I said to Masu, “Masu, how are my kakaruks going?” and Masu with great umbrage stood to his feet and said, “Masta, yu ting mi gat hamas han bilong mi?.” [“Sir, how many hands do you think I have?”] And he was still plucking them these damn things. Quite a character.

So how long did you spend in New Guinea with the PIR?

Altogether six years. I went back later on.

04:00 After that patrol had finished, back to Vanimo. I had actually sent Mavis and Leigh home because her mother had been up visiting with us and I knew that I was going to Vanimo for six months, and at the end of that six months, I’d be going home anyway. We’d all be going home so I sent her home with her mother because in the time we’d been up there her father had died. Those are his medals there, the top set are his medals. He had served

04:30 in France in the First AIF and enlisted again and served, he was still serving when I met Mavis in 1953. That lower set of medals there are her brothers who died just a few years ago. Anyway where were we?

You had just finished that patrol…

So back to Vanimo and eventually to Taurama and came home. But in those days the only airline that serviced

05:00 Papua New Guinea was Qantas. Both externally and internally. In fact, Mavis worked for Qantas in Port Moresby. They had little aircraft and float planes and what have you to do the internal workings. And to get home you either went by DC4 or consolation or whatever the hell that aircraft happened to be at the time on a waitlisting,

05:30 I mean you go out to Jackson’s Strip every morning, you know for days and days, and if you happened to have a seat available, off you went. Also in those days the administrator Sir Donald Cleland of Papua New Guinea, he really had the power to do what he wished. There was no such thing as these rascals in Port Moresby. No native was allowed in Paul Moresby unless he or she had a job. Or was native to the township.

06:00 There was Paul Moresby and there was Hanuabada, which was the Papuan village out side and Porabada further out but the police went around and if they caught any native in Port Moresby without a job he was out of the town of that night. He was sent back by canoe or whatever back to his place. Similarly Europeans who got into any trouble at all, cohabiting with native women,

06:30 or drunk out of their minds or whatever. Cleland would have them on the Qantas aircraft the next morning back to Australia – it was that tough. So you could get out to Jacksons there, thinking you had a seat and some bum’s been ejected so he gets the seat before you. So that happens to me two or three days before I finally got out and got back to Brisbane on a very long leave because of course you don’t have leave while you’re up there. So I had three months leave coming to me.

07:00 When I got home and I enjoyed that and eventually I was posted to Five Cadet Battalion here in Brisbane which was just a job. I was the instructor, I had Nudgee College, Brisbane State High School and Wynnum State High and I looked after them each week. Coincidentally at Brisbane State High my school RSM, schoolboy RSM was a fellow by the name of Stan,

07:30 Stan Krasnov, a White Russian. Whose family had come out through Harbin and Manchuria. A big, tall, strapping fellow. I had no trouble with any of the school boys when he was the RSM. In fact later on, he was commissioned and commanded the 3rd Battalion [3RAR] many years later. Following that two year posting which, as I say, was just a job, I managed to get back

08:00 into the regiment of the 3rd Battalion this time. And I spent from 1959 to 1962 as a company sergeant major with the Third Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment here at an Enoggera. And I can say that was only a job too but it was a job that entailed being away from home, anything up to eight months each year exercises or schools or whatever what ever. And then in December 1962,

08:30 I returned to PIR, which was still just the one entity. This time as a company sergeant major based in Port Moresby, no troubles. We then had two children, our son having been born after my first trip to PNG and the family was ensconced in Murray Barracks, not Murray Barracks, Taurama Barracks, in married quarters. Had a wonderful time.

09:00 I don’t think there’s much I can really tell you about those two years but towards the end of sixty-four I was due for A, re-posting and B, leave. Well my next posting was very satisfactory, I was to the RSM of the to be raised 2nd Battalion of the Pacific Island Regiment up in Wewak. So I agreed and we came

home, the whole family,

09:30 on three months leave. And in the early sixty-five returned to Port Moresby, and after a little bit of a delay, because the raising of 2PIR had been delayed, they used me as an umpire on the 1PIR exercise to run the condition off me that I had put on on my leave. And then up to Wewak we went and we had all that time in Wewak up until the end of the sixty-six, when I was posted

10:00 on to the 'unalloted list' list back in Brisbane here. For re-posting and re-posted I was, sorry I was attached initially to the Australian component of the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, which was serving in Vietnam at the time. The Aust component was back here at Enoggera, and then when the battalion came back to Australia, I was posted as RSM of 6RAR

10:30 in September 1967.

What was your opinion of RSMs early on in your career? What esteem did you hold them in?

They were the pinnacle. That's what one should aim for.

So how did it feel once you were in those shoes?

Oh it was great. The ultimate power, I mean in a battalion you've got the commanding officer

11:00 You have the regimental sergeant major who's the senior other rank, or non-commissioned person. And he owes his allegiance only to the CO, he doesn't have to worry about anyone else in between. He is the CO is man and between them I guess they have the ultimate power. The RSM looks after the discipline and does all the drill and so on and so forth; he has other responsibilities on operations,

11:30 but it's wonderful position to be in and what's more, if you're any damn good, then you are much admired.

What did you know of the situation in Vietnam at the time?

Only what I'd read in intelligence and briefings and so on and so forth. I didn't think the Americans were doing the right thing, I mean obviously they should've attacked the north and got the damn thing over and done with if they was serious, but

12:00 I'm not sure that, the whole rationale for them being there was right anyway. In hindsight, they seemed to have been supporting to what was a fairly corrupt regime. But I mean, if they wanted to finish the war it should have been done by attacking the north, that's where the power was coming from, sneaking in through Laos and Cambodia. They should have struck the north but I think they were afraid that the Chinese would become involved.

12:30 **So what happened then – RSM of 6RAR?**

I was RSM and I took over from George Chinn DSC [Distinguished Service Cross]. He won his DSC with the Training Team [AATTV].

What sort of handover is involved?

The complete thing. He handed over the mess. He even gave me some of his new socks and things, of which he had a surfeit obviously. But the hand over was pretty good.

13:00 Although, I might add, I've written it in there and I also wrote it into, I contributed to the official history of the regiment, 'Duty First'. I wrote a piece in that and I said there is the difficulty in assuming the role of someone who has enjoyed significant popularity, potentially just having returned from active service and that was the situation

13:30 I was faced with. Most of the NCOs were staying on, a lot of them shifted but most of them were staying on. And Chinn was popular so there was that reticence initially, "Who's this fellow marching in?" but as I read just recently, one of the fellows who was a veteran of the battle at Long Tan and he was later

14:00 one of my junior NCOs on the second trip, wrote to me and he said, "I was with Charlie Company and we were detached to Canungra after the battalion had leave. And we acted as the demonstration company and we knew we had a new RSM, and we thought to ourselves, "Who is this new RSM and what the hell is he like?" and we thought to ourselves, "Well

14:30 he mightn't be six feet tall or even seven feet tall, but he's an ex Royal Marine so he can't be all bad." And anyway I made my presence felt here and we were only here a wee while. September through to early November. And the battalion was then required to shift up to Townsville. Now Lieutenant-Colonel Townsend who had been the CO in Korea, Long Tan and all that is remaining on

15:00 through until the new year with some of his officers so he said to me, "Look, RSM,' he said, "we will send the battalion up north by troop train and other means, and you and I will take the easy way. I'll go up in the staff car with the battalion 2IC and Brian, Major Brian McFarlane was the other officer and if you wouldn't mind coming up in your own private car."

15:30 So we went slow convoy up the coast dropping off for lunch, and evening meal, and nice motels, and

drinkies in the evening. When we got there the battalion was settled in. And he was good, was Colin Townsend, he having commanded the battalion from its inception, and taking it to Vietnam and all that entailed there, Long Tan and all the other things.

16:00 He knew that the fellows needed some sort of peace time routine so he allowed a peacetime routine to develop in Townsville. You know, with the married fellows being able to go home at night to their families and all that sort of business, and nothing too rigorous in the way of big exercises and what have you. Just a normal barracks routine. Now that was true through until the end of the year. I was living in at the time.

16:30 Because I left Mavis and the kids here in Brisbane, the kids were at school. At the end of the year, December, I drove down with one of my CQMSs [Company Quartermaster Sergeant] who'd been my storeman in 3RAR, drove all the way home and I had leave here, and I picked the family up and went north again. Now in January '68, Colonel Townsend handed over to Lieutenant-Colonel David Butler and he became

17:00 the CO. So really my true RSM position started at that point and a number of changes took place. Some of the senior NCOs who had been on the first tour who were qualified warrant officers were put out into the companies as company sergeant majors. Some of the corporals went for sergeant. David Butler wasn't too happy with the performance of what I felt too

17:30 was a pretty scrappy platoon, well the remnants of the assault pioneer platoon. So he said, "I want you to sort that platoon out RSM, now get someone there who will do the work." Now I didn't really know all of them all that well, but I knew that I had in that group, in the General Group, a corporal Alan McLean, big raw-boned Queenslander who had been with 5 Battalion at Vietnam,

18:00 and had been wounded and sent home. So I sent for McLean one day and I said, "How would you like to be a sergeant, Corporal McLean?" and he said, "Oh I'd love it, Sir," and I said, "Right, this is your job: you get down there and you sort out that scruffy platoon, and I don't mind if you lay on the hands a bit, but providing you don't bully. You straighten them out, if you can give me your firm promise that that's going to be I'll take you upstairs now and promote you." Done deal.

18:30 He was upstairs, promoted, and the platoon was wonderful thereafter. And I didn't ask him how did it, but he did it. We gave him new blood and it was a great platoon. I'll deal with that later on when we…

I that regard do you think it's possible that some of these blokes are always available to be at their best but in the conditions they just dropped their game and take it easy for a while and need someone to

19:00 **give them a kick up the arse?**

Well that's perhaps true, but also it could well be that they hadn't been very well led in the first instance and that's contributed to. Well, I should make your own determinations. But they were pretty scruffy. But assault pioneers are scruffy anyway they're supposed to be, it's the nature of the work they do but

19:30 they didn't appeal to me one bit, but the new platoon was great. I had a lot to do with them in fact in operations. And thereafter we just got stuck about the business of getting ready to go back to Vietnam because that had been allotted to us. To train to get to Vietnam and then we knew that going to Vietnam, we would be the ANZAC [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] Battalion on the second tour because

20:00 the concept had already been established. With first 2RAR had become the first of the ANZAC battalions, and they had in turn been relieved by 4RAR and this was the unit that that we were about to relieve, so they were 4RAR a bleak and said and sack battalion which we would assume. But there were a few differences. The training really built

20:30 up and we did everything possible to build up this esprit de corps at one stage of the game we were having trouble with people going AWL [Absent Without Leave] – not just disappearing into town, but heading off back to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne. You know, young National servicemen wanting to go home to mummy. And David Butler was a bit worried he said, "What will we do to stop it?" and I said, "Don't you worry, the next fellow who transgresses

21:00 only for an hour, we'll fix him." So one poor fellow was absent for a few hours and he fronted the CO and I said, "Right, hit him with the lot," so he gave him his maximum punishment, which was seven days' detention, and fourteen days confined to the barracks and the requisite fines. We didn't have any trouble after that.

21:30 We trained, the National Servicemen were wonderful for the army. I wish we still had it going because they were the pick of the crop. They were twenty years of age, they had been assessed physically, mentally, the whole shooting match. I mean they were mature, and amongst them with some wonderful sportsmen, A grade cricketers, A grade league players, union players and what have you. We killed them up north,

22:00 the rugby union side. You know Lawrie Lawrence the swimming coach, he played half back for University, we murdered them at the final competition that year we were there. Lawrie Lawrence, his

opposite number was Shortie Turner who lives just up the road here, Shortie iced him a few times. Everything was done to embolden this as esprit de corps. We were tops in the rugby union,

22:30 we had an Australian Rules side up there and that wasn't really ever spoken about much, we had a crack soccer team and some of the rugby union players used to play league at the weekends so we were there. And the CO had made me, although I'd never played union in my life, he had made me the battalion selector because I knew who was who and I knew that if I said you'll be there for training that they would be there.

23:00 We organized it whereby if there happened to be an exercise and there was a big game on, they were pulled out a couple of days beforehand, brought home and got ready for the game. At one stage of the game there was a requirement for me to appear as battalion selector before the selector for North Queensland, Lieutenant-Colonel Charlie Duke, to select a team inter-service side to come south and play South Queensland and then the RAAF.

23:30 And he said to me, " Right RSM, any nominations?" I said, "Yes, you can have the first 15." And he accepted the first 15 plus one other and they came south, thrashed South Queensland area, thrashed the RAAF and four of them made it into the combined service side. Wonderful. That was the thing that set the battalion up. The quality of our sportsmen, not

24:00 not all National Servicemen, but mainly.

At this stage what was the reaction like between regular servicemen and National Servicemen?

They just fitted in. In fact, some of them became junior NCOs, we actually had a couple of National Service officers. Some of these people, particularly the officers extended their time to finish twelve months in Vietnam. You remember

24:30 that saying, 'Punch a Postie' on the RTA? That was started by National Servicemen. Because we weren't getting the mail through, and when you get home on RTA you punched a postie. I don't think it ever happened, but the threat was there. No, we trained, we did some things that we shouldn't possibly have done and we

25:00 had brought, I say we, the battalion had brought back from Vietnam from the first tour a number of captured weapons. AK-47s, SKSs and so on and so forth and also ammunition. Now it was forbidden under ministry law to utilise captured weapons, but I said to the CO now we were discussing training I said, "Look, you remember the old crack and thump method of estimating distance

25:30 of your enemy from his fire?" He said, "Yeah." "Well we've got these weapons here. We've got this ammunition. Why don't we do the same thing down the range and train the NCOs and the officers in estimating differences using SKSs and AK-47s, so they can get used to the sounds of these strange weapons and know the distances they're being fired at?" So without telling anyone we did that.

That sounds logical why were you not allowed?

You're not allowed to do these things:

26:00 I mean that we probably shouldn't have had the ammunition anyway apart from anything else. And the other thing we did whilst we were up in Townsville, George Chinn had amassed a quantity of produce, you know shell casings and, allegedly all from Long Tan, but I think perhaps that's drawing a long bow [exaggerating] but some of that certainly was and

26:30 what we were going to do was to fashion a battalion crest, all the other the battalions had them, usually made in Japan or in Singapore. the Mount Stuart refinery was not far from Townsville and our assault pioneer platoon commander Lieutenant Kevin Leadbetter was friendly with the chief engineer there so we, I got all this ammunition, we weighed it, there wasn't enough by weight so we got some from elsewhere and we got enough and he

27:00 had this manufactured for us. It was wonderful. We also had our colours presented up there. At which parade appeared all sorts of dignitaries. And then later in the year, John Gorton who was the Prime Minister, presented us with the Long Tan citation streamer. And in that particular case, of course we were right into training. Are you familiar with Townsville? You know the

27:30 High Range area, that had all been cattle properties and what have you and had been acquired by the Defence Department so that's where we were going to train. The CO said to me one day, "Get up there and do a recce [reconnaissance]," so I got a couple of CSMs [Company Sergeant Majors] and the RP [Regimental Police] sergeant, and off we went. Land-Rover. God, we had to repair the damn track on the way up. Eventually we got up the top and you know, places like the Poisoned Water Hole, and others became very familiar. Others followed us and

28:00 established things. But we were up there training and the CO said, "Now we've got this presentation and Gorton's coming up, how many days you reckon you'll need to train the battalion?" I said, "Give me three weeks." He said, "You can have five days." and that's all I had. But the soldiers were great and they reacted well. And then tempus fugit it was time to go almost again so we went back. We had the craziest situation

28:30 Though, where the CO had established an advance party and he had me with him in the advance party. We had to go through Singapore as though we were civvies, so we had polyester slacks on and shirts like that and close cropped hair and zippered duffel bags and we got off at Singapore at Changi [airport] and had a cup of tea or something and then go back on in the aircraft,

29:00 changed into full uniform and logged into Tan Son Nhut, and in Saigon the battalion was met.

How did the rest of the regiment get there?

On the [HMAS] Sydney. On the Sydney. We were up there I suppose, a couple of weeks before they arrived. But we got into Tan Son Nhut and it was the old business of 'hurry up and wait' but in the end we were hanging about, you've no idea. Tan Son Nhut.

29:30 Have you been, you haven't been to Vietnam have you? Traffic going every which way. Fighting aircraft and bombers and Hercules and eventually this mini Herc [Hercules] came in, I think it was a C120 I think they call it, a shortened version. It came in, lobbed, bullet holes shot through it, it dropped its ramp and they brought a bulldozer. Body bags, body bags, body bags, and they said,

30:00 "Well, this is yours, this is what you're going up in," and so they changed most of the aluminium decking. And we all got in and we all just sat on the deck linked arms and we took off. Unbeknownst to me down the back, Spike Jones my sergeant tells me down the back wasn't very well cleaned at all because they were sitting in body parts. A couple of the soldiers were sick. Anyway we were lobbed into

30:30 Nui Dat and commenced the handover, takeover from the 4th Battalion. Now before we had left, some months before we had left in fact. The New Zealand and Australian governments had had the presence of mind to actually give us the New Zealand 2IC, who was to be the battalion 2IC in-country in Australia So he arrived in Townsville and he was with us for a few months so we could recognize him and he was familiar with our

31:00 practices. Major Wallace was his name, Neville Wallace, a very nice man. Now when we arrived in Nui Dat, as I say we relieved 4RARNZ [Royal Australian Regiment New Zealand] at the same time one brand-new New Zealand rifle company was arriving and that was the Victor 4 Company. Remaining with us was

31:30 Whisky 2 Company, which had only done six months so there was always that. So we were to be 6RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion. And that comprised the battalion headquarters, Alpha, Bravo and Delta companies, support company and admin company, Victor company and whisky company.

32:00 So you had two New Zealand rifle companies and also a component of New Zealand in New Zealand assault pioneers who joined our respective platoons. So it was quite a big battalion actually. And everything sort of melded in well. Of course, the word had got back to us that the Kiwis were crack shots, one round, one kill sort of thing.

32:30 I think everyone what was a bit tense about this, so what we did in Townsville was we got air rifles and we established under the barracks mini ranges with blankets and what have you. And the soldiers practised and practised and practised, and in the end we would just as good as the Kiwis were. We were as good as each other. The other thing we did in Townsville was, there was a requirement to inoculate the soldiers battle wise.

33:00 Now the machine gun which the army had in those days, the GPMG [General Purpose Machine Gun] M60, the American made thing, was not very stable on its tripod, so it certainly wasn't suitable for overhead fire or even flanking fire and you weren't allowed to use it anyway. That was part of the deal anyway – you don't use enemy weapons and the GPMGM would have been unsafe, so it was decided that we would get the Vickers machine guns

33:30 out of mobilisation stocks and I was quite happy. I was the RSM, I was an ex machine gunner, I was right and the RSM of 31 Royal Queensland Regiment, Greg McGee, had been in machine gun platoon 3RAR at Kapyong. So the two of us the weekends, we trained the junior NCO is, we got ammunition from somewhere I think it might have come from India. We trained these junior NCOs and the Vickers

34:00 were used for overhead and flanking fire on the battle inoculation packages. OK, so the battalion eventually arrived, and we were in situ. I think the very first contact would have been Whisky Company, because they were sort of well versed in what went on and they had a contact not far from Nui Dat in the first couple of weeks we were there. The task force commander in those days was

34:30 Brigadier CMI Pearson who had commanded 1RAR Battle Group in pentropic [a form of military organization] days, he was actually, armoured corps, but as a brigadier he commanded everything and he was a very nice man. So he said to David Butler, "Right we'll have the battalion go up into the north of the province, Phuoc Tuy province, up round the Courteney rubber plantation. Nice and quiet there. You can

35:00 go up there and get your procedures sorted out and you'll be pretty all right." You know, "Brigadier, hand me a map, you know." So off we went, Operation Lavarack was the name of the thing, named after Lavarack Barracks in Townsville. The Fire Support Base was one which had been used by 4RAR

previously and named Virginia, and just off the main drag also in the rubber trees.

35:30 We wouldn't have been there more than a few hours, every company was in contact. It was such a big deal that he just left us there three weeks. We killed over a hundred. Everywhere that popped the head up there was a 6RAR mob there to bump off. Even, you heard of the Battle of Binh Ba, now that in fact was a 6RAR thing. But the

36:00 North Vietnamese Regiment had got into Binh Ba and occupied it but it was within our area of operations. Now Colonel Butler could not afford to pull the companies out because they were all in contact, so he asked the task force commander for the ready reaction company from Nui Dat to come up and they sent up Major Murray Blake with whom I had

36:30 had dealings previously as a subbie [sub lieutenant] and later on he was my chief instructor elsewhere. He came out with his under-strength company, and they got him with the Centurion tanks into Binh Ba. He was under command 6RAR but as the battle developed it needed more troops so Butler asked the task force commander for another company of 5RAR and Major Harring came up with his company and they

37:00 then joined the battle and with that, Butler relinquished command to Colin Cahn the CO5 so really Binh Ba was a 6RAR battle from its inception, although it later on became five. We had a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful time there on Lavarack, I mean from the standpoint of operations, the battalion was blooded and did it very well.

37:30 Obviously, we took casualties ourselves, and that's always regrettable but it's always go to happen, isn't it? The biggest ambush ever by an Australian unit occurred on that operation, Second Lieutenant Rod Chandler, they laid an ambushed this night, he was part of Delta Company and they killed all but twenty-two in the one ambush.

38:00 That's the biggest ambush result for which he awarded the MC. Old Roddy. He's here in Brisbane. One of my pipers, Gordon Black, when the reinforcements used to march in, in Townsville, they would be interviewed by the adjutant captain, Michael John Harris, and the RSM Jim Cruickshank. Now Mick Harris

38:30 was looking for rugby union players, Jim Cruickshank was looking for pipers and drummers, because where about to lose our bandsmen you see and Gordon Black marched in and he was an Australian from Newcastle and I said, he was asked if he played rugby union and he didn't, he was a league man, and, "Do you play the bagpipes?" "Yes I do." "Good you're off, you're going to be a piper." "I don't want to be a piper." "You're going to be a piper." And piper he was.

39:00 Well, he was also, he was the stretcher bearer corporal attached to Delta Company at the same time right up in the north. And he and Brian Mills, the medic, were on picket this night and Brian nudged him and he said, "Hey, there's one of the nasties there." We looked. God, so it is! So they counted them

39:30 One, two, three, four, five and when they got up to nineteen, he pressed the claymores and they initiated this ambush and they killed a few that night too.

Tape 5

00:33 Okay now I have been asked by Michelle [interviewer] to perhaps backtrack on something I may have remembered while she'd been away for lunch, and the one thing that did spring to mind over lunch was my time at Nutt Point, Los Negros with the PIR. The company headquarters building was the building in which the Japanese war trials had taken place after the Second World War

01:00 And it was quite a tall building actually. And it had raised seating on the sides as though it were for a jury or spectators. And in the middle of the floor there was a white circle on which the accused used to stand. Now not too far away were the gallows, what was left of the gallows. And one of our number had actually been the assistant hangman and despatched a few of these

01:30 recalcitrant Japanese, Keith May was his name. I'm quite happy to tell the story. The other thing about Los Negros was the number of sea going crocodiles, you used to see them often off the shore, huge monsters and we often tried to get to them from the shore with .303 rifles but unsuccessfully. May I add that we never ever swam there.

02:00 But between us, and there were all three services were up there. There was the RAAF at Momote, not too far away, which Qantas used to fly into once a week. And at the naval base was HMS –HMAS Tarangau, it was only just across the water a bit. So we had a pretty good thing going at the sergeants' mess at the RAAF base,

02:30 and also the petty officers' mess at the navy. And in fact, we kept pigs, the PIR. You know, large white pigs. And the OC of the company was a Scotsman by the name of Ramsey [actually Couper], ex Black Watch and the company sergeant major, whose name escapes me now, but he was a real flea, he used to abhor

03:00 anyone who drank, you know. He'd looked down his damned nose at us all; Mick Jury was his name, Mick Jury. He would look down his nose at us, but then he would disappear for a couple of days and get as drunk as fowl, you know, out of sight. Anyway, he convinced Ramsay that these pigs were causing flies and we were ordered to get rid of them. So Charlie Shoal, who was one of the other platoon commanders, ex 2/9th Battalion incidentally, and myself,

03:30 we dispatched them and then hung them up in the deep freeze over at the naval base. And occasionally we would have a barbecue, to which we did not invite either the OC or the CSM. Another thing it reminds me of, Manus particularly, between us and Momote there was a vast swamp area in which there were crocodiles, and the RAAF fellows used to go there at spotlighting at night shooting crocs. The other thing was,

04:00 between us and the main island at Papatilai there was a big, well it wasn't a creek it was part of the sea but it looked like a big creek, separating us from the mainland of Manus. Dumped there were literally dozens of brand new vehicles by the Americans, you know, at the end of the war they just pushed them in. And obviously they had dumped some in the jungle too because

04:30 a couple of the RAAF fellows had got half tracks out of the shrubs, done them up and used them as private vehicles. They were very smart. Obviously we were there unaccompanied, the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] had a funny system, apparently they had a naval officer commanding who was quite a senior fellow, he was there in the big married quarters with the swimming pool and all the rest, but the others to gain

05:00 a married quarter had actually to build one of their own you know, a Quonset hut or something. So a heap of them would team up together, put up a Quonset hut and call it a married quarter. One family would shift in and then they would get together and do the same with others. It wasn't a very happy situation I don't think. Yeah, no the RAAF were fine, they seemed normal, well as is common with the RAAF they had

05:30 a wonderful system where they muster into their force, only the people they need for specific tasks. And on active service always between sheets you know, miles away from where the action is… although they did all right by us in Vietnam. Anyway, that's the end of my story on PIR. Where was I now? We were up on Lavarack weren't we?

And you just talked about the big ambush …

The big ambush, that was Chandler. All the companies did very well there and I think I've mentioned

06:00 Binh Ba had I not? Yeah. At the end of that exercise the feeling in the battalion was one of, almost euphoric because we had been very successful. At that time as the RSM, I had the responsibility of commanding the battalion headquarters sector within the Fire Support Base and I also stood duty as command post duty officer you know

06:30 on the rota with all the other people, all the other officers. I can remember one particular occasion where I was on at night and I can remember the person who called this fire mission down from B Company, Captain Doug Byers, the company 2IC, he called down a fire mission and then that was transmitted to me in the command post ,and I sent it down to the gun line and they fired the mission

07:00 and then back came the instruction from Doug Byers – "Five rounds fire for effect." that means that all the guns are firing five rounds and away they went and impacted and then back came Byers and he said, "Repeat." and I gave the repeat to the gun line and with that the battery commander said, "Stop!" and came down into the CP [Command Post], "For God's sake, we don't have any more ammunition left on the gun line." So that was that.

07:30 Anyway, back to Nui Dat, we went for a week or so, and bit of rest and clean up and the we were deployed down to the south of the province on an Operation Mundingburra, named after a Townsville suburb into that area there

08:00 down around the fishing village of Long Phuoc Hai. Now this became rather a ticklish operation because it was close to the area, you've heard of the minefield, from Dat Do to the coast which was put in by the Task Force some years previously, the Viet Cong had mastered the art of lifting these mines because, with a minefield, once you install a minefield,

08:30 it should always be covered by fire and visually. And this had been passed on to the Vietnamese Army, the AVRN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] to look after but they hadn't bothered so the VC [Viet Cong] made themselves very welcome to lifting these damn things. The only trouble was that they had a tendency to place them in our path and this occurred, we had a huge accident one night. Our Fire Support Base

09:00 was Thrust, was the name of the place Thrust. Nearby we had a tall tower which a Chinook brought in, from the top of which you could observe the countryside all the way round. And Mundingburra was a sore test actually as it transpired. Can you remember the day man first landed on the moon, can

09:30 you remember the date? June sixty-nine. It might have been the, you said 21st? Yeah that's right 21st. Now what happened on that day, was a company was in the Light Green off to the east of the main

highway and as it transpired,

10:00 all the platoons had with them single civvy type radio with the ear piece. They knew that man was about to lob on the moon and they were all listening in. And one particular platoon was not only listening in, but everyone was clustered around to get the word and with that the platoon commander stood on a mine and not only killed himself, but wounded severely the platoon sergeant

10:30 and all the other section commanders with the exception of one. Plus a number of other private soldiers and members of the mini engineer team that was with them, you know to lift mines. Complete disaster. And as soon as we got the word back at the Fire Support Base, the CO got a helicopter and he and the doctor flew off to the site of the accident and I said to him, “You want me to come with you?” and he said, “No

11:00 you stay back here and look after this,” you know the Fire Base. So off he went, they attended to the casualties and had them dusted off, the engineers and the assault pioneers cleared a track through to where the dust off was to take place and once all that had occurred the CO and the doctor and the others were coming back along this secured track when the doctor sighted just outside the tape

11:30 a piece of VC propaganda. He stepped outside the tape 10 cm and blew himself up. Completely blinded and he wounded the commanding officer, David Butler, plus others including a member of the splinter team and then standing some hundreds of meters away was the only surviving junior NCO from three platoon, John Needs. Killed stoneless dead.

12:00 And they got to him, there wasn’t a mark on him apart from a small hole where it had pierced his heart. So with that of course we were in a quandary, the CO was dusted off and gone, in came the battalion 2IC, the New Zealander, and assumed command of the battalion. Which was a seamless operation, it was fine. But of course the battalion 2IC had always commanded the whole

12:30 of the Fire Support Base for defence and task patrols out of the fire base and all this business. So with him as the CO he said, “Right RSM responsibilities and now yours.” So I became responsible then for the total defence of the whole of the Fire Support Base, the battery, any armoured corps, the works including the tasks of patrols.

13:00 Well it was unexpected but at least I didn’t have to do duty in the CP any more. Now it took something like three weeks for Butler to get well enough to return. And when he did he said, “Right, RSM you will continue with those responsibilities, the 2IC will be redeployed back to Nui Dat where he should be.” So for the rest of the tour Neville Wallace would fly in on day one and he would actually sight the Fire Support Base,

13:30 you know the battery and the mortars and all the other bits and pieces while I looked after my own sector and then once he had gone, the whole thing was mine. And I would task patrols, and worry about clearing patrols and all the rest of the nonsense for the rest of the tour.

Could you talk us through a typical day for you?

Well, once I had assumed this responsibility, we had in the Fire Support Base there was the Command Post, you know the CO and all his staff

14:00 The radios and what have you and so forth. And then for the defence of the Fire Support Base there was a defence command post, a small one containing me, and a couple of sigs and also the assistant quartermaster, in our case Second Lieutenant Phil Badcock, who was responsible for getting op-dems [operational demands], maint-dems [maintenance demands], and the flow of material out to the companies.

14:30 So we were co-located together. So essentially what would happen, a typical day would be this: Butler had said to me before we got to thrust, he said, “RSM, I give you this as your charter, we are not to sustain any casualties within the Fire Support Base.” Because previous battalions had been mortared.

15:00 “You will make sure we are all dug in.” So I made sure that everyone was dug-in and that we all slept below ground. Anyone that was throwing mortars at us would have been mainly unsuccessful. Back to the start of the day. Typically the day would start just before sunrise when the whole force would stand to, the Fire Support Base, the companies out in the fields what have you stand to

15:30 For the transition of just before dawn, through dawn, until after dawn has passed. Now that is one of the prime times for an attack to come in you see, so we were all ready for that. Following that I would despatch in order of rotation, a patrol out to clear out, to perhaps a hundred meters out round the Fire Support Base all the way, to make sure that no one had come in and left any nasties for us, and then the normal routine would

16:00 devolve upon: the battery would get to cleaning and the guns on rotation and same with the mortars and so on and so forth and everyone get to washing and shaving and having breakfast. And then the normal routine for the day, in support of the companies who were out there, providing them with fire support or whatever. Then as the day closed we would have stand to again just before nightfall. I’d give the order to stand to,

16:30 and the whole base would stand to for the period just before nightfall, through nightfall and for a period afterward, because that's the second time of the day when you might expect nasties. And then I'd hop into my command post along with the assistant quartermaster and we would sit there, and usually I'd have one of the NCOs, possibly the radio sergeant in there but if not, one of his NCOs sitting on

17:00 a device we had there, a monitor device because we had sensors out all the way around the fire base so you could hear any movement. Well usually there was lots of movement, but it was usually pigs or lizards or monkeys or some damn thing. And we would sit there sort of monitoring that and of course all around the Fire Support Base, there were claymores [anti-personnel mines] out and so on and so forth and listening posts. And then I

17:30 would stay there until one or two in the morning, you know, listening and then go to sleep. And that was right till the next morning, stand to again. Oh, just before stand to clearing patrols would go out again and just check the perimeter just prior to stand to. And then I might be required to send fighting patrols out during the day so I'd get volunteers, or I'd volunteer you, you, you and you

18:00 and corporal you will lead them off you go. And give them a task.

What would be typical tasks?

Oh I might say, "Right there's been a suspected movement in that particular vicinity there, just go out and check it out. And if there's anything there bump them off." And on one occasion, I just forget which Fire Support Base this was operating out of, but one of my RP corporals

18:30 was there, Lou Stevens, and Butler said to me, this must have been after Mundingburra [actually later in the tour], he said to me, "Look RSM, there's a requirement for us to send two track vehicles out to pick up the Defence and employment platoon from the task force which had been lying in ambush at X marks the spot for umpteen days. What I suggest you do is send the APCs [armoured personnel carriers] out but put some of our people in the and close

19:00 the hatches down, so that when they get to the position we get the D & E's [D&E Platoon] into the APCs and our fellows go out into an ambush." So I sent Lou Stevens and three or four other fellows out and I, no, I shouldn't give the rest of this because it might get to the greenies. I promised to reward him if he was successful, let's put it that way.

19:30 And then listened in on the net and sure enough within a few minutes of the D & E platoon coming away, Stevens came up: "Contact wait out." He'd shot two VC who'd come in to investigate as to what they thought the D & E platoon had quit the area and looking for food or whatever. So they won't do that again, will they? So that was not symptomatic of what we

20:00 did at Mundingburra, but it's a task I did do.

So when people came back, did they report to you what they'd seen and done?

Well if they'd been out on patrol they would come back and report usually to the intelligence officer. Because he was the fellow that would collate all the information. I'd only task them out and if they had information to pass on it went to the intelligence officer, Capt.

20:30 Fred Fairhead, who had been in 2 PIR with me incidentally. Okay. Mundingburra. So eventually the CO came back and then we went off, we went off the then – there were a couple of small operations involving companies, the next battalion operation I think was Operation Burnham when we left Phuoc Tuy Province, and went into Bien Hoa Province

21:00 to support the American land clearing teams, who had these huge Rome bulldozers, you know, ten abreast, they'd go in and mow down square miles of jungle. But of course this would attract the VC who would attack them, so they also needed to be protected by infantry and we had the task of doing that, I think 5RAR had been there before actually

21:30 The Fire Support Base there was 'Diggers' Rest' which had been used by units in the past and as I say it, was in Bien Hoa Province right out of our normal area of operation. Now the things that happened there were, one night, late one afternoon the sensors picked up movement outside the Fire Support Base, and they called in

22:00 air support, and air support came in and fired ordnance at this particular location and then reported that they in turn had been fired upon, this is the aircraft, so this is from, I stood the fire base to when all this was going on and from then, that's right on dark, until 4 o'clock

22:30 the next morning we had continuous air support. Phantoms dropping high drag bombs, napalm, those spooky aircraft, those C 47s that fly round and round with mini guns that are firing millions of rounds a second. And that went on all night. Of course, we were all well bunkered down. The next morning out went the clearing patrols, and they found nothing but flattened

23:00 foliage, although there were tracks of about 30 people who had passed by, so obviously something had been there all right. That same day, the next morning, on the nearby highway a convoy of trucks was ambushed by the nasties, North Vietnamese/Viet Cong. And then Whisky Company ran into this,

23:30 we think the same mob that bypassed us at the Fire Support Base, 'Diggers' Rest', they ran into them in a heavy bunker position, which kept the company very active for the rest of the day, you know trying to get into it, shooting and hacking and stabbing. In fact, they almost ran out of ammunition just before last light and they put in an ammunition op-dem. Now normally fresh ammunition –

24:00 or anything else – would go directly from Nui Dat into whichever company, but this was right before dark: there was no way they would get from Nui Dat up there so it came to me. I got a helicopter, and with some of my – CSM Godfrey from Support Company – my RP Sergeant Watson and Tommy Douglas, my Stretcher Bearer Sergeant, we bundled sufficient small arms ammunition other stuff in this helicopter

24:30 lobbed into Whisky Company right on dark, and gave it to them and then got out of it. Let them entertain the Viet Cong for the rest of the night.

How much of a problem was it getting low on ammunition and stuff?

It didn't usually happen because I mean, main-dems, op-dems were religiously, I mean whichever company would put in its op or main-dem

25:00 in code, it was a set code for all these things, you know pair of socks might be 'z' or something, ammunition, rations, the works, clothing, was always delivered as required, you know fresh socks or whatever. That's the only occasion I can think of in the whole twelve months where they'd actually, I mean the contact was so heavy and they weren't really making headway into this damn

25:30 bunker system that they were perilously close to, running out which would have put them at a disadvantage then. In fact, they got in the next morning and the nasties had evacuated the area, but there were signs that they had been successful: a bit of blood and stuff about. And that's about it for Burnham, I think.

26:00 Mundingburra, you know Butler was wounded, and of course he was dusted off and whereas most people would go to the 1st Australian Field Hospital, for some reason they took him to 36 American Evac, also in Vung Tau. The brigadier, the task force commander, flew in shortly after all this had occurred, and he said to me, "Are you worried about your CO, RSM?" I said, "Yeah I'd like to see him." He said, "All right, take my helicopter and go." So I got the brigadier's helicopter and went down to Vung Tau.

26:30 And I caught up with Butler in 36 Evac, now he had been there, this must have been the next day because they hadn't even shaved him, you know the Yanks. We exchanged pleasantries and I said it now, "Look it's getting close to August, and you and I had discussions about what we should do on the 18th of August to recognize the Battle of Long Tan," and we had mulled over whether we would have a service at Nui Dat or whether we would actually go to Long Tan

27:00 and do something. And he said it, "What you reckon?" and we mulled it over and we decided, yes we would go out there and plant a cross. And he said, "Well you fix it, you get the cross made and I'll get the ops officer, Major Johnson, to do the operation order." So when I got back to, when Mundingburra had finished and we got back to Nui Dat, I gave the task to this Alan McLean who had straightened out the pioneer platoon. I said, "Now, I want you to build me an 8 foot concrete cross and have it ready to take out

27:30 for the 18th of August ." And he did that and they got it curing nicely, and it's – have you seen pictures of it? It's got a distinctive diamond shape in the middle, now that's deliberate because it was thought that with the reinforcing and so on and so forth, it wouldn't be sufficient to stop the arms from dragging eventually, so that diamond shape is to hold the cross in shape. So he did that and

28:00 I got Andy Watson, my RP sergeant; to obtain from sources unmentioned a piece of brass. Of a specific size. And then I gave him the wording and he went somewhere, I think down to one of the local villages, and had it engraved in the wording which appears so, having done that, the ops officer then produced an operations order,

28:30 Operation Long Tan. And on the 17th of August 1969, Delta Company, which had obviously been involved in the battle, and myself and my RP section and some of the pioneers went in, we were taken into the Long Tan rubber and the company deployed and I got the survivors of the Long Tan battle, a number of them,

29:00 John Beere, and Neil Rankin and others, and Brian Halls, and we walked the area and I said, "Now where?" Because the whole thing, the battle had started with the felling of the forward scout of 11 Platoon,, "Where was the forward scout killed?" They all into a huddle and determined that that was the spot, roughly there, and I said, "Right that's where the cross will go." create a bit of a spot. The next morning, the pioneers dug a hole and a helicopter dropped the thing in

29:30 lowered it in and we cemented it in and put chains around and polished it up and painted it and polished the brass plaque. The battalion came in by various air assault or by APCs, formed a perimeter and then we had the service.

Was that a dangerous thing to do?

Well, it would have been dangerous for anyone who wanted to come close handy. No, we were all right.

Did that help the survivors' morale?

30:00 Oh, yes absolutely. There were ten of them there, well in fact, there were only nine of them there. I think nine because one, Darby Munro, who was another survivor, had just been wounded and lost both his legs on Mundingburra. He was back home here, so there were nine original infantrymen and there was one armoured corps fellow who had actually been there with the APC squadron so a total of ten.

30:30 And then Gordon Black and Dave Newlands, two pipers were there. All the hoi polloi, the local dignitaries were there, and there was a service and I read the names of the fallen and so on, it was great for the survivors, and great for the battalion. So that was Operation Long Tan: now that happened after Mundingburra and before Burnham.

31:00 And now Operation Ross as I recollect was an area – we were directed to go to this particular area in rubber, just to the west of Xuen Mok. And it was an operation with a singular lack of success. We, the task force commander had changed: we now had Brigadier Stuart Paul Weir who had been my company commander in Korea, he was commanding and he wanted us

31:30 in this particular area. Fire Support Base. Discovery was the name of the fire base. And the companies patrolled incessantly, we even sent out at one stage of the game a large fighting patrol from the Fire Support Base, commanded by Company Sergeant Major Godfrey, they were out for days and days looking for signs and there was nothing. But Discovery was in this long piece

32:00 of rubber and to the east of it was a long kunai patch, you know, grassed area. And the battery commander thought that this would be a great way to exercise ammunition resupply using aircraft. So we used the wallaby aircraft, not the Hercules, the Caribou, to drop them.

32:30 So in they came, and we all stood by to watch this marvel ,and out they went over the back, the parachute separated from the ammunition and we finished up 'boom boom boom' and fires everywhere. And I had to put the Fire Support Base below ground, we all hid until, oh God – it took a long while for it to finish exploding. So that was the end of that as a concept, I think after that they took the resupply by road

33:00 or by Chinook, one or the other. The only other thing that happened there was the INT [Intelligence] Sergeant, Sergeant Robin William Jones MM [military medal], he'd won his MM on the first tour, was with me in the Fire Support Base, and I sent him out on a fighting patrol with a Hoi Chan, you know, one of the Vietnamese who had surrendered, and they went out to this particular area and

34:00 sighted Viet Cong. The trouble was that engaging them, they would be firing back into the Fire Support Base, so again I put everyone below ground and said, "Go for it." They engaged what they thought was the VC, went forward and examined but there was no sign so whether that was a person or a figment of the imagination, I'll never know but that was Operation Ross. Next one was?

34:30 **The Hoi Chan, the Vietnamese who had surrendered, how could you possibly trust them to work with them?**

One of our principal oppositions was D445 Battalion, which was a local battalion. One of the company commanders surrendered to us, and actually went back out with A Company, with Company Sergeant Major Myles, and this fellow was actually armed, they armed him

35:00 and he participated in attacking his erstwhile companions and in fact on one occasion he stopped them and he said, "Don't go to that side," he said, and he dug up a mine. And on the other side of the track he located another sixteen mines so I mean, there you go. On another occasion we had a Hoi Chan

35:30 surrender and he was brought to the Fire Support Base. And he said that he knew where some of his companions were hiding on a pepper plantation. And the CO said, "Right," now our helicopter pilot very often was Captain Flanagan, a New Zealander from the New Zealand Army Air Corps or air force or some damn thing. And he said to Flanagan, "Will you take this fellow out?" and he said, "No fear." He said, "I'm not taking

36:00 any of these Viet Cong, or ex Viet Cong fellows." There'd have to be someone else with him. So the CO looked around and the lightest person in the Fire Support Base was me, so I went out with Flanagan and this Viet Cong fellow, Hoi Chan, sitting in my lap. I was armed of course. And we got overhead and he pointed to where it was, now Alan McLean with the Assault Pioneer Platoon was out in the area, and I was in

36:30 contact with him. I said, "You just stay where you are, McLean, while I get down." So we landed and the Hoi Chan indicated these hides and McLean and his merry band located the deadly enemy.

Did you find that extraordinary that they….

They'd sell their grandmother for twopence. I think they just got sick of living in rather unpleasant

37:00 conditions and being constantly harried, they thought, "Well perhaps I'm on the wrong side after all." But that particular find, I think the assault pioneer platoon was actually working in concert with Delta Company at the time, which had changed company commanders, Jock Stuart, the then company

commander had gone home to staff college and he had been replaced by Major Mick Gill, so those two entities were working

37:30 in concert. And in fact, they had put a screen around and we got these two fellows out of the ground and they captured another couple who ran into the screen. But when we reported this damn thing back to the battalion, the instruction that came back was put him back in and make him come out and they sent a PR photographer out to snap it. So we said to this Nog [soldier of the Viet Cong], get down in that hole in the ground and he got terrified, he thought we were going to bump him off.

38:00 But there it is. There's a photograph of Alan McLean and myself and this silly old Nog coming out of the ground, this Hoi Chan, he wasn't Hoi Chan, he was VC. But there were a few of them surrendered and I would never have trusted them all but this company commander, Major Lok, he went entirely the other way, he was on our side boots and all

38:30 even to the extent of attacking his erstwhile comrades.

How big a problem were all the hidden tunnels in terms of how you fought the enemy?

It certainly didn't impact on me at all, although we did, on one occasion up in the north, I think it was Fire Support Base Peggy. One of the companies had encountered a huge tunnel complex, and wasn't far away so we got to it.

39:00 And this was before the task force commanders changed over, so it wasn't Peggy, because Sandy Pearson was the task force commander, He came up, he wanted to go down, but Butler said, "Right let's all go together," so there was Pearson and one of his staff officers and Butler and the adjutant and they all had torches except the task force commander. So Butler said, "Where's your torch, RSM?" and I got it and handed it to Pearson,

39:30 and they all dropped down the hole and went. And I thought, "Well, I can't be chicken," so I dropped in behind them, but when I got down there they'd gone, there wasn't a sign of them. See the tunnels used to access perhaps that square, straight down. For about four or five feet, and then they would level out and they would dig a tunnel aisle way underground. I got down there and it was just blackness so, I had no torch, the task force commander had it, so discretion being the better part

40:00 of valour I got up. However, quite recently a fellow by the name of Mannion has been corresponding with me by e-mail from Vietnam. He's across there now with one of those reconstruction teams looking after orphanages and what have you. And he has confirmed with me that in the village of Phuoc Hai, not Long Phuoc Hai down on the coast but a bit further north of that, Phuoc Hai,

40:30 there is an extensive tunnel system that, accessed from a cemetery which goes for literally miles in every direction which was there in the time of the Viet Minh [League for the independence of Vietnam] and the French. And now I don't think we ever found, or any other battalion of the task force ever found it. Now obviously, people were popping in and out of that all the time. And I often wonder

41:00 to myself well, Major Lok must have known about that, but he didn't reveal it to us. The Hoi Chan fellow, and all the other Hoi Chans – never ever revealed it and it's definitely there, because not only Mannion but another fellow who has been corresponding with me, took his wife up on a trip and they were shown it, it's part of the tourist thing now.

Tape 6

00:32 **Can ask you first what your role was with regards to dealing with the air force?**

I had virtually nothing to do with them at all. I mean, the air force was there, they operated dust-offs, pulling the wounded out there was a great job. And some of them operated as

01:00 bushrangers, you know, machine guns and rockets. And one of them, by name Lynch, actually in 1987 attended our big reunion down in Sydney, he was then flying F-111s, in fact I'd met him up at Amberley, so there was a bit of the rapport with them. They had a bit of a bad name initially, I understand, in that they weren't keen on getting too close to the action, but no such experience in our time, no.

01:30 I mean, for some of those fellows to hover, to take off dust-offs under enemy fire takes a lot of guts, you know they're sitting there in really the prone position, not knowing where your next moment's going to come from. I think it takes a lot of guts myself. But I had nothing really to do with them. I had no dealings with them directly.

To what extent was 6RAR deployed using the choppers?

02:00 We air assaulted on a number of occasions, in fact one particular occasion, the name I forget, the headquarters actually air assaulted in behind one of the rifle companies. You know the area was softened up by fighter-bombers and then in we went. And the bushrangers off, and in we went with the Iroquois, lobbed and did our drills and got out.

02:30 Hoping that the deadly enemy was there, hoping that he wasn't there. Air assault using Iroquois was quite a normal feature. And they were also used, they had a priority call always with the SAS [Special Air Service Brigade], if the SAS were out, usually five man patrols, their task was never, ever to get in contact, because they were there to gain information and intelligence.

03:00 But if ever there was a hot extraction, they had priority: they would just fly in with the ropes dangling and they would hook up and they'd be pulled up and away. That happened once, I just forget exactly when now, but we were actually back in Nui Dat, and an SAS patrol had to be hot extracted and the aircraft went in, the ropes dangling, and they all hooked on and

03:30 went up in the sky, but one fellow hadn't hooked on properly and he plummeted hundreds of meters down. And we were deployed, the battalion, two of us in turn, companies looking for him but he was never, ever found. He would have been smashed to smithereens anyway. On that particular occasion I was actually up with

04:00 the CO in the command and control helicopter with the battery commander, we were overflying the area. But I didn't have any dealings with them directly, no.

Continue on with the different operations…

Marsden was an operation which the CO and the intelligence officer had been very, very keen to get us involved in. Now this was up into the Nui May Tao which is the massif at the junction of Long

04:30 Kanh, Long Binh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces and which had been the hidey hole for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong for donkey's years, you know, right back to French time. I can remember that David Butler had had Fred Fairhead construct a mud map, in one of the, it might have been 'Discovery', I think this mud map of Nui May Tao

05:00 with routes in and out and all this sort of jazz and trying to talk Weir into sending us up there, but he wasn't content to send us up there then, he was content to have us do the Xuen Mok area over. But eventually, anyway we got up there to Marsden. I can remember we went up by road, a terrifying experience, because in my opinion, we were on APCs and whilst they had sandbags all over the floors, I was always uncomfortable,

05:30 because there were occasionally APCs being blown off the tracks by the Viet Cong, driving over booby trapped aerial bombs and all sorts of things. So I wasn't very happy. The first support base we were aiming for was Picton right up in the north, but there was an intermediate Fire Support Base we went to. We stopped there for a day or two, and I can remember I stopped:

06:00 we halted the column short, and I sent McLean and the pioneers forward to do a trip around to make sure there weren't any nasties. And sure enough, they found a couple of booby traps that they had left for us. So we were there for a couple of days as I say, and then we went north to Picton. And that was sort of late-ish in the year, because I know I came home on R & R for five days partway through. And in that Fire Support Base

06:30 Picton, we had a wireless interception team, commanded by Warrant Officer Class One Andy Cockburn, a Scotsman like myself, in fact he and I were commissioned the same day. And I can remember Butler saying to me, "If nothing else, if you do nothing else, if the nasties attack us, you are to make sure that Cockburn and Co are not ever taken or bumped off.'

07:00 Because of course they were, listening in on the foreign language business. Should I say that? The companies got really stuck, and the tracker platoon particularly, commanded by Second Lieutenant Neervoort, or 'Doggy' he was nicknamed, 'Doggy' Neervoort. He was a National Service officer who had actually extended his time to the full 12 months.

07:30 He lives in Sydney, married with three or four kids. Anyway, the companies did exceptionally well and they, Neil Rankin, who had been the platoon sergeant 10 Platoon at Long Tan was acting as, well he wasn't acting, he was platoon sergeant of the 11 Platoon on the second trip. And they were in the base of the

08:00 Nui May Tao, and he was following this track, was our Neil, and he saw that there were some sort of certain sign of one side of the track that wasn't present on the other. He suspected that there was something close by, so he took his sig and he crawled forward, and sure enough they found this cave with a couple of, a pair of legs sticking out so he backtracked, called the company commander up

08:30 and said, "I think we've got something here." So they went in, hoping to capture the pair of legs but the pair of legs had disappeared, but inside this cave was the largest combination of ammunition and munitions ever found in Vietnam. It was so large, they were pulling the stuff out and backtracking it and it was so big that the task force commander gave

09:00 permission for the whole thing to be blown in by implosion, so they did that. Blew it in. So vast. That is, Neil Rankin found that. And then they found, one of the companies found the main Viet Cong ammunition construction place, a big armoury where they made arms and ammunition, a huge hospital up on the Nui May, on the mountain itself and

09:30 Victor Company got that. They called me up, the OC said, "Come on RSM, part of the RSM's duties is

recovery of prisoners of war, let's go and get them." So I went up there and we got a few but they were just workers, there was no malice toward them. We got them back, but it was a huge operation. We actually established on top of the mountain a Fire Support Base.

10:00 A Fire Support Base Castle with a section of mortar, two sections of mortar up there supporting the companies which were out round about. Of course there were difficulties then with ranging and you know you're right up the top and you've got a weapon that does that, so the battery commander came up with a system of working out suitable ranges and it was very effective. And in fact we were actually up there on Christmas Eve, and the Viet Cong

10:30 called a ceasefire, and we abided by it and the companies just propped where they were. The OPD [Other Protestant Denominations], Chaplain Mills, came up in a helicopter with the pipe Major Alec McLeod-Lee and the three of us went around the companies, and we got to Delta Company which is on the other side and Mills trapped me into, what's that bloody thing they do–?

11:00 When they give you little bits of bread? Confirmation. In that book and says I was trapped for the first time in years, I was trapped for the first time in my life, I'd never been confirmed into the Church of Scotland. So he got me and the pipe major played his pipes wherever we went, and then the following day was back on again. That was Marsden – it was a wonderful operation. And not only did we find this huge –

11:30 or Rankin find – this huge massive dump of ammunition but, in the hospital complex was also found the largest ever discovered dump of drugs and medications and complete surgeon's kits, manufactured in Sweden and Russia and all sorts of places.

12:00 And all of these drugs had come from all sorts of places, Switzerland, Germany, the United States of America. But literally thousands upon thousands, so Butler would not release them back through the system until he could get a firm guarantee that they were going not into the black market, but going into hospitals and so on and so forth. And when he was given that guarantee he released the stuff back. Otherwise it would have been back in the hands

12:30 of the Viet Cong in a few days. So all in all it really was wonderful, it completely smashed their whole hospital and rehabilitation system. And weeks and weeks afterwards, I think A Company laid ambushes to the west of it and they caught some of them just filtering back in again, but caught they were.

13:00 Completely smashed their whole logistics system. Now we were taking about Hoi Chans, weren't we, before Michelle [interviewer] and we had a particular Hoi Chan. I think it was late in the piece; we might have been in Fire Support Base Peggy I think. Talking about Peggy, when we first went in there

13:30 we had, we went in the battalion 2IC established the fire base, I did my thing with my sector and then the mortars were installed, the ammunition was installed, the field battery was in but receiving ammunition by Chinook. I saw the Chinook come in; it did one pass over and then came in to land with an under-slung load and all of a sudden

14:00 it's rear rotor flew off ,and it just collapsed and burnt and boom, boom, boom you know, the ammunition exploded everywhere. The pioneers and the trackers started to go forward, but they couldn't get forward because of the explosions and so on and so forth. Eventually, Lance Corporal Tichener from the tracker platoon got forward once everything had abated and he could see that everyone was dead. The Yanks came in later on and

14:30 firebombed it, and did the recovery themselves.

Was that a US Chinook?

Yes, I think what had happened as that when the pilot, who would have been a warrant officer probably, was doing this with these controls, a coffee cup had jammed. Which meant that the nose kept on going up and up and up and off flew the rotor. I was very uncomfortable in Chinooks thereafter,

15:00 I can tell you. But also in Peggy, this Hoi Chan said that he knew where D445 Battalion was. This was our nemesis – we were always chasing D445, at which had been there at the Battle of Long Tan along with some of the North Vietnamese. So it was decided that the battalion would be airlifted out, and would do a set piece attack into this particular

15:30 grid square which he had identified. So Butler sent for me, he said, "How many men would you want me to leave behind with you in the Fire Support Base, to sort of pack it up?" And I did my sums and came up with a figure. At the time we had what we termed 'F Troop', which was commanded by Warrant Officer Shorty Turner, who had been promoted supernumerary in rank. And bits and pieces of a variety of organisations,

16:00 like some from the sergeants' mess, the bar steward, Corporal Carruthers of the sergeants' mess, on his second tour he'd been a second commander previously and other people which formed this platoon ad hoc. This allowed the Fire Support Base to be protected, and allowed the pioneers and the trackers to go out and function as rifle platoons. So having done my figures, he said, "Right, we're off in the morning." But he did leave Captain Bill Wallace

16:30 behind, the signals officer to be nominally the man in charge, but Shorty and I did all the work. And off

the battalion went. And I just forget the configuration but one company was to block north, one to the east and one from the south and the other was to drive in from the west. The Hoi Chan had picked the wrong grid square and A Company which was moving into position as a block

17:00 to the south ran into D445 Battalion. And guess which platoon it was? The same platoon that had been in that mine accident in Mundingburra. Now, they had had, they had lost two platoon commanders killed, they had lost Hines in Mundingburra, they lost Marks-Chapman up on the Nui May Tao – was

17:30 killed in an ambush – and Thornton was wounded in this particular occasion. With this, Corporal Hans Flear, who was on his second tour, he'd been with 4RARNZ, took command and fought their way out and won the DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal]. And he is now Lieutenant Colonel JC Fleer, AM [Member in the Order of Australia] DCM. Well he's in the reserve now because he's too old to be a regular.

18:00 So that was a Hoi Chan who had the best will in the world, but had his facts wrong and 3 Platoon A Company was call signed, well that was their call sign, this is call sign 13 and we all said, "Yeah, you're well named – 13 – what luck.." In fact the only member of that platoon from the inception who had not been wounded

18:30 was a fellow by the name of Leigh Floyd, a National Servicemen from the 10th intake [of National Servicemen], who had extended his time to do the full tour. The OC A Company Peter Belt came to him and he said, "Look, RSM," he said, "he's not twitchy, but he's well into the tour now and he's seen some terrible things happen and he hasn't had anything happen to him yet. Can you find him a job?" And I said, "Right, my batman wants to go out into a rifle company,"

19:00 so I gave him my batman and I took Leigh Floyd with me. We worked together well.

How did blokes act when they were getting short on their tour of duty?

There was no problem. There was this business of only three a 'wakey' or one a 'wakey' or three hundred and sixty four a 'wakey' so there were jobs to be done so

19:30 that's what they concentrated on.

So there was no preferential treatment for someone who was getting close to…

We're all in the same boat. The only time was September 1969, we lost the tenth intake of National Servicemen who'd been with us from Townsville, and these were all the crack sportsmen. Douglas, Frank Douglas who owns Ace Driving Schools here,

20:00 well his father used to own but now he does in Brisbane. John Mason from Inverell in NSW – a crack centre at rugby union and Owen Puie, a crack back at rugby union who went to the Main Roads Department, but now retired, I mean all these people left, so that was the only time there was a bit of an impulse, but reinforcements came in and they had time to do and a job to do

20:30 and that was it.

What about fellows on second tours? Were they treated any differently?

Every one of those fellows went back to doing what they were doing. On the second tour for instance, we had Vincent Shorty Brown who is now the Reverend Richard Brown MM, he won his military medal with us.

21:00 He just went back and became, he was a section commander and that was it, he stuck it out with us and he won a wonderful military medal and as I say he is an Anglican priest now. He had ceased to be physically fit so he found another vocation. Neil Rankin, platoon sergeant at Long Tan

21:30 and on the second tour with the 11 Platoon he was out. He set a quick ambush one day, initiated claymores, killed a number of the nasties and he was being, I was listening on the radio, he was being harassed by his company commander, Jock Stuart: "Are they VC or NVA?" "I don't know. I'll let you know as soon as we examine them." "What sort of footwear are they wearing?" "I'll let you know when I find their bloody feet."

22:00 So that's – there's a fellow on his second tour, he didn't worry at all. They all just got about their business.

How hard was it for you when I guess a lot of the time you're hearing these fire fights over the radio…

Thank Christ it's not me. Oh no, I mean I was in my forties, you don't want to be out racing around in the mulga being shot at. Well, I was there to be shot at, but I don't think

22:30 I'd be able to keep up with – at my age – twenty-year-olds effectively.

Did you sometimes feel…

Well, I'd have liked to have bumped off a couple but without too much pain to myself.

What was next then?

Marsden was the last big operation, although the final one I think was Operation Townsville.

23:00 And on this particular operation was the biggest coup of the lot, bigger than all these ammunition dumps, and hospitals and killings and all this sort of nonsense. Lieutenant Lochiel McLean from B Company on the final operation, his platoon encountered a couple of the deadly enemy and bumped them off.

23:30 On one of them, they found a one-time letter pad. Do you understand what that is? It's a system of codes and this, on the face of it was a great coup, but they passed it back, as they were required to do, back into the intelligence system. It got to the taskforce and it was passed back to the Yanks, well it was the biggest thing since sliced bread for the Yanks. This gave them entry to all the Viet Cong codes,

24:00 and of course the Viet Cong didn't know they had them. And we only discovered this laterally. The CO didn't know, the only person who knew was Brigadier Weir, the taskforce commander, and he only knew because he was briefed by the Commander 2 Field Force Victor, General, whoever he was, the American, that this is a great coup and you are to be congratulated, and your battalion is to be congratulated but you're not to tell anyone. And

24:30 Bill Weir has written a letter in this book which I'm proofreading in which he outlines all this. He didn't even tell our Chief of the General Staff, he didn't let anyone know, his wife, or CGS [chief of general staff] or anybody else know, and it was only released in fairly recent times when Butler was given the OK to release it, and he wrote an article for our regimental magazine. But that was the big coup. That was the equivalent to the Enigma

25:00 thing during World War II. 6RAR had been the cause of cracking the VC code. That aws the last operation and on that operation A Company was moving out into a cleared area to pick up transport for embarkation and back to Nui Dat, clean up

25:30 and finito – this is it. They had had with them the whole time the same FO [Forward Observer], Lieutenant Bernie Garland from 1 Field Regiment, and he stood on a mine and killed himself. Terribly sad. He'd been married in Singapore only weeks beforehand; his fiancée had flown up from Sydney. So he was killed and at he same time Smiler Myles was wounded, the CSM who had been there in Mundingburra

26:00 and had, on his second tour with A Company – boom – he was wounded. So the body was taken, and the wounded were dusted off, there was more than the CSM, there were others wounded as well and they got Myles down to the hospital and when they were operating, they discovered that he had been wounded before. On Mundingburra. And he hadn't told anyone.

26:30 Tough as guts eh? Anyway he got word to me because he was to be flown home through Butterworth, he was badly wounded, and he got word to me, he said, he used to call me boss or sahib, "Sahib, save me!" so I went to Terry Hillier, doctor and said, "For God's sake don't let them send him home, do something." So Hillier used the medical system, got him retained in country because we were all, the whole battalion was flying home.

27:00 The intention at the time being that we would all fly home, they would all have leave, I was leaving, but the rest of them would have leave, pick their families up and then fly up to Singapore to relieve 1RAR, but the government changed the plot and that didn't occur until the following year, but we flew home nevertheless. And then I left. I had been posted from 6RAR to be the RSM of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, which

27:30 is the last job in the world I wanted. You remember that bastardisation had taken place? They had really done a job on my old friend the RSM down there, Norm Goldspink, they'd done a job on him, the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation]. It's the last thing I wanted to do. Well, I was saved. Out of the blue came my name to be commissioned onto the quartermaster list. So I came home, they scrubbed the posting to RMC, I came home, and I had to go and do an education course which I did,

28:00 I was commissioned – badges of rank were pinned on me by Brigadier SP Weir, who was then the Commander of 6th Taskforce here in Enoggera, my old company commander. And I was posted as the adjutant of the Northern Command Personnel Depot for a time ,and then as adjutant of 49 RQR [Royal Queensland Regiment] and I was busy beavering away there, we'd just finished a camp and the phone went and it was the Directorate in Canberra: was I

28:30 interested in returning to the battalion as quartermaster? This afternoon? Paddy Young, our QM [Quartermaster] had a tumour in the brain, and couldn't go, so his ill health proved my good fortune. I did a quick QM course at Canungra and then flew across to Singapore and joined the battalion a couple of months after they got there and that was it.

How was your reception back in Australia, was it okay?

29:00 Individually? Yes no problem.

What about as a group?

This nonsense about no-one wished me well when I came home – what a load of rubbish. I came home

twice from Korea, and no-one clapped me or did anything, the fellows from the Second World War came home without accolade. 6RAR the first time came home and marched through Brisbane with thousands out in the streets clapping them.

29:30 When we left to go to Vietnam, the battalion, the second trip, we had to march through Townsville and the word went out then the university students are going to get to you and of course there'd been all sorts of things happening down south, paint being thrown over the colour party and all this, so I briefed the colour party on what we were going to do, just in case there were any intruders. We marched down Flinders Street, David Jones

30:00 corner, and there were all the uni students with a big banner: "6RAR we're with you all the way." Wonderful. No, I don't have any truck with this business of no one loved me when I came home. And in fact that big parade in Sydney in 1987, but you know the welcome home parade, I wasn't going to that. And I was prevailed upon by one of the officers from down south he said, "Look you're the founding president of the 6RAR Association –

30:30 you've got to be there." I said, "Well, I'll only go there if you'll guarantee to have Townsend and Butler there." So they agreed and all three of us were there. And it was good for the soldiers, I suppose, but I thought it was quite unnecessary, I mean you go and you do your job and you come back and that's the end of it.

Can I get you to talk about that – the mindset you had of going to Vietnam to do your job. How you rationalise that?

31:00 Peter [interviewer], it was just the job. I mean, I finished doing a total of thirty-four years in service. At the time I went to Vietnam in 1969 I had already had twenty-three years service up. I mean, I was a soldier. And I wouldn't have liked to have felt that I had missed out on going because that's what the government had paid for me to do.

31:30 I mean, there are all sorts of ways of looking at the thing. Some people think that we shouldn't have been there and probably we shouldn't have been. I don't know. But the thing is this; soldiers do not determine where they're going to go to. Some politician says you go, and you go, and you do your job and that was it and it didn't worry me one bit. It doesn't worry any of the regular fellows that I'm aware of. Not any of the regular infantry fellows anyway. It was just a job that had to be done.

32:00 **Could you understand some of the Nasho [National Service soldiers] fellows feeling a bit hard done by?**

I thought the National Service scheme was wrong in its conception because it should have been all in, of those who were fit to be called up. I mean everyone that turned twenty any given year should be called up and some of them would have gone to Vietnam and some of them wouldn't have done. As it was under the system, most went to Vietnam, but some didn't.

32:30 I can understand some of them being a bit put out in being unlucky enough to get the ballot, but none of them, in my estimation or opinion, ever squibbed on the thing. I mean they were picked up and they went.

Can I ask you a little bit about the fellows with R & R [Rest and Recreation] and R & C [Rest and Convalescence], the difference in that?

R & R was rest and recuperation and was out of country.

33:00 Most of the married men came home to Australia and, under the American system, it was the Americans that did it. For some of them, the single men mainly, went to places like Taipei or Hong Kong, Japan or Thailand. You know other places in South East Asia.

33:30 R & C as I understood it was done at the Peter Badcoe Club [an Australian soldiers' club] in Vung Tau. Which the companies went down to again for four or five days at a time. I went down twice, the CO wanted me to go down with one of the New Zealand companies, and I went down with Whisky Company. And we had a good time, we just drank and swam and ate and hoped that we would grow fat, but I don't think we did. And on the second occasion, I went down with Delta Company some months later.

34:00 But that was it. Now there was an R & C centre, there was the Peter Badcoe Club, which had comfortable accommodation, a sergeant's and officers mess combined, a big swimming pool, a big canteen and the soldiers went down there complete with arms and ammunition which they put into the arms kote [secure area] and then they were released, and they went out and did what they had to do. But there was an R & C centre actually in Vung Tau,

34:30 and there was an Australian warrant officer used to run it. Now what the circumstances were in going to that place I don't know. I think perhaps someone who was wounded and remained on semi duty went there. I stayed there once with the RSM of 4RARNZ, Tony Toghill, we were up in the advance party and he took me round Vung Tau, he took me into night clubs so I could smell the smell of marijuana.

35:00 And he showed me the places where the soldiers shouldn't go and so on and so forth. And we stayed at this particular R & C centre and then returned to Nui Dat the next day. But those were the distinctions as I knew them.

I know the Americans had a lot of problems with drugs and so on, were there any cases you knew of in the Australian Army?

I did mention this to a fellow who interviewed me. Brad or Brett [Archive researchers] or..?

35:30 We didn't have any problems at all. Let's put it that way. I won't mention names but I'll say this, that one of the battalions I understand had declared an amnesty, anyone who was in possession of drugs to hand them in and nothing would happen. I won't mention what the unit was. I did mention it to Colonel Butler and he said, "Jeez, I hope it doesn't happen here," and I said, "It's not going to happen here but if it should occur then we will take remedial action."

36:00 And he said, "Right, I'll be advised by you." Some little time later one of the quartermaster platoon was down in Vung Tau on leave and was caught by the American military police with a packet of Salem cigarettes, you know, those menthol cigarettes? Do you know what a marijuana cigarette looks like? You know the twistie top, you know they take some of the tobacco out put some of this funny stuff and twist the top? Well, he had a packet of twenty and one was missing.

36:30 And he said, "I didn't smoke it." and they said, "Is this your packet?" "Yes." "All right, you're gone." So he was given to the Australian Military Police, who in turn brought him to me. I locked him up. We had a big Seatainer, which we converted into a hoosegow [a cell], so we locked him up. I had him before his company commander, remanded to the CO and the CO said, "What do we do now?" and I said, "Easy, you remand him for trial by court martial," and that's what happened to him and he got six months of hard labour

37:00 back here in Australia, and there were no more drug problems in the 6th of foot. And I don't even think he, I'm not sure to this day that he had actually imbibed, but it was his packet wasn't it?

Were there any other bad things that came across filtered through from the American system to the Australians?

No. The only other thing I can recollect – Peter Belt – remember I told you the thing about Leigh Floyd?

37:30 I gave him my batman, who had only been my batman for a matter of weeks, I mean he'd been a barman in the sergeant's mess. My batman had been the previous RSM's batman. Wonderful fellow, muscles, Queenslander. You know muscle man and weights and all this jazz. And he had decided that his time was up, six years were up and he was going home so he left sort of late in the tour, and I took on this barman

38:00 as my batman, and he didn't really want to be a batman either, he wanted to be a fighting soldier so we did this swap. A Company went down to the 'Horseshoe' where – have you heard of the 'Horseshoe'? We had the responsibility for most of our tour of training the army [ARVN] down there so it was A Company's turn and they went down there. This fellow, I won't mention his name either, left and went down into Binh Ba and got on the scoot [on the drink]

38:30 on this Bami Ba ,you know this gut rot whisky, and he got absolutely paralytic and he was armed of course, and so with this he disarms a couple of Americans, took their weapons, made them lay down and then went out into the middle of the road, and he stopped an American convoy coming this way, and an American convoy coming this way. And he had them at gunpoint. Raving lunatic.

39:00 So they sent for a company commander, and Peter Belt comes barrelling down and with him the CSM. So Peter Belt stops and he says, "Private X! Here is your OC – put your weapons down," and this fellow says, "Just the 'B' [bastard] I've been looking for' and fired a couple of shots towards him. He was too drunk he wouldn't have hit him anyway, only by accident. With that,

39:30 the CSM ducked behind a truck and took a bead on him, and he was going to drop him, but he just dissolved in tears. Dropped everything, crying, "Boo hoo hoo! No one loves me!" So they gave him to me and I locked him up too and we court martialled him, and sent him home for six months and I haven't heard of him from that day to this. But that was the only other occasion. We had a good battalion. We'd no real worries.

40:00 And that was, in his case, the drink affecting him.

So overall, is it possible to rate the Australian soldiers versus the American soldiers?

There's no comparison, absolutely no comparison. We didn't have the sorts of problems the Yanks had with drugs and throwing grenades into their officers' tents and all this sort of… I know it did happen on one occasion in Nui Dat with one of the battalions,

40:30 not ours thankfully. But I think that was probably the drink talking again too. I mean you've got to understand that even back at Nui Dat you're armed to the teeth. In my own tent, I had my pistols, I had my M16 rifle, I had claymores, grenades and all sorts of things. You know, just polished up and leave them there for the next op. Every tent was the same.

41:00 All the soldiers had their weapons. It would have been easy for someone to get drunk, and take out a load on somebody else and blast them away, if that's the sort of mind set you had, but we're better men than that. The Yanks are different.

Tape 7

00:40 Thinking about arms and ammunition and what have you, and this is nothing to do with arms or anyone wanting to beat anyone's brains in really. But when we were back at Nui Dat there used be a system whereby the officers would have a party night, where they would invite

01:00 the nurses up from wherever, or ladies from the concert party or whatever. And have a merry time and the warrant officers and senior NCOs would do all the duties and the CP and all the rest. And then a few days later, they'd be a change, we'd have a party and they would do everything. Anyway, this particular night that we're having their ding just across the street and the telephone went asking for the RSM.

01:30 So I picked it up, "Yes. Who's this?" "Hello, it's the support company, sir." "Who's the duty sergeant for support company?" I said, "Don't worry about it, I'll send him down," and hung up. "Who is the duty sergeant?" "Alan McLean." "Get down there and sort that rabble out!" So down he goes. And it was the New Zealand pioneers and mortar people, who had decided the canteen was closed, but that's all right: they would take cartons of grog up to their tents and get stuck into it. Now, this was strictly forbidden.

02:00 So, I'll remember the name of the fellow and I will quote him, Corporal Lakatani, who until recently was the Premier of the Republic of Niue. Anyway Lakatani, is there with a box of booze on his shoulder, with a tribe of his mates with him, Maoris and others and McLean said, "Corporal Lakatani stop. Return that grog to the canteen and get your scaly lot to bed and

02:30 to sleep." With which Lakatane told him to do something which is physically impossible, and McLean dropped him, cold as a mullet [unconscious]. Down he went. And one of the Maoris stepped forward to avenge his fallen fellow and down he went too. And another one tried it so there were three of them lying prostrate. "Have you had enough? Now get the booze back and get to bed." Next morning, he was Sir Alan.

03:00 That's the sort of fellow he was. Now I haven't mentioned any of the Kiwis except Neville Wallace. But when we first went there, the company commander of Whisky 2 Company, which was there for our first six months was Major Lindsay Williams who presently resides in Christchurch, New Zealand. He retired as a colonel. He had as his company sergeant major, Warrant Officer Class Two Hedley: later I met Hedley in Singapore.

03:30 Victor Company, Victor 4 Company was commanded by Major Larry Lynch, and his CSM was Warrant Officer Class Two Jones. Now both those gentlemen are now dead. Larry was an RMC [Royal Military College, Duntroon] graduate, and in fact married a Canberra girl and in fact settled over here. He died of cancer a couple of years back. Bob James – not Jones – James died a few years back,

04:00 for what reason I don't know. Whisky 3 Company was commanded by Major Evan Torrence, who retired as a brigadier and lives on the North Island somewhere. And his CSM was Warrant Officer Macintosh BEM [British Empire Medal] whom I think who I think is still alive. They had some wonderful senior NCOs, Sergeant Tom Tuhiwai, who was Maori and

04:30 latterly had been, I don't know what he's doing now, but he had been an Anglican priest. He won the Distinguished Conduct Medal with Victor Company, and there was sergeant Flutey, he won a Mentioned in Despatches. These are a great bunch of fellows. Very professional.

How did the Australian soldiers get on with the Kiwi soldiers?

Great.

Was there interaction in operations or...?

05:00 Well the companies were always usually separate, so there wouldn't have been much interaction. They were successful as we were. They had big parties when they finished. In fact, there was a story that, whether its true or not I don't know, but it's one of these third hand things, that one of the New Zealand companies managed to bowl over a Viet Cong paymaster, who was carrying thousands of dollars in American dollars,

05:30 which were never surrendered back. That's the story.

What were living conditions like back at barracks?

At barracks?

Vietnam barracks...

Nui Dat. Well, we were all accommodated in twelve by fourteen tents, with sandbag walls up to about the height of that there.

06:00 All the way round. Because it wasn't unknown for them to send rockets in. Although rockets impacted inside the base while we were there, never anywhere near us. But 'belt and braces' you always made

sure you were all right. So it was just twelve by fourteen tents with wooden duckboards, sandbag walls, and in my particular tent, I was by myself, you know the soldiers were four to a tent. I had one all to myself. I had a

06:30 bit of a desk there. And I had a wardrobe that my predecessor had pinched from some village or other in which I hung my civvy clothing. Waiting to go home.

Can you tell us how the Australian bases were different in the whole approach compared to the Americans?

Well, I was never near an American base apart from Ton San Nhut, you know landing and coming home.

07:00 But I understand the big difference was the Americans allowed locally employed Vietnamese access to the bases. Well, you do that: you're inviting in the Viet Cong. Vietnamese were not allowed under pain of death near the one Australian taskforce area, there were none employed at all. There were some employed Cambodians and Vietnamese down in Vung Tau,

07:30 in the base areas, but no Vietnamese anywhere near the taskforce area.

Nui Dat was in built in the trees…

Yeah it was in a huge rubber plantation.

Because the Americans had a tendency to clear…

Be out in the heat and the sun. Yeah I never got near an American base. I had no desire to.

08:00 **What was the deal with the wet canteen with regards to soldiers?**

Well, we were always a dry battalion. There was no alcohol allowed in the field at all under pain of death. Once they were back, they were allowed a couple of cans, well really there was no limit, but realistically a couple of cans they'd be on their ear anyway, after three or four weeks out in the scrub. You'd want a good feed and a sleep.

08:30 **What were the rations out in field?**

In the field were always C-rations [American field rations].

What sort of grub could they expect to be greeted with when they got back?

Fresh meat and what have you and so forth. Chicken and turkey and anything else the Americans happened to have, and sometimes seafood from down Vung Tau or Long Phuoc Hai

09:00 Back at base there was no problems, eggs and all sorts of things but out in the scrub it was strictly C-rations, and of course the fellows to reserve weight they would throw a lot of stuff away, stuff they didn't want. And I know that for a long time there, I couldn't look at a can of any American stuff. So I used to…With each ration pack there also used to come a pack of sort of comfort

09:30 you know toilet roll, stupid things, toilet rolls, two pound jars of stuffed green olives, cigarettes, shaving cream and things that the soldiers wouldn't want. I mean, how can you divvy up a two pound jar of olives? So for a long time there, I had a two pound jar of green olives beside my chair, and that's what I ate day after day. Just olives. I couldn't stomach the pork and beans and that other nonsense.

10:00 **What sort of beer did the blokes get? Australian?**

Mainly Australian, although there was a bit of Budweiser. The American beer's a bit lighter, a bit like tiger urine. But we had Fosters and VB [Victoria Bitter] and Carlton, that sort of stuff. In fact you could always tell the difference if they'd been

10:30 on Budweiser or Pabst or whatever those American beers, and all of a sudden the next night Australian beers, like Fosters was an issue, there'd be fights in the canteen. Much stronger stuff. We also had a sort of unit PX [Post Exchange – American canteen unit], you know they use a term, where the stuff was brought up on the [MV] Jeparit and we had a sergeant who organised this,

11:00 PC Anderson was his name; he was on his second tour also. And he organised this PX, he brought stuff from all over from Jeparit and from the Yanks and you could put your order in. Now I ordered stuff, I sent home a set of binoculars for my son, I sent home a couple of good Japanese electric fans and some other stuff. You could buy it cut rate prices you know,

11:30 no tax or any damn thing and posting them home was quite good too. Relatively inexpensive.

How was it coming the other way – receiving packages from Australia?

Pretty regular, pretty regular. In fact, Mavis used to number all hers and I did the same in turn. I think all the married men would have had regular correspondence, and most of the single men. In fact one of the CSMs, Smiler Myles,

12:00 who was the CSM A Company, and I told you he was wounded. He lives in China now, he owns a

property up there. He made the comment for this book that one of the features of resupply in the battalion was the importance attached to the receipt of mail from ones next if kin and how down in the mouth people were when they didn't receive mail. I mean, it was taken out into the field to them.

12:30 The other comment he makes for the book also, is that he couldn't get it into the heads of the people down at 1ALSG [Australian Logistics Support Group] down in Vung Tau that what they considered to be their front line, because they had patrols out and that, we came back to their front line for our rest area and of course Vung Tau was also a well known rest area for the Viet Cong.

13:00 **What about the equipment the Aussies had, was it mostly hangover from British equipment?**

No it was entirely Australian. Boots, in fact the boots were in great demand. Every man and his dog wanted them, you know the Yanks and all others wanted them, because they had, you've heard of the panji stakes [sharpened bamboo stakes], they had a light steel plate in the soles to counteract that and they were a leather boot up to here, boots general purpose.

13:30 The uniforms they were just, I mean the uniforms of today are probably much improved but these were just normal greens and the equipment was Australian designed. The only American equipment we had was the GPMG [M60 weapon] I suppose and, that's all, GPMG. Basically.

Was there any problems you could see with Australian equipment? With the weapons or anything?

14:00 Peter, there is no Australian equipment ever made which will satisfy an infantry soldier. He will always go and buy something else and they're doing it even today. You see these QM stores all around the traps, selling things at huge prices: the soldiers will go and buy those. It was the same in my day too.

Was that okay? Was that allowed for the guys to have mixed gear?

Not in Vietnam. Back here they used to try it on a bit.

14:30 When the battalions first came back from Malaya, they were in British shirts and boots and God knows what. And there was British canvas patrol boots; they were made to dispose of when you get back into Australia. No, the equipment was really adequate and always probably has been, since we started designing our own but then again there is no infantry soldier will ever be satisfied with what you give him.

15:00 **What were the monsoons like?**

They were ferocious. I used to hate it. You'd be out there and there's damn all you can do, you're going to be wet. Every afternoon down it would come and you'd get wet and then it might rain for another two and then all of sudden, it's dry again, and you're steaming. Just something you had to put up with. And of course as the soil in Vietnam is red laterite, the same

15:30 as in Malaya, very red and muddy.

So how would you sum up Australia's involvement in Vietnam?

The Australian soldier, the Australian Task Force in my opinion were aces in Vietnam. There is nothing the Americans could or would do that would come within a bull's roar of us. We were just too good.

16:00 Tactically and physically and that remains the same today. I mean look at our SAS people in Afghanistan and places like that going in and bumping off, and not get any casualties yourself. We were just too good. And in fact later on, when we were in Singapore with 28 ANZUK [Australia New Zealand United Kingdom] Brigade, you know the Brits were going to pull, and Australia said

16:30 'Well, we'll fill the void' and we went in and the Brits said, "Well, we'll stay as well," so we had ANZUK. Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom – 28 ANZUK brigade. One battalion of the Poms, that was the 1 Royal Highland Fusiliers initially, later in the tour it was the Gordon Highlanders relieved them. 1RNZIR [Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment] who stayed on after we had come home, for years, because there was nowhere for them to go in New Zealand and of course 6RAR.

17:00 We were the last unit to serve overseas full time. Well, this Timor business, but the battalions of the regiment had been overseas continuously since 1945 until 1973, when Whitlam [Australian Prime Minister] pulled us out of Vietnam on a lie. He released

17:30 to the press that in Singapore we preserved our radio, wireless listening unit and that smacked of colonialism, you know listening in to the transcriptions of other nations. For God's sake, they'd been there with the Brits for donkeys years since JC [Jesus Christ] was a school cadet, and what he admitted to say was the facility we had there in Singapore was identical

18:00 to the one which continued for years afterwards in Hong Kong. Australians. But he used that as the excuse to withdraw from Anzac. He was the worst thing that ever happened to this country, and that idiot who followed him, Fraser [Australian Prime Minister]. That's my political story for the day so put that in your pipe and smoke it.

So happened when you came back to Australia?

18:30 From Vietnam?

No from when you've gone up, you've done the QM..

Yeah I went up as a quartermaster. And there I was and I thought I'd had power as the RSM. I had infinitely more power as a quartermaster, cause you're only responsible for the one fellow and again the same fellow the CO. But you've got this millions of dollars worth of gear that you look after for him. I was a bit reticent because I knew nothing about Q work and

19:00 I'd been sent off to do this quartermaster course but I'd always been regimental. Fortunately, in the battalion we had a Warrant Officer Class One, Wally Sutherland, who was the RQMS [Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant] who had been I think with 7RAR in Vietnam, he'd been with 3RAR in Korea and he had been an RQMS for years and he knew all the fiddles. Did he teach me how to be a quartermaster!

19:30 I tell you what: I kept that CO on the straight and narrow or the COs rather, for the time we were up there. We had a great time. It was the best posting as a family we ever had because I was there with Mavis and the kids, we even took our own boxer dog up with us. We had a wonderful bungalow adjacent to Selerang Barracks – it had been occupied by a wing commander prior to us. Wonderfully appointed. We had an amah [a kind of nanny]

20:00 to look after us. True, eventually I had to travel each day by domiciliary across to Kangaubut even that wasn't a great hardship. Every weekend was free. And we had lots of leave to go to places like Penang and the Cameron Highlands and up to Kemamin. Kuantan. Wonderful. And I was very thankful that it happened to me, and I do believe that it happened because the person who influenced postings

20:30 out of the Directorate was none other than lieutenant colonel David Matheson Butler, my ex CO, I think he had engineered me out there, and I was ever thankful and I told him that too. We had a great time, I was in the rear party and when I came home I had been the QM and for the first time in my life I received a confidential report back with the endorsement of the formation commander who was a Brit,

21:00 became a major general later on. Colonel Drabsch was the CO and he'd said, "Yes. Fight to get this man," and he went on to brigadier, the British brigadier and he endorsed it, "Yes, I endorse this. But this man is wasted in the Q field; he should be put back into either the regimental or the instructional field." I just initialled it and that was it and then some months later up comes the

21:30 Military Secretary, Brigadier 'Blanc' White. And the adjutant Peter Langford said, "Put a signal round the traps, any officer wishing to see the military secretary please contact me." And he phoned me and he said, "Don't you want to see him Jim?" and I said, "No, I'm quite happy doing what I'm doing thanks Peter, I don't want to see him." Well damn me if he didn't send for me. Did Blanc White. He entered the COs office and he said, "Take a seat." "Nice to see you again Jock." He said, "I've got

22:00 some good news for you and some bad news, which do you want first?" and I said, "Well, you'd best give me the bad news first." He said, "Right, I'm posting you to the Infantry Centre at Singleton," the Infantry Centre which then was at Ingleburn. And I said, "But aren't they moving to Singleton shortly?" "Yes." I said, "What the hell have I done to deserve this sort of a posting?" This is because of this damned confidential, this brigadier – but in the end, that's why

22:30 I went. I stayed behind on the rear party with my RQMS, I told you was Wally Sutherland. His wife became ill, so the whole family had to go home and coincidentally he had a set of twin sons did Wally, one of whom was a public servant, and the other was a private soldier in the battalion. He was killed by an electricity strike, a lightening strike up in Johore Strait on exercise.

23:00 And then his wife became ill, so they went home and I was asked to find my own replacement, so I put the finger on Neil Rankin, who was then a warrant officer class 2 CSM, so he became my RQMS with the promise that when we get home I would out him back into the regimental stream but he didn't want to do that. In fact, he was later commissioned as a quarter master. And as my RQMS

23:30 increment, (we had two RQs), I had staff sergeant Robin Jones, who'd been the INT [intelligence] sergeant in Vietnam and he and Ziggy Imaks, his offsider corporal, looked after the place wonderfully well and when we handed the barracks and everything back there were no losses, no breakages, no nothing, I was able to go down to the commander of Anzac Force Support Group and

24:00 report to Colonel Ted Smith, who had been my company commander in PIR, that everything was handed back in great order and he thanked me and we went on our way. And then after a long leave we came, after we came home we went on leave. That was January 1974, the floods in Brisbane. We lost all our possessions in storage where they had been placed before going to Singapore,

24:30 so that was a bit of a blow and then we went down to Singleton and we had a happy three years there. I ran the Warrant Officer Wing which trained all budding RSMs and potential WO2.

Sorry before you said good news, bad news. What was the good news?

The good news – oh, just the shake of the hand.

25:00 **So three years in Singa...**

Then I was promoted and posted to the Directorate Of Infantry in Canberra as the SO2 [Staff officer Grade Two] person, responsible for the hiring and firing of all warrant officers and sergeants in the corps and I did that for a couple of years and then I got word that they were going to post me again because Military Secretary wanted me over in his office. I said to the director,, "No. My wife would benefit

25:30 from being back home." She hadn't been well: Singleton first and then Canberra. All the dust and pollens and what have you, so we came and my last posting was here in Victoria Barracks in Brisbane. I was the SO2 Personnel Coordination. I did the final two years there. The last year of which I was the deputy director of studies of an Industrial Mobilisation Course which is run by Defence Central,

26:00 and I was the deputy director here and the students, if you like to call them that, were all the captains of industry, you know, the secretary of Mt Isa Mines and the senior military officers and air force officers and the head of BP and Shell and public servants, and each Monday we would go to Victoria Barracks and someone would lecture us on something and the following

26:30 day we would go off. If the lecture had been on science, we would go down to Salisbury in South Australia or if it was on uranium we would go to Mary Kathleen and then up to Weipa, Mount Isa, down to Wollongong to the mines and Bulli, and God, we were always on the move. It was a great. It was great. And then on the 3rd of November, 1980

27:00 I bid them farewell and left and did nothing for while and then I was employed by the Federal Court of Australia here in Brisbane, initially as a casual court officer then became a permanent public servant as the officer who was responsible for checking all documentation under Part 10 of the Bankruptcy Act. Then later became manager court support, which in the old parlance is list clerk

27:30 but I was also the deputy sheriff up here in the state and admiralty marshal, you know arresting ships and God knows what. And that's it.

What sort of celebration did they put on for you when you got out?

Where, from the mess? Just the normal good job, well done, ta ta. Colonel Townsend who had been my commander up here too had retired up, and he came down for my farewell. But really they

28:00 made a presentation. I was able to select what I wanted and I wanted one of those work tables so I've got one of those. I've had it up in the shed, I use it occasionally and you've read that certificate out there and that's it. But when I left the Federal Court, the chief justice here, the head justice, the senior justice here in Brisbane, he presented me with a bottle on behalf of his fellow judges of Talisker Single Malt Whisky

28:30 and the registrar of the court and others took Mavis and I to the Terraces Restaurant for dinner before I actually left, and arranged for my whole family to be there: my daughter and my son-in-law and my son and daughter-in-law and all the other irks.

What of what you've told us today have you passed on to your son?

29:00 I've written it all in there. Look, he's done his own thing, he always wanted to be a serviceman, and he went to the Officer Cadet School at Portsea as did our son-in-law. He's done everything, he's been to staff college, he has two degrees: he's a bachelor, a masters degree, which he's done in his own time. He has been overseas on postings to UNTSO [United Nations Truce Supervision Organization] in the Middle East. We

29:30 spent two months with he and his family there in Israel. He was up on the Golan Heights for six months and then the second six months he was up in Lebanon. He had an attachment to the Irish Guards in London for four months. He's been to Butterworth on attachment and he is now a full colonel, honorary chief of staff, of the deployable joint force headquarters and on the same headquarters, in a reserve capacity, is our son in law who is also a full colonel.

30:00 **In what way has being in the army shaped your life outside of work?**

I think it certainly gave me the will to do things. Let's not forget that I also married the daughter of a serviceman. Now he was a sergeant

30:30 when I met Mavis. In the First World War, he was a stretcher bearer and saw some obviously horrendous things. He was born here, George Wardrop was born here in the Colony of Queensland on the 21st of March 1900. Still a colony. He was discharged here in Brisbane in 1918, wounded, gassed, having served overseas in France for two and a half years.

31:00 He was only sixteen. When the Second World War started, he wanted to get off overseas again but the fellow who'd discharged him remembered he'd bodgied his age [lied about it] and said, "Come on George, you can come in but you're not going anywhere." So he was medical corps and attained the rank of sergeant, in fact he was at Greenslopes when it was first established as a hospital. When I first met Mavis,

31:30 he was the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] sergeant at Gaythorne. But he died because of the gassing to the lungs. They gave him a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated] Pension finally when he got out. No,

I think my, Mavis was raised really as a military brat if you like, because during her formative years, you know, during the Second World War there was only she and her mother at home.

32:00 The father was in the army, and both her brothers were in the army, and for the latter stages were brought up in the islands. So she was really a military person and I was a military person always, because my grandfather had served in the Boer War in the British cavalry. My uncle whose photograph is out there was the then master of the– a band sergeant in the Queen's Own Cameroon Highlanders in the First World War and then after going to Kneller Hall

32:30 and being made a band master, he went to the King's Own Scottish Borderers and he stayed with them from 1920 through to 1950. So he was man and boy forty-three years in the army. So that was my background, and I think it instilled in me a bit of discipline to do things. Mark you, I must have been the only one in which it was instilled, because my brother Bill, now deceased

33:00 was with me in Korea and he was a good active service soldier but he was a fair B on peace. He was always in fights and getting drunk and my other brother Allan was in the Royal Marines like me, but he couldn't handle the pace I don't think and he was later in the RAF Regiment and he didn't like that much either, so I was the one who seemed to have the discipline. The others lacked it.

33:30 I've forgotten his name now but this fellow who had been a sergeant in 5RAR phoned me up and he introduced himself and he said, "I'd like to get your autograph if I may." And I said, "Why would you possibly want my autograph?" Thinking, "Here's someone trying to do a swiftie on me," you know, access my bank account or something.

34:00 And he explained that he had got from Western Australia this book which contains all the citations for every Australian who ever served in Vietnam and I was amongst them. So he brought it out, and for the very first time I read it, and I did give him my autograph. I subsequently got this fellow here, Brian Avery, to buy a copy, because it assisted us in the compilation of this book, because all the citations for all the Australians in 6RAR

34:30 were there, and we had written to New Zealand and we got all the citations from Wellington for the Kiwis. You want me to read this now? "The RSM WO1 J Cruickshank, was mentioned in despatches and the citation reads, "An outstanding RSM, he demanded and achieved the highest standards by force of his own example and was held in high regard by all ranks of the battalion. His effectiveness in training in the junior NCOs of

35:00 the battalion is reflected in the high standard of leadership and performance by that body of men. RSM Cruickshank combined the traditional duties of the RSM with command of the battalion headquarters group on operations and on occasions assumed command of the Fire Support Bases in the absence of the battalion 2IC including deploying elements of the base, establishment and supervision of the defences, and the planning of patrols. The citation notes his marked ability to command elements of different units,

35:30 sound grasp of technical situations and the highest order of infantry skills."

Until this chap had contacted you…

I hadn't read it. The colonel commandant wrote to me and said, "Congratulations Jim on a job well done," but that was it. I didn't know and in fact the MBE [Member of the Order of the British Empire] thing I sent of to one of my Royal Marine friends

36:00 to give it to our drill instructor from 1946, who's still alive and turned ninety-one this year, and he wanted to know how his recruit had got on.

So how did that come about?

The Royal Marines, three or four years ago, I got this letter from CARO [Central Army Records Office], you know, buff coloured envelope and inside it was a letter which said, "Dear Major Cruickshank, Enclosed herewith

36:30 is correspondence as requested by the sender." and it was another white envelope and there: "Jim Cruickshank, Australian Army, Australia." "Who the hell is this from?" So I opened it up and it was from one of my fellow recruits from 1946, Ted Wright, so we started corresponding. You know, snail mail and as I was on the internet

37:00 I said, "Now look, get your act together, son, and get on the internet." And he got one of those palm jobs and he e-mails me using his telephone. Now he had started to try and track down every member of 462 Squad Royal Marines and he had managed to track down half a dozen of us: Norman Chaplin, who I think I mentioned before finished up as the regional managing director of Bass Breweries,

37:30 John Balfour Sneddon, a fellow Scotsmen who finished up working for the Royal Bank of Scotland, Ted Wright who worked as manager in the factory and Lofty Jones, who used to run all the Hertz car franchises in the North of England – he's actually a Welshman from that place with the long unpronounceable, something or other, his father was a doctor.

38:00 So I've been corresponding with these fellows. Have you ever heard of a fellow by the name of Condron,

Andrew Condron? Was the only member of the British Commonwealth to defect, well that's how they put it down, from Korea. Now he was a close friend of mine and we were on Liverpool together as was Lofty Chaplin. Now Lofty Chaplin has given me a mile of correspondence on the subject.

38:30 He didn't defect. Nor was he a British traitor as was portrayed in the British press. He did lots of things, did Andrew Condron, to mitigate against the harshness of the POW in North Korea. What he did do though, was they were given the option of either returning to the country of their choice, or remaining in North Korea or going to China.

39:00 So Andy tossed a coin and he said, "I'm not going back to Scotland to finish off my twelve, obviously, I'll go to China," so he went to China. Taught English at the University in Peking for years and years and years. He married the daughter of the first secretary to the French Embassy, who later on became the French ambassador to Moscow, Jacqueline someone or other. She was half French,

39:30 half Vietnamese, you know that oriental mix, beautiful girl apparently. And he had, they had two children Ian and I forget the girl's name [Jacqueline]. Oh the great hoo ha over Andrew Condron, and in fact I have a book, a 'Green Berets in Korea' written by a fellow member of 41 Royal Marine Commander, who eliminates any nonsense about him being a traitor or defecting or anything else, and I've also got correspondence

40:00 from Chaplin to one of forty-one [41 RM] who accuse in writing, accused Condron of being a traitor, Condron's well measured response to him and then Chaplin's furious response back to this fellow who had the Queens Gallantry Medal which he had obtained as a police inspector. So Condron was not a traitor,

40:30 Condron was a good friend of mine and all right he stayed behind in China, so what? As we all say he was a good ship mate and he was a good friend. Strangely, his brother had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese during the Second World War, and there he was prisoner of war of the North Koreans. Now on Anzac Day this year, I spoke with Brigadier Phillip Greville retired,

41:00 the fellow who was our POW, and I said to him, " Did you ever run into Condron?" and he said, "No." And he, Greville, was kept in solitary confinement in some sort of a box thing for yonks [along time], but in the cell next door to me, was a Brit who had been a POW of the Japanese and had been in that very same cell because his handwriting was still on the wall. So how's that for bad luck? Caught twice in the same cell.

Tape 8

00:34 Ready? Now I've been asked to read the citation for my mention in despatches. Now the citation from Alexander M Palmer's book, Vietnam Veterans. Honours and Awards. Army reads: 'Warrant Officer James Cruickshank joined the Australian Regular Army in October 1950. He served with the Royal Australian Regiment in Korea and later in New Guinea with the Pacific Island Regiment. He joined 6th Battalion

01:00 of the Royal Australian Regiment in September 1967, as regimental sergeant major and in that appointment accompanied the battalion to the Republic of Vietnam in May 1969. Regimental Sergeant Major Cruickshank has proved to be an outstanding regimental sergeant major. Throughout his tour with the battalion he has demanded and achieved the highest standards by the force of his own example and because of the high regard in which he is held by all ranks. He has been instrumental in the training of the junior ranks of the battalion,

01:30 and the effectiveness in this training, and his continuing personal interest, has been revealed, and the highest standard leadership and performance attained. While RSM Cruickshank has combined his normal duties with those of commanding the battalion headquarters group in operations. Moreover, on several occasions, he has assumed command of the battalion Fire Support Base in the absence of the battalion second in command. This entailed the deployment of the various elements of the base, the establishment and

02:00 constant supervision of his defences and the planning of patrols. In the performance of these duties, RSM Cruickshank has shown marked ability to combined elements of several units, infantry skills of the highest order and a sound grasp of tactical situations. His efficiency, reliability and willingness to work long hours has been constantly to the force. RSM Cruickshank's devotion to duty, his willingness to assume additional tasks, the consistently high standard

02:30 of his personal example ,and his loyalty to his battalion reflect great credit not only on himself, but also on his regiment and warrant formal recognition.' So that was forwarded to the task force. Now in respect of the MBE, which occurred when I was in my final posting, I was, in fact, acting as

03:00 staff officer grade one personnel, because the incumbent was away on leave or something. Every Friday morning Colonel Townsend used to hold prayers, you know a meeting. And I was on my way and had left this house early enough, got caught in the damn traffic in Kelvin Grove Road and I was late getting there. Made my apologies, arrived in about ten minutes late, and Colonel and Townsend said, "That's all

right Jim, take a seat."

03:30 And this was the stage which we were at, and he brought me up to date. Later that morning, I got a telephone call from his secretary – report to the Commander. And I thought, "Oh God, here we go. I'm in the poo." and I went round to his office, and he said, "Congratulations mate, you've just been awarded the MBE." Now that citation read that, the same sort of guff as there, you know I joined the Royal Marines and I'd done this, that and the next thing.

04:00 And that whilst at the directorate of inventory, with little assistance or direction, I had organized and perfected a means of personnel management which had hitherto been non existent. And that this had been placed into being and was sort of current in the corps and because I was a good boy, etc.

04:30 In reality, what had happened was this, you see I had served in this corps since 1950 and up until my last couple of postings, it had all been by chance. In those days it depended on where you were at the time as to how you got the posting. Now, for instance, when I took over from Paddy Brennan as the S02 Personnel at the directorate, this was because Paddy was leaving the service, he was unwell.

05:00 He and I had been together in the same battalion in Korea. He said, "Look, I'll take you down and show you the filing system for the warrant officers and senior NCOs in the corps." And he took me down to what was then the archives room, you know one of these big Chubb Safe jobs, opened it up and he gave me five little officers notebooks. Now that was the sum total of the personnel

05:30 management of the senior members of the corps, which was then the biggest corps in the army, and the person who had been doing the job had been in the job in Melbourne when the army headquarters was there, and then shifted up to Canberra and Paddy had relieved him. So I won't mention the fellow's name, but he had been in the job since JC was a school cadet. And that was the sum of personnel management; if you happened to be on the spot you got the posting –

06:00 if he liked your face. I said, "Well that's not good enough. It's not going to happen that way." It had happened to me in the past: I told you this story about posting the corporal up to warrant officer slot and me about to be posted as a sergeant down to New South Wales, when I was qualified for a warrant rank. So we sat down and we, Mick Harris was there, SOI Personnel, so he roughed up on his white board what he thought was a good system of progress

06:30 through the ranks, ranks and postings. And I took a copy and I considered that. Juggled it about a bit and then I sat down with my WO1, Ken Hall, and I composed this thing which placed postings in order of seniority. We didn't have an RSM in the army in those days, I was against it as a concept, I might add. But probably the top of the pops was the RSM of the Royal Military College,

07:00 and RSM of OCS [Officers Candidate School] when it then existed. And came up with a whole series of postings which were important in order of seniority. And then extended that so that each of them bore the posting number, the ECN [Employment Category Number] number and so on and so forth. And having done that, I then sat down and compiled this huge instruction that ran about

07:30 thirty pages. And sent it out to every unit in which an infantryman served, and in those days there were hundreds of them, not just infantry units but there were people posted to warrant officer positions in ordnance corps, service corps, engineer corps, you mention it. And many of them were filling officer appointments so these hundreds of letters went out and I waited and waited and waited. Not one response. So I went to the director,

08:00 Wally Campbell, and I said, "Well, there it is Colonel. You agreed with this, we've all agreed here. I've put it out around the corps, and there is no response so obviously everyone else agrees with us." He said, "Implement it." And I did. I went up to Cairns and I travelled right around the east coast, round the south coast and across to Perth, implementing this and lecturing on it and never once was I taken to task.

08:30 That still works to the present day, I understand. Well perhaps there are modifications I mean there is an RSM of the army now, so obviously that would take pride of place. But there you go, so really it was for that. And according to the citation which I can't find, my other duties, exemplary duties as a staff officer so there you go.

09:00 **Can you tell me your thoughts on Anzac Day?**

Anzac Day is the day on which we should remember and commemorate all who served in every conflict we were ever engaged in. And it should be the only day on which we do that; there should be no Long Tan Veterans' Day or any of that damn rubbish. I was working

09:30 with the Federal Court when the justice of the Federal Court [Mr. Justice Evatt], sitting as a Royal Commission, sat in the Agent Orange thing and I assisted him on day one. I can't think of his name now, he was in the navy during the war had the DSO [Distinguished Service Order]. He recommended that a day be set aside for the Long Tan veterans to celebrate, the Vietnam veterans rather, to celebrate, a service for Vietnam.

10:00 Now, you recollect that we had a Labor government in those days, and the Minister for the Army was one Humphries by name, and that other flea, Hawke, was the Prime Minister. Now, I corresponded with them both, wrote to the Courier Mail, because I was then the president of the 6RAR Association and I

took umbrage, as we all did that they, the Vietnam veterans, had purloined our Long Tan day. I mean that's strictly a battalion thing.

10:30 And both Humphries and Hawke told me to go and get lost, or words to that effect so it's a done deal. But it shouldn't happen; Anzac Day should be the only day for commemoration and remembrance I think. I mean is there a Tobruk Day? Is there a Shaggy Ridge Day? Is there a Battle for Wewak Day? I mean there's not. This Long Tan thing was strictly 6RAR, and should only be commemorated by them. Which we do each year.

11:00 And I'll never, ever march with the Vietnam veterans on Long Tan day. In fact, I won't march with the Vietnam veterans on any other damn day for that matter. I blame the RSL for the Vietnam Veterans Association being started, because the RSL is a very insular body, and I've been a member of it since fifty-three. They didn't want to know the Korean veterans after Korea. Many of these people in the RSL in those days

11:30 probably wouldn't have heard a shot fired in anger – and that's true up to the present. They didn't want to know the Vietnam veterans either after Vietnam, so they started their own association as a lobby group, and it's gone from strength to strength. But I mean it shouldn't have occurred, there should be the one ex-service organization and the one commemoration day. You've got the RSL and Anzac Day and that should be it. That's my opinion.

So who do you march with on Anzac Day?

6RAR. Occasionally, if I happen to be around Sydney

12:00 I might march with 1RAR, which is my old battalion but, really having been, I was with six for a total of six years, you know, RSM and then the quartermaster and they all know me. And I was the founding president of the association, so I'm sort of honour bound to march with six.

Going back to Vietnam, can you tell us your involvement with any of the chaplains?

12:30 I can remember, should I mention this, I don't know? I can remember a Protestant denomination chaplain who called me an arrogant Scots bastard, but he apologised for it shortly afterwards. But no, I didn't have a great deal to do with them; I'm not a person who goes to church anyway in the normal course of events. I've been to church

13:00 on feast days, weddings and funerals but I try to avoid them. I keep my own thoughts inside my own tabernacle up here. But no, in Vietnam the chaplains did a great job. Giving solace to those who needed it, and they will always forward of the companies, always seeing the wounded, and even that OPD fellow who called me an arrogant bastard, he was dead right

13:30 I am arrogant and Scots. But he did apologise but he was a good chaplain, he's dead now. He died of leukaemia after we came home. He was a good fellow. We had at New Zealand padre too, with a Maori name, he was good too he was an Anglican. And of course we had the inevitable Roman Catholic fellow. Who in my opinion, although I'm a Protestant, are the pick of padres you know, the Catholics. They're more 'men's men'. They have a drink and gamble

14:00 and play golf and rugby and yeah.

Were there any Sally [Salvation Army] men up the there in Vietnam?

We had an Everyman's [Everyman's Welfare Service], I have a great deal of time for the Salvation Army, I think they are wonderful organisation, not that I go along with their religious pursuits. But we had an Everyman, I've forgotten his name, it will be in that book somewhere. He was great Everyman.

14:30 He ran pictures and put up with all the snide comments made by the duty soldiers. And he used to do the right thing. Occasionally he would go to Hong Kong and he would buy stuff. I wanted a fur coat for Mavis, and he went and he bought it for me, I gave him the measurements, and he bought me a couple of, for her, mink hats in Hong Kong and brought them back. He would do it for any of the soldiers.

15:00 Mark, she doesn't have it any more, none of them, because they don't fit her any more. I think one of our grandchildren might be wearing them now. No, he was a great fellow, an Everyman's fellow, I don't know what his name, I think they might have been Church of Christ? I don't know.

Do you recall any of the entertainment units that went around?

We got them occasionally. Usually, lots of pretty girls, and they would go to the officers' mess and

15:30 the only occasion I was called upon to entertain anyone, and I saw the CO afterwards and said, "Don't you bloody dare ever do that to me again ever', and that was Johnny O'Keefe. And his concert party, they came up and they performed and I arranged a slap up a meal in the mess, king table, the works. He was there with his whole party; I had all the sergeants there. And he was sitting beside them

16:00 And he was snuffling. He went outside and was sick and I think he was on the old funny stuff myself. I said to Colonel Butler the next day, "That's the last time I entertain any party in my mess. That's the end of that. Unless you'd like to send me those pretty girls across."

Would you like to make any comments about Agent Orange?

No I don't. It was I'm not sure

16:30 it ever affected any of our people. I mean, David Butler some years ago phoned me and he said, "What the hell do you know about this Agent Orange thing Jim?" And I said, "Well, I know as much as you do. You're asking me and I know nothing." It's certainly true that these little C120s, or what whatever the hell they were, used to over fly and drop stuff on us when we were in rubber. And it was said that that was to keep the mosquitoes at bay. Now if that were true,

17:00 well, I suppose that's true. On the other hand, Smiler Myles in his little memoir to me, before he returned to China, said that in one particular area in Hat Dich, they went through it on one occasion and they were overflown by aircraft which dropped something, and they said, "Oh it's the mosquitoes," and when they went back some weeks later, there wasn't a leaf on any of the trees, so obviously it was more than just mosquito

17:30 repellent. We had it dropped on us a fair bit, and they used to do it through Nui Dat, but that is more for mosquitoes, it was more like a fog thing. So I don't know anything about Agent Orange, I know some of the people who claim to have been in contact with it. Have a very, very vivid imagination because a lot of them were RAAF ground crew and people in the LSG [Logistics Support Group] at Vung Tau and so forth.

18:00 I don't know. I am a bit cynical about this, put it that way.

What about post-traumatic stress disorder?

A good friend of mine, whose name I have given to your organisation for you to interview, served in the2/ 5th Battalion in the islands. He was in BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] with what was then 67 Battalion: later on became 3RAR, went to Korea with them, fought at Kapyong. Came back, had a number of postings in Australia, married a Japanese lass.

18:30 He's got a tribe of beautiful girls, daughters. Four of them. Went to Malaysia with 3RAR, Malaysia, Borneo. And then he was commissioned and went with 6RAR on the first tour and was the regimental signals officer, Don Parsons by name. Don was invited a couple of years ago to lecture specialists and what have you at Veterans' Affairs. Psychologists, psychiatrists,

19:00 general doctors and so on and so forth. And when he had given his spiel on Korea, Vietnam and so on and so forth, someone said to him, "Was there much of an incidence of PTSD [post traumatic stress disorder] in Korea, Don?" To which he responded, "The term had not been invented then." and he was given a great round of applause. Now, it obviously exists, but to what extent I don't know. Again I am cynical. I had what – thirty-four

19:30 years service – I'd two tours in Korea and I'd been in Vietnam and all sorts of the places, and as I said before, these were just jobs for the regular soldiers. They didn't affect us mentally, I don't think. We went, we did them and we came home to our families and that was it. So I'm a bit cynical about that too. In fact, John Parsons and I are part of a study. We've been to Greenslopes [hospital], and they took blood and questioned us at length and we had to fill in all sorts of questionnaires.

20:00 Took blood, given to a scientist. We are part of a survey which this lady's doing for her PhD [doctorate] to determine why we, regular people, having served in all sorts of places, don't have this post-traumatic stress syndrome whereas it seems to be present in younger people, so we'll see what happens when that result comes out in twelve months time or so.

Officers apparently don't suffer it as much as privates do…

20:30 Well, perhaps so. I don't. I wasn't an officer at the time, and I certainly haven't suffered. I do get angry at times, but not so much. I'm almost seventy-five now, getting angry is a waste of time. But I'm a Scotsman, I picked – I do get angry from time to time, but that's just being a Scotsman I think.

So you've suffered no ill effects from serving in Vietnam?

21:00 No. Or anywhere else for that matter.

Have you noticed with being a member of the Association?

Oh, a number of the senior NCOs are TPI. They have PTSD, nerves and so on. Some of them who had had two tours in Vietnam, but others have it for other reasons, you know the cancers. Les Turner, a good friend of mine, Shorty Turner, wonderful half back and all that jazz. He's TPI but he's had cancer

21:30 of the stomach. For the first time in my life I heard, he had cancer of the breasts, he had to have his chest removed. But PTSD he doesn't have. A number of members of the sergeants' mess have become TPI, but for reasons not associated, I think in the main with PTSD for other reasons, cancers and so on. In fact, one of those fellows there in that photograph

22:00 I mentioned to you, Gus Guthrie, has had horrendous cancers inside his head and his neck. And he just has operations and goes back and does his thing, plays bowls and that and he got TPI, he's had this for years, and he got TPI only in the last three or four months. Back dated at six months point. Not PTSD

though.

How about your involvement in the 6RAR Association?

22:30 I'm just a member now. In 1985, they a meeting here in Brisbane, General Butler was up for some reason. And he had an ad hoc meeting at the 6RAR sergeants' mess on Long Tan day, they had a bit of a dinner, they had a bit of a get together. They said, "Yes, we will have a 6RAR Association." And it was a great thing. Because earlier that year he and I had been in Sydney and a couple of the National Servicemen had said, "What the hell was on with our old battalion?"

23:00 So that put the seed in his mind, and he had this meeting as I say, on the 18th of August, 1985, when Mavis and I were in Europe. And so they appointed this committee, I became the president, appointed as a volunteer, and all the other fellows were mainly first and second tour fellows. So we were the interim committee for a period of

23:30 a couple of years, until we had the first general – a full year's – and then we had the first general meeting and it was established then that there would be a committee. But at the five-year point, I resigned and I thought that someone else should take over, so Brigadier Mick Harris took over. And then following him was Graham Smith, who had been at a signalman on the first tour and had been with D Company at Long Tan.

24:00 More recently, Tex Howarth, who retired as a major but was one of our int duty men on the second tour. He is currently the president so that is one, two, four, five in the years since the formation in 1985. But I'm just a member, I don't play any part, I attend meetings every fifth year.

So what do you do on the 18th of August every year?

24:30 Usually I go to St. John's Cathedral. Attend the service. And then Mavis and I go about our business. This year, they didn't have a service because they were getting ready to go to East Timor and most of the battalion was away on exercise getting ready for that. So they had a Beating Retreat ceremony in Enoggera, to which Mavis and I were invited as honoured guests and we attended that. Next year I doubt they'll be back in time

25:00 For Long Tan, oh no they will be back in time for Long Tan day. They come back in April next year and I think they're the last battalion to go to East Timor.

You talked about the RSL and the Vietnam's Veterans Association, how about the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs]? How have they looked after you?

Oh, I think they've looked after me very well. I've had two very extensive operations, just almost five years ago. I had been experiencing chest pains

25:30 playing golf. So I went to a specialist and he said it was angina, put me, my cardiologist bunged me in hospital and the result of all that was I had an angiogram. And resultant from that I had a quintuple bypass operation on the heart and they also replaced the aortic valve while they were in there doing the plumbing bit. And then two,

26:00 a bit over two years ago, I had a right carotid endarterectomy. Cleaned all the gunk out of there, so I'll live till a thousand at least. And the Veterans' Affairs have looked after me. Initially, they weren't going to for this heart operation. I had claimed for it but no result, there was no result at the point where I had myself admitted to the St Andrew's Hospital.

26:30 I'd engaged a cardiac surgeon, Dr Michael Gardner, to do the operation. And I had donated my own blood over two weeks to get the litre or whatever it is they required. And the day before I was due to go in, Veterans' Affairs wrote to me and said, "We recognise your complaint and we will accept liability." And I said, "Fine." I rang them up, the treatment section and I said,

27:00 "Look, I am booked for the operation tomorrow at St. Andrews." "Get your specialist to ring us." So I phoned Michael Gardner. He had his secretary ring to tell them I was all geared up for St. Andrew's and the result of that conversation was: "Direct him to go to Greenslopes." And when he phoned me, I said, "Well, you can tell them to go hopping to hell backwards, I'm going into St Andrew's tomorrow morning, be there –

27:30 I'll be on the table for you." He operated, and Michael Gardner was excellent. He cut his fee in half, which was a substantial saving. So in the end, I had the operation at St Andrews as a private patient and so on and so forth. Medicare paid some of it, the defence force health fund…

28:00 What do they call it? AHBF, Army Health Benefits Fund, paid bulk of it, they didn't call it defence health but there was still a gap of what, $5,000 which I wasn't worried about. I just paid it and said, "I'll get the mongrels at Veterans' Affairs if they don't come good." But my old CO from PIR, Kenneth MacKenzie, was the head advocate at the RSL,

28:30 and he took up the cudgels on my behalf, but he was beaten to the punch because in the meantime I had had this recognized. And that increased my pension to 60%, and that gave me the gold card and they also paid the gap, they sent me a check for five thousand odd dollars. Now, may I add that at this point I already had a pension for 40% for hearing loss.

29:00 The heart and the carotid artery amounted to another 20%, but still I’m not complaining.

The hearing loss is that from being on the gun line?

Oh yeah. Yeah. I’ve got no complaints. Veterans’ Affairs do a pretty good job but I think, by and large.

Anything else you’d like to add?

I don’t so. I think I’ve spoken long enough. Waffle, waffle, waffle.