

Australians at War Film Archive

Terrence Hippisley (Hippo) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 15th August 2003

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**Some parts of this interview
have been embargoed.**

The embargoed portions are
noted in the transcript and video.

Tape 1

00:33 **Can you just start with giving us an introduction to your life story?**

Well, I was born in East Brunswick in Melbourne. I think I might have been about twelve months or thirteen months old when my father moved up to Brisbane with my eldest brother and myself. And we moved to Mount Gravatt, over on the south side of Brisbane. I've got six brothers,

01:00 and they were born later on, the other five were born later on. We lived there until I was eleven years of age and then we moved to East Brisbane, over near Morningside in Brisbane. I worked in a fish and chip shop for a while, for about three or four years for the old man and come eighteen years of age, I joined the army. Like I said you can stop me,

01:30 I'm sorry, I don't mean to...

No, this is perfect.

I don't mean to, this is all going to be edited, you're not going to rub all this stuff. I just don't know exactly where you want me to go...as far as like?

I guess just tell us about where you enlisted and...

Well, I enlisted in Mary Street in Brisbane. I tried when I was seventeen but they didn't take. I don't know whether I was too young or just failed their test, I don't know. They never tell you why and then at eighteen I did the same thing again and I passed.

02:00 I may be being sceptical or paranoid, but I got a funny feeling they didn't want me at seventeen because by the time they finished training me at eighteen they couldn't send me anywhere, because I was still too young. But when I turned eighteen, by the time I turned nineteen I was of an age when they could send me. Because from the time I joined the army, I joined the army in April '67 and I was in Vietnam by March '68. So that's how fast...my, my feet didn't touch the ground.

02:30 You know, I did nothing but train, train, train, train, train for nearly eleven months - and then Vietnam. I got posted to infantry. I didn't want infantry at the time. I wanted to be a motorcycle rider, believe it or not, and I wanted to be a don rider. A don rider was a despatch rider and I wanted to go to signals, service corps or ordnance, and two of them had don riders and the other didn't, but you had to fill in three squares.

03:00 And then when I got in the army and went to Kapooka and they said, "Why do you want signals or service corps?" and I said, "I want to be a don rider," and they informed me they hadn't had don riders since the Korean War. The bloody recruiting officer must have pissed himself laughing because he suckered me right in. So they put in infantry and every second and third guy at that time was going infantry, and that was obviously because they needed someone to fill the battalions.

03:30 And they had a rotation scheme, had about three battalions over in Vietnam, and we had nine all up eventually, and they would rotate them three at a time, well not three at a time but they'd always have three in Vietnam the whole time, you know. Then I got posted to, did three months training at

Ingleburn, infantry training, and then I went to the battalion at Holsworthy, then to, as I said I was in Vietnam within

- 04:00 twelve months. I lasted only, not quite six months because I always make a joke of it – I zipped when I should have zagged – but it's not true. I actually got shot reading a book. I nodded off and I'm not real proud of it. Anyway, I got shot on the 1st of August, '68, shot in the arm, and then they casevaced [casualty evacuation] me home because it was a
- 04:30 broken bone and bones in the tropics don't heal real quick, you know. Then I got out of there and was posted to another battalion and then they were preparing to go to Vietnam again, so I thought, "Bugger this, I don't really want to go back again, once is enough." Then I managed to transfer back to my old battalion when it came home from Vietnam and went to Malaya and Singapore for two years. I got married just before I went.
- 05:00 My son was born over in Singapore and my wife was pregnant with my daughter when we come home two years later. Then I did, I was transferred out of infantry all together. Then I went into what they call the Royal Australian Army Service Corps Transport. I'd done a driver's course by then, so I was a driver in infantry anyway, and then I did my six years and got out in '73. I went back into the army again in '77 to '80,
- 05:30 did three or four years in there again. I got out again and in 1988, I joined the air force, at forty years of age, to be a driver, a truck driver, you know, and did four years in there and got there again, so you might say since I've left school I've had more jobs than I can count. It's just shit – this is what the doctors told me is part of a veteran's make-up now, we're constantly moving, we

- 06:00 can't sit still. I don't know whether it's war-related, it's just the way it is. Have I gone far enough or?

No, you've done real well.

Have I? I've tried to just brief on it...briefly. There's more to it, of course.

Of course. Well, we can go back over it, now actually. Let's just start with, I guess, growing up and childhood. What it was like...what you had six brothers?

I mean I don't remember the move from Melbourne.

- 06:30 I've got a photo over here of my father and myself and my elder brother, an old photo of us sitting, I think it was an old Chevy [Chevrolet]. I call it a 'Model T Ford' because that's the only one I know. We come up, he was a tram cond [conductor], he'd been in the Second World War and he married my step-mother and then he came up to Brisbane and moved to Mount Gravatt. We didn't even own a car. We couldn't afford a car in those days. Those were the days of fruit mince pies and
- 07:00 bread and dripping on the old wooden stove, you know, and three and four of us in the bath tub at a time. Had no showers and it wasn't a tub, it was one of those big round tins – you wouldn't know them, you are too young to remember. It's big round tins and we used to bath in that. That was our bath and they used to tip the water over the balcony every night. But we used to, that was our bath and we used to rent the house and we didn't even own a car. And my old man used to work at the local sawmill, which was
- 07:30 I think big Sears Brothers there now. And I grew up in Mount Gravatt and it was a pretty tough life. You've got to remember, I've got well, at that stage I had my elder brother who was running foul of the law and I wasn't a model child at the time myself, whether I was influenced by him I don't know. And then I had my other two or three brothers, who I constantly had to either defend or make way for, and things were...My old man worked pretty hard to feed us. We used to get our groceries
- 08:00 in an old purple pram. That was before shopping trolleys even got, they had shopping trolleys, but their shopping trolleys wouldn't hold our grocery bill. We used to pile it into a big purple pram and push the purple pram home full of groceries, you know. We lived on a dirt road at Mount Gravatt. I used to go to Mount Gravatt State School, you know. I was pretty good at school up until the time we moved to Hawthorne and then I went downhill after that. I don't know why. Whether it was just the move, I don't
- 08:30 know. But it was a pretty tough life – fair amount of fights. The coppers were always looking for one of us, you know. The coppers came to the house one day looking for my older, looking for, I think they were looking for Allan and they came to the door and said, "We're looking for your son," and all the old lady said was, "Which one?" Cause even my old man said to me later on when he saw me in uniform, he said to me, "You look smart son," and I said, "Thanks Pop," and he said, "Just as well you joined the army, because if you didn't, you were going to gaol,
- 09:00 same way your brother went." Cause some things are best left unsaid, there might be a statute of limitations on some of this stuff.

Do you reckon he was right?

What?

Your dad?

Yeah, oh yeah, I wasn't a model kid and I was in a fair bit of trouble. Coppers came looking for me a few times. Yeah, it wasn't anything bad. It wasn't rape or murder or anything like that line, but a bit of lifting here and a bit of lifting there. In the army they used to call me 'Hydraulic,' actually.

09:30 I'd lift anything, but it was just as well I joined the army. The army came along, I suppose, for people of my time and era and particularly our characters. We were all roaming from milk bar to milk bar, nothing to do. You know, this, they do it these days, but Vietnam probably came along at an opportune time for the army but an inopportune time for all us blokes. But it was somewhere to go.

10:00 It was something to do, you know what I'm saying? That's how I look at it now, I didn't look at it that way then. I mean, "This will do me, this will do me for a while. Sick of bloody running around the streets, go in the army. See what the army's about." Cause me old man was in the army and I always had visions, you saw the Vic Morrow shows and all that sort of stuff, well it ain't like that at all. Nothing like that at all, they can put it on camera all they like, but it's just not the same. I left home, I went to Morningside, or Hawthorn,

10:30 and I went to school there and by the time I got to Hawthorn - education - I went downhill, just went downhill. I don't know, I just...I always make a joke of it. I say, "The only reason I went to school between the ages of five and fourteen was because the government made me." Gee, I hated school. I think two people were happy the day I left - me and the school teacher. I think she was happy to see the end of me too, I think. I got told I was going the same way my brother was. "Oh, we had your brother here before you, you're heading the same way son."

11:00 **Was that the sort of thing that would piss you off or you'd just, I mean you'd just be constantly compared to your brother?**

No, no, no, no. I was in a lot of trouble on my own, I didn't need him helping me. I was always in fights, always fighting. Seven boys, no girls.

Amazing?

Well you got it pretty tough. We had a theory in our family with the brothers, if one can't beat you, the other one can. It wasn't a fair

11:30 way to fight but winners are gridders and I was always constantly in fights, always in fights...at school, on the streets. I did a lot of boxing in those days. Way back when I was living in Hawthorn I used to go into a place called the Railway Institute, I think it was called, and a lot of the old blokes would know this. It was run by a bloke called Jack Kelso, and Jack Kelso, I don't know whether he was a boxer,

12:00 but he was a trainer, and actually Johnny Famechon used to go to the same place. He was in a higher rating than me. I was just a glorified punching bag, I think that's all I was. But the old man always wanted to teach us how to box in those days, not the 'kung fu' and stuff they do these days, or the judo or the karate or taekwondo. It was just boxing in those days. It was a fair fight, you stood toe-to-toe with a kid in the street and the winner walked away and the loser had respect for the winner, that was a fair way.

12:30 So I learnt how to fight, I learnt how to box and that's basically what kept me going and I had the Hippisley nature. We fight. I learnt things about the old man later on in life and he wasn't exactly a model child himself, so it obviously carried on, you know what I mean? He was always in trouble with the coppers. He was in trouble with the coppers in Victoria. He used to say to me,

13:00 in those days, as a matter of fact I was at his funeral, I mentioned it at his funeral and the coppers in those days had pushbikes and the old man was in trouble and the copper was chasing him on the pushbike. And the old man said the easiest way to get away from a copper on a pushbike was to stop and the copper would stop, lean his pushbike against a post and he said when he went to do that, you started running again and the copper wouldn't leave his bike. And then when he got onto motorbikes, the coppers in those days had sidecars on their motorbikes, and he said the easiest way to get rid

13:30 of them was to keep on doing left hand turns, cause they couldn't do left hand turns. So I'd listen to all this stuff. Later on in life I thought, "No wonder I got into so much trouble." It must have got passed down. He was always in trouble with the coppers. He had a criminal record. He never said what for and I wouldn't know to this day. He was never proud of it, but it stays with you. I'm glad I didn't get one in retrospect because when my eldest brother, no my youngest brother was

14:00 at Wacol for break and entries, one of my younger brothers, this was about fifteen years ago, my father had to get special permission to go and see him because of his criminal record that dated back to, Jesus, back to the 1920s, not 1920s, 1930s, whatever it was when he got booked by the cops, so it stays with you the rest of your life and it's on your record and he couldn't even see his own son without special permission. I thought that was pretty rude, but that's the law, that's the rules and that's forty-five,

14:30 fifty years later, and you've got to get special permission to see your own son in gaol, and I was shocked and actually when I went into Wacol one day to visit my brother, when they close those doors behind you, I got the shakes and I thought, "Hello. I might not get out of here." I started getting guilt complex, "maybe they'll find out," cause I wasn't exactly a model kid myself. Yeah, that was a pretty tough life. We managed. We always had shoes on our feet and clothes on our back.

- 15:00 We had no car and we were always scratching for a living but we always managed. The old man fed us so that was it. Well he grew up in the Depression years and let's face it, a pretty tough life from what I can gather. I don't know too much about it. We're pretty lucky these days compared to those blokes.

How would you go seven of you living in the same place? How would that work?

Well it didn't, well you did the best you, well I suppose you just got used to it.

- 15:30 There was, well I suppose you just got used to it, there was, well there wasn't seven of at the one time. Allan was off doing his running from the law at that time. I think he was in trouble with the law. I don't know too much about what Allan was doing and then it was mostly, then I became basically head of the boys and then we had Robert and then Ronald and Lance and Shane and then Guy was born, I think. I think Guy was born just before we left Mount Gravatt. He was only a baby. See most of these kids, most of my brothers were only very young when I joined the army, cause
- 16:00 my youngest brother underneath, four years under me, so when I was in the army at eighteen, he was only fourteen, only a teenager, so I used to have to hose their nappies out when I was over at Mount Gravatt, and it's a thing I'll take to my grave. I'll remember it to the day I die, hosing bloody babies nappies, you've got to be...this is not a job for a teenager. Not right, it's not fair. It wasn't fair, but this stepmother of mine, and with
- 16:30 all due respect to her, I won't say too much about her, but we just don't see eye to eye. We never did and that's just the way, maybe because I'm not her son, I don't know. That's her problem, it's not mine. But I used to have to look after, baby them and hose their nappies and do this for them and look after them, and then it become and I took over the role of protector, I was their protector. Like I got into more fights because of them, the same as my older brother, he was always fighting for me and then when he left I had to take over the role
- 17:00 as king head fighter and I was always fighting with kids. I took six kids on one day to defend one of my brothers, six of the buggers. I managed to beat the head leader. You always went for the top. Beat the leader and then the rest will...and it did work and the next thing they're up at the shop complaining to the old lady that I ripped his jacket and I split his jaw open. Well she told him to piss off. "You can't hit one of my sons now, give the game away." Pretty tough, pretty tough life. I suppose in
- 17:30 hindsight it geared me for the army, for a tougher life, cause I was pretty tough. I don't think I was tough as such, but I think I was pretty hardened, pretty fit and young and looking for adventure and the army was, "Well, we'll grab this bloke, this is perfect." A stereotype...I reckon I was one of thousands, of all the blokes that went to Vietnam I was probably just - we all probably fitted the same mould. We could have all been brothers for that matter.
- 18:00 Probably all running from the coppers or nothing to do or getting into more trouble than Flash Gordon [comic book hero].

Did you have much of a relationship at all with your mother?

No, well I never knew my real mother. My mother, from what I can gather, my old man he's funny my old man. I loved him, but he wouldn't tell you too much about the past and I think he married my mother, I

- 18:30 think my mother was a war bride. She come over from England to get away from the Blitz and then I was born. And then I remember him, he mentioned to me once when he had a few beers, the only time you could get anything out of my old man was when he had a few beers in him, and she offered a thousand pounds for me to take me back to England, and he refused. And that's a lot of money in those days, back in 1948, a thousand pounds. You could have bought bloody Sydney Opera House for a thousand pounds back in 1948, but he didn't do it and I was quite happy. I'd be a Pom now,
- 19:00 and I couldn't live with that - no offence to the Poms. And she went back to England and I never knew her. In fact it wasn't until I was fourteen years of age that I was down the river, down at Hawthorne fishing with my other brother and he told me that she was...I didn't know she was my real mother until I was fourteen. Whether it was a good thing, in those days I gather they kept things pretty well under wraps and anyway I walked in the shop that day,
- 19:30 and I said, I must, I think I asked her, I said, "You're not my real mother?" and I don't know whether I said it the wrong way or not, but from that day onwards I got nothing but hell curry [trouble]. I mean I wasn't a model kid, don't get me wrong. I deserved the odd belting, but she was a cruel woman - floggings. I've even got scars on my arm now from her, from the ironing cord. In those days the cord used to detach from the iron, like the frypans of today and she used to whip me with that and
- 20:00 she was a cruel woman. She used to almost froth at the mouth and the only thing that kept me alive at the time was the old man. He'd step between them. I've got a scar there where she got me with a milk bottle. She threw it at the old man actually but he ducked, but I was standing behind the old man and I got a milk bottle. I hadn't learnt to duck at that stage. And it carried on and on and on, and I think that's another reason I joined the army. I had to get out of that environment.
- 20:30 And I swore that when my children grew up I'd never flog my kids. I never did. I used to belt them but I never flogged them. I never used an instrument, and never ever used an instrument because I

remember what I went through. She bent the old wooden stove. There was a poker stick that you get in a, that you stir the coals up with. It's about that long I think and it's about, not quite five or sixteenth inches thick and she bent it on my brother one day, watched her bend it, whipped him with it. I thought "gee, no wonder he went off the rails."

21:00 I'm not saying that's why he went but only one thing I'll say in her defence, when they left Melbourne and she's only seventy now and I'm...no, she's only seventy now and I'm fifty-five. You with me? So when she was with my old man and I was born she was only a teenager, little past a teenager herself, and here she is with an eight-year-old boy and a twelve-month-old kid to look after. And then she had five sons of her

21:30 own and they pumped them out like rabbits. But that's the only thing I'll say in her defence. It must have been hard for her rearing two other children at nineteen, seventeen, eighteen years of age I think he left with her at Melbourne when she was fifteen or sixteen. If I do my sums right I think they left Melbourne when she was probably fifteen or sixteen and it's probably no wonder they left Melbourne cause she had four big brothers, so they were probably looking for the old man. Yeah, he's a bit of a...

22:00 I'm probably not allowed to swear on this thing, am I?

Oh, yeah.

Probably a bit of a root rat philanderer, I think, excuse my language, bit of a stud, so he took, so he left Melbourne, I'd say, with the family hot on his trail, I'd say, shotgun stuff [pregnant girlfriend, so forced marriage]. Yeah, so that's the way it was with them. I don't hold any hatred for her, I don't like her, but I don't hold any hatred. There's no point.

And was she always that aggressive?

From that time onwards yes, that time onwards, yes,

22:30 even when I came home on pre-embarkation leave. You get a week off before you go to Vietnam and pre-embarkation leave and I walked...in those days there was no such thing as catching planes and that sort of thing. They stuck us on a train and the train got into, I think it was South Brisbane and then, I think I caught a cab home to East Brisbane. We were living in East Brisbane then. The old man was a cabinetmaker by trade and he was working at that, so I walked in, sat, I remember walking in Saturday morning, and there was a blue [fight] on in the house, and there was always blues. They had

23:00 'knock down, drag 'em out' fights, the old man and Marlene. In Mount Gravatt, they used to...it was one of those old houses where you can go from room to room, and honestly, it was like, they'd punch each other that way and then they'd punch that way and we're all sitting in the corner. It was probably usually over one of us, but holy bloody hell, you grew up with that violence. But anyway, I walked in Saturday morning and you spend a week with your girlfriend, your wife or your parents, cause you're going away to a war.

23:30 Anyway, so there was a blue on between the old man and her. By Saturday afternoon it was my fault. Now whether or not I'd said something in the course of the day, I can't really remember. I probably didn't help the matter much, but the next thing you know here she is trying to knee me between the legs. I mean, I grabbed my uniforms and I said, "I'm not putting up with this bullshit," cause by this stage, I'd grown up a little bit and I said, "I'm leaving," and it was more of a pride thing for her, I'd say. Here's her son walking out and she went

24:00 hysterical and I had to end up grabbing her wrists, physically grabbing her wrists and she tried to knee me between the legs and I'm pretty strong. I'd done a lot of physical PT [Physical Training] by this stage and I was pretty fit and filled out a bit more, and I held her and I just said to the old man, "For Christ's sake come and get her will you, this is crazy." Anyway, he grabbed her and pulled her away and as I bent to pick up my bag and that, and she threw a house brick. By this stage I'd managed to duck a bit - I probably remembered the milk bottle.

24:30 And it missed me and I thought, "Oh bugger this, I'm gone." I went and stayed with a mate over at Hawthorn that I knew from my childhood days. I stayed with his mother and they still, I don't think she can still come to grips of when I got wounded and they did allow me to go out of the hospital after a few weeks or a month to stay at home...I didn't go home. I went to stay with my mates again. There was no point, you know what I mean? No point, I never went back. Cause that stuck in my,

25:00 that still sticks in my mind. I got wounded as it was, and I mean, here I was saying goodbye to my parents and you get a house brick. In other words, nothing had changed, so I went back to the only family I knew, the army, all my friends and mates. So that was the woman, she was, and she's only living over at Caboolture now. I don't see her very often.

Has she softened at all?

No, hard woman, oh well.

25:30 She realised now with the old man gone that what she's missed, with the old man that is. I think she took him a lot for granted. Now he's gone now, she's finding it a bit tougher. Well, I feel sorry for her, but that's as far as it goes. She's got five sons. If she was my mother and still treated me the same way, I would probably do a lot more for her, but she's not my mother. She's no flesh and blood to me,

26:00 and I don't have to put up with that bullshit any more. She's got five sons who I look at and think, "This is your mother, you should be doing something." If she was my mother, irrespective of what she had done, I would still look after her, but not one of them hardly ever goes near her now. The younger brother, Robert, he drops in every now and then but the rest of them don't drop in, so it's not me, you with me?

Yeah.

And they don't want nothing to do with her. And my brother, we live, my brother is buying the house

26:30 sort of thing over there, my younger brother Guy, and she rang me up not long ago and said - I used to mow the lawn when the old man was alive, see. I did it for him, that was the only reason I did it and when he passed away I didn't want to do the yard any more - and she rang up the other day and said, "Can you come back and do the yard? I can't afford it." So I rang Guy up and I said, "You know that house you're buying?" I said, "Yeah, you'd better find someone to mow your yard." I said to him, I said, "No offence, I've got nothing against the woman, but you're buying the house, it's your house eventually," I said. "You find someone."

27:00 So they found someone, got a friend doing it, fine. And that's the cruellest thing I've ever done to her and I feel bad about that, and isn't that terrible? I'm the one that feels bad. But cause it's the old cliché, two wrongs don't make a right, eh?. No point in being bitter, I'm not bitter against the woman but I can't bring myself to embrace her, hug her or tell her I love her or something like that. It's not there, it's too late. I'm fifty-five years of age nearly, so it's too late for all that stuff. It's too late.

27:30 I envy people who have got, who grew up in a - like I've got a mate that lived at Hawthorn, his mother still lives over at Hawthorn, he's down at Helensvale now. His family life is fantastic. He's got a mother, they have Chrissie dinners, all this sort of stuff. We had our Chrissie dinners but it, we used to have a big thing at the old man's place on Boxing Day and it was Boxing Day by name and Boxing Day by nature,

28:00 cause one of us would start a blue. It would be a punch up by the end of the day, well that's our Boxing Day. No wonder they call it, they must have named it after our family, I'm bloody sure of it. But my mate goes to Boxing Day and they have a fantastic day and they sit around, drinks and chicken and stuff like that, and it's great. And I envy that, I really do miss that, but that's the way it is. If you told stories about my family and you put it, you published it and people read it, they would put it in the fiction column.

28:30 They wouldn't believe it, some of the stuff that went on in that family, and there's some stuff that today's going to go on camera like I said here before. You can't because there's too many things out there that need to be left unsaid, but that's the way it was, a pretty tough life. And like I said, the army, I was ready-made, ready-made, from what I know now. I didn't know that at the time. I mean I was nineteen years of age and full of everything. I just wanted to go and do something, I was bored. And the army gave me a war to go to,

29:00 and so I stopped being bored five minutes after I got there, but anyway.

What about girls, growing up?

No, didn't have much to do with women at the time. I used to chase girls, I used to chase one girl at school at Morningside with a dead rat, but that's how much I thought of girls. Then I got, I was always up the office, I was always in trouble. I got more cuts on my hand - gee, kids today complain about a smack on the bum, Jesus Christ Almighty, it's no wonder my hands are probably so tough now. You used to get six cuts in them days. Sometimes I got six on each hand.

29:30 I was always in trouble with girls. I used to chase them and drop water bombs on them or look up their skirts going up the stairs or whatever. Sorry, I used to. I told you before I wasn't a good kid. That's the way it was. I'm not making this bullshit up, it was fair dinkum. I was always in trouble. In fact, I think one day I went up to head office, I think the day I chased the girl with the dead rat, Christine I think her name was, and I went up there and this deputy headmaster he said, "Oh, not

30:00 you again." He said, "Look just sit there for twenty minutes." He got sick of caning me, it must have worn the poor old bugger out. He let me off. And I thought, "That's unreal." But whenever trouble did go on with school, particularly girls and that, it didn't make any difference whether I was involved or not, they used to come and grab me anyway. It's like the coppers might do today. They'll get a bloke who knocked over the local bank and they'll pin the other six banks on him anyway, even

30:30 if he didn't do it. That cleared up their paperwork. Well, the school was the same. They used to throw me, I was always in trouble. And girls, I had nothing to do with girls. As far as taking girls out I, I shouldn't tell you some of this stuff I think. I took one girl for a ride on my little Vespa one day, but she wouldn't put out, and she was a lot older than me, about eight years older I think. I think she was taking advantage of me. I think she wanted a young fella but didn't work out. No, I didn't really start chasing women until

31:00 I actually got in the army. No, I didn't, no I didn't. When I was in Vietnam I used to write to about eight of them. They all thought they were the only ones, but you didn't tell them that. I'll get onto that later

on. No, nothing to do with school. Too busy having a good time.

Had you heard much about World War II or war in general at all?

Yeah, I used to watch the old

31:30 movies and that, Vic Morrow in Combat. He went too quickly. He got hit by a chopper anyway by what I heard. I used to watch it and the old man would sit there and say, "That's a load of bullshit, that don't happen that way," and you'd only half listen. You'd think, "Oh no Pop, this is ridgy didge [true] stuff." Till you get involved later on yourself and then you find out and then you sit in front of the TV and say, "That's bullshit, son." It's like a carry on, isn't it? But I used to watch the

32:00 war, I still watch them. I get, it's not so much fascination. I particularly like, well the First World War movie, the First World War and the Second World War, any documentaries or movies I see on them, it's like we were saying before, it's fascinating, terrible, it really is. Some of those things they went through, some of those blokes. I don't class myself in their category. I really don't. I look up to the old blokes with a great heap of respect,

32:30 especially the World War II blokes, and more so the World War I blokes. I mean some of the things I can't, I've got the film, the video, the vide...Jesus Christ, here we go, Christ Almighty.

There's a story.

That's another story, sorry, oh Christ. I got the video on Gallipoli and I can't watch it. I watched it once and I can't watch it again. I've still got it

33:00 but I can't watch it, cause it's sheer waste. And looking at what I knew when I went to Vietnam and what those young fellows went through then. I mean they were jumping out of trenches and not even allowed to put a round up their spout because they were frightened they were going to shoot the guy in front. That was just crazy. They're charging machine guns with just bayonets. I mean you talk to a young soldier of today that that's what they did, and it's unbelievable, it's going back to the Civil War days. And I look at that and I've even got a thing up there

33:30 on the First World War, all the units and that and it's just horrific what some of those blokes went through, horrific. The Second World War blokes went through much, oh, I wouldn't say much worse. Every blokes war is horrific or bad to them, but those things. Some blokes had an easy time of it in all wars, but the old foot sloggers [infantry], where I lean to all the time, cause that's where I was, it's pretty tough.

34:00 And those Second World War blokes, like that Sandakan march and the Changi gaols and the Burma Railway, you only got to read stories on that and you can't believe how human beings can treat other human beings that way, just inconceivable, inconceivable. I suppose that's the way it was, but it doesn't make it right, you know what I mean? Doesn't make it right. I'd like to think that one day, things like your documentary, there won't be any more documentaries, but I don't think so. We've been fighting since bloody cave

34:30 man days and it's still going on. I get a little upset from time to time. My daughter went to Timor not long ago. I didn't want her to go. I told my son the other day, he's in the air force, as soon as Iraq started, "Don't put your hand up," and what does he do, puts his bloody hand up. He didn't go, but he stuck his hand up. God, and it's not because I big note myself or big note it. I talk about the funny stuff more so. You probably might get a bit more out of me today than most people ever get out of me.

35:00 My children will be absolutely shocked to read some of the stuff probably, anyway.

That's kind of what it's about I guess.

Yeah, that's what it's about, yeah. Like I said, I don't want to be blowing my trumpet.

Don't have to worry about that.

Well I do, so you're not going to get rid of that, anyway.

Did you find anything out from your father about World War II?

No, he kept it pretty...not until later on in life when I joined the army

35:30 and when I came back from Vietnam, he opened up a bit then. I think he saw me as an equal or another...we always had, Pop used to always say to his sons, even the two that went off the rails a bit, he'd say, "I don't care what they done, they're still my sons," and he was always proud of that fact. But as far as the military side was concerned with me, he never told me much at all. He would tell me certain things, he again would

36:00 also only tell me the funny stuff, like he was called 'Hippo'. Well actually, to go back to Hippo bit, I came home from school once and I'd been in a fight, another one of course, and he asked me what I'd been fighting about. I said, "Some kid called," I don't remember this, this is the way that he tells it, and he said I said, "some kid called me Hippo," and he said, "I've got two lines of advice." He said, "Either learn to fight like a prize fighter, or accept the nickname."

- 36:30 He said, "Your grandfather got it, I got it, you'll get it." And all my brothers get it, so when he was in the Second World War, he was called Hippo. He was a Bren gunner. His mate was called Slippo - Hippo and Slippo. Don't ask me why he was called Slippo because his name was Cunningham or something. I don't know where he got Slippo from, but that's the military: you get a nickname. Always do, you always will. You'd better find yourself one or they'll find one for you. So I always got Hippo, that was automatically. I didn't tell them that. People just picked it up. And he tells me once
- 37:00 when he was over in the jungles and the Japs [Japanese] weren't very far away and he hears this noise and it's deadly quiet and you don't talk, no one's talking, and he feels his mate Slippo's elbow him and he elbowed back and they could hear the noise and all of a sudden this face comes over the pit and he had the Bren pointing up and he shot shit out of this thing and the poor thing was an orang-utan. He'd been out scouring the jungle and he said he shot shit. He said, "He shouldn't have been there."
- 37:30 That's all he said, "He shouldn't have been there." He said, "I could have told him not to stick his head over that pit, I was as nervous as buggery." Cause you see, everybody is nervous. I reckon even the Viet Cong was sitting in his pit nervous. We're all flesh and blood, everybody does it, nobody wants to die. But anyway he tells me another story once where he was, he had this young lieutie [lieutenant], Shavetails as they call them, it goes back to the old. Shavetail was a nickname I think. It goes back as far as the
- 38:00 cavalry days, from the Americans too, I think. He reckoned they called them Shavetails because the donkey's arse would be shaved and they'd nickname an officer a Shavetail, so I thinks that's where it goes back to. Don't quote me on it. I don't know the full story of it. Anyway this young green [inexperienced] officer come over and the old man had been at war now for about eighteen months by this stage so he's pretty well a seasoned trooper by then and he's a Bren gun. So he come up to the old man
- 38:30 one day and he said, "Right-o, you and your mate, come with me. We're going for a recce [reconnaissance]." So away they went and they got a...he said, we got up to a bend and the officer said, "We'll go round here and have a look," and the old man said, "No, no, no, no, the Japs are around there." And he said, "No, we'll go and find out exactly where they are," and the old man said, "I can tell you right now, they're around here, they're right there." And the officer said, "We're going to have a look," and the old man said, "I ain't going." He's a private, mind you, so
- 39:00 is mate and this an officer, he said, "I ain't going," and the officer said, "I'm ordering you Private Hippisley, to get around there." He said, "You can stick your orders up your arse, cause I'm not going round there." He said, "You want to get shot, you stick your own head around there." He turns around to Slippo and he says, "You go," and he said, "If he ain't going, I ain't going." And anyway, he says, "Well, I'm going to charge you," and the old man said to the officer, "If you make him go and he gets killed, I'm going to shoot you," he said to the officer. He don't talk about it, he only mentioned it once, and every time I asked him more on this he wouldn't talk about it.
- 39:30 And they get back and all the major pulled the old man aside and said, "Look, I understand he's green, but you can't threaten to shoot officers," he says. In other words, they don't give a stuff and that's the way it was. I mean, self preservation. I mean the old man's been in the game for a while, this man was brand-spanking-new. The old man said to me, "He would have got us killed and for what?" And he said, "I knew they were there, you didn't need to be an Einstein to work out where they were, you could smell them." That was the way he was and he got charged and I got all his service records and
- 40:00 I sent for them. I sent for my grandfather's, I sent for my great uncle's and I sent for my great grandfather's, I've got all of them and mine, and I gave them all to my son and in it, I went through his charge report and I said, "Which one's the one?" and he said, "I don't want to talk about it son." He didn't want to talk about it, that's the way he was. And that's all he mentioned on the war. He mentioned the funny stuff. He mentioned Borneo, he didn't mention too much. He found, particularly Borneo where the Japs had captured a lot of our blokes and he'd find them. Are you finished are you?

Tape 2

- 00:31 **Well Hippo, we were talking about your dad in the Second World War and some of the things he experienced before he went to the war, can you tell us a little bit more about those things?**
- He don't talk about it much, he didn't talk about it much. I don't know, I didn't know at the time why he didn't talk about it much, but I do now. It's a trend that servicemen have that they just sort of keep a lot of things to themselves. Anyway, he tells me once there was
- 01:00 times when they came across Australian prisoners of war that had been killed and he found some of them actually wrapped in barbed wire and bayoneted. The Japs used to use them for sport. And he said he even found pieces of flesh cut off, off some of the Australians, buttocks and stuff like that, where the Japanese had been eating them, and this sort of stuff. He said, and then he would just move straight on, he didn't talk about it. It must still be upsetting for him.
- 01:30 He said, "from that time onwards," he said, "if a Jap came out of the jungle, a lot of times they didn't survive." He said, "They were told to put there hands up and if they didn't put their hands up, they got a

burst from the Bren gun." He said, "There was no second goes." He said, "Our blokes were pretty wound up by this stage." He said, "There was no room for Marquess of Queensberry rules out there." And he used to tell me something, there was a division called the 7th,

- 02:00 the 8th and the 9th Divisions. The 7th was the one that was over in the Middle East and the 8th was captured and the 9th was the, I think my old man was the 9th Divvy [Division] and they used to say, "A gentleman of the 7th, a capturer of the 8th and the butcher's of the 9th," and that's what the old man used to say, he said, "because our men became butchers after a while." He said, "The prisoners, not many prisoners were taken, till eventually the officers had to step in and say, 'we need information, we need prisoners,
- 02:30 for information and stuff." And then he tells me another time, he said they used to have the Kanakas over there working alongside of them, the locals, and they'd use the locals to take the Jap prisoners back, to save their own men doing it. And the old man said one day he'd sent this Jap prisoner back with this Kanaka and about twenty minutes later he sees this Kanaka and he says, "Didn't I just send you back with a prisoner?" and he says, "No, no, no, that my brother."
- 03:00 He said, "What they were doing was taking them down the road, lopping their heads off and coming back for another one." So poor old Japs weren't even making it back. He said they eventually had to send the Japs back with their own blokes to make sure the prisoners got back. He said, "This was a sport for them." He said, "These blokes had been suffering under the Japs." He said, "They were just chopping them up with the pangas [machetes] and stuff," so you can imagine the poor old Japs, but that was the way that it was. He went back, he was in the 2/2 Pioneers and
- 03:30 I think now I know why he was in there, cause he was a cabinetmaker by trade and they pulled him out a line up, him and a few other blokes to build the towers to house the Japanese prisoners when they were capturing the Japs in great numbers and they would. So he actually went as far back as that as a cabinetmaker building the towers to house the Japs. But he wouldn't talk about much other than those few isolated incidents. I've got a picture of him sitting on the guns in Borneo,
- 04:00 a picture of him sitting, I've got his medals. I sent his medals onto my son actually. I got them for him, not for me. In fact, I even gave my son my medals, not that I wear them much. I used to always say to the old man, in fact, when we were kids we used to, I used to wear one medal, Robert would wear one and Ronnie would wear one and I said to him one day, I said, "Pop why don't you wear your medals?" And he said to me, he said, "Well, I know what I done, I don't need to prove anything to anybody else." And it was true and I'm the same way now.
- 04:30 I don't wear my medals much. I give them to my son. I wear my miniatures if I go on parade, not on parade, but Anzac Day, and I don't wear them when other blokes do wear them because I don't really think I need too. I know what I've earned, I don't need to prove anything any more. I know my son's got them and he knows that I've got them and that's all that matters. It doesn't matter what Joe Blow in the street knows, I really don't care. But that's the way it is.

Did he keep in touch with his mates?

No, not until

- 05:00 later on in life. He kept, I used to say to him about going to reunions and he never went to a lot of them but when he got onto his seventies he started going to reunions a lot more. He kept in touch with Slippo, his mate, in fact I met Slippo one day and I can imagine those two when they were bloody nineteen or twenty. Christ they were rogues, and he tells me some of the things he and Slippo used to do up at Atherton Tablelands before they went over to Borneo and that sort of thing. They broke into the officers' mess one night and drank their grog.
- 05:30 The only reason they got caught was they fell asleep and they were found the next morning drunk and he got a lot of charges, my old man, and in fact I followed him too. I got a lot meself and another time he said they were in charge of a milk truck and they had to deliver milk, driving milk around to all the respective units, and he said they went to this farm and got this milk and they were running around selling it and then they realised they'd sold a third of the milk truck so they pulled into
- 06:00 one of those big water towers and topped it up with water. You know, he's unreal, and he also said he knocked off [stole] a five gallon keg [of beer] once and he said, "We had to bloody carry it five kilometres, but," he said, "everybody was happy when we got there." This five gallon keg...gee he was a wild bugger, he was a wild bugger, and he's got a charge report as long as your arm. You want to see it, conduct and AWOL [AWL - Absent Without Leave], he used to go, he said, "I used to come back when I run out of money, son." He said, "They just couldn't understand it." And I was the same, I
- 06:30 went AWOL a couple of times. I used the same reason, I ran out of money, I came back. We just got on the turps [turpentine - cheap spirits] and having a good time and wine, women and song and, "Bugger going back to the army, I'll go back tomorrow." But the army took a dim view on that, for him and for me, very much so. My son's got all this stuff now, so it should make interesting reading for him.

Do you think it changed the whole sort of British attitudes of morals to the army from the Second World War to Vietnam?

- 07:00 Changed what?

Changed, you know how it was very sort of British and based on the British protocol, did it change in Vietnam as opposed to the Second World War?

I don't think so. My old man, I didn't know my grandfather. He was First World War and so was my great uncle and Pop was in the Second [World] War, but I think the Australians have always had a unique individuality anyway. I think the only reason they got killed in great numbers in places like Gallipoli and that was because of British-led...It wasn't

- 07:30 the Australians that got themselves killed, it was the British that got them killed. I say that pretty well with clear conviction too, because I read enough on it. I mean, our blokes are pretty - this 'God, Queen and Country' business that was ludicrous, ludicrous. I mean we're still - I'm as patriotic as the next man now, but I don't think Australians have been renowned for their patriotism. They're just, we're just different, we're not Yanks, we're not Poms, we're Australians, and I'm proud of that and my old man was the same.
- 08:00 I think he was all for the Empire but the Australians always had an individuality of their own. I mean the First World War guys were no different. From history you can tell that the Germans and the Italians and even the Germans in the First World War had a healthy respect for the Australians. Are you right mate? I mean it was no different in the Second World War. Plenty of Australians,
- 08:30 bloody, I mean if ever you needed someone to take a position or hold a ground or something, it was normally the Australians they got to do it. And the Australians normally did it because we're individuals. I mean, even Vietnam was the same. We did what we were told, but we were totally different to the Yanks, totally different to the Yanks. We didn't operate the same way. Their method of clearing patrol was to stand up from their pit
- 09:00 and fire a big burst and clear the ground in front of them. Our method was a bit more dangerous but it was a bit more effective, whereas we cleared land two or three hundred yards out by manpower. We actually physically searched it. It wasn't a healthy way to do it but it cleared the ground. And the enemy used to have, I suppose, a healthy respect for us. We met them on equal terms, and I think the Second World War blokes were no different. Look the first people to stop the Japs were the Australians. The Americans didn't stop them. They eventually beat them
- 09:30 but the Australians stopped them at Milne Bay and I think the Germans got stopped in the First World War by the Australians, so I think, no I think we're just a nation, I wish sometimes we were just a nation on our own, really I do, I really do. I mean we followed the Poms for two hundred years, now we're following the Yanks. Why we've got to follow anybody has got me buggered, why we just can't be ourselves, just follow ourselves, just be Australians? I don't care whether your name's Giuseppe or whoever you are,
- 10:00 just be Australians and that's the way I feel, I still do. I still say, I've been saying, "Crikey," longer than Steve Irwin's been saying it. Are you right now? He's starting to give me the pips, but anyway.

I'm just going to go back with your parents for a while.

That's all right, I'm sorry, I get off the track a bit.

No, that's all right. Your father obviously loved you very much, to not let you go back with his war bride to England?

Yeah, I think he wanted to keep me there, here and

- 10:30 for what, other than the fact that he might have wanted to keep his son, he loved his son I suppose, I presume he did. Looking in, hindsight I'm quite happy.

But that must have felt, even if it was an unconscious thing, do you think it made you feel secure through your life?

With my old man? Oh yeah.

That you always had his love?

Yeah, I can tell you right now, you couldn't...it was standing room only at his funeral and there's no one I know of that will say an ill word about him, and he never spoke ill of anybody,

- 11:00 he never did. He would say, "Oh well, that's the way it is son, don't worry." Never had a cross word and the things he did for people, he done real. I don't know if your father's still alive or how old your father is, but I can tell you right now, that era they won't make again, they won't make them again. I don't think I'd be, I wouldn't be able to step into his shoes, no way in the world. I'm not belittling
- 11:30 myself, I'm just don't think, I'm just don't think that I'm of the calibre that my father was. They're just an era that you'll never see again, once they're gone. I said that at the funeral, I said to people, "If you have a father or a mother of this age still alive, start looking to them. Look at them now, cause once they're gone, they're gone." That's the way it is.

Did you ever work out perhaps, you're a thinking person, did you work out why your mother was so aggressive towards you?

Like I said, the only

12:00 thing I can say in her defence I said earlier was the fact that she had to rear me at such a young age and I was not a model child and she could never break me. She tried and I was too steel-willed. I think that's the Hippisley in me. We're pretty strong-willed. She tried to break me and the more she tried to break me, she comes from a very strong, her mother was a very strong Methodist. They were both Methodists, and the big thick bible, the big-six inch bible,

12:30 she's still got it, and they were very strict Methodists and hate Catholics. Oh, they hated Catholics. I was even told to hate Catholics. I even punched a Catholic once because I didn't like him because he was a Catholic, and I can remember back and I don't feel proud about that day either, but I mean now I don't. I waited in ambush for him, actually, but I mean I don't know why she was so hard. That's the only thing, she had a hard life, I'd say, herself living with my father.

13:00 Maybe he wasn't a model, from a son's point of view he couldn't no wrong, but maybe as a husband he wasn't all that well. I mean, we're all guilty of not being good husbands and wives, I mean let's face it.

She may have been angry that your brother told you that about her not being your mother?

Yeah, I was a little bit, yeah, that's right it probably was, because he wasn't exactly the goody two shoes and he wasn't her son either. He's from a different marriage again. He's been married three times my old man, see. He married my eldest brother's

13:30 mother, then he married mine, and then he married her.

**This section of transcript is embargoed
until 1 January 2034.**

14:11 See it come from my brother see and I don't know whether it changed that exact day, but almost after that I started getting floggings, and I mean floggings. The kids today reckon they get belted, Christ, they should have been round in my time. You wouldn't, I'm lucky, I'm not saying I'm lucky I survived but God, she used to whip me

14:30 and I can remember I used to cringe, I used to curl myself up in a ball to get away from her and that was just whipping. I mean absolute whipping and you wouldn't do that to a prisoner and I reckon, not putting tickets on meself but I think I must be a reasonably strong character still because I don't hate her, but by Jesus...

She obviously had something going on of her own makings?

Oh there was something bothering her. It probably wasn't just me but I was the one she centered it on and other than the old man being here.

15:00 I don't think I would have survived. I had a mother...I hit her, actually, I hit her once and I never hated the old man for doing it either, I hit her once, I must have hit her back and she said, "Billy, he's hit me," and my old man hit me so hard he put me from one side of the room to the other and he said, "Don't you ever touch her again." He said, "I will step in between youse but you ever lay a hand to a woman again," he said, "I'll kill you," and for my old man to hit me like that

15:30 was pretty shocking and I went, "Holy shit, I'd better not do that again," so I never hit her again. But what he was trying to instil in me he says was respect for your mother, irrespective of whether I didn't like her or she's not my mother; she's a woman and I've never hit a woman since, never. I wouldn't have been game. I've come close but I haven't hit a woman since. There's some women that need hitting, but...

She'd had a lot of resentment probably from taking on other peoples' children

16:00 **from such a young age?**

Yeah, that's, I lean that on her for her defence. That's the only thing I can lean on, and Kath said that the other day, "You've got to remember she was a young woman taking on young kids and she's only sixteen, seventeen. Sixteen, she's taking on two kids," and Allan was eight. Allan was born before the war then he went away to war and left Allan with some people while he went away to war and I had, I was a war bride kid I suppose.

16:30 **So why wasn't Allan with his mother?**

Ah I don't know, I don't know. That's another story that doesn't get told. Where Allan's mother was I do not know and if I was to ever ask the old man would say, "I don't know son, that's the past and I don't want to worry about that." He wouldn't talk, he didn't want to.

So your father took really two sons, and the women didn't have them, which is highly unusual for that day...

Yeah, yeah.

into a new marriage?

17:00 Yeah, he kept the sons, yeah. Allan, I think that's where Allan went off the rails a bit because the old man, Allan used to get, actually I run into my half-brother from my mother's side, Ray, he lives over at McGregor, in Brisbane here, and I talked to Allan. It's very hard, I'd like Allan and Ray to get together but they don't want to get together because Ray is older than Allan and Ray used to beat Allan up. Cause Allan got left with

17:30 Ray and Billy. Ray and Billy are my half brothers from my mother's side and from what I can gather, Allan was left with Ray, with my mother and they used to give Allan a hard time, so I mentioned to Allan the other day, I said, "I ran into Ray," and he said, "Oh yeah, I don't want to talk about that bastard," he said. So my brother still holds a grudge. But my brother's pretty hard nailed. He doesn't forgive or forget, so I just sort of let that go.

Did you ever have the desire to meet your birth

18:00 **mother, your original mother?**

No. I am regretful I didn't only the sake where, I was growing up pretty (tape stops)

So Hippo, I just asked whether you had the desire to ever meet your original mother?

No, I was pretty, I was moving pretty fast and growing up and I joined the army and then Vietnam come along so I really didn't have that much, the only family I knew was my brothers and

18:30 that was all. I knew of her but the old man wouldn't talk about her. It was a shame, but every I mentioned it he would say (tape stops)

Okay, so Hippo sorry for the interruption but basically you said it was a bit sad that you didn't get in touch with your original mum?

Well, sad in one respect, but look it's a two-way street. She could have tracked me down and probably would have been able to track me down a lot easier than I would have been able to track her down because I mean, I was actually in the military, so it wouldn't have been too hard to find me.

19:00 You could have gone straight to the Commonwealth, to the Australian High Commission and bingo, he's in the army and (unclear) would have found me, no trouble. So she obviously didn't want to find me and the old man wouldn't tell me too much and I got on, and I got married and had kids, so I was moving on and I'm a lot like, I like to think I'm a lot like me old man. That's part of the past that really has no bearing on me and that's through no due fault of mine, that's the way it was.

19:30 When I was in the air force I actually got a letter from Salvation Army saying, "Are you Terry Hippisley, 41 years of age, whose mother's name was such and such?" and if I didn't want to contact this person, I didn't have too. So I said, "Yeah, that's me," and anyway they put me in touch with Ray, me half brother, and I mean we get along great but we really don't know each other that well. We've never known each other at all. He knew me when I was a baby but that was all. When we moved to Brisbane they lost track of him.

20:00 Anyway I asked the old man about him and the old man didn't want to talk about him, him or Billy. Billy was another half brother, but Billy's died since - cancer apparently. Anyway, to cut a long story short I actually had to go down to by semi down to Williamstown, which is an air force base, and there was, no sorry, that's right, that's when I dropped into see Ray, I dropped in to see Ray then.

20:30 Then I got another letter one day saying there was an uncle, no, I've got a cousin somewhere in Australia, down at Nowra or somewhere and, sorry, the cousin come over from England, that's right, the cousin come over from England and was the one that tried to track us down. Anyway I went down to Nowra to actually, he stopped to see his father, who's my uncle over at Nowra and I actually stopped into see this uncle of mine who was coming over from England and

21:00 his wife's brother, if I can get this story right. I was there for two hours talking to an uncle who I'd never met. After two hours we'd run out of conversation. What were we going to talk about? He showed me a picture of me mother, she died that time two years earlier apparently. So it was, it was '89, so what's that? I suppose fourteen years she's been gone

21:30 now. We ran out of conversation. He's a nice guy, but what are we going to talk about? There's nothing to talk about. I don't know the man, two hours later I was bored. And I said to the Missus, "I'll think we'll go, hey?" I mean what are we going to do? You can't throw your arms around, I didn't come from a family where you throw your arms around people. I grew up pretty hard and tough, so all this was coming out in me. It would have been nice to embrace these people and go to England. My ex-wife is actually going to England very soon and she's going to

22:00 stay with my uncle. Great, good stuff, cause that's the way she is. She wants to know that side and I,

look, one of the first things I asked when my mother passed away was, I said, "Did she own a castle or anything?" Dear me, "Did she leave any money, did she leave any inheritance, do I become an earl or lord now?" No, none of that, she was on a pension, so there goes that idea.

22:30 So you see, there was nothing to talk about and it's sad, it's past it, it's unfortunate and I got, I think I've got a picture of her somewhere but I mean, and when I met me brother Ray and you see us two together you can see we're brothers, same receding hairline and everything. I mean I look like the old man but I also look like Ray too. We'll have a coffee soon.

23:00 **I was just going to ask was it a little bit difficult for you coming from such a male household socialising with girls? Were you a bit uneasy about it at first?**

Well if I was it certainly didn't develop later on. There's my wife Kath anyway. Sorry we're filming...sort of. They're going to edit all this. Yeah, no, I don't know, maybe I wasn't that way inclined at the time. Probably because we were all boys, I don't know. Girls,

23:30 they were the days when you didn't really chase girls that much. I didn't really consider girls until I joined the army.

So what happened just before you joined the army, well actually within enlisting up for Vietnam can you tell us about that process?

Well what I can recollect I mean I went in, I was telling, what's his name again?

Chris [Interviewer].

Chris, sorry mate, I forgot. When I went in I was riding motorbikes for the Brisbane Metropolitan Motorcycle Club, which is an old club. We had Vespas and

24:00 80 Suzuki Ks, not this big stuff, and when the army come along, I read in a brochure one day that they had Don R riders, despatch riders, and I wanted too, I said, "Great, I can ride motorbikes and be in the army too," so Signal Corps and Service Corps were the two that had the Don R riders, according to the pamphlet, and in those days you had to choose three choices, so I chose ordnance. I thought, "Well okay, ordnance, I don't want to go in bloody infantry, bugger that, you

24:30 get shot at in the infantry." So I went down to Kapooka and I did me training and right at the end you go before a selection board and in those days it was, in these days it's (unclear) and you tell them what you want before you go in and if they've got a vacancy, they'll give it to you and if they haven't you have to choose something else. But in them days you went in en masse and they went, "You and you are going there and you and you and you are going there." Some blokes would get what they wanted. Anyway you went before three full colonels and colonels had the big red bands on their hats and I walked in and

25:00 guys were filing in, one after the other like a needle parade, and they said, "How come you've got Service Corps and Signals and Ordnance?" And I said, "I want to be a Don R rider sir," and this recruiting sergeant in Brisbane had told me, had signed me up saying, "Oh yeah mate, we'll get you, you can be a Don R rider, yeah." And when these colonels, when they asked me this question and I said, "I want to be a Don R rider," they said, one colonel says, "We haven't had a Don R rider since the Korean War, we disbanded them years

25:30 ago." That bloody recruiting sergeant suckered me right in, the mongrel. So he probably went back to his home that day and pissed himself laughing thinking, "I got another one here." So they turned around, look they had me earmarked for infantry. I can tell you right here and now, they had me down for infantry before I even walked out that door because everybody coming out was getting, was telling everybody what they got: "I got infantry." In fact me mate went in before me and he asked for infantry, Jamie Ploughman - couldn't believe it. He said, "I want infantry, my father was in infantry."

26:00 I said, "So was mine, bid deal," but he got infantry, he got what he wanted. They probably thought, "Oh great, this saves us choosing."

Was he with you in Vietnam, Jamie?

Yeah, he was with me, yeah, Jamie. Oh actually he wasn't in the same company as me. They moved me to another company. So they said, "Infantry, what do you think of infantry?" I said, "Oh, I suppose," cause me mates were all going that way and you go where your mates go, you did. Cause I didn't know, I didn't know anybody else but these blokes and

26:30 it's a terrible thing to say about my family, but at this stage I didn't know it, that it was happening. I have more affiliation with every Vietnam veteran out there today than I have with my own brothers. It's a different thing, it's a different thing. You've got two men walk a road, right? Two men walk a, I always remember this cliché, two men walk a road and one joins the army and goes to war and the other don't. They meet up again later on, you've changed, you have,

27:00 you've changed and it will be with you until the day you die. You walk a different road and you always will. Some guys can say, "Ah, that's the past, forget about it," but I bet they can't, they can't. It's in your blood now. I sometimes tell the joke I bleed green, I can't help it. I've got a lot of memorabilia around me. Some people reckon I live it too much. It's not, it's, I'm comfortable in that environment, I'm comfortable there. I belong to the Vietnam Veterans' Motorcycle Club.

- 27:30 I'm comfortable there, I'm with my own kind. I even went into Greenslopes once, the psychiatric ward mine you, Ward 14. Some blokes even wear their Ward 14 sign on their feet now, it's like a badge of honour, but when I actually had to go in for a bit of help, I actually, the doctor put me in Belmont, which is the mental hospital over there and he came over in the Monday morning. He put me in on a Friday and he came over on a Monday and there was no room
- 28:00 at Greenslopes and he said to me, he said, "How's it going?" I said, "Listen," cause I was over there with people, with women with post-natal depression and all this sort of stuff, and schizophrenics and nymphomaniacs, but if they were I don't know but anyway, if they were I didn't find them. But when he come over on the Monday and said, "How's it going?" I said, "Look, if you're going to put me with crazy people, put me with my own crazy people," and that's what I'm getting at, I wanted to be amongst my own kind.
- 28:30 And I am more comfortable and in fact, Kath unfortunately only just come into the environment, the military environment and I don't know too many people outside the circle who are not veterans and that's just the way it is. I'm not ashamed of that, I'm comfortable that way. I've got a couple of civvy mates, my old mate from Hawthorn, Macca. I ring him from time to time but he'd be the only guy I know from my school days, who isn't military.
- Well your army mates, they're the bonds that tie.**
- It's as I said to you a second ago, it's
- 29:00 stronger than a family, it's as strong as a family unit. Some people have a strong family unity, well I've got that unity with the military and I got that from the time I joined. I didn't know it at the time but it's something that develops and it's something, my father was the same. He had friends all over the place but like I said towards the end he went to his military mates and he was comfortable. The old man was comfortable talking with me because I was ex-military and we'd talk old soldier to old soldier.
- 29:30 I often see that movie, what was the movie where, oh The Presidio where that old Congressional Medal of Honour bloke says, "When I die I'm going to talk to the Spanish American boys and we're going to swap stories." And that's the way it is. I can go, I can walk, I see guys walking around now with the same mandatory tattoo and the receding hairline and the way they are and I think, "Oh he's a veteran, I can tell." Like a copper, you can smell them.
- 30:00 **So once you were put in the infantry, what happened then regarding Vietnam?**
- Well you don't straight to Vietnam of course. You do, you finish, well that was towards the end and then you go to Ingleburn, at that time it was Ingleburn. That was where you did your corps training, infantry corps training. You did another three months of infantry training and rifle fire and drills and parades and Christ knows what. They brain wash you there, it was constant and then it was, Ingleburn is still there but
- 30:30 no longer an infantry base, they go straight to the units now. Three months at Kapooka, then three months there and then into the battalion.
- What kind of stuff, Hippo, did you do in the training?**
- Well you'd fire, you'd fire all kinds of, all the sorts of weapons, the M60, the Armalite, the SLR, you'd throw grenades.
- Can you tell us what those are, M60?**
- Oh well the M60's a machine gun, 7.62 machine gun. That's the fire power of your section.
- 31:00 Most people would know what a machine gun was. They've seen enough movies to know what it is, irrespective of whether it be First World War or even today a machine guns a machine gun. You had the, the forward scouts had Armalites. Armalites, M16s I think they call them. I think it was M15s and then M16s. They were light like a plastic weapon as such and they were mainly used for forward scouts or the section commanders. They
- 31:30 were a single shot or semi-automatic or automatic. You could convert them to either. They were like a little machine gun.
- But everybody trained on them?**
- No, oh everybody had a firing of them, yes, everybody fired them because later on down the track you would be given your individual weapon and we all fired the SLR, which is a Self-Loading Rifle. That's been replaced by the Steyr today. I mean the bullet, 7.6, would knock an elephant over with it, so you can imagine what it did to a human body. But we trained,
- 32:00 everybody trained on these weapons and you'd fire them from the hip, you'd fire them from the sitting position, you'd fire them from the standing position, you'd fire them the prone position and you'd fire them almost backwards. You kept and everybody trained with every weapon and grenade throwing was done, not very often but on a regular, regular basis. You'd got out to a grenade range and you'd sit inside a bunker. There were two bunkers
- 32:30 and then, one man would come out with the instructor and you'd throw the grenade and you'd here the

explosion inside the bunker and they'd throw it out into an empty paddock and so you'd train with those as well and everybody did this, it was mandatory, everybody did it. And then as you got into your unit you were given, some blokes were put on the machine gun permanently and some blokes were given the Armalite permanently

33:00 and other blokes were given the SLR permanently, so I carried the SLR, that was my weapon. You were given your individual weapon once you. You fired all these weapons but they weren't yours. You just used them and then you went to your unit and you got your individual weapon, with your individual number. I'll tell you a little funny story. When I was back, I haven't told my kids I don't think. When I was at Kapooka you've got your

33:30 breech block. You know what a breech block is? It's your slot which, it's what makes the weapon fire. You take it out of the SLR. What we used to do we was we'd have our weapons in our rooms but without the breech block, so each breech block only fits each individual weapon. You can't interchange them, well I couldn't anyway and anyway you handed the breech blokes in at night and they got put in a little box and put away in a safe in an armoury. And every time you had to go on the firing range you had to go down, somebody had to go down

34:00 and draw the box of breech blocks out for that platoon and you would put it in your weapon then and you'd go out on the firing range and you'd go through your firing. Anyway one day I went out on the firing range and they said, "If your weapon fails in anyway, raise your foot in the air, so just to signal to the instructor that something's wrong with your weapon," because you've got to remember we're recruits and we don't know what we're doing yet. And anyway I raised me arm and he came along and he had a look and he said, "Okay, look unload."

34:30 He said, "I've got another one here sir," and I thought, "Oh he's got another one here." I didn't know what that meant and later on he pulled me and another bloke out, I can't remember who that was because he could collaborate my story, and he said, "Do you know you two blokes why your weapons won't fire?" and we said, "No." "You didn't bring your breech block." We'd forgotten to draw it, so the weapon wouldn't fire, so we had to stand in front of the whole platoon of mixed Nashos [National Service soldiers] and mixed Regs [Regular Army soldiers]

35:00 with our hand on our old fellow [penis] and a lot of guys, and a hand in the air with the rifle and say, "This is my rifle, this is my gun, this is for shooting, this is for fun," and we had to say it three times in front of the whole platoon. I never forgot my breech block from that day on and that was the way it was. It was just one of those things I can relate too. It was just funny at the time, wasn't funny at the time, it's funny now.

When you said Nashos and Regs, Regs were the Regular Army guys like you?

35:30 And Nashos were the ones that were conscripted, yeah. We had a mixture in Kapooka of half National Servicemen, the platoons in those days were pretty big, nearly fifty strong. Normal platoons are around about thirty-two to thirty-six, I think they are but we were about fifty-strong, for training purposes and we were half Nato's. I don't know if we were half Nashos but we were a mixture of Nashos and Regs and the bartering went on, don't get me wrong, it did and it still does to this very day.

Why?

It's just the way it is, it's a soldier thing, Nashos have a go at Regs and

36:00 regs have a go at Nashos and say, "You Regs wouldn't," like Nashos would say, "Look we had to be bought in to finish the job. You Regs obviously couldn't do the job so we got called in to help you out," things like that. And look my machine gunner was a Nasho and I was a Reg, so it didn't matter. When it comes to the crunch and you're in the bush, in fact the blokes in the motorcycle club and everybody I have to deal with, I wouldn't know whether half of them are Regs or half of them are Nashos and I really don't care. If we find out the

36:30 bartering system, the digging goes on but that's the serviceman's way. That's the way it is, you always have a dig at each other. The same as we have a dig at the navy and they have a dig at us, the air force have a dig at the army and so on and so on. There was no real hatred, it was just a camaraderie, just having a dig, that's all.

I was just going to ask you if you ever came across any of the Nashos that were really resentful that they'd been called up?

No, no they were there, no, they were typical Australians.

37:00 I think they realised they were there to do a job and they did it. In fact to tell you the truth if you asked me today, I could tell you a few mates who were Nashos but if you were to ask me at the time who was Regular and who was Nasho, I wouldn't have been able to tell you.

Well when push came to shove it didn't matter?

That's what I just said a second ago, it doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter.

So you were at Ingleburn, you were training, was that for six months?

Three months.

Three months, sorry.

And then we went onto the Battalion then. It was just constant. Kapooka was to mainly get

- 37:30 that civilian attitude out of you, to instil the military one into you, even though you probably don't realise you've got it, but they can see it. And they can say: "Forget your Mum." I met an old sergeant at NCPD, which is Northern Command Posting Depot at Enoggera, and the same cliché can be said today, he said, "I was in Baghdad when you were in Dad's bags," and I thought about that the other day and I thought, "That can be said again now." Someone else can say that now,
- 38:00 that old sergeant, he's probably dead now, and I went, "What have I done, what am I doing here?" and that was my introduction, "You bunch of bloody no hopers," and away we went and you go off and you grin. So the military's got to get rid of that Mummy's, "You're not going home to Mummy tonight," and this sort of stuff and over the microphone, excuse my French, of a morning, some mornings, "Right hand's off cocks and onto socks," over the microphone, things like that.
- 38:30 And it was mainly to make or break you and there was no, no Marquess of Queensbury rules as far as they were concerned. They were there to train you and probably the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] were ex-Vietnam vets themselves, or ex-Korea or ex-Borneo or even Second World War for all I knew.

Can you explain that, NCOs?

Ah non-commissioned officers. You've got the officers who wore the rank on the sleeve, the pips, they're officers, they're commissioned

- 39:00 by the Queen, where you get non-commissioned officers which start off as a private and then work up to a lance corporal, corporal, sergeant and warrant officers and that sort of thing. Well, they're called non commissioned officers, NCOs for short. And they were good NCOs, well they were good at being mongrels so they must have good training but they were only doing their job, probably just to prepare us because we're green, we're straight out of milk bars and wherever we're from. And they've got to mould these
- 39:30 blokes and we go onto Ingleburn and the same thing, and the same thing goes again. You've got more instructors, more military discipline.

So how long Hippo was that going on? Until you actually left Australia, the training process?

Well in some, it varies depending on the people. I mean I was just saying to Chris before, I joined the army April '67 and was in Vietnam, March '68, under eleven, under twelve months. Some blokes took longer to get

- 40:00 there, some took less and some blokes come after me, which means they didn't even do bloody eleven months training, so it was pretty fast. But I just happened to go into a unit that was being geared that way, some blokes might have gone into a unit that wasn't going to Vietnam for another eighteen months or might have gone to another unit that wasn't going to Vietnam at all.

So militarily speaking, you were well trained?

Oh couldn't have been better, couldn't have been better. I reckon, most Vietnam vets will tell you we didn't lose the war,

- 40:30 the government lost that. No, we were well trained, well trained. We had good NCOs, good officers, most of them, there was the odd one or two, don't get me wrong. I wasn't a model digger myself. I was as green as grass, but no, we had seasoned troops with us, seasoned NCOs. They were top blokes, at least in my platoon anyway, and my company, they were top blokes. Some of them had been to Malaya, Borneo, even had a Second World War bloke floating around somewhere, so they'd been
- 41:00 around. It was good to have them blokes there because irrespective they were different wars, they had the experience and we were babies, let's face it, we were only kids, we needed looking after. In fact our officer was, one of our officers was only three years older than I was, incredible, but he was a rarity but our NCOs were the ones you looked too, the corporals and the sergeants. My corporal had already done a tour of Vietnam.
- 41:30 My sergeant had already done a tour of Vietnam, the warrant officer had already done a tour of Vietnam. He was CSM [Company Sergeant Major], so they were all seasoned men, been there before. Maybe things were different, but things were the same, if you understand what I'm getting at, so they could guide us. If we looked like getting a bit slack they would know when to pull us up, how to train.

Tape 3

- 00:32 **Okay Hippo, we talked a bit about enlistment. I just wanted to ask you whether, how much you knew about I guess the possibility of going to war before you joined?**

Thinking of it I didn't really give it much thought, I really didn't. My feet didn't touch the ground. I really didn't think of Vietnam at all, honestly. I was at Ingleburn when it first reared it's head and

01:00 actually, one of the first guys to bring it up was an insurance company rep [representative]. He actually came out to where we were training and he wanted us all to take out an endowment policy for a thousand dollars and he said, "Look," he said, we were due to get our posting to our units then, all of us were infantry and some of were going 3 RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] in Adelaide and some were going to 1 RAR at Enoggera, not Enoggera, at Holsworthy. And he said, "You know and I know you're going to be

01:30 posted to your unit next week and whatever unit you go to, you know that that unit is earmarked for Vietnam and once you find out, I can't insure you." This is what he said, whether or not it was insurance spiel to this day I don't know. In fact I only just thought of that, probably was just spiel. Anyway I took out a thousand dollar endowment policy to cover my parents, so obviously in my mind I must have been thinking that I knew roughly what was going to be happening or I

02:00 thought in my mind I knew what was going to happen. No, honestly I didn't think much of it. I took out the policy and lived to collect it, thank Christ, but it was only to cover my parents, and I was only thinking of my parents, too. I wasn't thinking of myself, I was only thinking of my parents. If anything happened to me they couldn't afford to bring the body home so, I think by that stage we were probably hearing or reading something about the casualty rates. But we were too busy going in the Cross [Kings Cross] to worry about anything else mate. That's when I learnt about women,

02:30 fast women and I don't mean in cars either.

This is on your time off?

Yeah, oh the time off I had and some of the time off I took.

Do tell us?

I got me first charge when I was in training, Christ I didn't waste any time, well AWOL, AWOL. Oh you know you had to carry your rifle on training on weekends, during the week, carry your rifle. It was to get used to you carrying your weapon. If you were caught without your weapon, "You're working Saturday morning, caught without your weapon, now you're working Saturday afternoon." I got the whole weekend.

03:00 So on Saturday we were sweeping this bloody road, four of us, and then Sunday morning we got up again and two of us said, "Bugger this," and they piddled off and what we should have done was kept sweeping, we'd have been right. We probably could have covered for them but we piddled off too and they charged us, too. The next morning the NCO said, "Where were you blokes?" "Oh we were..." "Oh bullshit," he said, "You're on a charge." Five dollars, five dollar fine, whoop-di-doo. It was worth it, I had a good time. I went back three parts stashed [tired] and collapsed in the bed and got shaken by a corporal the next morning and got

03:30 charged but I don't care. I mean we were fearful, we were trembling but I didn't think too much of Vietnam at the time. It was so fast. I look back on it now and I still can't believe how quick it was because we weren't doing, we'd no sooner got to the battalion. We all lined up and they went "you two A Company, you two B Company, you C Company and you keep D Company." It was Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta. That's your radio alphabets, see and I went into Delta Company,

04:00 D Company and I was only in there about four weeks and they moved me to C Company. I don't know if it was because we kept hiding from the PT instructor, or what, but me and me mate got kicked onto Charlie Company but I knew nothing about Vietnam, really. And then we did more training again, more weapon training, more drill, we even went to Rockhampton. They even flew us to Rockhampton with Hercules to do a big exercise. We went to Canungra, which is where you do your jungle training. Thirty-two, we

04:30 walked thirty-two miles, in them days, thirty-two miles through the hills of Wyangerie [?], up the back of Canungra, with all our webbing on board, and the hills were like that, they were mountainous and they sent us from country that was like that and no bloody hills. I could never work it out. There were hills in Vietnam but not very many I never thought much of Vietnam at all really but it was obviously coming into my mind but I mean, it was an adventure. I mean every soldier, I mean the First World War

05:00 guys when they went to Gallipoli, you ask any of the old guys, it's an adventure and then when the first mate dies or the first whiz bang goes past your ears, well it's no longer an adventure. You think, "Bugger this." The glory in it is, on the screen it's a lot different than real life. Every serviceman will tell you that, no matter what service corps they're in or what rank but it's...

05:30 I always maintain they're getting closer and closer, these movies are getting closer and closer. Forrest Gump was the first one that made me jump up because that zipper, the bullet is pretty realistic and then you get onto things like The Thin Red Line and Saving Private Ryan and then it's start getting really, that Saving Private Ryan was a bit over the top I thought at the start but that's probably what happened at Normandy. I say that's probably what happened. It's not like the old Vic Morrow days where the guy just

06:00 falls over, it don't happen that way. The day comes when I reckon I'll stop going to movies is the day they put smellovision, do you remember, have you ever heard it mentioned? I've heard it mentioned and the day they invent smellovision is the day I stop going to movies and no serviceman will go in, it's just the smell, and that's the thing that stays with you. But getting back to your question, no, I didn't think too much of it. To me it was just, well you didn't have time to think to be honest with you. Square bashing [fatigue duty] and rifle drill and

06:30 chasing women and drinking and playing Crown and Anchor and

Crown and Anchor?

Yeah, Crown and Anchor, yeah Crown and Anchor, that's the dice, six-sided dice. You've got crown and anchor and, crown and anchor, heart, diamond, club, spade. You've got three of them, thrown them down and you have a board with everything, a crown, an anchor, a heart and a diamond, yeah Crown and Anchor. It was a game we played, gambling game, there was money involved, big money, bloody big dough.

07:00 I remember one guy, Kingy, he got VD [Venereal Disease], and it was the week before we were due to go to Vietnam and when you've got VD you're not allowed to drink and he went up and he said, "Bugger it." He got paid and he went up to the boozer and he played Crown and Anchor and he won seven hundred dollars. It was a lot of money in them days, so he went and got pissed. Oh funny.

Can you tell us about the Cross in those days and what you got up to?

07:30 We had a good time, a bloody good time. It was an R & R [Rest and Recreation] centre for the Yanks, so I found out later. I didn't know that at the time to me, and we'd go off and go in our uniforms. Always go in our uniforms with our blue, our beautiful blue, agate, and our, because we were proud to be in our unit and in those days you were encouraged to wear your uniform and that told everybody who you were, but the trouble was it told the military police who you were too, that was a bit of trouble so when you got in a shit they knew who to pick on. But I like the Cross. We used to go to a place called the Jungle Hut and

08:00 it was a Miller's pub, and Miller's beer in those days, Miller's Beer was a terrible beer but the pub had an atmosphere, a tremendous atmosphere and we'd go upstairs and I remember the band always used to play 'Running Bear', at the end, 'Running Bear', and we'd all be singing "in the raw." You know how you sing 'Running Bear'. You know that movie, not the movie, the song, "Running Bear jumped in the water and Little White Dove did the same,"

08:30 do you remember that song?

Can you do a verse for us? I don't know it by title.

"On the banks of the river, stood Running Bear, young Indian brave," that one, it's an old song and at the end of each line, each caption or whatever, little verse, we'd all sing out "in the raw" and it become a big thing and we were there each Saturday night and girls would come there and you met the girls. I met one girl there I actually done me bloody heart over, I nearly said something else then, but I didn't.

09:00 I did my heart over, and you wouldn't believe it and I'll show you how naïve I was I come into visit her on one of me days off, I got a day off, which was rare and I came into see her and they said, "She's not here," and she lives at a place called Pott's Point in Sydney. I don't know exactly where it is, somewhere near the Cross obviously and I went round to see her and you know where she was, she was in bed with another bloke, she was a pro, and I never knew. I never got anything out of her, mind you, obviously because I wouldn't pay,

09:30 but I mean, I never knew and that actually devastated me, actually broke me heart and that shows you how naïve I was. She probably knew all along, I was buying her drinks and all kind, she was having a good time. Having me on the side so I was buying her drinks and hawking the fork [engaging in prostitution], you might say, I'm sorry, on the side. And I fell in love with her and then I met, I don't know if you know too well, I met a girl up there called, oh God, Jesus, what was her name?

10:00 'Big Pretzel', I used to go to a place called the 'Pink Pussycat' and it was a stripper joint, or a go-go dance, strippers, there were strippers there when the Cross had the only strippers in the country and her nickname was 'Big Pretzel'. She went to dance for all the troops in Vietnam later on. She used to be able to swing her boobs different ways at the same time with tassels on the end, and she was fantastic and the troops loved her. She went to Vietnam and how she could do one boob in one direction

10:30 and one boob...and it was fascinating how she did it. I don't know how she did it. I took her sister out, actually took her sister out and her sister one day, we were there one Saturday night, it was a ritual to go to this Jungle Hut and I met her there one Saturday night and me mate said, I should know her name because, that's terrible, isn't it? And my mate said, "Doesn't she look like she's put on a bit of weight?" and I said "Yeah, I've got a funny feeling," and it wasn't me because I hadn't touched her, I knew I hadn't and she was pregnant.

11:00 And this night she was all over me like a rash, normally she kept at a distance, and she was all over me like a rash and you know, she wanted a husband, that's what she wanted and I went (demonstrates), "I've got to go back to base, I'm on guard duty in the morning." I wasn't...I just had to get out of there. I never saw her again, I never went back for a while, for three or four weeks. Blokes were telling me she

was asking for me but I wouldn't go back, never saw her again. I'm sorry for that, but I went cold turkey, I went

11:30 chicken, Morningside, alarm bells were ringing, I wasn't ready for a wife, but we had a good time. Actually, I lost me slouch hat there, somebody stole me bloody slouch hat. I had it resting on the board and I seen the hand come over and grab it and I bolted down the stairs, but by the time I got down there, they'd gone, never mind. Then the provos [provosts – Military Police] picked me up, the military police, cause I was walking around without me hat on, and you couldn't explain to a provo, he didn't care.

12:00 "In the paddy wagon, boy," straight back to base. They could have arrested me but they just took me back to my unit.

And what does losing a hat cost you?

Buying another bloody hat, it didn't cost me nothing particular but I had to go and buy another bloody hat. It was like that one over there. Regimentally bashed and puckered here and nearly done. You're proud of your slouch hat and the bugger stole it.

12:30 We used to go to a place called Johnny's Naval House, which was a dollar a night. It was a naval place under the Sydney Harbour Bridge and you could stay there for a dollar a night, in bunk formation, and you always took the top bunk. Never took the bottom bunk because if anyone took the top bunk and particularly if they threw up, you're on the bottom bunk aren't you? Always took the top bunk. Yeah it was good, always had good times at the Cross. We used to get off at Wynyard Railway Station or Central Railway Station and do a pub crawl,

13:00 and we'd end up at the Jungle Hut that night, but we'd do a pub crawl right through all the Cross, all the pubs, yeah it was a good time, good time.

And is this where you caught up with your mates that you went over with?

Yeah, well actually by this stage the blokes you, see when you were at Kapooka, blokes went to different corps, so you lost a few then. I went through with a few mates from Kapooka, right into Ingleburn, right into the battalion, right to Vietnam, even Malaya and Singapore. You had them with you the

13:30 whole time, off and on. Not the whole time, off and on. Some would go into different companies, or different sections and he'd have a different job maybe but you're always yes, close together. I can name you the ten blokes in my section, I can name you four or five guys, no, about a dozen guys outside the section in the platoon. I can name you another four or five in the company. I can name you about another half a dozen in the battalion and that's it, because you live

14:00 within your section, your ten men, basically where you live. It's the blokes you sleep with, shouldn't have said that then. Well you did everything with these blokes. Well you did (unclear) together, you drink together, and you do everything together, you're with them together. So you have that bond, that you don't even realise is forming. It's just there.

14:30 It's something you took for granted then but you don't take for granted now, if you understand what I mean?

Yeah, yeah.

It's something, and I don't care, I said to one guy one day, "Even the bloke you least got along with," and everyone's got one. I was probably the one for someone else, even that. "Even though you didn't get along with him that well and didn't like him, you

15:00 can't forget him." He was there, that's the way it was, the camaraderie and we had a bloody good time, bloody good time. They were good times, a lot of good times. The bad times came later, but then were good time plus we lost some mates along the way before we got to Vietnam, like one bloke pulled out. He, Brownie, we used to call him 'Rags'. We used to call him Rags because he whiffed like a woman, no offence. I'm sorry, and his nickname, that's what he got.

15:30 He carried on like a woman with her periods, and they nicknamed him Rags, and his name stuck too, Rags Brown. Incredible, anyway we lost him, he pulled out at Ingleburn. He knew we were going to Vietnam. He, actually it wasn't too well received at the time. I don't blame him. His girlfriend didn't want him going to Vietnam and she sort of talked him into pulling out and he pulled out, which looking back in hindsight was probably the smartest one of the lot of us.

16:00 I mean, I've never seen him since. We used to go down the Cross and drink and wine and chase women and dance till all hours of the morning and then Monday morning we'd get back up and back to work again and next weekend do it all again. We had Doug, do you remember Dougie Walters the cricketer?

No.

You must know Dougie Walters the cricketer? Geez, probably a bit before your time. He was an Australian cricketer, he played with the Chappell brothers and he was in our

16:30 battalion but he was a Nasho, I think he was a Nasho. He never went to Vietnam at all. He used to be on

guard duty when we were going into town and we'd say, "Oh you're going on guard duty Doug?" and he'd say, "Yeah, but you blokes are going bush next week and I'm not, I'm playing cricket." He had one there. We had a mascot, the battalion, a Shetland pony. Still got it, not the same Shetland pony, a different one and Septimus, and it's serial number was H20,

17:00 which was water. The next one was H202 which was hydrogen. I don't know what the third guy's number is. He's gone to Tertius, Tertius the Third, Tertius is Roman or Italian or Latin for third I think, and anyway they got a pay book and everything, got paid and everything. They don't get paid like we get paid, but they get paid. I don't know how it really goes but they ever got a charge sheet, like Septimus, our one we had, actually bit the RSM, which is a Regimental Sergeant

17:30 Major, actually bit him and he got charged for striking an NCO, unreal eh? Incredible, but that was more of a pride in your unit, that's all, one of those things handed down, as a matter of fact we were one of the first units to get a mascot or anything.

Who would look after him?

Oh, they had a handler to look after it, usually a lance corporal and he was in charge of it and he'd clean out the stall and it was a good job, one man to look after a bloody horse.

18:00 But I mean I was never offered the job, I never ever thought about it. It was one of those jobs you got if you were one of the good boys and I was never that good to get a job. I was always in too much shit. I got charged with having alcohol in the lines and everything, bloody hell. They searched me for stolen gear, looking for stolen gear they were and come searching our rooms and I had a two bottles of Pilsener in me locker, I think and the CSM come in to

18:30 look for the stolen gear and he said, "What's in the bedside locker?" and I said "Just boot polish," where you kept your boot polish and all that stuff, and he said, "Unlock it," and I unlocked it and bugger me dead if there wasn't two bottles of Pilsener, I knew there was two bottles of Pilsener in there and that's why I didn't want to unlock it. And I got charged, everyone knew we had alcohol on the lines, it was an unwritten rule, but you weren't allowed to have it. It was against the rules. You got caught, you were charged. The idea was drink it and get rid of the evidence but I'd forgotten to drink these two, so I got charged. I got seven days CB [Confined to Barracks] which

19:00 is confined to barracks and marching all over the parade ground, with packs and rifles and all that stuff and forty dollars. Pretty bloody heavy money in them days, mate. And I met this warrant officer, I was in a different company before I went to Vietnam and he was in D Company and I met him on the HMAS Sydney going over and I said, "Whatever happened to those two bottles of Pilsener that you took?" He said "I drank them, didn't I." The bloody old bastard. He drank them and I got charged over it, that's the way it was. I was just unlucky that's all, just unlucky.

19:30 **Maybe they read your dad's service record?**

I don't know but it was a good time in the sense that I can look back on it now and to me it was a serious time, but it was funny. We were there one day, we were sleeping in the lines on a weekend and we didn't, after a while we stopped doing this for this reason, or I did anyway. We were in our room and we heard this door open next door and we were on the second story

20:00 and about the second room along and we heard the door open next door and this voice say, "What's your name soldier?" And we heard it through the walls and we heard some mumbling "Private so and so." He said, "Right, two of my guards have gone AWOL, you're one and I'm looking for one other." And me and my mate we couldn't get past this room because the stairs were between us and whoever it was that was looking for this replacement guard, so we had these big lockers, and we climbed inside our lockers. And here

20:30 I am looking through this crack in the timbers and I seen this red sash go past, which meant this was the orderly sergeant and if he'd opened the locker I don't know what I would have said, "What are you doing boy?" "Checking my socks," I don't know. I don't know, but from that day onwards we never stayed on base. We went into the Cross every Friday night straight after we knocked off, straight into the Cross and didn't come back to Sunday morning.

Where would you stay?

At Johnny's Naval House, as I said we stayed there or if we were lucky enough to find a girl we stayed at her place, but usually Johnny's Naval House, or you drank to all

21:00 hours next morning and went back to base, but very rarely you went back to base till late Sunday night.

Didn't want extra duty?

No, we did enough as it was, did enough as it was but it was a good time.

Did you know much or hear much about Communism?

Yeah, they, look I can only go by what I think I remember. I remember going to training films and they'd

21:30 show us things on what the Viet Cong were doing to their own people, things like that. I'm not saying it wasn't true, it probably was true, from what I can gather that's what they were doing. They were killing

the headmen, they were killing teachers, they were trying to break the Communist rule, they were trying to overthrow people. Basically doing it through foul means or fair, which ever they could do, didn't matter. I think that was fairly true, but it was shown to us as propaganda reasons to get us into the,

- 22:00 "they're the bad guys, we're the good guys" type of things, so yeah, we were shown training films, just mainly to show us what we were fighting, so we'd have, what's the word? Ideology or have an ideal, we're here to save the oppressed. And I still think to this very day, when we went I think we went with the pure intention of doing good, as an individual, that's what I thought, or we thought,
- 22:30 but when you read the books now it was all a big plot, wasn't it really? These people were destined to become Communists whether they like it or not but it was a big global thing, wasn't it? It wasn't just little old Hippo doing his little thing that was going to change the world, you thought it was. It went beyond that, it went beyond just the poor little guy in the field, it went to the governments, it went to the reasons, the domino
- 23:00 principle and all that business. What do I know at nineteen about dominoes? Yeah, you play them on a board, that's the only dominoes I know but the governments looking upon this from Second World War to Korea to Malaya to Borneo, the Communists are coming down, the Yellow Peril is coming over the hill, type of thing and I'm not saying we didn't do good. We went to do good but as you know from history your hands were tied. Well, not my hands were tied, but the system's hands were tied. But we don't know this, you're out in the bush just trying to stay alive.
- 23:30 You don't worry about, look I'm as patriotic as the next and I'm as unpatriotic as the next guy, being an Australian, but Communism and Democracy was instilled in you. The moment the shit hits the fan all that goes out the back window, all that goes out the back window. I can tell you right now, it's self preservation. Look if I'd had my way, seriously, and I don't know whether everybody agrees with me on this,
- 24:00 this is my way of thinking, if I could have got out of my pit, particularly on Coral, and walked across to Charlie [Viet Cong] and said, "Look mate, you go back to your bloody rice paddy and I'm going back to my milk bar," I reckon he would have been just as happy, I think. It was pointless, absolutely pointless. I can understand the Second World War, geez they had to be stopped. We'd be talking Japanese if it wasn't for our troops and the Americans, but looking at Vietnam, it was, I'll put it in the right order, it was a waste of lives,
- 24:30 money and effort. I'm not saying our blokes didn't do good, we did good. All of them did good, every soldier, every serviceman that went to Vietnam done his job and done it to the best of his ability, but his hands were tied and he didn't know it, that's all. So that's where the business, I reckon this government or whatever government's in power when the last of us dies will breathe a sigh of relief because it's going to be an era they can just bury, they want to bury.
- 25:00 I still reckon they want it buried, just get it out of the system. Cause you notice all the wars coming on now, which is good, don't get me wrong, they've learnt from it hopefully, they treat the young serviceman with a bit of respect, they give him his medals straight away, they give him counselling straight away, they're bending over, and so they should, so they should. Should never let that happen again.

Might have a lot to do with you boys though?

Not me particularly, but yes, I agree with what you're saying, I do think so. Yeah, I think the young soldiers have got a lot to thank our generation for, because of

- 25:30 that happening we've now stood on our hind legs and said, "We're not taking this shit," and by doing so not only are we defending ourselves but we're making it harder for the system to do the same thing to the younger soldier, younger serviceman. And that's the way it should be. So if my daughter comes home with any problems now or the next soldier comes home from Afghanistan or Iraq, he's going to come home knowing his rights, and that's the way it should be.
- 26:00 You ask a man or a serviceman to go and do something, you're asking them to do something stepping outside his normal role and doing something, see my psychologist told me something, who's that? He told me something, he said, "When you're a child and you're bought up you're taught the bible, not all of us aren't, you're taught the bible, the ten commandments, you shall do this, you shall not do this, you shall not kill and all this sort of stuff and then you get in the military
- 26:30 and you're told the exact opposite." Are you with me? So you've got to go against all your beliefs and do something that's totally foreign to you. You don't know that at the time it's only when you get older you think back and say, oh TV bloke, oh can we cut for a minute. (tape stops)

Okay.

Where were we? We were at the Cross, were we?

We were at the Cross.

- 27:00 Had we moved on from the Cross?

Actually there were a couple of things I wanted to ask you, one was I guess coming from a family of seven boys and you were telling us earlier about not chasing girls at that stage, that all happened when you joined the services, but

But I don't recollect chasing them, I don't think I did, I'm pretty sure I didn't until I joined the army.

Yeah, can you tell us a story about you losing your virginity or is that a bit too...?

Jesus Christ, straight

27:30 forward...ah, bloody hell.

You've invited us to...

Did I? I'm trying to bloody think now.

I'm guessing that it's related to joining the army?

Yeah, well it probably was, I can't think now. Oh crikey, when was the first time I had, oh it would have been a pro at the Cross, yeah would have been. Don't ask me her name mate. Sweetheart, that was her name,

28:00 and I was in love, yeah well. I was in love till the next morning and then went back and got in love with some other one then. Yeah, I think it was some prostitute at the Cross. It was an R and R centre, I didn't know until later on in life but a lot of blokes might have known then, but I was pretty green, it was the underworld was pretty well full-strength down there, but they basically left us alone because we were big money. The troops were spending a lot of money there,

28:30 so if anyone of us was to get hurt or get killed or anything that, I mean blokes were robbed probably and bashed and that sort of thing but generally we stayed together anyway. Not for that reason, but because we drank together that's all. I found out later on that basically, from people who were in the know, we were left alone because if one of us were grabbed and had something done to us, the CO [Commanding Officer] would probably shut it down for us and then they'd do money. We were big money spinners, particularly

29:00 the Yanks, so they didn't need a bad rep. I mean the Cross was wine, women and song, let's face it, but it was and there were drugs around, obviously, but I didn't know too much about it. I was nineteen, having too good a time drinking with me mates, but we were left alone pretty well. Now and later on down the years, the time went on that the pros moved from bars to actually driving around in cars, so it was sex on wheels I suppose. I never chased them in cars. My first girlfriend was that one I was telling you about, I can't remember her name

29:30 but that's terrible, isn't it? That was my first girlfriend. I went on pre-embarkation leave and would you believe it as I got back on the train coming home, back to Holsworthy, I met a girl on the train. Me and me mate got on the train together and it's an unwritten rule when you're with your mates, if one cracks onto a sheila, you piss off. Don't cramp his style and I cottoned on to her and her name, oh God, I'm going through a memory bloody block

30:00 here in a minute. I was in love with this girl, oh Frances Corcoran, that was her name, Frances Corcoran, and I'll tell you what, to this very day, I shouldn't say it too loudly but I was in love with her, I'm bloody sure of it. I still miss her. I don't know what it was, just one of those women you meet and I met on a train. By the time we got to the city we were pashing on, but that was far as things went. In those days you had a bit more respect for women, well I did. You didn't try nothing with women like

30:30 that, she was a nice girl. What she was doing with me was another matter but anyway, she was a nice girl. I think I was in love with her and anyway when I was writing to her when I was in Vietnam, I was actually writing to six others but she was me favourite, and that made a lot of sense, didn't it? Wouldn't have to her but anyway, and then I got the, I'll talk about that later but I ended up getting a 'Dear Terry' letter [Dear John letter - letter informing that a relationship is over] actually and that sort of broke my heart and still has. I got it in the middle of Coral too, just what I needed.

31:00 "Dear Terry, I'm going out with a navy bloke." "Oh, good on ya, in the bottom of the pit," but anyway. I was in love with her, I really was. I'd go out with her every Saturday then, she was my sweetheart from then on. Never went out with anyone else. She lived at 7 Joseph Street, Dundas. That's forty odd years ago, nearly forty years ago, and I still remember her. I even wrote a letter years ago trying to track her down, just to say good day.

31:30 Just to say good day and I never got a...I sent it to 'Dear Occupant'. well she might have married, she might have died, anything might have happened, Christ knows where she is now. Wouldn't have a clue, tracking her down would be hopeless, anyway.

And what about the Americans in the Cross?

Didn't have much to do with them really, I didn't. If the blokes did, I didn't know, I didn't have much to do with them. The Jungle Hut, we ended up at all the pubs but the Jungle Hut

32:00 that was our haunt. Every unit had it's own little pub. The only pub we were ever thrown out of that was

the Civic, but it at least wasn't, we weren't singled out. The army and the navy were kicked out. They wanted no military there at all because we used to fight, there'd be punch-ups, physical punch-ups between the navy and the army, and for no other reason than there was nothing else to do, probably.

- 32:30 We got kicked out of the Civic. Went in there one day in uniform and we got (whistles) out, "You blokes had a blue here last week." "Wasn't me, someone else obviously," but we were all banned. That was the only pub I was ever kicked out off. Yeah, but we had a good time, the beer was shithouse but it was a good time.

You were saying before how the underworld kind of left you alone because you were

Well I didn't know that at the time but I do now.

Yeah, but do you think in hindsight that some of the boys were, caused a bit of trouble

- 33:00 **that they would have needed, that it was actually good that they were I guess protected a little bit? Like ordinarily would they have actually got into a bit of trouble?**

The troops?

Yeah, because of their behaviour?

Oh shit, yeah I know, I think it was B Company, was it B Company? I'm not sure, there was a place called McKenzie's Kellar, which was at Wynyard, I think it was McKenzie's Kellar it was called, at Wynyard

- 33:30 Railway Station. It was a pub there, a little pub of some sort, some sort of bar and they wrecked it and the battalion paid for it, went through the battalion, the whole battalion paid for it and not whoever did it, we all paid for it. They took money out of each one's pay account to pay for it. That was the only time we got into trouble. There were always fights on, always blues, I mean there was probably a lot more going on than I knew, but I just sort of kept to my own little circle and I never got, if I did get into strife I've forgotten.

- 34:00 I only got into trouble with the provos that one night and generally I never got into fights up there generally. I was having too good a time. It was a wild time, it was fun, even in Vietnam we had fun. Believe it or not, we had fun times there. You know, you've got too. Later on it became a different reason. Sydney was because we were young and

- 34:30 "hey this is all right." You're letting off steam and you've got to remember we've been training for eleven months, well not so much training but nineteen years of age, I couldn't drink in Queensland because you had to be twenty one, here I am down in Sydney and the beer's flowing and the women are flowing and this is good. I like this and away we went. This is basically what your body's singing, "this is all right," and you played hard and you drank hard and you worked hard and that was the way it was.

- 35:00 You didn't think about, I mean I used to keep enough money out of my pay for boot polish and that was all I kept, I spent half one week and the half the next week and I was always borrowing or someone was borrowing off me. If you weren't playing Crown and Anchor you were piddling it up against the wall, excuse my French. That was all you did with your money. I wish I had a dollar for every bloody stubby of beer I had, or midgy, or whatever you want to call it down there. I would be worth a bloody fortune but that was all you did, just drank your money away every weekend.

Coming from a house of seven unruly boys

- 35:30 **and that, how did you find the discipline in the army?**

Not much different, well I don't know. It was different in a sense where I had a stranger telling me what to do, but probably it wasn't that difficult because I'd been used to been told what to do, now I'd been told by a military person, that's all. So I was pretty well programmed. I knuckled under quite easily. Some blokes, most

- 36:00 blokes knuckled under pretty well, some didn't but they usually managed to get through some eventually, everyone toed the line eventually. I didn't find it too difficult knuckling under. There were times when I would question authority, but that was my nature, like going AWOL. Like I said, sounded like a good idea at the time, it wasn't. They couldn't see the funny side of it, the army, neither could I, especially when I was doing CB or when you got charged

- 36:30 for it later on, but everyone knew the repercussions. Blokes went AWOL in Vietnam. We'd go down, they'd go down to Vung Tau for R and R and piddle off and then turn up a week later and get charged. They came back when they ran out of money - no where else to go. It wasn't nothing personal. The discipline was tough but I was already programmed and it didn't take me long to fit it. I just, "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir," that's basically all you did.

- 37:00 **Do you remember getting your marching orders, like when you found out you were going to head over?**

Well, you knew that when you went into the battalion. Everybody knew that when I got posted, when we left Ingleburn, I don't know how true it was, but they said if you played football you went to 3RAR, this is Aussie Rules, if you didn't, you went to 1. And if I recollect correctly there were quite a few that

played Aussie Rules that went to 3RAR, so that's when I started losing a few mates, they went different directions.

37:30 But everybody knew that 1RAR and 3RAR were the next battalions to go and we all knew that, so as soon as they said, "You're 1RAR," I knew that I was on my way to Vietnam then. When I don't know the exact date cause we weren't told exactly but we knew we were heading and we got in the battalion and the battalion sort of filled up overnight basically. They were waiting for us to arrive almost and from that time onwards we trained and trained and trained and trained and trained, that's all we did. Whether it be Canungra, Shoalwater Bay in

38:00 Rockhampton or whether it be the back of Holsworthy, we didn't do nothing but train, preparing us, preparing us the best they can, but anyway.

We'll pause it there because we're just about...

Tape 4

00:32 You'll go loony by the time you finish all this.

Besides the propaganda films that the government made you watch, what did you know about Vietnam?

Nothing except that, didn't even know where it was logistically. It was just another country being overrun by the baddies and we're the goodies and we were the cavalry and we were going to come and rescue the people and I still think to this day we went with that intention, individually or collectively, but obviously the

01:00 hierarchy looked upon it from a different point of view. They were looking upon it as a political gain, didn't they? I was nothing political, I don't want the bloody joint and in fact I've got no ambition to ever go back. I've had mates go back to the Coral site but I've always maintained you could blindfold me now, march me down to a rubber plantation, if we had one nearby, dig a big field full of water, tell me that was a rice paddy, tell me I was in Vietnam and I'd believe you because I didn't have a bloody clue where I was. I'm a private, I follow the guy in front. I don't

01:30 have any inkling of what's going on, I don't have any say in it, "What do you want to do? Do you want to go out on patrol or do you want to stay here and drink grog?" What a choice, they never give you that choice. That was the way it was.

So you didn't have any expectations of what it might look like, or anything like that?

No, it was like I said before, it was probably like everybody else, I suppose we were heading off to do some adventure. You were probably keyed up

02:00 but it was more like an excitement type of thing. We were off to do something, we're going to do this and we're going to do this, and what's that expression? I probably should know, I hate doing, what is it? "Young and full of come," yeah, you know that expression? And that's probably the way we were, young and vibrant and ready to go and that's the way the army wanted you and they moulded us into a unit. Don't get me wrong, I'll still say again, we couldn't have been better trained and everybody say's it about their unit but I

02:30 reckon that battalion was one of the best. It was a top unit, really top unit.

What were your first impressions of Vietnam?

Well we got off the Sydney, well the Sydney, the trip over was the first impression. What a boat cruise, anybody join the bloody navy has got me stuffed. I'd come out every morning and there it was, the sea. Miles and miles of bloody green water, gawd. If a flying fish went in the air everybody got excited.

03:00 It was six hundred, seven hundred soldiers on board and we got nothing to do. We used to fire rifles off the back of the ship at balloons with a little bit of water in each one so they'd sit on the water, otherwise you'd have, and you'd have section shoots, rifle groups of five men would fire, and then the gun group would fire and then the scouts would fire and then you'd all fire collectively at these balloons, just target practice. And all you could find sitting behind the Sydney, that's the Sydney out there, all the way, way back, was all these balloons we'd missed and you'd see them all floating. You could

03:30 have followed us to Vietnam, we left a bloody trail and we did this sort of thing. I've got photos of us doing rifle drill on the decks of the Sydney, just stuff to keep, just more and more stuff just to keep more, I think it was, looking on it now, to me it was just mundane, more and more and more. But to them I'd say it was a way of keeping our minds occupied and then we got to Vietnam twelve days later.

04:00 As I said after a long, long boat cruise.

Did you take anything with you Hippo because you were superstitious?

Frances give me a, I wasn't, I was a bit superstitious I suppose but I didn't really think much of it, what do you call it? A St Christopher Medal, isn't he the patron saint that protects you or something? I lost that, don't know what happened to that, but he might have protected me. Only got me shot with one round so he might have looked after me but I don't know. He didn't do a real good job on that day. Don't know what happened to that, I lost that, maybe I threw it away, I don't know.

04:30 But yeah, I wasn't that superstitious I didn't think. Without jumping the gun too much, I don't know whether other blokes would agree with me but particularly in a combat unit, which there are many of, not just my unit, you've always got the impression that it's the other guy that's going to get hit. You think if anything's going to happen, it's not going to be you, so when it does happen to you it comes as a complete shock it does.

05:00 But that's a terrible way to think probably from a person who doesn't understand but you always think you're not going to be the one that's going to get hurt. You always know the risk is there but you don't think you're going to be the one that's going to get it. But we got off the Sydney and we actually had to climb down cargo nets. I still don't understand to this very day why we climbed down those bloody cargo nets, when I heard later on that blokes had ramps they were bloody walking down. I don't know whether they did it to us to be, "Let's make them climb down the cargo nets." I don't know, there was probably a reason for it but it was a pain in the

05:30 ass and climbing into the landing craft, it was just like Normandy. Here we go, we're going to storm the shore, but it wasn't that way, we just got onshore, jumped in trucks and they drove us to Nui Dat. My first, the first thing I remember seeing, smell, oh stunk.

What did it smell like?

Oh just sewer, like a bloody mud, Singapore smells like, have you ever been to Singapore? Singapore smells like that, used to. You get off at Singapore and get that bloody putrid smell about it. I think it's the mud flats or something. I don't know what it was but just a terrible smell.

06:00 Anyway and I remember seeing a big snake tied to a big stick and these six little kids were carrying this big long, like a boa constrictor or a big carpet snake or what it was and they were carrying it. And I found out later on where it ended, in the cooking pots, that where it was going, because they eat everything you know? They eat dogs, cats, everything. There were never any dogs over there. I was never game to eat too much but mainly they kept, their biggest watchdogs over there were geese or water buffalo, that's what they keep over there. But I saw this big snake

06:30 and the first, actually I don't, you'd almost think it was put on for us when you think about it but the first bodies I saw was the day we actually arrived and we must have been going past the Kiwi lines, the New Zealanders were there too, you see, and there were five dead Nogs [Viet Cong] on the wire, in their little 'you beaut', I mean I'd never seen dead bodies before so it was fascinating from that point of view. Terrible when you think back on it now but and they were on the wire and obviously tried to breach the wire and they were Viet Cong and

07:00 where that was, it could have been at Nui Dat, could have been anywhere, I can't remember. All I remember is seeing them from the trucks and two of them were women apparently. So the Viet Cong were Viet Cong, whether they were women or men. A woman can fire a rifle just as clearly as a man can and that was my introduction to dead bodies, and I didn't think nothing of it, I really didn't. I looked at it, it was fascinating and, "Oh wow," that's all I can remember of it really. I don't remember too much more of it, we were just travelling past.

You called them Nogs?

Oh Nogs is an expression

07:30 we called them. It's Nogs, 'Orientals', we called them Nogs. It's an expression that got, I don't know where it got bought up. Other blokes might be able to tell you. You want to ask that later on. I'd be curious to know where that come from too, but we called them Nogs. We also called them Slope Heads. I'd rather that didn't go on TV is you can help it because there are people out there, Asians that will take offence to that and they'll take offence to Nogs too, but that's what we called them. I don't mean anything derogatory now although

08:00 I'm talking to a camera, I might, I did that with tongue in cheek.

But the guys in the army would call them Nogs?

Yeah, we'd called them Nogs, yeah, Nogs. Nogs, Slopeheads, yeah. The name we really called them was Charlie, we called them Charlie, you know that? VC, Victor Charlie, and the nickname Charlie stuck, but Nogs, we called them Nogs and Nogs was even the lowest little kid, little Noggy kid or Noggy woman or a, that was the expression. They called us 'Uc Da Lois',

08:30 Uc Da Lois, that was the Vietnamese word for Australian, that's the Vietnamese word for, Uc Da Lois, it means Australian in Vietnamese, so that's why they called us Uc Da Lois.

So where did they first take you to in Vietnam?

To Nui Dat, that's where our base was. They took us to our little tent and I went into the tent with the two forward scouts, me, Rod Etoch, Phil Pegler and Tony Bryant. Tony Bryant and Phil Pegler were the

two forward scouts and they put me and Rod Etoch... In fact, Rod, I just met Rod the other day for the first time in about twenty-odd years. He was over

09:00 at Caperra [?]. He's over your way somewhere, over where you're living somewhere and they put four of us into a tent and we were in that tent.

So am I to understand that the forward scouts and the rear scouts would be chosen prior to going out in combat?

Yeah, I don't know how they, they probably picked them for their alertness and their being like, some blokes had a knack for walking in the bush and you were taught, we were all taught to look for suspected ambush sites and machine gun sites and

09:30 stuff like that. It's easier said than done sometimes, the jungles that thick. There could be a machine gun behind every bloody tree for all you know but these blokes obviously were trained for their alertness and these two blokes were very good at their job, I might add. In fact, to tell you the truth they were often asked if they wanted a break up the front and they would often refuse. Not because they were gung-ho but they didn't trust me to be up the front, because then they'd put me at the front and put them vulnerable and I might not do the right thing

10:00 and we might all get into trouble. So they looked upon their job as a specialist job and they guarded it religiously and that's the way they were.

Well that position was different in the Second World War because they would move them around every five minutes?

Well they would move us around periodically too, but not, our two blokes I remember Tony Bryant and Phil Pegler often would refuse to be replaced. They would replace them with other forward scouts, other sections, but not other blokes, no. That was their job and they felt that if they did it and anything happened it was their

10:30 responsibility and they took their responsibility very seriously and I was quite happy to let them do it, I might add. I didn't want to be up there because if anything is going to happen, that's where it's going to happen.

So you were carrying an SLR and where were you in the line?

I was, well depended on which part of the section, which part of the, you've got to remember you've got a section of a platoon, of a company, of the battalion, so you could be in the first guy, in the first section of the whole lot,

11:00 or you might be the fifth guy right down the tail end or you could be in the middle somewhere, could be anywhere. Depended on what order of march they put you in. They might put, I was in Charlie Company and I was in 5 Section, 8 Platoon. Well they might put 5 Section in the middle of the Platoon but the second section from the front, if you can understand what I'm getting at. So I could be, I was a rifleman and I was normally down the tail end so I could be down the tail end of the whole battalion. I could be the last guy,

11:30 which means that if anything happens to the rear, I then become the first guy, are you with me? So it's always good to get the middle.

So what was it like at the base when you first arrived?

Oh first two or three weeks it was mostly getting acclimatised, just acclimatised. It's got its use in tropics, because we're in the tropics and it's hot and wet and you're sweating the whole time so they just put us in and acclimatised for a week or two then

12:00 they went out on a day operation to get us used to choppers, the helicopters, getting us used to getting in and out of them. When they took us out in a chopper they took us out en masse, I mean you go down to the Kangaroo Pad [helipad] they called it and all the way along, the whole airstrip, was hundreds and hundreds of choppers, literally thousands of them. The Yanks had millions of the damn thing and they could pick the whole battalion up in one swoop, that's seven men to a chopper roughly, and pick them up, Point A to Point B. They did that mainly for an exercise to show us, to get us

12:30 used to, we'd done it before with our own choppers but we were limited, two at a time or a company at a time but this was, the Yanks would do it, the Yanks would move the whole battalion at one hit. And that day I jumped out of the chopper and I twisted me right ankle, so that means that bloody put me, not so much out of action but on the very first operation that came up which was about, I don't really recollect. I think it was anywhere up to three weeks, some blokes could probably tell you better the time,

13:00 but they went into what they call, I think it was called the Long Hai, the Long Hai Mountains, and I was left behind to guard, not so much, to look after the, the area we were in, Nui Dat, was protected by a fair bit of barbed wire. We were pretty well protected there, reasonably, you could send the odd mortar into us but generally we were free from attack cause there was too much weaponry there for Charlie to try and take that out. He tried from time to time mind you, just to harass us but never

13:30 tried to actually overtake us, it was too big a base. And like a little city it was really and they went on

their first operation and I got left behind to sort of look after the section area and do kitchen duties, whatever the case may be.

Did Nui Dat, did it only house Australians?

No, I'm not, no, the Kiwis were there, the New Zealanders were there. If there was anybody else there honestly I can't remember, I don't know,

- 14:00 in my area, in my battalion area, but it was mostly Australians and New Zealanders. There were probably more than likely Americans there, but not on the big bases, not in great numbers. Other blokes might tell you a bit more differently. I'm a private in a section and pretty limited in what I know.

And the Aussies and Kiwis got on well?

Yeah, we didn't have much to do with them. There were battalions over there, they used to call them Anzac Battalions. I think 2 RAR was one

- 14:30 and 4 RAR was the other, where instead of having, we had A, B, C, D, Support Company and Admin Company, right so that's six companies. 2 RAR and 4 RAR would have A, B, C, say, no D and they'd have a company of Kiwi's to replace the D Company and I'm not saying it was D, I'm saying it was one of the companies and then they'd have their support and admin as well.
- 15:00 But the Kiwis were inserted into the battalion to be part of the battalion, Australian battalion, because they were only a company strong. They used to call them, there used to be two companies over there, V Company and W. We used to call them Whiskey and Vodka Company, we nicknamed them. That was probably their nickname, I don't know if it was their call sign or not, I don't know. I didn't have much to do with the Kiwis. I met them once, I didn't meet them much in play time, I say in free time, but I met them once on an operation we were on and they were, they'd
- 15:30 been in a heavy contact and they'd lost one of their blokes and we were used as a security measure for them to withdraw through. And they would withdraw through us and I remember just lying there guarding my area and they came through and these Maoris came past and bloody hell, they were man mountains, the size of these blokes, big boys. That was the only time I had anything to do with the Kiwis. I had a bit to do with them in Singapore but that was a different thing.

- 16:00 **Did they have a good reputation, like the Australians, for fighting?**

Mm, very good. I think you might say that goes back to Gallipoli and I don't think that's changed. I mean the Kiwis and the Australians have their rivalry with their football and that sort of stuff but I think as far as the army's concerned they're almost, well they're brothers, without getting too tearful about it. We got on really good with them. Well I didn't have much to do with them, like I said, but their reputation as fighters was equal to us and it

- 16:30 always has been, if you think back on it, New Zealand, the Second World War, everything. As good a fighter as the Australians are, that's probably why we get on so well.

What about the food there at Nui Dat, what did you have to eat?

Oh don't start on that shit, Jesus Christ, that's garbage. It's probably why we fought so hard, it was shit. Other blokes will tell you different stories. I know some guys said, "We had fresh eggs." I said, "Oh, did you? Half your bloody luck. No wonder I couldn't get them." We

- 17:00 used to have eggs over there that had ether injected into them. The ether was to preserve them. I heard later on that fresh eggs were coming in but they weren't getting to me. Where they were going that's another story, where they were getting to I do not know. I'd rather not know but we'd get ethered eggs and you could scramble them, fry them, boil them, do what you like and you could still taste that ether and they were bloody woeful. We had a thing called plastic spud. I used to it plastic spud.
- 17:30 It was like Lux Flakes, you know the Lux Flakes you get in the soap powder, it was like that and of course you had to boil it. I felt sorry for the cooks, they had to boil it. The cooks can probably tell you better than I can, and boil it and if you didn't cook it right it went, "Ping!" it would fly off the plate. It was like eating starch, well that's what spud is anyway isn't it, starch. And it was terrible and then we had these little cubes of steak. I don't know how big they were but they'd get them, little squares and they'd stick them in water,
- 18:00 a saucer or a tub of water and they'd swell up and they were like chewing on a rope. It was the, you can imagine the fibre and it was absolutely bloody awful. Sometimes it was better to eat ration packs and we got a lot of fresh meat in, don't get me wrong. We'd get steak in and have barbeques and we had our own boozier. There used to be some Kiwi milk come in, I think it was Kiwi milk in litre cartons, strawberry and chocolate and gee, we used
- 18:30 to scoff that when it came in as we didn't get much fresh milk there. But it was, the food wasn't really flash, it wasn't really flash at all. That's probably why we fought so hard, we probably were so aggro eating all this bloody shit tucker.

Were you skinny?

And the old man would probably say, "Geez that would be good tucker for me." He'd probably eat

worse, you know what I'm saying?

Were you skinny then?

Oh yes, there's a photo of me somewhere. That's me up there on the wall up there but I was thin. I had no fat on me at all. You've got to

- 19:00 remember, you're not eating, you're training non stop and you're going, you don't see too many fat nineteen, well you do see a lot more fat nineteen year olds these days than you used to, but not, you don't see too many fat nineteen year olds in the military, even today - well you shouldn't. We were walking up mountains, and walking with full packs and rifles and stuff like that and you didn't need to go to a gym, let's put it that way.

How heavy were your packs?

- 19:30 Other than bloody heavy, I couldn't really tell you, but we carried, I've still got all that stuff up there, we carried nearly all that stuff on our backs. We carried a spare set of greens [uniform], our spare socks, you carried your rifle, your ammunition, your rations. Most blokes wouldn't carry a mozzie net because it meant carrying extra weight. You did away with what you couldn't do. You learnt, like with the plastic razor, you'd snap that in half, so it would come down to that little thing, and go (demonstrates).
- 20:00 You cut down on space as much as possible. Sometimes you'd share the boot polish. Like I'd take the boot polish, he'd take the shaving gear, so you'd share this stuff. That was a crazy thing too. Always had to put boot polish on our boots, and shave ourselves every day. No wonder Charlie knew where we were half the time, he could smell us. It was more done for disciplinary reasons than anything else, I think. Yeah, shaving
- 20:30 and boot polish and the boot polish was good in one respect because you've got to remember one thing that you're walking in sometimes in rice paddies and mud and rain a lot and if you don't put boot polish on your boots it's going to soak through to your socks and you can't walk. It means you get bloody tinea and that's another story too. I'll tell you about tinea later.

Tell us now.

My father told me. At Coral I had tinea, real bad tinea between me toes and me father told me how to get rid of it.

- 21:00 Piss on your feet and I did and it stung, but guess what? It got rid of tinea, you ask anyone. I bet I'm not the only bloke that did it. Fancy piddling on my feet and it stung like buggery, and I let it, I let it sit for about two or three hours drying and sure enough it cleared it up. Better than any of that ointment you can get and my old man told me to do that and it was one of those things he told me to do when I went over there because he'd been in the tropics too.

Did you thank him?

No, I never got around to thinking about it, no I didn't. I don't think so. I don't think I thanked him, no. Wouldn't have occurred to me.

- 21:30 That was the way it was. Eat what you could. We used to get fresh food every now and then and we'd get fresh bread every now and again. The rations, the rations were good. The Yank, the American rations were good, very good. In fact the only trouble with the Americans was it was too much. What they'd get in one meal we'd get in one day and I don't know how true the story was but the reason they were fed that well was because they would get resupplied every twenty four hours where
- 22:00 we'd only get resupplied every three to four days, every two or three days and that was done for, how would you put it? Security reasons, I mean if you're out bush you don't want the enemy to know where you are every day by having a chopper bringing you resupply and that was technically, probably why we did it. Other blokes in the know, more rank would probably say, "No that's not why we did it, we did it because of such and such." That's the way I looked at it. I looked upon it from the point of view that it was more
- 22:30 yeah, keeping hidden from the enemy as long as possible so we met, I keep going back to the Second War blokes, I mean the only way they beat the Japs was to think like the Japs, to beat them on their own turf, on their own rules, and that's the only way you can beat any enemy. You've got to play in his playing field. If he knows where you are each day it makes it easier for him. If he knows where you are day one but doesn't know where you are days two, three and four, it keeps him guessing doesn't it? It keeps him on the alert.
- 23:00 Keeps him looking over his shoulder instead of you, that's the way it goes. And the Yanks I heard got resupplied every twenty-four hours, maybe they did, maybe they didn't. But their rations, they got tinned bread and tinned fruit cake and oh it was good to get their rations. You would get five days rations before you went out at a time and sometimes you'd get three days American and two days Australian or vice versa and you'd toss it all out on the ground and you'd sort out all the stuff you wanted. The Yanks had no sugar in their ration pack, oh they did but only a couple of little satchels.
- 23:30 We had heaps of sugar so we'd take the American coffee but our sugar. You'd take their tinned bread but throw out, what do you call it? Our ham and eggs, oh God, that's why I won't eat McDonalds, throw

it out. I still reckon McDonalds is using pre-Vietnam stuff, or post-Vietnam egg. Me missus reckons they're not but I reckon they are. I reckon it's left over from Vietnam that shit. I reckon the army had so much left over, McDonalds bought it.

24:00 I reckon it's the same stuff. I said to one girl one day, "That's bloody from Vietnam that shit," and she looked at me, and looks at it and says, "I don't think so," and I said, "Yes, it is, yes it is." Just that powdered egg you see. McDonalds were using powdered eggs for a while, I know they were. I reckon it was left over from Vietnam, but anyway, probably wasn't but that's my theory. But the food, it sort of kept you alive. Rations were made to bung you up [constipate you], and that was done for a reason also, a security reason.

24:30 Because it stops you going to the shithouse every day and you're leaving tell-tale signs. I mean you move a battalion through the bush it's pretty hard to keep it hidden anyway but we moved pretty quietly.

Can I ask you about that? How did you, did you have somebody guard you while you went to the toilet?

Well, you generally did it within the confines of your perimeter. You had what you called a 'little cat shit', like a cat does a little hole and covers it back up, the same thing, you did the same thing and you did it within the perimeter. You did it within eyesight of your mate.

25:00 There was no room for shyness. We were all guys, there were no women. That's why I always say there were no bloody women there where I was. Wouldn't mind having women on the gun (unclear) at night sometimes but anyway.

What about if you were out on an op and you had to go to the toilet?

That's what I said, you went in the confines of your perimeter. You would normally, if you wanted one while you was walking, you'd want to be quick, they'd leave you behind, but generally you were told you weren't allowed to.

25:30 The rations wouldn't do it that way. The rations were made, unbeknown to us of course, to bung you up, plug you up basically and you didn't really want to go and when you did go it was like, excuse my expression, like shitting a brick. It was like passing a brick sometimes, bloody, you'd be straining, burst a blood vessel trying to get it out, it's terrible. You can laugh like this now, it wasn't funny at the time. When they hit the ground the earth was shaking.

Did you get stomach pains because

26:00 **of that?**

I don't know, I didn't. Some blokes might have, they might have, could have and I don't think in long terms it would have done us any good, but that was the way it was. As I said if they do that to you, then they make you polish your boots and shave. That was discipline, that was the way it was.

What about boot polish on your face for camouflage?

No, not boot polish. You'd sometimes blacken your face with a bit of mud. Oh look, this is not like you see in the movies where they darken

26:30 like the footballers do under the eyebrows and a can and stick a tree in your hat, which we did back in Australia for camouflage. It didn't really work that way, because you'd no sooner, if you did cam yourself up, they have cam kits these days, camouflage, little, like a makeup kit. We didn't really have that much really. Generally as you walk along you were sweating anyway. Your greens would go black from either the rain or from sweat, so anything you put

27:00 on your face would eventually drain off anyway, but after awhile you got pretty filthy. At Coral for instance, Coral went for about five weeks, off and on. Some blokes can remember the exact dates, I don't remember the exact dates and we were out, and our greens almost rotted on us. We had to get resupplied with green at one stage because they were rotting on us and I mean it rained there one day when we were at Coral, it poured, so we all jumped out of our pits, stark naked, stripped off and

27:30 were standing in the middle of a field, or wherever you call it and started soaping yourself up and you had to be quick because the rain would switch off too, just like that and it did. I remember, Rod Etoch, he was talking about it the other day and I mentioned, "Remember that day we showered?" and he said, "Yeah, that bloody rain stopped before I could finish, I was covered in soap suds." He was clean anyway, so you showered, you bathed as best you could, when you could. That's why I got tinea because, I mean,

28:00 you weren't game to take your boots off. Things got pretty hairy there at one stage and you weren't game to take your boots off. You never knew what was going to happen next and you weren't game to check with your boots off, your pants down maybe, but not your boots off.

So what was your first operation there?

Coral, that was my first operation. I always maintain that was a bit of a joke. I say, "I was nineteen when I went in, and I reckon I was thirty-five when I came out." Definitely, definitely an initiation

- 28:30 you might say. In fact I didn't even know, well to cut a long story short there was a book on Coral, Lex McCoy, got it over there actually. We weren't there the first night. We, the companies were dropped away from where the fire support base was being put and we were supposed to proceed from there, patrolling, to the base. We never made it due to 3 Company got contacts, they call them contacts, with
- 29:00 the enemy that day. I don't think we did, we got held up by an unexploded mine, bomb we found, so we stayed and guarded it for a while, but I don't know why we got held up but we never made it to the battalion that night. That night Coral was overrun, the guns were overrun, the mortars crews were overrun. Sixteen men died that night. No, sorry not sixteen men, sixteen men died through the whole Coral. We lost about eight or nine blokes. The mortar crews were overrun, the guns were overrun and a lot of men died that night and
- 29:30 we didn't get in to the next day and then we dug our weapon pits the best we could and then it started raining. And that night I slept on top of the ground because you couldn't sleep in the pit because the pit was full of water, half full of water. And I'd never heard an enemy rocket before in my life, never heard of one and I was lying on that ground and I heard something go over and something told me they weren't ours. It was instinct, I don't know what it was, and I just up in one movement and into that pit,
- 30:00 water or no water. It was up to here, with webbing on and water up, trying to keep my webbing out of the water.

What do you mean by webbing?

Webbing, that's where you keep your ammunition and your basic pouches and your water bottles and it's all on a harness type thing. That's called your basic webbing. Your pack was sitting up front of me and I remember, actually I remember taking my webbing off at one stage because I had so much water, I couldn't get me webbing out of the water and it was, all my ammunition and everything was going to get wet and my cigarettes.

- 30:30 Cigarettes can't get wet mate, Jesus Christ, be buggered without my cigarettes and I put it up on the pit in front of me then all hell broke loose. And I mean all hell broke loose. Anyone who was on Coral would know what it was like and it didn't matter where you were on Coral, whether you were in the rear or the front.

We want to go into Coral in a lot more detail. Just before we go there, had you come across working with the Americans yet?

No, we hadn't. We had Americans on Coral with us.

- 31:00 I didn't know them that well. We had the big 155 no-bolt guns with us and I think they had a lot of their aircraft were there, around, not actually on Coral. They had a few choppers there but they were more at the rear. I didn't see much of the inner, I was more on the outer.

So you hadn't actually met any fellow private American soldiers?

No, I hadn't met any Americans, not at that stage, no. No, I hadn't met, no I hadn't, basically just our own troops. See you don't, as I said before you don't have a tendency to move much

- 31:30 outside your own platoon a lot, you don't. It's not a case of, "Look I'm going to slip down the road, I'm going to jump in the car and have a look at Zillmere and see me mate." You don't go too far out of your area. You weren't allowed for starters and you just stay within your own confines of your own area, your own men.

How long had you been in Vietnam before you actually went to Coral?

When was Coral? May,

- 32:00 about six weeks I suppose. Six weeks, I remember I missed the first operation which was only a matter of three or four days.

That was because you hurt your leg?

Yeah, ankle and then Coral was actually my first operation.

In that time had you written home to Australia or received any packages from home?

No, not at that stage. I was writing to, you used to go up to Company Headquarters and there was a big pile of mail there, "Dear Soldier." It was written by people all around Australia and

- 32:30 I'd siphon through them and pick out the young girls that were writing. My mate reckoned I needed a typewriter. I used to write to about six girls. I remember one girl, Sue Anne Spicer, she was from Wangaratta, not Wallangarra, Wangaratta in Victoria. I was writing to her. I wrote to a girl in Sydney and about three or four others. I lost them all when I got sent home. I was disoriented when I got wounded and that sort of thing and I lost track and

- 33:00 Frances, like I said, I threw her in the bottom of the pit.

You didn't meet up with any of these women that you wrote with later?

Yeah, I met up with one. Which one was it? I took her out, I had me arm in plaster, mind you, and I took her out and I rang her up the next day and I said, "Do you want to go out again?" and she said, "My mother said I'm not allowed to go out with you any more." I was obviously a bit of an animal.

- 33:30 Look, I hadn't seen, what we used to say in Vietnam, I hadn't seen a 'round eye', which is what white women are. We called them 'slanty eyes' and I hadn't seen a round eye in nearly six months and I was pretty toey. I tried to force myself on her, obviously. She said, "Mum said I'm not allowed to go out with you any more." I can't even remember her name but I think she was in Sydney, yeah, pretty sure it was Sydney. What a shame.

Her mother must have been a bit cluey?

She must have gone home and told her mother, "Mummy, Mummy,

- 34:00 he put his hand up my dress," and what else I don't know. I don't even know what I did. I only had one arm. I did pretty good for a one-armed guy. One arm was in plaster so I was obviously a bit of an animal. I felt sorry for the poor girl. Hadn't seen a woman for bloody months, I didn't know how to behave. There's an old, there's a piece of paper out, I don't even know if I've still got it, it tells you when your son comes home or your husband comes home, if he shits in the corner

- 34:30 of the room or if he does this, or if he does this, or he does this and if he doesn't do the things he did, please excuse him because he's back from Vietnam. And it was almost like that. You sort of pick up some very bad habits. I reckon a lot of mothers and a lot of wives and a lot of girlfriends would have been shocked when their boyfriends, husbands came home because they're likely to come home and say, "Pass the fucking sugar would you?" You got, you changed and you

- 35:00 can't bring that to society, I know that, but blokes did and you come back to society and that's why a lot of marriages have broken up. Men have that changed, and not for the better either. But this is what it does to you, it changes you and gives you a different outlook on life, I'll tell you that now. I definitely appreciate life more now than I used to - oh definitely. That's why I don't care how much money she spends, I don't give a rats, I don't care. As I said to you before, fifty years from now, it's not going to matter is it?

- 35:30 **Actually that's just a detail that I'm curious about with money, how much were you getting paid when you were in Vietnam?**

Obviously, not enough. Some blokes dappled in the black market, I didn't. Sorry, I have to admit, yes I did, but not directly, more indirectly. I don't exactly know the wages. Other blokes can probably tell you that better than I could. I heard a rumour, I can say we used to get twenty dollars a week, which was big money, extra, danger money, we paid no tax but it was not an exorbitant amount but it was

- 36:00 probably good for it's time. I don't know. And we used to get, whenever someone had a birthday on or an anniversary or they were going home, they'd put on, and beer was only fifteen cents a can then, fifteen cents, so a guy would put a hundred bucks over the bar and that would, the whole company could get pissed on that, it was good. Smokes were cheap too. Have we gone through that time already?

Did everybody smoke?

Just about, yeah.

- 36:30 **So would you be made fun of if you didn't smoke?**

I really can't say. I never thought about it. Everybody smoked because you had nothing else, if you weren't on operations, there was nothing else to do but drink and smoke. What are you going to do? There was nothing to do. There were no women there. We used to have movies and anything between five and fifty would have a beer can thrown at it, women coming across the screen, (demonstrates),

- 37:00 **Let me just ask you about the money. So today when you get paid it transfers into your bank account, what did you do? Did you get paid every Thursday or something?**

No, we were paid every fortnight, but we were paid in military script, MPC [Military Payment Certificates], military, I can't, something currency, military something currency. The other blokes will tell you exactly what, MPC, it was called.

What did that mean though?

It was occupation money, it wasn't real money. Like monopoly. They wouldn't give you real Australian dollars because you've got to

- 37:30 remember you're in a foreign country, so how are you going to spend an Australian dollar? There's no exchange houses, there's no banks, this was a country at war. Probably be the same as the Japanese occupation money, but it was legal and they changed the colour of it, like Korea, they changed the colour of it every now and then so the black marketers couldn't make a killing on it. How that worked I don't know. I never had much choice in that. But they paid me every fortnight and you would only draw what you needed.

- 38:00 And if cans were fifteen cents a can and blokes were putting free money over the bar and often you get a lot of free cigarettes, then you didn't really need to draw much, so most blokes didn't draw much of

their pay. And a lot of times you were out on operations and you can't draw on your pay while you're on operations and it would just accumulate while you were out there and you'd come in and you'd get paid whatever. The pay bloke would come around about a week before and say, "How much money do you want next pay?" and you'd say, "I want a hundred bucks." It was a hundred dollars equivalent

38:30 in Australia but it was in military money.

And you'd cash it all in when you went home?

No, yeah, you would hand it back to the army and you'd come home and that money would then be transferred directly into your pay in Australian dollars. Like if you had a thousand dollars in your pay book when you come home from Vietnam, you would have a thousand dollars Australian when you landed. Are you with me? I think that's the way it worked.

Where did you get your free cigarettes from?

A lot of the time what they called supplement packs would come in, there'd be free smokes would come in and cartons of smokes were only a dollar twenty-five a carton anyway in those days,

39:00 a dollar twenty-five a carton, but I used to go through three packs, I don't smoke now, but I used to smoke three packs a day.

Do you think a lot of that had to do with nerves though?

Oh shit yeah, that and peer pressure and you've got to do something with your hands. Keep a cigarette in your hand (demonstrates) than, I'm not saying that but you had to smoke. I smoked, heavily,

39:30 and a lot of blokes still smoke heavily to this day. I don't smoke at all any more.

But you wouldn't be allowed to smoke when you were on an operation?

Mm.

I mean when you're walking through the jungle?

Yes, these blokes would light up every chance they got. You wouldn't light up on a patrol but you would, every now and then you would get the signal (demonstrates), fifteen, twenty minutes, smoke if you've got them and we'd smoke, yeah. Everybody smoked. Oh yeah, everybody did.

40:00 If anyone carried any flasks of alcohol on them I don't know. I didn't, but I wish I would have known if anyone did, but no, I didn't. If there was any drinking done it wasn't done according to me, but smoking was, everybody smoked.

Was there a lot of thoughts on the American soldiers smoking and wearing their white t-shirts and perfume, that Charlie could smell them?

Oh look, I was always so filthy dirty

40:30 and so wet most times you wouldn't have smelt much of me anyway, but more than likely cigarettes. If you were on a big fire support base and we're all smoking, Charlie could pick it up, of course he would, yeah, he'd pick it up.

Tape 5

00:35 You can start wherever you want. I don't know where we were.

We were just, I'd actually like to go through a blow by blow of the Coral.

Oh, yeah, I don't know.

Just that whole operation for you and what you experienced of it.

Yeah, well it was, how can I put it. Like I said we weren't there the first night and the idea

01:00 of infantry companies, their main role is patrolling and all that stuff as well but also when you go like into a fire support base, the role of the infantry is protect all the artillery pieces, the armoured corps, anybody that's in the middle, headquarters, that our role. That's why you have an outer perimeter. We protect everybody on the inside. They protect us with what equipment they've got but we have to protect, but we're basically the first people that the enemy will meet.

01:30 Anyway, we weren't there the first night due to contacts with the enemy and darkness approached and you just don't move at nighttimes, suicide. And then that night as I said the guns got overrun and the mortar crews got overrun and I was reasonably oblivious to it all really because we didn't really understand what was going on. We knew something was going on but it was kept pretty hush-hush from us but when we found out it was pretty

- 02:00 devastating, these were our friends and even if we didn't know them they were still fellow soldiers and the poor buggers got overrun. We basically should have been there but I don't want to go down that road because it's not really, I mean someone should have got a kick in the arse for meself, not me but someone should have but we didn't make it there in time. Anyway the second night it rained and the third night they hit us again. And they hit us with everything. They hit us with rocket fire, machine
- 02:30 gun fire, mortar fire, machine guns, small arms fire and they also did a large infantry assault on us as well. My area was as heavily pounded by the infantry as other sections were but it was enough to keep me busy at the time. And I didn't know at the time but I just recently found out in the last few years that the, I suppose, I
- 03:00 couldn't say how many we were, I'd say we might be a thousand strong with the battalion and supporting troops, with the artillery and the armoured corps and a few service corps. There were even a few cooks there, believe it or not and I'd say the enemy would be about three thousand strong, I suppose. Just at a guess, I'm guessing because there were different battalions that attached us and A Company sent up flares and they just could just see waves upon waves of these
- 03:30 Nogs coming at them, hundreds of them. So it was a pretty hairy night. It started, I don't know, I've got the details written down somewhere. It started in the middle of the night of course. It always starts in the middle of the night, never starts, if you're having a war you never fight it on conventional grounds, between eight and five sort of thing. Anyway they attack when you're at your most vulnerable, when
- 04:00 you're tired or you're sleeping, or whatever and it was pretty well full on all night. There were helicopters flying around and you couldn't see them because they were blackened out. We had Puff the Magic Dragon, which was a DC-3, you know the old Dakotas? Had one of those with a big long roll of, I never saw it actually, but a row of mini guns on each side and when it banked on it's side it would fire these guns, like a, and they reckoned it could fill a football field, inch by inch,
- 04:30 with one burst, with each round and they used it that night, on the battalion that was being held in reserve, a Noggy battalion it was held in reserve to relieve their own troops, they used it on that. We saw rockets coming out of the fire, there were rockets going up, it was pretty full on. And I didn't, I saw enough of it to last me a life time but I basically
- 05:00 kept, most blokes would have kept down in their pits pretty well, deep down, as far as you could get because it wasn't wise to stick your head up, because there was shit flying everywhere. There was shrapnel flying past your ears, there were bullets flying past your ears, there was rounds landing not far, mortar rounds landing not far from your forward pits and pretty terrifying. You've got to remember one thing, I'm only nineteen of age here and pretty terrifying shit and I never promised God that I'd become a priest if I got out of it but
- 05:30 by Jesus I come close. I come close to becoming a born again Christian that night, I'll tell you. "Get me the hell out of this shit, this is bullshit. This is no fun at all." I didn't panic and I didn't run, as you're training wouldn't allow you to. You had friends to rely on. That bloke in the pit next door to me, I mean you couldn't leave him, but I was tempted, tempted to get the hell out of there, but I had nowhere to go, so discipline keeps you there and peer pressure - coward,
- 06:00 you don't want to be a coward. But by Jesus, I didn't cry but I had tears in my eyes but not from crying. It was more fear or just frustration because you couldn't do anything. There was nothing you could do about it, you just had to stand there and cop it. If you saw, some people fired but I didn't fire any rounds that night because I had nothing to fire at. There was so much going on. From a civilian point of view, or the bystanders' point of view, you might say it was absolutely fascinating.
- 06:30 There was so much stuff going on. There were tracers, cause every fourth or fifth round you've got what they call a tracer, a tracer round and you fire and it illuminates and all you could see were these strips of tracers going backwards and forwards across the sky, coming in and out of the sky, from the ground up and the air down. And there were rockets going off and there were radios going left, right and centre and people yelling out. "Oh," I thought, "bugger this."
- 07:00 And that was my baptism of fire you might say. That was just that one night, it was only that one night and they didn't hit us like that again because this time when they came, they thought they were going to have the same success they had the first night but this time the platoons were there and they didn't know and they got cut up pretty bad. We gave them, I think we gave them, we lost a few men that night too, as well, just a couple that night. One bloke got a direct hit with a mortar round and he actually came out of his,
- 07:30 remember I said before how our greens were rotting off of us, and he actually only came out to issue new greens, and then he was probably due to fly out the next day and the poor bugger didn't make it. He got a direct hit with a mortar round. Yeah, they were scrapping the poor bugger off an F111 I heard. Bloke called White, actually I read it yesterday, talking to me mate yesterday about it. Yeah so it was pretty well an initiation. The operation went on for about three weeks after that actually,
- 08:00 and we had various contacts with them. It was always, every time you moved outside the wire or outside the area, it was often, D Company had to try and take out a bunker system and they didn't succeed. They ended up bombing it with B52s it was that impenetrable, you couldn't get in there, not without losing men. They tried, they lost one guy and a few wounded, so they ended up bombing the damn

thing. Should have bombed it in the first place as far as I was concerned, but that went on for about three or four weeks. Without taking anything

- 08:30 from Long Tan, and I stress that, because Long Tan was horrific in itself, everybody has their own battle that they think was their baptism of fire and we all do. To each man, each man meets it as he finds it, but Coral was ours. It was the largest, and I'm not going to argue with blokes over this, it was a fact, it was the largest land battle of the Vietnam War,
- 09:00 that's how big it was. And in the ten years we were there and that's not taking anything from Long Tan or any other operation the guys will talk about. You'll find different blokes will talk about different operations, Anderson and Coburg and names like that. Coral is even on our battle honours and you don't put a name up on your flag, on your battle honours, on your unit without it signifying something so it was pretty full on, pretty full on.
- 09:30 So I definitely don't want to go through that again. Like I said I could have got out of me pit and walked across to Charlie and said, "Listen mate, what do you reckon we piss off?" I reckon he would have been in that too, because they were getting cut to pieces. They got a few of us and my Jesus they got chopped up pretty bad and they went away to lick their wounds and they hit us a few more times with the odd rocket fire. More of a, actually to get a mortar attack every now and again was more annoying than anything else. They'd fire a few mortars in and piss off, it was more annoying but those
- 10:00 bloody things have got to land somewhere. Anyway we waited about a week, not a week, a few days and they said, they didn't say, they didn't offer me a choice, they said, "We haven't seen them for a few days, so we'll go looking for them." So the company went out, my company, Charlie Company, and we actually went out and I was the pacer. The pacer is the bloke who in a section, your NCO wants to know, he has a map and a compass, and
- 10:30 he looks at his map and compass and works out exactly where you are on the map. You have to because if ever you have to call in artillery or mortar fire, you've got to know exactly where you are. No good living in this house and being at that house and you call mortar fire in on the wrong spot, call it in on yourself. And I was the pacer and I counted thirty-two paces. I know that because I remember that book called The Thirty Nine Steps, and I remember counting thirty-two paces and all hell broke loose up the front, 'contact front' as they
- 11:00 used to scream out. And we had three platoons, we were about a hundred and twenty strong I suppose, for want of a better number and the 7 Platoon, 8 and 9, I was in 8. 7 and 9 were up the front and Company Headquarters were in the middle and my company, my platoon was at the rear and I was second last section and all hell broke loose and we all went into our normal drill and 7 Platoon and 9 Platoon were pinned down
- 11:30 and we were guarding the rear, and to cut a long story short, we ended up having to call the APCs [Armoured Personnel Carriers], and the Centurions, which were the tanks in to pull us out because if they had not have got there we would have been cut to pieces. They were coming down both sides of us, they were bringing mortars on our rear and we couldn't move and they would have chopped us to pieces. If anyone ever tells you that to run from the fight, that's not kosher, that bullshit.
- 12:00 You get to hell out of there, you stick it up your jumper, I'm out of here, I want to go and I was into that APC quick, in fact I might have knocked blokes out of the way getting into there. You get to hell out. We lost one bloke, a mate named Buddy Abbott, we lost him and a couple were wounded and we got to hell out of there, it was a wise move and then they used an F4 bomber on them which was a Yankee fighter.
- 12:30 And they used napalm, and I kid you not mate, never use that stuff, it's woeful, it's a woeful weapon, but when you've just lost a mate and you're sitting on top of a hill, you don't give a rat's, you don't care, up them. Better them than you but looking back on it now that was terrible but I suppose Mr. and Mrs. Abbott don't look at it that way, do they? They'd just lost their son, he was a national serviceman I think too, in fact, yes, sorry he was a national serviceman. They kicked up a hell of a stink and they took the government to a case over that
- 13:00 and I don't blame them, they lost their son who was drafted, see. And they were pretty bitter and in fact his name is not, it wasn't, it's on some monuments that I've seen, but his name is missing from the Canberra wall, it's not on the wall, at his parent's request. Cause I asked about it and I went down there one year, to Canberra, and Abbott, being AB was the first name and where the
- 13:30 two rows run there's a gap and I went up to bloke at the counter and he said he didn't know nothing about it. Coming back from a Coral reunion in Townsville in '88, I actually spoke to someone else about it and he said "We've got the director of the museum on here," so I went and spoke to him and he said the reason that's not on there, and I've still got it written down, he said his name was withheld from the memorial at his parent's request. They were so bitter they didn't even want his name on the memorial.
- 14:00 Yeah, I know. We heard it back where we were, we heard the flack where we were back in Vietnam. We actually heard the hue and cry that they were kicking up. They must have, word had got through but what they don't seem to understand, and I can't blame them, is he was our mate and his name deserves to be up there, but as parents they must have that right and it's not on the memorial as I know. It could have been put up since but it wasn't up there last time I looked. There's a gap there for it and that's the only one I've ever heard of ever

14:30 being refused to go up there. They were pretty bitter. They're probably dead now, I don't know, anyway.

Was the, what was the first kind of I guess face to face encounter you had with?

Didn't actually meet any, to be honest with you. Most blokes don't, some do. I didn't actually have an encounter with them. During that night I saw shadows.

15:00 When the flares would go up you would sometimes see a figure in the distance but basically I didn't meet the enemy. I met one captured one. We captured, I said we captured, they captured a guy and it was close to where I was and I seen him being bundled into the APC, but that was the closest. Never got the enemy real close, not alive anyway. That night after the third night they attacked us I could see bodies lying out in the field or out in the open,

15:30 but they sent out a clearing patrol to, how can I put it? Just to make sure they were dead or pick up any wounded and some blokes can be pretty callous. One bloke shot a bloke clear, straight through the bloody head from point blank range cause he got told by the officer to make sure he was dead. I think that was pretty callous, that was war and that's the way it goes. He could have been alive and shot you in the back, who knows. I didn't have to go out there. We were out patrolling one day and we came to a

16:00 weapon pit which had had a mortar round, you could see where a mortar round had landed close to this pit and caved it in and the sergeant said, Russ Hocking said to me, "I want to dig that up and have a look what's in there," so he got me and Rod Etoch, who was me mate, to start digging. We were digging with our little trenching tools and uncovered this bloody head and I. Rod walked off, dry retching, he started retching because the smell was something woeful, bloody awful and then I started.

16:30 I started a chain reaction. I got a whiff of it and I started throwing, not throwing up but heaving my bloody stomach. I couldn't bloody stand it and Russ said, "Come on, come on," and I said, "I'm not digging down there." He said, "There could be eight ks [kilograms] down there," and again with Iraq I said the same thing that I mentioned the other day, I said, "I don't care if there's gold-plated eight ks down there," and they found some gold plated eight ks in Iraq. How's that for coincidence? I thought of that the other day, gold plated eight ks. That might

17:00 be at the bottom of that pit. He said, "All right, cover it back up," and I just went (demonstrates) with me boot, a couple of scrapes with the dirt and walked away. I just wanted to get away from there. I didn't care about him so much. I was starting to heave, I was getting sick. You have a tendency, hatred is a terrible thing, I know, cause I've been there. That's why I don't hate these days because it doesn't do you any good. It eats you up from the inside but

17:30 you do get a hatred, when you lose a friend and it's only as time gets on, you get older and wiser and you don't hate them any more. I don't hate them. I don't really like them that much. I feel uncomfortable around them but I don't hate them but you learn to hate a lot because we were on an operation, we were on a patrol. I don't know if it was Coral or not and we got a contact and there were two of them, obviously. One fired an RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenade], which is a rocket because I remembered seeing the big orange flash

18:00 hit the rubber trees and just exploded somewhere about fifty, sixty yards in front of us and then an AK-47 opened up. You can tell the difference between their weapons and ours. They had a different, distinct sound. One section did the firing and another section did what they called a sweep through, firing from the hip. You're actually attacking the pit and they actually did the sweep through. They fired and apparently they got, they said,

18:30 "They've got one," that's all they yelled out. Someone yelled out, "They got one," I don't know who it was. Anyway they continued on past the pit and my job was, part of my section, we came up on the rear and we covered the way we'd come in. We covered, we turned around and faced the way we'd come, so as to cover our rear because that's what they call the 'killing ground'. The killing ground is an area where you don't want to be caught in, you get in and you get to hell out of there, cause where's there one, there might be more. Anyway to cut a long story short,

19:00 sorry, it was the same day I was eating my pears I think, because I, or was it? No, it might not have been. This is where I get confused. But I remember eating my pears, had a tin of pears, and I remember eating the pears when contact broke out and I was drinking the juice and I drank the juice and when hell broke out I just shoved it in me basic pouch. The contact was over, again I came to that pit, where the dead Nog was in. First of all the machine gun,

19:30 a machine gun, I don't think it was my bloke, he said, "There's a dead Nog in the pit." Louis said, "Make sure he's dead." So he fired a burst of about fifteen, twenty rounds, point blank range, from here to you away, into the body of this Charlie and then it had overhead cover and then they threw a grenade in the overhead cover and imagine what that did to the body? It was unbelievable. The point I'm getting at is the callousness of it. I went over, I had a look, for what reason I don't know

20:00 to this day. Probably fascination, I don't know just and do you know what I did then? I finished me tin of pears. I sat down and eat the rest of me pears and that's what is like. Here's a dead person, someone's brother, father, son, who knows who it was. I don't who he was but here he was, and here he was in, it was indescribable, I've never seen, the body was just torn to pieces, absolutely just a mess of, I can't

describe it. It's just

20:30 unbelievable. I've still got a picture in my mind today, and I went and finished my tin of pears. That was the most important thing in the day to me, finishing that tin of pears. Terrible, that's the way you got. We lose one bloke it devastated us, obviously they didn't seem to care too much about their troops. I don't know. Maybe someone did. He was probably someone's mate. He had a friend somewhere, probably the best of mates. He went back to his mate and said, "Shit, I've just lost Hoo Flung Dung," or whatever his name was.

21:00 And that's the way, that's how callous you got. To this day I never forget them, that's the way it is. I don't forget it now. That's probably why a lot of us now our nerves aren't real flash, they say, we call it flashbacks. You could call it nightmares. I have flashbacks all the time. I'm always constantly thinking of it. I don't eat, breathe and drink it, but it's seldom

21:30 a day goes by, like the psychologist said, "Something will trigger it." Who knows sometimes what triggers it? You're triggering it today and if it wasn't for you, it would be something else anyway. I mean I keep memorabilia all around me. I can't help but trigger it, but you've also got to live with it too. It's just part of it, you just got to live with it, you've got to go on. Like I keep saying, I hate repeating myself, but fifty years from now it's not going to matter, is it? It's not. I've got no ambition to go back.

22:00 I don't want to see the place again. The Communists wanted it so badly the Communists can have it. They could have had it on day two, as far as I'm concerned. Day one was enough for me. I could have turned around and gone back home again, yeah, anyway.

Was that, I guess first day in the firing line, I guess the biggest shock or surprise for you or were there days that were kind of worse?

No, that night on Coral, the battle of Coral itself it went on for five weeks, was enough initiation to last me a lifetime. It wouldn't matter what happened after that. Everything was pretty tame.

22:30 I mean don't get me wrong, we lost men after that, even after I came home I lost some good friends but I, Coral, that night on Coral would be the most signifying night for me. I spoke to a guy the other day, there's two guys in the bike club, one was an engineer there and we had a new guy join the other day and he was a sig [signaller] there. Well I don't care if you were a cook there, you've earned your spurs as far as I'm concerned.

23:00 It didn't where you were on that fire support base, it didn't matter where you were or what your job was, you were vulnerable. We were more vulnerable where we were but a lot of times when they couldn't break our lines, they would just sit back and send mortars. In fact I sat there one night watching rockets and mortars going over my head into the middle and they were trying to knock out the radio towers that we had in there, for our radios and that. And you know what I thought? I know it's a terrible thing to say and I don't mean anything by it, I was happy they

23:30 leaving me alone. They were bombing me mates and I thought, "Thank Christ, I'm getting a break." Isn't that terrible? That's the way you thought. I said to the sig bloke the other day, I said to him, "Do you remember that day you blokes were being mortared? I was as happy as a pig in mud that I was being left alone." I said, "I was sorry for you but I was happy I was being left alone." That's the way it was. You can through the flag up in front of me, that is why especially a lot of

24:00 Vietnam veterans, you throw the flag in our faces and we're likely to wrap it around your neck, not that we've got anything personally against the flag, but don't bring up that red, white and blue in front of us any more. It's all bullshit. I love this country. I would defend this country tomorrow, but don't bring any bullshit with you. They're talking now about flag burning, making a crime. Who gives a rat's? I don't care, I mean that's the way I see it personally. Burn it if you want too, I'll go and buy another one. We're not like the Americans.

24:30 You burn an American flag, they almost go to war over it. I couldn't care less. It was a flag, it was only a flag. It's a symbol I know but Jesus Christ if you're going to go into punch ups over it, just let it burn. So a lot of us blokes don't feel, we're patriotic but very sceptical when the government says, "We're going into Iraq because of..." Oh yeah, right-o, yeah. Nothing to do with the oil, yeah? Oh shit no.

25:00 Anyway maybe I'm being pessimistic but that's the way I am.

Oh you're not alone.

No, I don't think so.

Did you lose any mates that you'd made during the Coral battle?

Did I lose what?

Did you lose mates?

At Coral?

Yeah.

Oh shit, yeah. In fact when I came home, I was glad to get to hell out of Vietnam when I got, this might

be (unclear) briefly, but I was glad to get out of Vietnam when I did. I got what they

- 25:30 called a 'homer', thank Christ, but when I was home recuperating and I was on leave down the Gold Coast, or wherever I was, I was getting the Telegraph, the Brisbane Telegraph, the old one, and they would publish the names and I was going, I never picked a paper up one day that I didn't know somebody. Then I started getting the guilts and I've still got the guilts, a little bit, to this day. I'll carry them to the day I die, too. I know there's nothing
- 26:00 I can do and my psychologist said, "Don't beat yourself up over it," and I don't, and that's the way it was. I'm coming to grips with that a little bit more but I lost friends. I lost Bobby McNab. I was in D Company for the first three or four weeks like I said, and then I was in a room with me, Tony Cameron, Frank Yates and Bob McNab and Tony and I got moved to Charlie Company, C Company. And Bobby McNab is one of those spit and polish soldiers. I mean he used to give you the shits. He used to get picked Best of Parade and
- 26:30 he loved it. He breathed and ate 'the army'. I loved it too, but I was a bit of a slack soldier, but he, his boots were always immaculate. He was neat and he'd march well, he loved it. I think he was a Nasho. Anyway he was made for it. I hadn't seen him for a few months and then on Coral I was on my weapon pit and my weapon pit was right out in the open, which was a good thing in one respect. They might be able to see me but they good only get me with a well-aimed shot, where if you're in
- 27:00 a rubber tree they can fire rockets into the trees, so it wasn't a good spot to be, in the rubber. Anyway I remember D Company, that's the day they went out to take the bunkers actually and D Company came out through my gun because it was an open area, through my pit, they came out through me area and they could spread out quick, not get caught because if Charlie was going to hit them, they are going to hit when they're more vulnerable, than coming out and they were vulnerable. And as he went past I hadn't seen him for a couple months,
- 27:30 and he said, "G'day," and I give him a wave and said, "When you come back we'll have a brew." Having a brew was the second best thing you could do over there, have a cigarette or have a brew. If they said, "brew up," you'd be surprised how fast, I could cook a brew in five minutes flat, a cup of coffee. Anyway I said, "See you when you come back." He said, "Right-o, we'll get together for a brew," whether his pit or mine, I don't know. And then they got hit by a rocket trying to attack that bunker system and he got a little piece of shrapnel I heard, and it went straight through his heart, and he was a top bloke, he
- 28:00 was a nice bloke. He was one of the first mates I lost. Then I lost, I lost him, I lost Buddy Abbott. I didn't know Buddy that well, but I drank with him so I considered him a friend. I lost a bloke from my section but after I come home, Jim Slattery. Jim got killed, he was a Nasho. He was a nice bloke too. It's always the nice blokes seem to wear it. Mongrels like me get away. Always the nice guys seem to wear it and Jim was one of the nicest guys you could meet.
- 28:30 I've always been meaning to, oh I don't know where he come from, I must find out one day where he lives, where he used to live. I'd like to go and see his parents. I don't know why, just to drop in and see them and say, "Look, I knew Jim," or where he's buried, that sort of thing. So I wouldn't, yeah I lost, they were the close ones. No one actually got killed right beside me, thank Christ. If it ever happened to anybody I really feel sorry for them.
- 29:00 It never happened to me. But I'd lose them. One minute they were there and the next minute they were gone. That's the way it was and that's probably why we drank so heavily and caused so much strife when we were loose because you don't think in the front of your mind, like I said before you don't think that you're going to be the one's that going to wear it. You always think, you don't hope it's going to be the other guy but you always think it's going to be the other guy. That's the way you think and that's the way I thought and
- 29:30 I've spoken to a few guys since and a few psychologists and they all agree, that's the way your mind thinks. You think it's going to be you. You and I think, "I hope Hippo makes it and I hope you make it. He looks like one, he might wear it." But when you're hit, like when I got hit, it surprised the shit out of me. "How dare they." I lost friends galore and I don't think there's a bloke that went over there that didn't lose somebody even if you weren't, like I've got blokes in the bike club now
- 30:00 went into a different corps but lost blokes from other corps. They joined together but went into their respective corps, so everybody know somebody, everybody. Yeah, it's no fun.

Was there some times at Coral where you sort of thought or felt that you might not come good or you might not make it?

- 30:30 I don't know that I actually thought about it. No, yeah, well you were sitting there, not much praying like buggery but you had everything crossed. You just wanted to get out of there, you just wanted to. You'd wake up the next morning, you'd get up the next morning and your eyes were hanging out of your head, you hadn't had any sleep but no, I don't think I actually thought of getting killed. I always knew the possibility was there.
- 31:00 I mean you'd be a fool if you didn't think the possibility was there because them bloody mortar rounds they just land anywhere. They don't discriminate. They don't make any difference is you've got stuff up here or stuff down there or nothing at all. I always maintain the only good thing that came out of

Vietnam was the fact that it made us all equal. Officers could walk, before Vietnam officers and sergeants and NCOs could walk around flashing, I used to call them crabs, walk around like crabs showing all their rank off but when a bullets coming at you it don't make no difference

31:30 whether you've got three stripes on there or nothing at all. It doesn't pull up and say, "Oh private, oh sergeant, oh hang on, get the private." Doesn't work that way, so it made us all equal, so when the shit hit the fan, you're all one big happy fan, one big fan. So everybody's vulnerable and that made it a level playing field. If I'd met, I'll call her Betty Britain, if I met Queen Elizabeth tomorrow, I call her Betty Britain, if I met Betty Britain tomorrow I could look her in the eye, not trouble at all.

32:00 I wouldn't bow and scrape, I wouldn't feel awed by her. I wouldn't feel awed by Howard or Gaddafi or anybody, you name them. I couldn't give a, you're flesh, you're just a human being. You sit on the throne just like I sit on the throne, no different. You bleed like I bleed and eventually you die same as I will and that made me come away thinking, "We're all equal here buddy." And then after Vietnam finished, they all went back to walking like crabs again. Those that didn't learn, mind you.

32:30 **Do you remember seeing I guess any of your first Australian casualties?**

Yeah, Buddy Abbott was me first. I was watching him being carried off. Actually, it was pretty bad. I wasn't that close. I could see him, one bloke on each arm, one bloke on each leg carrying his body away and I remember Jock Smith, that was our louie [lieutenant], yelling out, "For Christ's sake, cover him up."

33:00 Cause that's true, they should have covered him up. That's your mate they're carrying there. That's when hatred sets in. Oh, you can hate, geez you can hate. I hated, I had that much hatred in me at the time. They're the bad guys, remember? We're the good guys, we're the guys with the white hats. I know it's not true now, but no, it was bad news.

33:30 I wouldn't want to see that again.

Did you ever see some of the Oz guys take the hatred out on...?

No. Not initially. If it did happen it didn't happen around me, no, no. I saw blokes do some callous things, like that bloke shooting that dead Nog at close range. I thought that was a bit callous. Like when I read about that SAS [Special Air Service] guy being charged for kicking the dead body in Timor, "Oh God," I'm thinking, "oh God almighty, what's going on,

34:00 of course you've got to kick them." Jesus Christ, if he gets up and shoots you in the back, what are you? What if you went past him and all your section gets shot because you didn't check. Oh, get real, this is war for Christ's sake. This is not a car accident when you can walk away and call for the ambulance or something, no. There are rules but there aren't any rules. You can have a rule book and say, "This is what you should do on such and such,"

34:30 and then when shit hits the fan, you throw the rule book away. Rules, no it doesn't work that way. The old man showed me that, or told me that. Same thing in his war. You can have rule books, but no, sorry. That's the way it goes.

That's pretty right, from everything I've heard.

It is, it's spot on. There's no set rule. Like the rule of thumb was, when you were

35:00 training, this is back in Australia and you're training and they fire on you, you return fire, the gun group goes to the right, rifle group goes to the left and you do a sweep, blah, blah, blah. I saw them one day, we had a contact with one guy, one guy had attacked us or fired on us, we bought mortars in on him. Stuff the rule book. I was as happy as a pig in mud because it meant we didn't have to go and get him. He got away, I'm happy for him. It got to the stage later on

35:30 where if you didn't meet them, it was great. And that wasn't fair, but after losing mates left, right and centre and then we started getting the word that it was becoming hopeless, not so much from our point of view, but you could see the political business going back and the demonstrations going on. We started questioning it in our own minds, "What the hell are we doing this for? This is bullshit." So every time you went out there, I spoke to a guy at a reunion

36:00 for Coral and said, "We were trying," they were trying up to the last minute before they came home. I said, "What did you feel every time you went out?" and he said, "I don't know, we didn't run into them." He didn't want any more. He survived twelve months. When you arrive in Vietnam, you have 365 days, one year. Blokes were coming up and saying, "I've got 364 and I'm waiting to go." And that's the way it went on, all that wait. A guy would come up and say, "I've got 30 and I'm waiting to go, 29 and I'm waiting to go." That's what it was.

36:30 Everybody just wanted to go home.

Would people get more anxious the lower the number got?

Shit, yeah. I wasn't that lucky, I didn't last that long but I've spoke to blokes who have and they said, yeah, about three weeks before they were due to be send home they were very careful. I mean, you were careful as best you could all the time, but they were very careful close to going home, oh shit

yeah. If you were about one week off or three days off you didn't want to go outside the wire. I think they would have walked home if they figured they were going to have a car accident.

37:00 **Was there like a particular incident or a couple of days at Coral where you kind of felt like you were getting on top of it and you were going to hold the ground?**

There was never any thought of going the other way. There was never any thought about pulling the pin [quitting] because I was under orders. Basically, stay where I was, do what I was told and carry out me functions and that's the way it was. No, there was never any thought of doing otherwise.

37:30 You don't think that way. You can't afford to think that way. You start to think that way and then you'll drop your bundle. Your company will drop their bundle. I know, I heard of a rumour of one bloke dropping his bundle, which was Rhodesia. He dropped his bundle there and I wasn't with him at the time. But he had his own war going on. Rhodesia was at war then, and they were having their bloody war back there then and he, I've never seen him since. I haven't

38:00 seen him since and he actually stripped a gun in the middle of contact, I heard. In the middle of contact, started stripping the gun and someone yelled out, "What's the matter?" and he said, "Oh, just cleaning my gun," and from what I can gather, from the story, is he lost the plot, basically. That's the only incident I heard and I don't know how true that is, mind you. Don't know how true that is. But I never saw him again since. I went and saw him in Concord - that's right - Hospital. He was there for the bad nerves or something, but I never saw him again. As far as I know he could be in Rhodesia still

38:30 fighting his war. I don't know.

So what was the end of it like?

It just sort of tapered off. It tapered off. After that first second initial battle where we got pinned down and we managed to get to hell out of there, it just sort of tapered off. They gradually withdrew licking their wounds. They lost quite a few, I kid you not. They must have lost quite a few hundred, but they just went away.

39:00 And then one day they weren't there, weren't there, they were gone, so the whole reason for being there no longer existed, so we just jumped on the Chinooks, we jumped on the big choppers, the big twin-propped ones, we jumped on those and they brought us back to headquarters and that was the end of that operation. Then came back and two days R & C [Rest in Country] at Vungers [Vung Tau] and RS & Care [Rest, Sex And Care], RS and Care all right. There was no resting being done.

That will just about get to....

Tape 6

00:33 **We were just talking about the R and C coming up after your stint at Coral.**

See after Coral, you've got to, men are pretty tensed up, pretty hyped up. We've lost friends and it's pretty...and you've got to let off steam and if you didn't I think it would have pretty unwise of the system not to give us some time off. We would have rioted, I reckon. So you went down to Vung Tau in a company at a time.

01:00 A Company went, B Company went, then Charlie Company and so on and you had two days down there. You got down there on the morning. You had all that day and you had to be, in an area what they called 'the flags', where all the flags were and the trucks would pick you up at about a quarter to nine at night and you had to be back at what they used to call the Peter Badcoe Club which was a reasonably safe area that you couldn't, they didn't want you staying out in the village that night.

01:30 Some blokes did because they got too pissed to find their way home anyway, and then the next night, same thing again and then on the following morning you were back on the trucks and back to Nui Dat again. The first day I went in, I don't know what time it was, it was as fast as our little legs could get us there, I know that much and we went into a bar. We were all drinking in the bar, about six men, me and five of me mates and we're drinking away and then one bloke said, "Listen, there's a massage parlour down the road, I'm going down to check it out."

02:00 So away he goes. He don't come back and then another guy went and he don't come back. This went on down and down the row and me and the Yank, I was drinking with this Yank, and I said, "Hey, they're not coming back, the bastards." So I said, "I might go down and check this out too," so anyway I went down there and I found Tony Cameron and there was this sheila spreadeagled on top of him and he was pissed. He couldn't do anything and he said, "Get out of here, get out of here," and I said

02:30 "Yeah, righto." And I went in there and got me rocks off [had sex], you might say for want of a better word, because we're tense. Let's get this out of the way so we can get onto serious drinking.

What happened to the massage?

Oh, we didn't have one of those. Actually, later on in the day I went in for a, you could get, this is good

prices, there was massage, steam bath and a nookie [sex] for six dollars fifty. That was a lot of money in them days but all for six dollars fifty.

03:00 It was good. You'd start off with the steam bath first, then a massage and then a nookie. Sometimes different women, sometimes the same woman

What's a nookie?

A root.

Oh. Is that what they called it?

Sorry, I thought you knew. Where have you been?

I'm a bit naïve.

Obviously.

03:30 And on the second day, I know the second day we went to the Grand Hotel and it was where the Yanks had their R and C. They had a special hotel of their own. We had our little club and we went there. The first thing I did when I walked in there, we went looking for a, we wanted to find someone to show us a room. You got a room and a girl for the day for twenty-two dollars fifty. She was yours for all day and

04:00 I did nothing but drink, root, drink, root, drink, root, I did that all day. I got my energy back up and she come back in her bra, every time she come back in her bra and panties I got bloody wandering hands. I felt like saying, "Why don't you stay naked, you might be safer."

The alcohol didn't dampen your spirit?

Not that time it didn't, no. No shit no, not then. Don't forget I was only nineteen years of age. I was bloody like a buck stallion I think.

These were Vietnamese women?

04:30 Yeah, Vietnamese, actually

Were they beautiful?

Well, depended how pissed you got I suppose. No, no, I think they were. Looking back on it, anyway, I don't know what they were, but she was French Vietnamese this one. She was part French and she had beautiful boobs and that's what attracted me to her. Actually, the first one they bought me I didn't like, and Mama-san, Mama-san would bring the girls and there were three of us in the one room, a big room like this.

05:00 **What's Mama-san if you don't mind?**

Mama-san was the lady in charge of all the girls. Called her Mama-san. Now we were in a big room like this and there was one bed over there and one bed over there and one bed over there, no walls. Your mates might be going at it over there and you're having a drink and oh, "How's it going?" "Pretty good." And then you'd start yours and he'd watch you, and didn't watch you necessarily, but you were all in the same room together. There was no privacy here. There's no room for, if you want to be private then you go off somewhere and be private. I never had time to be private but...

05:30 too important.

Did you go thirds in the twenty-two dollars fifty then?

No, that was each, that was each. We went down the Yankee PX [Post Exchange - American canteen unit] and bought a bottle of gin, ninety-proof stuff in them days. A big corked bottle for a dollar, a dollar twenty for a big corked bottle of gin - no tax see - and we took that back and it was ninety proof and we were mixing it with orange juice and were drinking that all day.

So this might sound like maybe a too personal question but were you worried about getting...?

What

06:00 are you worried about personal questions now for?

Were you getting some sort of venereal disease or did you wear condoms in those days? Was that part of something?

I knew you were going to ask that. How did I know you were going to ask that? Why didn't that surprise me you asked that? They gave us one, they gave us a condom.

Mama-san?

No, the medics back at base gave us a condom. Anyway, I got that pissed, a lot of blokes forgot it, didn't use it and anyway sure enough, three weeks later after getting back to Nui Dat I got,

06:30 you're going to get an education before you leave here, I got what they called a 'drippy dick'

[gonorrhea], sorry. You asked.

What is that?

VD. Anyway, what you had on the end of your penis, sorry for want of a better word, a bit of white pus comes out and you've got VD and you've got drippy dick. So, when I went down to the bloody, you go down for penicillin shots in your bum, and if you've ever had penicillin shot in your bum it's bloody woeful, and these medics weren't fully trained mind you.

07:00 They weren't like nurses (demonstrates) they were straight in. There's none of this flapping or "how you doing darling?" or that sort of thing and when I went down to him he says "I thought we gave you blokes?" and he probably asked every Digger the same question, not just us. He said "why didn't you use your condom?" Franger, we called them frangers. He said "why didn't you use your franger?" I said, he said "what did you do with your franger?" I says "it's in me back pocket where I left it." I found it the next

07:30 morning. I didn't lose it. So he jabbed the needles in extra hard for me being a smart arse and then you couldn't stand, you couldn't sit for twenty-four hours. You couldn't sit down cause your bum was that sore. That penicillin hurts, and then you'd walk in the mess and you'd be eating your tucker and you'd have to eat it standing up and everybody knew. There was a big line up and everybody knew, and then everybody would yell out, "Unclean, unclean, get out of here Hippo, you unclean bastard."

08:00 And then Terry and Sladdo they were in there, so it didn't make any difference.

It would have been common I would imagine?

It was pretty common, but in those days you weren't, it was just local, sometimes NSU [Non-Specific Urethritis] or VD or something like that. It was pretty low key in those days. These days it's a death sentence, isn't it? Well, you've got AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] now haven't you? Didn't have AIDS then, and you never thought about it. If I was out there now, knowing what I know now, oh things would be different now. But

08:30 you know, she was so nice and she looked good. She asked me to take her home. She said, "You Uc Da Loi," Uc Da Loi - Australian, she said, "You take me home." I said, "Yep, no worries." I would have promised her anything at that stage. Where was I going to take her? "Get real lady." Going to go back to Nui Dat soon, didn't have time for this bloody love stuff. I don't know how serious she was. I think she might have been just mucking around. Probably says that

09:00 to every soldier. I felt sorry for them.

Well that brings me to, I had another question but it's slipped my mind now but I heard about some of the fellows having Vietnamese wives, did you know much about that?

I didn't know much about that. If they did they would have been the blokes down at Vung Tao who were stationed down there, or Saigon, yes they might have had a local full on, I don't know. Maybe they did, maybe they, I knew nothing.

09:30 I've heard that me self and lately, only in the last few years, but I never heard any at the time. Getting back in respect to where I was, I've met some guys recently that have said over the years, "Such and such a place is a beautiful town or a beautiful city," and I've said, "What would I know?" The only place I knew was Nui Dat, the inside of my tent, the inside of a boozer, out in the bush, rice paddies, jungle and rubber trees, that's all I knew.

10:00 I'm not bleating, but I'm just saying that's the way it was. I wouldn't know. Vietnam is probably a beautiful country from what I can gather, but I didn't see much of it. You ask any infanteer, he didn't see much of it. He just saw, his job was to basically, the role of an infanteer is pretty straight forward, isn't it? Pretty basic, so when you get two days off you don't worry much about

10:30 what's going on, just get out of there and do what you've got to do for two days because you're going to go straight back into it again.

Is that what happened?

Yeah, about a week after we got back we were back on operations again. I don't know the name of the operation but we were on, when was that? That was May, June, probably a couple of operations and then August I got hit, but anyway, that was later on. But I mean, the two days off we just drank and, I mean, smoked and had sex, that was it. That's what we did for two days.

11:00 I remember walking into that Grand Hotel, I was pretty disgusted when I walked into the Grand Hotel, when you first walked in, something that will stick with me to the day I die to, but I can understand the racial part of it. I walked into the Grand Hotel and there were Yanks everywhere and they had a patch on their sleeve, the Yanks had a patch on their sleeve, and it was in the shape of a bearcat, a bearcat like a wolverine or something like that on their spat [uniforms] and the place was crowded with them,

11:30 and I walked in and there was a spare seat and I zeroed straight in on it and I said to my mate, "You go and get the beers and I'll grab the seat." And I went over and these two Negroes were sitting there at this table and I said, "Can we sit in here, is this seat taken?" and in his Yankee drawl, "No man," or something like that, "but you really want to?" "Why? I thought you said they were free?" and he said,

"Yeah, they are." I don't know if that was his exact conversation but it went along those lines, and he said, "No, they are

- 12:00 but them guys over there mightn't like it." And I looked across the road and there's all these, the same guys wearing the same patch as these Negroes, but they were white, and the next thing a white guy comes over and he says, "You blokes want to have a beer?" and I said, "Oh no mate, we're getting a room upstairs in a minute, we're just having a couple of beers before we go up," and he said, "Oh you don't want to drink with these guys, do you?" And I said, "Piss off" or words to that effect, I said, "Get real!" Not
- 12:30 really...I said, "Fuck off!" because what he was getting at was they were Negroes and they were in the same unit. That was the way they were, and that went through their whole army, and I heard that it did and I don't know how true it is, but that was the encounter I had. I know the story is true in my own mind because one of the blokes, Negro's name was Montgomery, that was his first name. I don't know the name of the other guy, I just knew he was Montgomery, and his name stuck with me, and I said, "Up your arse" and we had about three or four beers with these Negroes,
- 13:00 big fellas too, and we left then and that was the way they were. And even on Coral when I went up to borrow an axe for overhead cover, for my pit. We were mortared quite regularly so overhead cover was, you made it a little home, it was a little home. You cut little holes in the side of the pit and put your cigarettes there and your shaving gear and you're nice and warm and dry and I borrowed an axe. I went up to the big mobile guns, the big mobile guns and track vehicles and the
- 13:30 crew was all Negro, all three. A crew of three and all Negro and we went to one of the other guns to see whether they all white or not, but they were all Negro and I didn't miss that part of it, I looked at it and went, that was when I first and when I got down to Vungers, we called Vung Tao 'Vungers', for the R and C and when this guy said, I knew straight away what they were getting on about. That's terrible, isn't it?

It seems like a crazy hypocrisy considering that their defence was that they were trying to protect democracy or force democracy

- 14:00 **and their, they were?**

The Yanks, look my father said something to me and I've no disrespect for the Yanks, my father said, "The Yanks is a great ally, but you wouldn't want to have them as an enemy." He said, "We stopped the Japanese." He said, "They were coming to take our iron ore, that's what they were coming for." He said, "If we had a commodity in this country that the Americans needed and their nation's survival depended on it and we said 'no', they'd come and take it like any other nation. That's a fact."

- 14:30 And that's what he said and I believe it. Look, the Yanks, as much as the Arab is a fanatic, the Yank is just as fanatical, only in a different sense, his own sense. He doesn't care. You'll never beat the American, I'll tell you right now. I wish they'd get all these other leaders together and say, "That's the Yanks, leave them alone cause the more you attack the Yanks the stronger they become." And it's been proven, since the bloody British, the more you attack the Americans the stronger they
- 15:00 become. Now they've been attacked again, they're getting stronger. It's like a science fiction movie where you kill the alien and it breaks into six different pieces. That's what's happening and that's the way it is. The more you bomb the Yanks, the madder they become. It's like stirring up an ants nest, leave them, look at what the Japs did, Pearl Harbor. What did that Japanese Admiral say? "Beware, you wake the sleeping tiger [actually giant]," and that's true, and that's what the Arabs have done now to the Yanks.
- 15:30 They've awoken them again. Geez, you'd think people would learn. And the Yanks I met, the Americans I met over there, look we could learn a lot from them as far as patriotism and the way they feel about their country, we could learn a lot from that as such, but on the same token they're just as fanatical as the Arab, that's what I reckon.

How were they in Vietnam alongside the Aussies?

I didn't run into them that much. I met them on Coral and

- 16:00 don't get me wrong, without their fire support, their tanks and their guns and their Puff the Magic Dragon, as we called it, yes, things might have been a bit different. Their fire power was second to none. I always maintained, it was a bit of a joke really, that if we'd have had five thousand Australians and American equipment it would have been a different ball game. That's putting tickets on ourselves, I suppose. I don't know if that's right or wrong.
- 16:30 But their attitude towards it was different and I can't blame, I don't blame, they call it 'dog faces' in the American army, I don't blame the odd dog face for it or the odd marine for the way they were thinking because they were also being given propaganda and brainwashed and they were cannon fodder, and I felt sorry for them because they believed in all this stuff. The Australians didn't believe all this stuff even when we were there.
- 17:00 We were quite happy to get out. We only stayed because our forefathers had fought before us, like a tradition. Don't get me wrong, I'm not ashamed of being a veteran, no way in the world, but in hindsight I wish it could have been handled differently. Especially the result, coming home, and I know that

sounds like sour grapes, and you'll hear this a lot, it's thirty-five odd years ago since it happened, and what's that old expression?

17:30 "Still waters run deep." Even that welcoming home parade we had, I've spoken to blokes since that and they say, "Didn't the welcoming home parade help you?" And I said, "Well in some respects it did but it was just a big get together for me." I don't think it did a lot for a lot of people. Most vets, most Vietnam vets, particularly, are still bitter, still bitter. I know it's not your fault, your generation's fault, it's probably not even your parent's fault. They probably had nothing to do with it, but

18:00 we're not singling anybody out, we're putting everybody under the same category. That's why we don't trust the system, don't trust authority, they let us down. And it may not mean much to a lot of people, but it means a lot to a returned serviceman, it means a lot to a serviceman coming home. It does, it means a lot. You may do the right thing and the wrong thing but if you don't get the support of your people, of your nation, like I said, I reckon the government which is in power,

18:30 this is the way I feel, and I always emphasise it, the way I feel. The way I feel, I think when the last government, when the last Vietnam veteran dies, whatever government is going to be in power will breathe a sigh of relief, I would think, to see the end of an era, "thank Christ that has gone, now we can move on." Cause I don't think this nation can move on until we are all gone because it's still, we're still battling in some respects but like I said,

19:00 the wounds pretty deep. I don't get up in the morning and spit at everybody because of it but on the same token it's very hard to forget.

Now, I'd like to talk more about that and I just want to go back a little bit between June and August when you got hit and you're still in Vietnam?

I'll be honest with you I don't remember too much about it. I'm more than likely was on a couple of small operations

19:30 at that time. I think we crossed the Firestone Trail where they sprayed all the Agent Orange stuff and bombed it and all that stuff. I remember crossing that but I don't really remember too much about that time in July and August, between June and August. It was only one month.

What happened when you were shot then? Can you tell us the day?

Yeah, the first of August actually. I think it was about half past two in the afternoon, or something like that. We'd been patrolling, right?

20:00 And the rule of thumb is, if you pull up for longer than...a period of time, and that period of time depends on the officer deciding what he's going to do or whoever's in charge. We pulled up and they said, "Righto, have a smoke," so we knew we were stopping for about ten or fifteen minutes, so we stopped there and had a smoke and time got on and we hadn't moved, then it rained and blokes strung out hutchies and we caught some water. We were a bit low on water so we caught rain.

20:30 And then time got on and on and on, and I don't know what period of time, it seemed like forever. Now the rule of thumb is if you stop for a long period of time, a long period of time, you are to go in all round defence and put out sentries, that's the rule. Now I know this now and I might have thought about it then, I don't remember. I'm not a 'bunny altogether' [nitpicker/do-gooder], I'm not going to be the one that runs up to the officer and says, "Excuse me sir, but there's no sentries out."

21:00 Cause guess who's going to get the job?

Can you explain to us exactly what a sentry is?

A sentry is an early listening post. You put out a sentry out front and if anything is going to happen, he's the first one to spot the enemy coming and he runs back and calls it. Like having a cockatoo, like a cockatoo [lookout] in the old gambling days? Have a cockatoo and he's looking for the coppers, call it a cockatoo. Did you know that? Geez, you've had a poor upbringing. Is your father still alive? No, he's not is he?

21:30 What a shame. You want to go and find a father then. Come visit me and I'll teach you some things. Anyway, you have a sentry out there and a sentry is an early listening device basically, and if anything happens he comes in. You have them all around the perimeter, stationed every hundred yards or something, usually in front of a machine gun, so when he comes back in, they come in on a machine gun. Anyway that was the theory. So I wasn't about to say, "No sentry," so

22:00 anyway then we managed to have a brew and we were sitting there for quite some time. Now all this time happened, now you switch off, you, with a war, with a battle, a battle doesn't go on twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. You can patrol all day and nothing will happen and all of a sudden something will happen and it's all over in a matter of five minutes and that's what can happen. One minute you're doing nothing and then all hell breaks loose, and then five minutes later, "Woohoo."

22:30 It's like rising to a high, coming back to a low, like that the whole time. Anyway, I was actually reading a book when I got shot which is not something to be proud of, but I wasn't the only one doing it. We were all doing it. The machine gunner was sitting on his gun and he was just, obviously he was half switched-

off. And what had happened was I'd say was this Nog, this Charlie had come in, followed us in, followed our tracks and I'd say he'd come upon us and it was just as surprising, he was just as

- 23:00 surprised as we were, or I was. I was the one that got shot, but he was just as surprised. Obviously he'd come around the bush or come around the corner or whatever and all of a sudden there we are and he opened up straight away. He would have fired straight away. Then my machine gunner retaliated and opened fire but he got away. We know he got away, we didn't get him so.

What was the book you were reading?

Cane, a book called Cane, all about a Pommy bloke up in North Queensland cutting cane, and I regret I never finished the bloody book either. Unreal, but I'll say that now.

- 23:30 No good me saying, "Look, I got shot charging a heavily armed machine gun and saved the battalion from annihilation," and there's going to be guys there saying, "Yeah Hippo, we know you were reading a book." So I'm telling you now, I was reading a book and that's it way it was. I'm not ashamed of that and it wasn't the fact that I wasn't doing me job, it's just that, I was talking to Tony Cameron, this mate of mine and he said, "I was reading a book that bloody, too."

Were you the only one shot though?

Yeah,

- 24:00 yeah, I was the only one shot. Actually, when he fired, when Charlie fired and got me, I don't know whether he fired more rounds or whatever, or those same rounds, but a guy standing in the middle of the perimeter, the middle of the perimeter, he was standing, got two bullets through the back of his trouser leg. And I spoke to the guy at a reunion and he said, "Yeah, that was me, that was my trousers." He got through, missed him, through the back of his trouser legs and when I went up to the boozer at Nui Dat to pack me gear, to come
- 24:30 home there's these drinks [pants] starched on the wall. So guys would do these things as a funny side, humour. There's a lot of humour goes on. It could be classed as false humour, but it was classed as humour because you had to have a sense of humour. You'd go nuts if you didn't have a sense of humour. So he starched them and put them on the wall and he was a very lucky boy. So was I for that matter.

So what happened with you Hippo?

Well I went down like a

- 25:00 bloody, you know in the movies where they get shot and they patch themselves up and Sylvester Stallone digs the bullet out himself with a knife and that's bullshit. Nothing happened. I went down like a stuck pig and I screamed and bled like a stuck pig, I can tell you now. It was bloody, I was shot, if you ever cut yourself heavily or hurt yourself, the first reaction is nothing. You don't feel a thing, that's body reaction and shock setting in and then when that goes, the pain starts. Well, it happens within
- 25:30 seconds mind you, but that's your body. Well, I didn't feel nothing, just felt a thump and then all of a sudden the pain set in and down I went. A big hue and cry went around, "Hippo was hit" and one said, "Hippo's been hit," and, "Hippo's hit," it went right around and I said, "Yeah, I know, I know, I'm Hippo, remember?" One bloke said, "Hippo's hit," and I said, "Ph yeah, is that right?" No, but I'll make fun of it because I mean,
- 26:00 I'm alive to talk about it.

The medic was obviously around?

The medic was, there is always a company medic, very good man, very brave man. He just didn't patch me up, he patched a lot of blokes up, and before me and after me. I mean a pretty horrific job. He's not a fully trained doctor here, he's a medic, he's done a very short course. He was very well trained but I mean he's got no MD [Medical Doctor] after his name and here he is patching wounded men up in the field and

- 26:30 their lives sometimes depend on it, how quick he can get to them and he's actually got to go into a hot area where the rounds are still been and patch you up. That's pretty, I don't know if I could do it.

Did they wear anything special so people would know?

No, no, no, you mean Red Cross and that? What difference is it going to make? When all hell is broken loose, you can't, things

- 27:00 don't stop. Like I said here before there is a rule book but the rule book goes out the back door. If Charlie is firing, he's not going to look for a red cross, he's not going to say, "Oh he's patching up an Australian, I'll leave him alone." It doesn't work that way. They'll shoot him, just as they shoot him, and he's not wearing a red patch. He's armed like I am, he's got a rifle, usually an Armalite. But no doc come in and patched me up, and then Russ Hocking, me sergeant dragged me away, dragged me out, as safety as safe as you could get, dragged me out of the line of fire.
- 27:30 And me machine gunner at this stage was firing rounds like Arnold Schwarzenegger in Predator, cutting down trees everywhere, needed a chainsaw and he firing at them. I've met him once before, he still

feels guilty that I got shot actually. He told me that once, and I said, "Don't worry about it Buddha, that's the way it goes." See he was in front of me, I was behind, I was in behind him and I was resting and he was looking out on the gun. It was his turn on the gun. It would have been my turn in another probably ten minutes later or something, but

- 28:00 it was his turn and he didn't see him creep up on us and he blames himself but that's something he's got to live with unfortunately. I feel sorry for him. I don't blame him. I probably should have been paying more attention, but it wouldn't have made any difference if I was paying attention or not, I mightn't have seen him anyway. So it was luck of the game I suppose. I lived to talk about it so that was the main thing.

You didn't pass out then?

No, I didn't pass out. They gave me a shot of morphine. They had morphine. I think it was in a tube, a bit like a plastic tube,

- 28:30 and jabbed it in that arm and that hurt just as much as the bullet did. I remember it going in, shit it hurt. And it's in the book actually, in Fighting First. I actually wrote some stories into the book and they actually published it and broke my elbow, and I'd only had my tattoo, my tattoo was only about five months old at that stage and I said to the doc, because he was running this plastic bag thing over me arm, where it's got a zip on it and you (demonstrates) blow it up, like a splint, plakky [plaster] splint. And I said to him, I said, "What about me tattoo?"

- 29:00 And he said, "Fuck your tattoo." It's in the book and he said, "Fuck your tattoo you dickhead," and I had morphine and I was high as a kite. It's good stuff that morphine, I tell you, I could have fought the whole Vietnamese army with that stuff and let me at them. And then they took me water off me because the water was short and I was being vacced [evacuated] out, they called it casevaced, I was being casevaced out. I would have been,

- 29:30 or I did about an hour later. They took all me rations off me because blokes were hungry and it didn't matter that Hippo was wounded or not, "He was going to survive, he'd be all right, let's grab his rations." That's why you...and I would have done the same thing. In fact they come down to visit me in hospital, Tony Cameron came down, and a few other blokes came down and they walked into the hospital and I could see they were getting fidgety and Tony said, "Listen we've got to be on the trucks again at three o'clock, you don't really want us to hang around here, do you?"

- 30:00 And they wanted to go outside the fences, go chase women. They wanted them too, they didn't want to be with their wounded mate. I'm going home, I was out of it. I said, "No, piss off, hooroo [goodbye], have a good day."

And so you went under the knife?

Yeah, I remember being, well an American chopper come and got me, a casevac chopper. I actually had to walk out. I could still walk and I had no weapon. I felt very

- 30:30 vulnerable then because I had no weapon, even though I couldn't fire it. I was right handed and I remember asking for my rifle and they said, "What are you going to do with it if we give it to you anyway?" And I walked out and they cut a few small trees down and the chopper actually landed and I went onto...I know it was an American chopper because he gave me a smoke, and in an American drawl, and they choppered me to Vung Tao. Actually, look, I can't praise whether it be Australians or Americans

- 31:00 helicopters, without those pilots a lot of men would not have made it and that's no lie. You knew you could be wounded and be in hospital within a matter of an hour or half an hour, depending on how close you were and that saved a lot. I mean look at Australia now, just about every hospital has got a helipad and that's just not because it's convenient, it's because it saves lives, it's quick. Up in the air, bingo, you're in your bed. It's quicker than the ambulance.

- 31:30 Yeah and that was good. And they flew me down to the hospital and I remember walking in and my greens were just filthy. They cut me greens off me and cut me boots of me, sorry, and I remember the doctor give me a needle and he said, "Now count down from a hundred," and I think I got down to ninety two or ninety six. That was the last thing that I remembered and then I woke up about a few hours later with my arm in plaster. And I was in a big ward, a big open ward where there were blokes, leg wounds, head wounds, stomach wounds, you name it, all there.

- 32:00 And those nurses, you interview that nurse, I'll tell you. I mean she might have even seen action herself. I don't know if she ever went out on operations, but even if she doesn't, it doesn't matter. There was one Australian over there, particularly the wounded, in fact if you go to Anzac Day and watch where the nurses come, there is not a soul that doesn't clap and cheer for them, because they've got a very thankless job. They're in a hospital and they're watching all these boys, their own sons or brothers equivalent coming in with all sorts of wounds and

- 32:30 these are women and some of them are civilian nurses. I didn't know that at the time. They're thrown into a casevac casualty area overnight. I mean one minute they're just nurses and the next minute they're treating men with wounds that no medical seminar can prepare them for. So compared to what, compared to what I had to endure, I endured comparatively little to some of those nurses, really as far as that is concerned, really nothing.

33:00 I suffered the war side of it but they suffered the other end. It's got to be a lot worse than what I went through, it's got to be. I don't think I could have handled it. That's why a lot of them aren't good now, nerve-wise. I mean, they've got to live with that. Imagine some of those boys would have died in their arms and I don't know about you, but I don't think I could have handled it. So those nurses, and the nurses have only just got their own memorial lately, down in Canberra. In fact they should have gotten it long ago. In fact some of the nurses I

33:30 hear are still battling to get recognition as far as war service is concerned. Pretty piss weak I tell you, pretty piss weak. Doctors were second to none. Some of those doctors were fantastic, just like in M*A*S*H, they were fantastic. I met the doctor who sewed me up actually one day in Brisbane. He was walking down the main street of Brisbane. Some big long name, I've forgotten since and I said, "How you going?" and I said, "You patched me up," and I said, "I want to thank you for that."

34:00 I mean he had to do it anyway, it was his job but I wanted to thank him. It was good.

Were you able to keep the bullet as a souvenir?

No. Wish I would have. Went in the elbow and out the wrist. I asked them, said, "Where's the bullet?" And they said, "It's gone." "Oh shit, I wanted to hang it around me neck." Well that's what you wanted to do, that's what soldiers do, that's what you do. And I didn't know, the bloody thing went the other way. What happened to the other two or three rounds I don't know. Whether they were the ones that went through me mates trouser leg, or

34:30 I don't really care. They didn't go into me that's the main thing because I was a lucky one. See I'm not crying about it, that's just the way it was. I'm surviving, I've got an arm sore, my arm aches. I was digging there the other day and I ended up pulling up after about half an hour. I couldn't work any more, my arm was aching like buggery. It aches, that's all, just got to live with it that's all but compared to some blokes I'm pretty well off. Some blokes are running around with half legs and Christ knows whatever.

35:00 Did you feel a lot more comfortable being in the hospital with sheets and...?

Oh yeah, actually I caught malaria while I actually in hospital at the same time and they tried to say I didn't take me Palitran tablet, which was the anti-malarial tablet, but we've been finding out a lot of history things since. It was only a suppressor and it didn't work on everybody, and maybe an open wound allowed a mozzie to bite me and things like that, that's what they say. But what I'm getting at was I took it everyday, religiously. An officer would actually pump them out when you were back

35:30 at Nui Dat, so I knew I took it so that was bullshit, but I got a temperature of about a hundred and two [Fahrenheit]. They said it was only the anaesthetic and the next thing they took me temperature, I was vomiting and the medic was taking me temperature and he pulled it out and he goes, "Oh shit," and he goes running out of the ward screaming. And I went, "Hang on, I'm the one that's sick here, what are you doing screaming for?" And he went down to get the sister and the sister said, "You didn't take your tablet," and I said, "Oh, bullshit, I didn't take me tablet." And I got malaria, so

36:00 they stuck me in the isolation ward, which was air-conditioned and I thought it was better still, it was good, and ten days later I was gone. Kept me in hospital about ten days until I stabilised or they had a full flight, and I come home with a big pile of wounded.

What was the food like in hospital as opposed to when you first go there to Nui Dat?

I can't really remember. It would have been a lot better than what I had out in the field, I should imagine. I really can't say. I can't think of it. It was about ten days, almost a blur really.

36:30 I was in and out of consciousness for the drugs for three or four days until the pain went. I know I was very adamant about showering myself. I wanted to shower myself, I was too proud to let a nurse do it. I wouldn't be too proud now. I was too proud then. They put a plastic sheet with elastic on both, top and bottom, to stop the cast from getting wet, but no, I was quite happy to shower myself.

Did any of the soldiers try to

37:00 crack on to the nurses?

They might have, but I didn't. I never thought about it. Jesus, I missed an opportunity there, didn't I?

Well I've heard there was a lot of respect from the men for the nurses so they...

Oh yeah, well,

...they kept a distance?

I don't know if they did that, for that reason. I'm sure if a nurse come up to them in the middle of the night and started playing with them a bit, I'm quite sure they'd accommodate them. That's living in a fantasy world, isn't it? No, I don't know. Some blokes were pretty badly wounded too, don't forget.

37:30 I mean the blokes next to me, there were blokes just round me that were a lot worse off than I was, so I was doing pretty good. An arm wound to me was minor compared to some guys. Some guys had horrific

wounds so they're the guys you really want to talk to.

What happened after those ten days, Hippo? Did you come back to Australia?

About ten days, and then they put me in, actually I went to 2 Mil [Military] Hospital, which is in Sydney, overnight, and Frances come and saw me actually. Came with another friend of mine, a

38:00 friend of my mate, a girlfriend of my mate. And I remember correctly I wasn't rude to her, but I was a bit cool and distant I think. Well, maybe I regret that in some respects that I didn't sort of speak to her more about it. I only had the one night there because I was being moved to Brisbane. I'd enlisted in Brisbane, so they moved you to your home state, see? I regret that, that I didn't sort of, she might have been there to apologise, I don't know.

38:30 Then again she might have only come out of loyalty, I don't know.

Or guilt?

Or guilt. Yeah, but I never saw her, then I left the next morning by Herc again. They flew me up here to 1 Mil [1 Military Hospital] and I was at 1 Mil over at Yeronga, the old military hospital at Yeronga, I don't know if it's still there.

What's a Herc?

A Hercules aircraft, a C-130, one of them four-propped things. The things you see on Iraq, going into Iraq, that's what they call a Herc. They flew me in by Herc. A lot of

39:00 blokes will actually tell you they went into Vietnam by Qantas, they flew them in. I went in by ship and came out by Herc. Some blokes actually flew in by Qantas. Isn't that crazy? Using an airliner to go to a war? Incredible, I never did, I was lucky enough. I think our advance party went by Qantas.

Could have asked for a lot of peanuts?

Yeah. I don't think it was that kind of flight. There were no stewardesses I don't think, I'm not sure. If there were they would have been male stewards anyway.

39:30 Especially coming home, even the males stewards mightn't have been safe.

All right, we might just stop it there thanks.

Tape 7

00:31 I had to scrap it off, unreal, it took me hours to scrape it off. I never put another one back on there, I never cared if it rained or not.

Hippo, I've just got to ask, you've got to tell us again about the time you did actually use your condom?

Oh yeah, on the rifle. Not on me gun, on me rifle. Didn't use it on me gun but I used it on me rifle. That's a good one isn't it?

What did you put it on your rifle for?

To keep the rain from getting into the barrel and then when I fired it that one night, I forgot it was on the rifle,

01:00 so here it was melted. The next bloody morning I thought, "Oh," and I've got me bloody eating knife and here I was for half an hour trying to scrape this rubber off the flash illuminator. It's called a flash illuminator, and it melted in there and, "Oh God," I thought, "that's it, I'm not putting another condom on my rifle again." I forget again, bugger it, I was too nervous. I used to have to fire the rifle. Don't ask me what I was firing at, didn't matter.

01:30 A couple of tapes you were talking about how bad the napalm was?

Yeah, I only saw it the once.

Yeah, what did you see?

Well, when the jet came in, like swooped in and I saw this cylinder coming from underneath him and I thought it was a bomb and it was, but when it hit the ground it just exploded, obviously one of his belly tanks,

02:00 they call it belly tanks, only because I've seen it in the movies that's all, that I know that. When it hit the ground it just sort of went from point A to point B like a big whoosh of flames, just this (demonstrates) and I can remember it to this day. I thought, "My God, that's unreal." Like a big fireworks display and that would have been terrible. Like I said I'd just lost a good friend and a few wounded and I didn't really give a rats,

- 02:30 but looking and thinking about it now, because I'm older and wiser, I don't know about wiser, but I'm older, but it's an horrific thing to use. I suppose it was effective, I suppose. I don't know many were killed by it. I suppose I'll never know, but at least we didn't have to go back in there again, that was the main thing. And I remember something that came out of it and you again talk about being pretty callous,
- 03:00 it was a rule of thumb over there, and I don't know whether other blokes will touch on this or not, but the tankies came in and pulled us out, this was a time they pulled us out and they brassed [shot] up a few with their so-called canister rounds that the tanks use and their APCs had their thirty and fifty calcs [30 or 50 calibre weapons] respectively, depending on which machine had them and they obviously might have killed a few too. When it was all over, it wasn't an open argument, but
- 03:30 it was a bit of an argument between the armed corps and us between whose kill it was. It was a thing that didn't go on all the time, but it was an argument over, especially if different corps were involved, it was an argument over whose kill, who would get the credit for it. There was no points awarded, it was a thing between units and there was a bit of an argument, I can't remember who was talking about it
- 04:00 but an argument this was. Whether it was armed corps or ours, could have been between armed corps and that's terrible, eh? That's the way it was, terrible eh. I remember that. I never argued personally about it but there was an argument about it.

And what about, I guess news of back home while you were in Vietnam? What were you hearing about?

Well we heard the Buddy Abbott story when his parents kicked up a stink about him being killed,

- 04:30 which didn't do much for morale because we figured we'd lost a good friend, too. But the demonstrations, I didn't hear too much about them at the time. We did hear from time to time, rumours, things couldn't help but get through to us, you couldn't keep everything from us and I think that's where a lot of blokes, a lot of blokes would whinge up the boozers to each other about it,
- 05:00 "When I get home I'm going to butt stroke [hit with the butt of a gun] the first demonstrator I see," and all this sort of stuff. Which is, you know, and it didn't do much for morale. It really lowered morale, so those people were doing us more of an injustice than anything else. I understand why they were doing it now, I do, but at the time it didn't do much for troops' morale.

So would you talk about it amongst yourselves?

You mean as far as that was concerned?

Yeah?

Not much, other than, "We'll butt stroke

- 05:30 the first demonstrator we see," or bloody, but blokes weren't questioning it because you had a job to do and you were ordered to do it and you'd go out the very next day and do the same thing all over again without question, but I think doubt was creeping into our minds, but you would stay. I mean you could have got out. I mean all you had to do I suppose was punch an officer or bloody go AWOL
- 06:00 or turn chicken or do something to get out of it. I'd say a man could have got out of it, but I don't think anyone was game enough to try that because you don't want to be seen, you don't want to do that, it wasn't the done thing. Your mates, you don't want to leave them in the lurch. Actually, if you'd have ran out you would have felt like you've ran out, not so much running out on the system, but you're running out on your friends and that was a powerful thing. That kept you together. Mateship was what it was all about.
- 06:30 It is to this very day. It's what keeps us going. If we didn't have each other, I don't want to be the last Vietnam veteran alive. I don't mind being the second last, but I don't want to be the last. I can have no friends left but that's where the camaraderie comes into it. My father would have felt the same way with his mates if he would have openly spoke about it. There's the blokes who serve on a ship, in the navy, they're the same thing. Blokes that serve in the air force, in the squadrons,
- 07:00 same, same again. It's the camaraderie that they get, you can't buy it. You can't buy it, you've basically got to earn it and live it. I mean you can work in a firm, you can work at Woolworth's, there will always be people you work with but with all due respect to people who work at Woolworth's, it's not the same thing, it's not, it's not the same thing. It's a bond, like I said to you before,
- 07:30 I keep going back to that, it's a bond. It's an unwritten bond. It's not something we walk around, "Hey, how you going? Remember when?" And we all hug each other all the time, it's just there, it's something there.

And is it something that you're kind of aware of at the time or?

No, more of a...yes, you are, but you don't openly walk up and say, "Geez. I'm glad you're my mate." They'd say, "Yeah, well keep your hands by your sides

- 08:00 and your lips shut," but I know what you're getting at. No, it's not something we thought of at the time,

but yes, we did, but not openly. I might talk about it more than some do, I don't know. See you're going to get different things out of different blokes. Some blokes will open up to you more, some you're going to have to prompt. Some of them are going to shut down on you. You might even get one or two that will shut this down, so don't, I'm warning you now, maybe you will, maybe you won't, but be prepared for it,

- 08:30 because sometimes you might touch on an area that's pretty sensitive. I mean, you've touched in my areas too, but I've only let you get in so far, if you really think about it, haven't I? Yeah, I don't want you going in too deep. I'm trying to keep it together so I don't need to go too deep. I think you're getting the gist of what I need to tell you.

You're looking after yourself in that respect?

- 09:00 Protecting myself here, you mean? In some respects, yeah. I don't need to go into the details. I don't think my children or any generation needs to know the nitty-gritty or the gory details of it too much. I really don't. I think I spoke enough of it. People can imagine all they like, me talking about it in detail is not going to help. I think it's only going to broaden their imagination more than anything else, so I don't think there's any point in going too deep into it.
- 09:30 Some blokes might go into it pretty deep but I don't think a lot of blokes will because I don't, I think it's too sensitive an area for them. It's bad enough, I mean I had a psychologist's appointment today, believe it or not, but I put it off till next Friday because your mob said they want to do it today and I said, "Oh okay." Cause I see him once every now, I need to see him every now and then, and I do need to see him every now and then because I want to keep myself on track. I've
- 10:00 got to watch by myself, I do this personally because each has its own, each person has his own way of dealing with life and I've got to keep myself pretty stabilised, and I've got to really watch how I go and I've got to constantly monitor myself by seeing my psychologist. By seeing him. He says, "You're starting to go that way," and I pull it up and Kath will see him too and say, "Look, Terry's been a bit," like for instance the night before last, I couldn't sleep.
- 10:30 There are nights I go...I can't sleep. My mind is racing and I can't sleep. I have bad days. There are days when I get really, really down in the dumps and for no reason, no reason what so ever. There is no reason, nothings upset me or anything. That's why I've got the Bon trike [Triumph Bonneville trike]. I'll jump on that sometimes and just go for a run, just to get wind in me face, just to get my mind clear, but it's a constant thing. How
- 11:00 can I put it? I can't afford to fully relax. It's terrible to be constantly alert and that's half our problem, because the more constantly I stay alert I can make it worse. I do relax, but if I was to relax completely and have a good night's sleep, I wake up the next morning and I'm on top of the world. I think, "This is fantastic." Yet, people have it every day and take it for granted. And I envy them, I really do. You'll find most veterans don't sleep well.
- 11:30 Some stay up, I've got at least four or five mates I can name who stay up to two o'clock in the morning. I sometimes make a joke of it. Since we've moved here and we're at Nanango on five acres, I say to Kath, "I'm going to go out and check the perimeter." And I walk around the fence, it makes me, I'm not really checking the perimeter. It makes me better to get out and just walk around the yard. Look at the same mango tree I looked at yesterday.
- 12:00 Take life as it is, just...I'm trying to live a bit better and not just for me, it's for my children because they would have gone, the years that I wasn't travelling really great, they obviously went through some hells, some dramas with me, the way I was carrying on. Keeping them at a distance, not letting them in, type of thing and that sort of thing and a lot of veterans do that, still won't. They keep their families at a distance. Some blokes won't talk in front of their wives at all, won't open up
- 12:30 to their wives. I tell Kath, Kath's pretty naïve to this sort of stuff, she doesn't know too much. My ex-wife she knows a bit but even then I kept her at a distance for twenty-five years, and it's part the reason our marriage failed. It wasn't her fault, it wasn't my fault, it's just the way it is. There's no good being bitter about it, you've just got to move on, and she comes over tomorrow, we'll have lunch. Her and Kath get along famously.
- 13:00 I sort of suck my breath in a bit, and a bit worried about whether it's going to go well, but no. Generally, I travel, off and on, it's like a roller coaster. You've got me on a good day.

I'm glad.

I'm warning you now, you might not necessarily get every veteran on a good day. And you would have encountered that already surely? And if you haven't, you will. You ask all your counterparts that have already done interviews, I bet they had occasions where they had a rough time of it.

- 13:30 I wouldn't say he sat here with an Armalite at his hip, but a cocked magazine on it but...

No, actually we've had a tough couple of days.

And you'll have them again. What you've got to do is don't make excuses for him. You're better off just getting the hell out of it and letting them alone. Like the guy that cancelled today. Why he cancelled, I don't know, I really don't want to know. He cancelled for his own reasons and you've really got to respect that. He might have got too much for him. I wasn't thinking of cancelling you but

14:00 I was conscience of you coming and I was a little apprehensive at first, so...

That's fair enough.

No, that's the way it is.

Can I ask you, and what?

What I'm getting at, and I don't mean to interrupt, I don't. I listen to what my psychologist says sometimes and I mean, basically, what they say is when we come home from Vietnam, we basically put up a wall, an imaginary wall,

14:30 and we don't let anybody past that wall, so we don't let anybody past that wall, so we keep everybody at a distance, everybody, the family unfortunately as well, friends, and we all changed. You and Heather [Interviewer] unfortunately, you are sort of on the wall. You're not inside the wall, you're not outside the wall, you're there and it's nothing personal, we just don't want to let you get too close. And that's and I'm only going by what my psychologist told me and I've come to grips with an understanding that was exactly the way we were treating people and that was why a lot of veterans,

15:00 not just me, all veterans from all wars, have put that wall up and kept their family at a distance. They don't want to bring their family into this zone because they don't want to burden these people with this stuff as well. That's the way we feel. It's a protective thing as well as for you, as well as for us.

So it's a sense of just not wanting to share what

15:30 **you went through, or not being able to?**

Sometimes you can't, and sometimes you don't want to...depends, it's not a case. Like I said, I can talk to you nitty gritty for the next six hours and it's not going to make much difference to you. You might try to understand, you might think you understand, but you won't. That's not your fault, that's the fault. It's the same as talking to a copper. Coppers go the same thing that veterans go through, ambulance people go through the

16:00 same thing, firies [fire fighters], all go through this withdrawal. They've only worked out in the last ten years or so that policemen are very stressed. You imagine going to a car accident where there's a baby dead or a person lost their head and look at the ambulance guy. Look at some of the things he's got to do everyday. Go to an accident and pull people out of burning cars or wrecked cars or something like that or motorcycle accidents. And look at the firies. I've got a mate who's a Vietnam veteran. He's a fire up in Townsville. Why he doesn't chuck it in has got me bugged because he's seen a lot more as a fire now

16:30 since he ever saw in Vietnam. He's had twenty odd years of being a fire and he's a basket case [mess]. I was talking to him and I said, "Jamie," Jamie Ploughman, the same guy, I said, "Jamie, you want to pull the pin." His wife, him and his wife sleep in separate rooms, his whole life is a mess. He's earning good money but what the hell? That's what I'm saying, so I'm not just sticking up for Veterans today, anybody in that field.

17:00 That might get me in good with coppers, show that one will you. Get a reprieve, show that to the police force. Coppers are top blokes.

Can you tell us about coming home then?

Well I came home on a casevac flight. That was an adventure in itself. On a bloody Herc mind you. Wounded men and they send them home on a bloody, they fly the good guys in and they fly the wounded guys out on a Herc and noisy. Have you ever been on a Hercules?

No.

What a noisy, mongrel bloody,

17:30 have you flown on a Fokker Friendship or a DC3? It's bloody woeful. You put wounded men through torture sending them home and we flew home on that and we landed at, I didn't know what it was, Butterworth at the time, and we had two days there and I still reckon to this day the pilot fainted the motor problem. We didn't have a motor problem and the next thing we're staying there and they took us across to Penang. Penang's on the other side of Butterworth there and we went across on this ferry

18:00 and the nurse took us across, a Pommy, a Pommy hospital and this Pommy nurse took us over, and one guy was in a wheelchair. I don't know who he was or anything and I had me arm in plaster and this guy I was drinking with had his leg in plaster. When I say drinking with, we weren't supposed to be, but that's another story as it goes on. Anyway this guy in the wheelchair he deserves a Victoria Cross cause he sacrificed himself, you might say. He took the nurse on fake, buying of a souvenir, and as soon as her back was turned we're all pissed off.

18:30 All over the island. And we're in this bloody bar and these Pommy Red Caps [Military Police] come in with their little peaked little caps and big red caps on the top of their noses and it wouldn't shield their eyebrows, let alone their nose, and they walked in, big blokes they were, and they said in their Pommy accents, they said, "You blokes off this casevac from Vietnam?" and my mates on his crutches and I had

my arm in plaster and we went, "No." "I think you'd better come with us." And wasn't she livid, oh God she was livid, and

- 19:00 me mate says, "What are they going to do? What are they going to do? Are they going to charge us, what? What are you going to do? Are you going to shoot us?" Anyway we ended getting on the Herc the next day. They took our uniforms off us and put us in pyjamas then so we couldn't get away. I feel sorry for the next casevac flight that came through, cause they would have been chained to their beds, the poor buggers, and then we landed in Sydney. Pretty un-ceremonial,
- 19:30 not that I can remember because I was still on drugs of some sort. I remember one poor guy coming home, I found out about him later, he was a ex-RAAF I think, RAAF, air force, and he had a brain tumour and all the way home in this Herc. He had an American doctor and a nurse with him, I don't know what it was all about, but he was screaming, screaming. I said to the bloody bloke at one stage, "for Christ's sake can you give him something, give him something. He's driving me nuts." The poor
- 20:00 bugger was dying. I heard he died later on about eighteen months later at 1 Mil, poor bugger. I felt guilty about saying that at the time, but if just to shut him up because there were wounded men all over the aircraft and this guy's just screaming. He was in pain and they were giving him morphine or whatever they were giving him to shut the rowing. Poor bugger. I don't know his name, never did. Then we landed in Sydney and then I said come to
- 20:30 1 Mil and I did some therapeutic leave there. Oh, they give me leave after about three or four weeks. They can't do much with me. They had me doing runner duties between the orderly room and wherever, "Take this here, take this here," and there weren't no phone systems like they have now. Yeah, "Take this here." I remember when me trunk come home. You remember that movie The Odd Angry Shot? There's part of that in there where the guy, Graeme Kennedy or whoever it was, threatened to punch the guy behind the counter,
- 21:00 the pogo [person not involved in contact]. We called them pogos, with all due respect to pogos, to the other corps, and he threatened to punch this guy because he was a clerk. He don't know what a fighting man does and all this sort of stuff, and my trunk came home and it had been opened. And in it was radio, or it was a radio for me mate, I was bringing home for his parents, liquor, speaking tapes, films, photos. I've only got about ten photos all up now and all of it was gone and there was barely anything in the trunk,
- 21:30 and this guy was a lance corporal from Ordnance Corps (tape blurs) and I said, "Where is the rest of me stuff?" and I remember him saying, "I don't know, maybe Customs took it," and I was going to jump the counter and thump him with me good left arm. It wasn't his fault poor bugger. I was so wild and then I heard later on a lot of wharfies and a lot of people were going through the trunks when they were coming home. Bloody lovely hey?
- 22:00 Imagine what they did to a dead guy's stuff? Probably took the lot, and that was what was happening apparently. I've spoken to a few blokes and apparently thievery was rife through the wharves, trunks coming home, blokes just rummaging through them, grabbing souvenirs. Bloody mongrels. I lost everything. I had to write to me mate and explain his radio was gone. I felt bad about that. Liquor, tapes, I would have liked to have had them to this day. Imagine what you could get from the speaking tapes? And you'd be speaking through a tape, the old tape recorder with the little
- 22:30 reel to reel, and you're talking through a tape and then someone would fire a machine gun into a weapons pit, like testing it, and you'd have that and you'd have a chopper flying over. I mean you can imagine all that now? It would be a fantastic tape to have now.

You were actually recording all this when you were there?

Yeah.

Oh, wow.

You'd be recording, speaking, like, "Dear Mum," sending a tape home to Mum. Remember the little tiny reels and you talk onto there and tape, battery-operated and then you'd talk onto there and a chopper would come over or

- 23:00 someone would fire a machine gun into a pit or someone would go, "Hippo, boozer's open," or something like that and this was all, and you'd say, "I'm trying to talk here you know." Now when you think about all those sounds, background sounds would be fantastic, yeah, and someone stole them. Someone around Australia has got photos of me in Vietnam for some reason, bugger him. Probably threw them away. They're bastards, hey? And this poor lance corporal wore the brunt of my anger unfortunately. It wasn't his fault, but I wasn't too impressed and that's what The Odd Angry Shot reminds me.
- 23:30 I'm going to punch him too, good left arm. And a demonstrator, I went into Queen's Park, Queen's Park in the city there where they form up for Anzac Day, I went in there one day and there was a demonstrator up on this stage and I had me arm in plaster. And me mate held me back, I said, "I'm going to punch the bastard." Looking at it now, he's entitled, he was entitled. He was just, he was more right than I was. He was demonstrating against the war and it was his democratic right and that's what we're supposed

- 24:00 to be fighting for and he was well within his rights to demonstrate. But at the time I was losing friends and I was not impressed. Like I said the main things most blokes have arguments with is not so much attacking, we didn't mind them attacking the government but when they were attacking us as, well, and it wasn't our fault. And this is where the still water still runs deep because I mean, by all means demonstrate, wreck the government, have them on, I'd like to have them on. Look at [Born on] the Fourth of July, Tom Cruise actually
- 24:30 gets in his wheelchair and demonstrates. I presume that would have happened, veterans actually demonstrating against the government, good, but leave the troops alone. It wasn't the troops' fault, so when these guys went to Iraq, actually I actually sent a letter into the local newspaper here saying when these guys come home treat them with respect, treat them with a bit of dignity. They're doing a job. They might not like their job but they're doing their
- 25:00 job. It's a pity people didn't think of that at the time. The wharfies for instance, they refused to load the Jeparit. The Jeparit was our supply ship, they refused to load it so what did the navy do? They commissioned the Jeparit and loaded it themselves, good. Hawke, look at Hawke, Bob Hawke, he was in charge of the ACTU [Australian Council of Trade Unions]. He was refusing to send ammunition. He was in charge of all that bullshit. He was the one organising all these bloody black bans on getting supplies to Vietnam
- 25:30 for us, so who, and when we did the welcoming home parade, who's on the dais? Prime Minister Bob Hawke, what a joke. A lot of blokes went like that (demonstrates). A lot of blokes went like that. I wouldn't look at the dais. As soon as someone said it was Bob Hawke, you're supposed to keep your eyes right to the dais, I never gave 'eyes right'. He could get stuffed and a lot of blokes didn't forget.

You wouldn't, would you?

No. Not that sort of thing.

- 26:00 Jim Cairns was another one, another politician. He was going to send Red Cross parcels to Hanoi. Look I understand his logic but what does that do to troops moral. That was really sticking the boot in, Red Cross parcels to Hanoi. Look at Jane Fonda? You know that business with her with sitting on the gun in Hanoi, well she actually sat on a North Vietnamese artillery piece in North Vietnam to demonstrate against the American involvement in Vietnam. The
- 26:30 troops to this very day, American servicemen, ex-servicemen, hate her guts. Her career, film career, went straight down after that. She actually, I got something through the Internet the other day, a picture of Jane Fonda sitting on the gun, "Circulate this around again," and they're into her still. She must be bloody crawling over, she must be really rueing the day she did that. Actually there was a story I read on her not long ago, where she went to a prisoner of war camp
- 27:00 in North Vietnam and one of the men gave her a list of names of all the men that were in the prisoner of war camp, smuggled it to her. She turned it over to the commandant. Apparently two men died, they beat, they whipped them, they beat them to death over it and they had one of these American servicemen on TV not long ago still talking about that and they haven't forgotten. And they still circulate, this thing come the other day circulating about Jane Fonda. I've passed it on, bugger her, what a bitch.
- 27:30 Like I said demonstrating was great but it really got out of hand, didn't it? You're attacking the wrong people. If you want to attack the government, burn down Parliament House, I'll help you. I always reckoned I'd be another Guy Fawkes, except they'd only build another bastard, wouldn't they? No point burning it down, only cost you another forty billion to built another one.

Did you experience any of the personal stuff?

No, nothing personal, no I didn't, no. Other guys you'll meet probably will, yeah. Other guys maybe but not me.

- 28:00 I stayed in the army after I came home see, so I managed to fit back into the system a bit better than Nashos would, just discharged in the middle of the night, given their pay. I mean some blokes were patrolling in Vietnam, form what I heard, say on a Friday and on Monday morning, they're discharged, gone. Flown home, dropped at the Sydney Airport, "There's your money, see you later, thank you very much." No wind down, just, "See you later," and that's what
- 28:30 destroyed a lot of them. I mean to go from that type of environment, straight back to your farm or straight back to your business, it would have been a big empty hole, wouldn't it?

Shockers.

I mean what are you going to do the next day? "Hang on, for forty-eight hours I was patrolling in the jungles and here I am, what do I do?" You wouldn't know what to do, would you? You'd be lost, luckily I wasn't one of them. I just fitted back in. No, I never got the personal abuse.

- 29:00 I wouldn't have wanted to either. Even to this very day when we heard the business, there was talk about demonstrators going to Anzac Day parade this year, I know for a fact there were quite a few blokes ready to break ranks. They would have gone through those demonstrators like a hot knife through butter and the coppers wouldn't have been able to stop them, I tell you now. They were ready.

That's how strong our blokes still feel about it. They see those demonstrators come up again, by all means attack the government, they're not arguing that part. Our own blokes are attacking the government but if ever we see that business going on again I can

29:30 tell you right now, I know a lot of those Vietnam veterans will break ranks and go through those demonstrators. Still pay back time yet. I'm sorry, that's the way it is. That's the way the veterans feel.

That's fair enough really.

Oh well, don't let it eat you but it's not forgotten. Anybody out there who did that sort of thing, actually there was talk the other day that they're, the demonstrators they have today are being trained by the ones who were demonstrators then.

30:00 Carry on, but at least they're attacking the right people this time. They're attacking the government, by all means attack the government. Whether it be right or wrong, attack them anyway, but leave the troops alone.

You mentioned news of that stuff getting to the battle lines kind of lowered morale?

Well didn't lower morale to the effect that it effected our performance.

Right.

It didn't effect our performance at all but it wasn't good. Blokes started feeling homesick, started getting homesick and

30:30 thinking, "This is not right," and that sort of thing. National servicemen particularly, I suppose, though I wouldn't know. Though in the bush you wouldn't know a Nasho from a Reg anyway. You don't wear Nasho on your forehead, I'm a Reg, I'm a Nasho, but no, it wasn't too well received, especially when they started attacking us personally, that's when it really lowered morale. We were being attacked. We couldn't understand. We couldn't understand why we were being attacked.

31:00 We were just doing what we were being told for heavens sake, but the Australian public didn't see it that way, see? The RSL [Returned & Services League] is the same. A lot of Vietnam veterans do not join the RSL. The RSL was behind a lot of that too and that was a well known fact. They didn't openly come out but they didn't support us either.

When did you first experience that stuff?

Well it took me nearly fifteen years to march first. I know some guys who still won't march.

31:30 It took me fifteen years to go in an Anzac Day Parade and one day I just got the shits and said, "Bugger you, I'm marching, whether you like it or not" Up here for the Redside March and I marched every year since. I marched with my daughter last year. I hoped my old man would have been alive because I was going to march with him and my daughter and myself together, the three generations. It would have been great but he didn't make it unfortunately, so I marched with my daughter at Caboolture, in respect of him. I marched with his, my nephew marched with his medals

32:00 and I marched with mine and my daughter marched beside me, so it was great, so one good thing come out of it. No, I never experienced it personally so.

Were you expecting to go back to Vietnam?

Not really, but I nearly went back, only because as I said I got out of hospital. I got out of hospital and I got sent to a battalion, 2 RAR, which was at Enoggera, because that's where the hospital was, in Brisbane, and they were moved to Townsville and they were preparing to go to Vietnam for their second

32:30 tour and I was going back with them and then when 1 RAR came home from Vietnam they were going to Malaya and Singapore. We all knew we were next to go there. It was a two year posting, like a really cream posting, and anybody who was ex-1 RAR had preference over going back to the battalion and I put my application in and six weeks later I was going back to the battalion and met up with a few blokes. That's when I lost a lot of blokes because a lot were National Servicemen who came home and got discharged and

33:00 weren't in the battalion when I re-joined it, so I missed them. Not missed them personally but I missed seeing them again, so I haven't seen them since, a lot of them. I've seen a lot of them at reunions and a lot of the Regs, Jamie was still with the battalion and Tony was still with the battalion and a lot of other mates were still with the battalion. Some Nashos signed on to go to Malaya, signed on for an extra two years to get

33:30 their posting. I nearly went back there then and when 1RAR came home from Singapore, Vietnam was still going and I put in for a transfer to Brisbane to build a house for my wife, at the time, because 1RAR was going back for it's third tour and I thought, "Shit, here we go again." So I thought, "I'd better put her in a house because if anything happens to me, at least I've left her with something."

34:00 So then Whitlam, then I did a corps transfer to Service Corps then. I got out of infantry all together. Not because of Vietnam, just because it happened at the time and then they, Whitlam got in and pulled us out, so it all died. So I could have gone back more than once. I don't know why they were so

determined to get me back. I don't think I helped in the war effort much, anyway.

Can you tell us about

34:30 **I guess you experiences in Malaya?**

Oh, Malaya was pretty low-key mate, it was just peace-time posting. You had your wife, your children, if you had children, or you had children over there. It was a two-year posting, it was a good posting, it was a bludge, an absolute bludge. We did exercises with the Pommies and the Ghurkhas and the Malays and the Singaporeans and basically it was a two year piss-up, it was really great, it really was. I had a ball. I could have stayed there. They could have left me there forever.

35:00 It was great. The money was good.

Can you give us I guess a kind of a picture of I guess an average day?

Well I was a driver then, just doing driving duties. Compared to Vietnam, Malaya and Singapore was pretty mundane. It was like being at home. You go out, you go to the supermarkets, you go to the, you go out, you go gallivanting around Singapore or Malaya. We were in Malaya for six months and then I was attached to the pommy army for six months. That was

35:30 a good time too, and I did nothing but just drive around. I mean, I drove officers around and just general duties. It was pretty easy work, a bit of a bludge. I loved it.

And you come home to your wife every night?

Yeah, you come home every night, yeah. It was like being at home, yeah I loved it. A two-year posting, yeah. Actually we were stationed at Samarang where the troops were made to do their surrender during the Second World War. We were actually stationed at Samarang where the Japanese made their prisoners sign that

36:00 'no escape' thing, that sort of thing. We were actually there, actually stationed at those barracks, so that was a bit of history.

Yeah, what was that like?

Oh, it was all right. It was very tropical, you've got to remember you're on the Tropic of...you're almost on the equator there, so it was bloody hot, bloody hot. It was a two-year posting and it was a bludge, an absolute bludge and they give me a medal for it. Cause you're overseas on an overseas posting and you were there under what they called the SEATO Treaty

36:30 [South East Asian Treaty Organisation], and because you were there it was stemmed on from the Malaya Borneo confrontation see and in fact there's still a company that goes to Butterworth now and guards Butterworth Air Force Base and they actually gave me the AASM, the Australian Army Service Medal, the Australian Active Service, no it's not, sorry, the Australian Service Medal. The Australian Active Service Medal was for Vietnam, so they give me a medal for it.

37:00 What a joke. I took it too I might add. Bigger them. I'd take the VD and scar if I figured I could get it. That's an old one, I say, VD and scar. "Yeah, how many medals you got?" "I've got the VD and scar." "Is that a medal?"

Of a kind.

Of a kind, yeah.

I just want, it's a bit difficult, but almost maybe an obvious question, but I'd like to hear what you say, is

37:30 **just of that time in Vietnam, I guess, what is it that I guess solidifies in you such a really strong feeling I guess towards other mates and the experience itself that has actually had such a?**

I'd say you've hit the nail right on the head. I'd say the reason for such camaraderie for want of a better word

38:00 is there, because of that. If you were to ask a Second World War bloke, or a Korean bloke or a Malaya bloke or even an Afghan bloke or an Iraqi bloke, they're going to tell you the same thing. It's a bond that you get by going through something either for want of a better word, unusual, dramatic or something that the average guy in the street does never do. With me? I mean you can be in a taxi company and know all your taxi mates, but you're not really going through a unique, for want of a better word, I don't like using these words because I don't want to glorify it, but

38:30 it's a unique experience you're going through and you all got through it together, whether it be army, navy, air force, you're actually all experiencing this thing together. Like all the men on one ship get together and have a reunion, the HMAS Parramatta or the Perth, all get together and have a reunion. It's something that just develops, or something you can just pick up tomorrow and say, "I've got camaraderie with him." You might be mates with him. I'm not saying

39:00 I'm mates with every Vietnam veteran, don't get me wrong, but we have a bond together. Whether you hate my guts or not, you can't help it, we're of one blend, and that's the best I can answer your question I'm afraid.

We'll just pause there.

Tape 8

00:31 **Chris just bought up an interesting aspect of the war, Hippo, about the black market, can you tell us about that?**

Oh, I don't know a lot, I don't know a lot. All I know is we used to get a little card, a PX card, and on it they'd punch holes and it had like liquor, cigarettes, and every time you got something they'd punch a hole in it. Well, there was so much free cigarettes coming in with supplement packs and so many guys were putting free beer over the counter, you never used your quota,

01:00 and I know for a fact we used to have a driver go down to Baria where we used to get our laundry done and he would go down and he would come around and get all your PX cards off you and pay you five bucks or ten bucks a card for the card and then he'd go off. I don't know how it all worked but all I know was, he'd go down and he would collect all this stuff from the Yankee PX,

01:30 obviously it wasn't kosher but it was done. This Yankee bloke would probably give him all the stuff and say it's all for the troops back there or even, and then that stuff would find it's way to, I don't know how it worked. It must have been the Americans that paid the money, or even our own blokes because I remember going down to Vung Tao and I walked up to a guy selling cigarettes and I was out of smokes and I said, "How much for a packet of smokes?" and he said, "Five bucks." I said, "What?" I said, "I can get a carton for a dollar twenty." And that's the way it worked, worked on supply and demand

02:00 I'd say. It was like a pyramid system. I don't know who ended up making the money. Anyway, I was only there five months and I made about six hundred bucks out of my money, so you can imagine how much money was being made. They paid me five bucks for my card. How much the driver sold it for, I don't know, and it went on and on all up the road, all up the chain. Just after I came home I remember reading in the paper about a major and

02:30 a lot of his troops, or a lot of people under him, were caught selling drugs actually, selling medical supplies. It disappeared from the papers real quick. I'd say that thing would, especially him being an officer. I never knew what happened to them. I'd say he'd be court martialled or something like that but I don't know. They were actually selling drugs and I reckon that was pretty rude, pretty rude, but selling our smokes and drugs, smokes and grog that was all right.

Did many of the guys that you were with

03:00 **have drinking problems after the war?**

Yeah, you'll find a lot of blokes, you'll find a lot of veterans as you go on, that you might encounter that will drink as you're interviewing him and be pissed by the time you're finished. I'm not saying that will happen but it could, and you'll often find someone who'll want a break and they'll want to have a beer. Your interviews might spur that on but then again he might say, "It's beer o'clock, it's time to knock off. I'm having a beer." And that's when I'd say you'd have to work out if you wanted to continue

03:30 interviewing or not. I'm not saying this will happen, I'm just trying to prepare you for what may come.

Do you think...people?

A lot of blokes have a drinking problem, yes, because you've had nothing to do but drink and smoke over there. That's all you know. A lot of blokes, I've got a mate now that he comes and stays, I've almost got to put a lock on the fridge. I don't mind him drinking, but he'll drink until there's nothing left and his wife is not doing real flash at the present moment. He's coming down the club on Monday night for Vietnam Veterans Day,

04:00 but she's not coming down with him. He'll come home Tuesday and that sort of thing, but he drinks like. A lot of blokes have drinking problems. I don't, I used to drink a lot when I was there. I'm not like a few others but I don't drink heavily, I don't drink heavily at all. A carton of beer can last me anything up to two weeks or two months, depending on what's going on. More like two months. You ask Kath, I hardly drink at all, which is good.

04:30 **You must have a lot of willpower as a person to overcome a) you've been in the war and you're a survivor, you're a survivor and b) also you've survived the whole alcoholic thing which a lot of vets?**

Well, I survived the smoking side of it. I walked away from the smoking with willpower. I woke up one day coughing and spluttering and I gave it up. I just walked away. I've had two cigarettes since. I think one was about twelve months later and one was about eighteen months later and never, ever...I tried a pipe for a while, I tried cigars for a while. Oh no, I walked

05:00 away and I don't regret it. And in fact I hate smoke and I'm trying to get my son, I'm trying to get my younger daughter to quit. I'm more worried about cancer than anything else, lungs or whatever, or breast cancer or something like that, but you can't convince them. I try, I nag at them. I shouldn't but I do. Father's are entitled to nag. And the drinking side of it, don't get me wrong, if I went to a reunion, like on Monday I'm, I'll be going down the bike club. I'll be

05:30 drinking down there. Kath's not coming. I'm setting up tent down there and I'll drink. Over the period of the day, over the period of a day mind you, I'll put away about a dozen stubbies at the most and around about half past nine of a night, I'm lucky enough that I've got a built in system that I start feeling I'm going to be sick and as soon as I feel that, I stop. Cause I've been sick before, and I tell you what, when you bring the inside of your stomach lining up, it's no fun at all. So I don't,

06:00 I do know when to pull up and I don't worry about the peer pressure side. I don't worry what people say. Up their bums.

Which brings me to another point, I think it must be fairly courageous to make the effort to go and see a psychologist, how did you decide to do that?

Oh well, a broken marriage helped me along a bit. Basically we had too. I'd been going through a lot of things. I went through suicidal tendencies,

06:30 I went through depression. I ended up in Ward 14, the psychiatric ward, a couple of times. I used to think that was demeaning but I think if I wouldn't have gone there, I don't think I would have pulled through. A lot of the blokes are just coming out of the woodwork. There's still blokes coming out of the woodwork now, going through what I went through. I'm meeting veterans now that was me three years ago, or two years ago and I'm saying, "This bloke is (unclear), he's got problems." And I have

07:00 got problems still. I still have my down days. I go to the gym. Veterans' Affairs have come to the party a bit. They've started a Heart Safe Programme, a gym program, which is not going to get us back on the mend. Don't get me wrong, it never will, but it revitalises you a bit and it gives you time to burn off that excess energy that, I still have me bad days, don't get me wrong, I still have me bad times but I've learnt to cope a lot better because of this gym. I

07:30 went to the gym this morning. When you said you were coming at half past eight, I went a little earlier so as I'd be home and showered on time. Once upon a time that would have been too much pressure for me but I don't know, what the hell, I'm going.

How did you get a good psychologist? Did you try a few out before you found one?

Yeah, I tried, I won't mention any names. I mentioned the person, one person and it was a she, and she was a nice lady, don't get me wrong, but I kept seeing her and a one stage she said to me, "Look, I think I've gone as far as I can with you Terry."

08:00 And that sort of took the wind out me sails a bit and I thought, "Hang on, I'm still looking for help here." I didn't, when I say I, maybe we, I don't know even half the time what I was looking for. I was looking for help. I mean I can't say, "I need help here with me maths, I need maths here with my English." I can't put a finger on what I'm looking for. That's what your job is. Your job is to tell me what I need to do.

08:30 We're looking for help here, I've put me hand up. So like you said it is very hard to put your hand up. I know a lot of veterans, like there's a lifestyle programme that Veterans' Affairs puts on for us. We go up five days in a four star resort with all your meals paid, with your wife. You've got to go through some classes, PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] things and anger management and how you treat your wife and relationship courses, and this is all in this week. And some of it is pretty heavy, pretty heavy,

09:00 and a lot of blokes, I said to one guy the other day about going and he said, "I'm not going, I'm not going to that." I opened a can of worms there, but a lot of the wives are suffering with the veterans and I went with Kath and I went to a PTSD course at Greenslopes, I went to a men's group at the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service and I kept going and going and going. And it takes, probably because I'm a bit thick-skulled at times, but they reckon if you

09:30 can swallow ten percent of each time you go, ten percent of what they tell you, and eventually it sunk in. And I went to this psychologist bloke not long ago, I said to him, "Gee Brian," Brian O'Hanollan. He's been working with vets for twenty years, gee he's a nice bloke. We were thinking of inviting him and his wife here one night, after he's finished his session at Caloundra and stay the night. That's how nice I think of him, and I said to him one day, "Gee Brian, this gym program I'm going on, gee I feel a bit more stabilised with it,

10:00 I feel a bit better. I have my bad days but I don't have as much anger as I used too." In other words, like I said to you before, I can't afford to relax mind you. I reckon if I give up the gym I'd be straight back in square one again, and he almost got his head and went "bang, bang, bang" against the wall. And he said, "I've been trying to tell you bastards this for years, God almighty, you're telling me what a good program it is?" And I laughed and I tried getting other guys onto it,

10:30 not so much for the, you'll never cure the PTSD problem, that's going to be with us to the day we die I think, I've grown used to that but it's learning to live with that and also it's, a lot of blokes are piling the weight on and they're going to have heart attacks and blood pressure problems. It's all very well being

retired and the government looking after us in that respect, but money is not going to keep us alive and I keep trying to tell blokes this.

11:00 But I'm the type of bloke it's very hard to, I have a tendency to preach a bit, the same as I do with me children, but I have learnt also when to back off. I've told Jamie about shutting down, I said, "Jamie you're going to be a basket case if you don't, why don't you approach the government and see if they can give you some help?" "No, stick it up their arse, I don't want it." I've tried twice, I give up now. I won't try any more. I will one day ring him and say, "How are things going?" In fact I might even ring him today

11:30 and see how he's going, know I've thought of him because it concerns me.

Do you think it's the PTSD that's responsible for a lot of the marriages breaking up?

I think that war has got a lot to answer for, let's put it that way, but I'm not blaming anybody in particular. All wars, I don't think what we're going through is anything unique. I think my mother probably went through a hard time. My father had his down days which I never saw. My grandfather would have been the same.

12:00 All soldiers, airmen or services, sorry, servicemen's wives are suffering and a lot of the wives don't understand, and the reason they don't understand is the husband hasn't opened up. See, men don't open up because it's not kosher, too much testosterone flowing through our bones, you can't do this. We can't weaken, we can't do this sort of stuff. I've got no shame on me. Once upon a time I went into Ward 14 and I thought I was,

12:30 I thought, "This is not right, I'm going nuts, I'm crazy, I'm going crazy, I'm going to be in the loony bin soon," and I got in there and there was two or three other dozen veterans in there and I thought, "I'm not alone here," and after a while I started to realise that it wasn't anything uncommon, it was something that had been going on since the Battle of Waterloo. It's only now that they're starting to treat it and so they should. And it's the same, they're

13:00 going to have trouble with the Iraqi boys and the Afghani fellows and the Timor veterans and so on and so on.

Are you able to talk with your children about what you went through?

Well they don't really ask. No, I think they're, I think I'd better start talking to them a lot more if they're interested. Anzac Day was a good time to talk to my daughter, but I tend to talk about the funny stuff, even when I'm talking to them anyway. I don't think my children really need to know the

13:30 deep, dark parts of it, I really don't see, same as telling you, I really don't see the point of going too deep into it because one thing I didn't see all that much compared to some, and I saw a bit more than others, depending what level you look at it. I don't think they need to know the nitty gritty and this is probably why when you get older and older, you get the old blokes and they get there and they start talking then and they get a bit teary-eyed and the

14:00 emotions come back, as they do with me from time to time. I don't know. I can talk to them a lot more now than I could if that's a short answer to your question, yeah, I can talk to them a lot more now, whether they'll understand. My daughter understands a little bit more now, coming back from Timor, only in the respect of what's it like to go to a foreign country with the army and be in a role, a military role. She wasn't that rapt in it when she was over there.

14:30 She said, "I'm glad I did it, but I'm glad I'm bloody home. I don't want to do any more of that." So she's had her time at it, so she's learnt something from it. She's a know-it-all but I don't want my kids ever going through what I went through. If you're going to have a little war, from now on until time immemorial, so be it, let it be so. It's a lot better than a full scale, men get killed, I know that and I'm sorry it happens. It's a terrible thing to

15:00 say but you've got to have little stoushes as we call them, to keep your troops reasonably experienced. We haven't had a decent war since Vietnam, which is good, but you've got to have your little ones to keep the boys on their toes, keep them trained. You've got to have trained troops. No good having an army if it's not trained, I'm sorry to say. I know it's a terrible thing. It's like having a police force without crime. No good having a copper without crime.

When you met your first wife were you able

15:30 **to pinpoint some of the relationship problems you might have? That all just came out afterwards?**

No, most, I kid you not, when I finally couldn't work any longer and I had to pull the pin all the scenarios I was going through, like working from six o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night, full bore, I did everything at full pace. Everything I did, I pushed me kids away, I kept everybody at a distance, drank heavily, partied, it was all

16:00 because of, you were working, a lot of blokes were still working, I met a veteran the other day who's still working full time and I was talking to him about it and I said, "I've retired, I had to pull the pin,"

and I went through all the stuff I suffered, the flashbacks, the suicidal tendencies, the drinking a lot, working flat out, burning myself out each day and he said, "I'm doing all that now." So he's going through what I've been through and he hasn't come to grips yet with what's going on. I finally come to grips with it, with a lot of

16:30 help and finally realised that I really don't belong, I've got to get out of the workforce before I collapse from sheer exhaustion or burn myself right out, so he hasn't learnt that yet. And he's got to come out of the woodwork and his wife is probably suffering. I mean, the years, when I hit the wall as they say, my children, my daughter said something to my ex-wife one day, they went to the counselling service in at town there and

17:00 my daughter said, "Now we know what's been wrong with Dad," and they didn't understand and neither did I. Cause you don't know these things and then they said, "That's why Dad's been like that, Dad's been very strict and done this and done this and done that." So it was because I'd obviously had a problem, but I didn't know I had. And now I know I've got it, it's a case of living with it. It will never go away. Kath has said since I've settled down in the last eighteen months.

17:30 We have our bad days but I've settled down and my ex-wife said, "You've changed a bit, you've calmed down." I can talk, because when my daughter got pregnant I got pretty rotable, I was rotable. Well she's seventeen and unmarried, right, and I was pretty rotable and the other kid here, I've obviously calmed down. He's a cute little kid and I really shouldn't take it out on him. I don't like...his father's back in England, thank Christ,

18:00 and I reckon he's a bum. In fact I went looking for him one day. I wanted to have a man-to-man talk with him. Yeah right. If you believe that, I'll tell you another one. He went back to England, not because of that but at least I put twelve thousand miles between me and him. But the grandson, he's a cute little kid so I really shouldn't take it out on him.

You're a good dad.

Not really, but I've come to grips with it.

But she knows you're there for her?

I will be now, yeah,

18:30 I'm almost frightened of bringing her over here. We've got a good granny flat here, and I don't want her moving in, no, no, no. We didn't buy this big house for them to move in. We bought it for space. She can come over and stay for all means. We've got to go over on Tuesday and baby sit while she goes for her driver's licence. I mean I could do it on me own. I'm over that way Tuesday morning, but I'm getting Kath to come all the way over because I don't think I could handle him on me own, especially if he gets a shitty nappy or something.

I've just got something to ask you about the Cross before,

19:00 **ages and ages ago, you said something about the underground in the Cross?**

Well, I only heard about that later because I didn't know it was happening at the time because what did I know. I only know I was drinking and womanising and that sort of thing, but I got told that later on, as years went on I got told about the underworld was there and we were all indirectly protected. I didn't know that at the time. I've only told you now because I've just found out myself.

Kind of like the mafia?

Yeah, in a way. That's where all the drugs were going through, see, and they looked after the soldiers because we spent a lot of money there.

19:30 Cause if a soldier got beaten up the CO would put that place out of bounds to his unit, whole unit. They did it in Changi one day, and businesses were going broke, so I'd say that was basically why the underworld protected us. I'm not saying the soldiers weren't knifed or bashed or attacked or anything. We were pretty well left alone, but then we travelled in groups. Whether or not they left us alone because we travelled in groups, we didn't travel in groups for that reason,

20:00 we travelled in groups because we were drinking together. But I heard that later on, I heard the underworld were basically protecting us. Not so much openly protecting us, but word got out, "Leave the boys alone or we'll deal with you." That's what I heard.

Do you think there are any good movies that accurately reflect Vietnam?

Like I said Forrest Gump started it, the "zip, zip" part of it, Saving Private Ryan got pretty close to

20:30 what really happens. Thin Red Line, which they filmed up in North Queensland, pretty realistic. Showed the Japanese, which I was surprised at, showed the Japanese side of it as well, the horrors. They were obviously devastated the same as the Yanks were. You could see them in that movie, if you saw the movie, how horrific their eyes were and that sort of thing, It was all done for movies mind you but I could actually relate to that and that

- 21:00 We Were Soldiers and young with Mel Gibson, and I've read the book and it's very, very phenomenal. I mean I even watched that colonel who Mel Gibson played in real life, they had him on 60 Minutes and he actually goes around the graveyard where these soldiers are buried now, every year, and actually talks to them. He stands there and talks to them, "Hey Joe, how you going? We've just had a new grandkid." He talks to them as if they're still alive.
- 21:30 And I can look at that and relate to a lot of that, I really can and it's pretty realistic. The way the movies, unfortunately for us, probably are getting pretty close to the mark. They're doing their homework a lot more and gone are the days when Vic Morrow in the Combat! series, now you're up to We Were Soldiers [Once] and Young, sort of thing, and then they're
- 22:00 getting pretty close to being realistic. You look at, I went and saw that Private Ryan, not Private Ryan, Forrest Gump when it first come out and I was at Gympie and I went with a mate and we got to "zip, zip, zip" and I sort of sucked me breath in and went, "Holy shit, that's pretty realistic," and now it's got worse, or better, for want of a better word. That Saving Private Ryan, I didn't even know I was going to see that, a mate said, "We're going to the movies," and we were on our way to the Sunnybank movies and
- 22:30 we got there and I said, "What movie are we seeing?" and he said, "Oh, Saving Private Ryan." I said, "Oh." I didn't really want to see that at the time, but I sat, once the first twenty minutes was over it was okay. But it's pretty, pretty...getting realistic, and as I said the other day if they invent smell-o-vision, it is the day I stop going and it will come, it will come. How they're going to invent it. I don't know, but then again...

Imagine smelling napalm?

Or even burning bodies. That's something

- 23:00 that stays with you to the day you die. If you smell a dead dog, smells terrible, you smell a dead human being, and most coppers and ambulance blokes would probably verify this, it's terrible. It's a sickly, sweet smell. It really is. It's something that stays with you to the day you die. We patrolled on Coral, when we were patrolling and we'd smell, a lot of these Nogs would die, some of these Nogs would die later on and be buried by their mates or just die on
- 23:30 their own somewhere, just crawl off and die. And you'd smell it, well you never went and investigated. You knew what it was, why would you want to go and look at it for? Nothing to look at, but it's a smell that stays with you and that's one thing I said if ever they put that on TV or one the news screen they won't get me there. They won't get any veteran there, or anybody, any copper, any ambulance bloke or fire brigade. Anybody that has smelt that smell, it's just a terrible smell. It's a very sickly, sweet smell. It's very hard to

- 24:00 describe.

How was it coming back into society and funerals, and what have you, do you have a sort of, what are your attitudes towards rituals?

What do you mean?

Well you've seen so much ugliness in the war...

You mean I'm pretty blasé when it comes to things like that, and I went to my father's funeral and that was, I even managed to get up and give a speech at that.

- 24:30 I was pretty emotional as we all loved the old man, and in fact there's not a day goes by that I don't think of him still. In fact, on his anniversary I'm going to put an ad in the paper, roll of honour column, and I've been down to see his plaque. I've actually spoken to him when I went down there. That sort of thing, like that colonel did and I talked to Pop. He's among old soldiers, and I said to him the other day when I was there, there's a RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] fellow on him. I said, "You've got a couple of RAAFies here Pop. I don't know what you're going to talk about, but you'll do your best."
- 25:00 Anyway no one was around. If anyone had been around I wouldn't have done it, a private thing. But I get pretty blasé when it comes to funerals. It's, I don't know, we've all got to die I suppose. I hope to proceed my children mind you. I don't want my children going. I worry constantly about my kids, but then I worry about the grandson. I was over there the other day, nit picking, saying, "Listen,
- 25:30 I think you'd better put a windscreen on that window, he can crawl up on that chair," and Kath picked up a marble and, "Hey, come on." As far as funerals are concerned I keep myself pretty quiet about that. I don't really show, I don't know, I don't mean nothing disrespectful. I said to a woman one day in a line up in a post office, she was whinging about the line up and how long it was taking, I said, "It could be worse, you could be in
- 26:00 a line up and have lung cancer." And she couldn't see the point and it would have taken me too long to explain. What I'm getting at it could be worse.

I was just going to ask you, did you come across any Aborigines in Vietnam?

One or two. We used to call them 'black bastards', but that was the way it went.

That was an endearment?

Of course it was, of course it was.

26:30 They bleed just as red as I do and they'd call us 'white trash' or 'white honkies', whatever they wanted, picked up an American expression. Eddie Jarden was one bloke I run into. Eddie's not going real good. He's suffering, he was wearing a bag last time I, but I think he's taken that off now, he's got a little better. He wasn't travelling real good at all. I met him in Greenslopes not long ago. Eddie was about one I knew, Eddie Jarden.

27:00 Joe Minnacon, we called him 'Joe Minnacocon'. I met him up in Darwin, but no, actually as far as Vietnam was concerned, no, I didn't actually have any Aborigines with me at the time, but I did hear later on that. I've ran into a couple since who were actually in different battalions. There were none in my platoon, but that's not to say they were not welcome, they just weren't there. Never thought about it honestly. We got on good with the Negroes, the American Negroes. As I said, they bleed just as red as the white man,

27:30 that's all.

And what about your tat, where did you get your tat from?

I was pissed when I got that done. You can't say pissed on here, but I'm going to say it anyway, what the hell. You can always edit it. I was up, it was in Sydney in Paddington, in Sydney. Yeah we went drinking and I got pissed and we were all going for tattoos. Some blokes had a pair of lips tattooed down here and different things, and I had that done. I apparently picked something on the wall,

28:00 a dragon eating a dead cat or something. I forget what it was, it was something vulgar and my mate said, "No, don't give him that." He said, "Give him that." That's a unit thing. You can't see it real good. It's got the Rising Sun there and the Australian flag and a rifle and that used to say 'Aussie' and it still does if you look at it. I see a guy the other day and I saw his tattoo and I said, "You an ex-vet are you?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Who were you with?" And he said, "I was in the navy."

28:30 And I looked at it and said, "That's right, navy tat [tattoo]." And I could tell, I could pick him. We can pick each other. Like I said we're like coppers. We can smell each other. I can tell. I go to the psychologist to see Brian and when I come out I see this guy sitting down and I say, "Who were you with mate?" And he said, "I was with so and so." "1713 was it?" And we yak away and you can talk like that. I can meet a guy in the street on Anzac Day that I don't even know. I can walk up to him at a table and "Can I stand here and have a beer mate?" "Oh yeah,

29:00 my name's..." and away you go. You do that out in civvy street [civilian life] and they'd look at you strangely and think, "Who's this bloke?" That's the way it works. It's that bond.

There's a sort of honesty that comes from the vets, that seems?

Well there should be. I know for a fact that over at the club there's been a bit of pilfering going on, but I'm not saying it's the members that are doing it. I don't know who's doing it, someone's knocking off coffee and stuff, but there's always one or two veterans around that will do the

29:30 wrong thing. Woe betide them if they get caught, mind you. You won't worry about calling the police. The president said that the other day, "If we find out who it is," he said, "the coppers won't be involved." But pretty well it was an honour basis. If I went and stayed with a mate of mine down at Marsden, which we were going to do on Monday night, we're not going to now, he could trust me. I'm not going to take anything. I wouldn't think of it. I could ask him to look after my house tomorrow.

30:00 Leave all my stuff open, I wouldn't put anything away, I trust them, that's the way it is. Veterans don't steal from other veterans. Strange isn't it? Yet I'd pinch the eye out of a needle.

Have you thought about writing a book?

I did at one stage. I wrote things down one day. My psychologist asked me to write things down, like my childhood, almost like what you're doing today and I wrote it

30:30 all down and I've got it back since and I've put it away. I asked for it back. I said, "I don't want it left lying around." I don't put everything down. I think what I'd like to do, I'd like to write it, put it in a sealed envelope and put it in a safe and only to be opened on my death. Then I could tell everything, and then they could say, "That mongrel."

Why don't you?

Well, I could think about it, I don't know. They could say, "That bastard,

31:00 I bloody wondered about that."

As a joke you could leave them that instead of any money?

I tell my children right now I'm riding around on their inheritance money, and I said to them the other day when we bought this place, we had to borrow a bit of extra money to buy this place, and I said, "You'd better hope I manage a few payments on this before I die, because your inheritance money will

go downhill." I'm doing that already, I don't believe in supplying. I'll look after my children. In fact, the way things are going, just jokingly, we were saying, we've

31:30 got an acre here, and land, real estate out here is just going crazy and young couples can't even afford to buy a home, even out here, hardly, and it's not beyond the realms of possibility that we might have to build a house out the back for one of my kids. That's not a joke, it could happen that way. I'm not saying it will happen that way, but it might, cause I don't know how my youngest daughter, who is seventeen, is ever going to afford a house. She's only seventeen now, so what's she going to be like in ten years' time? My eldest daughter just bought a house at Rochedale

32:00 but that's her house. The youngest one is living there but eventually she'll have to go out on her own.

Have you ever thought, this might sound like a crazy question, have you ever...?

You've asked a few already, so what's one more?

Have you ever thought about going into the [Fortitude] Valley and eating Vietnamese?

No, shit no, oh shit no. I went to Sunnybank, you ever go to Sunnybank Shopping Centre?

I've been there once.

Well, it's Vietnamese city. You've got Vietnamese restaurants, well there's a Vietnamese restaurant right next to

32:30 the theatre, and I said to Kath jokingly, as we were walking up, looked at this young girl walking around in this Vietnamese thing, some of the blokes will know the name of it, I don't know that outfit.

Fishing pants?

No, the little fishing, there's a name for it, the dress, it's national dress they call it, and I said to Kath, I says, "Gee, I think I knew her mother." And Kath says, "I don't want to know, I don't want to know."

So you don't want to eat it because you don't think you're going to like it or...?

I'd feel

33:00 uncomfortable, I'd just feel uncomfortable. Like I said to you earlier in the piece, I've got no hatred or disrespect for the people, I just feel uncomfortable around them. I know when we got off and went to Sydney for the Welcoming Home Parade in '87, we got off on the other side of The Domain in Sydney. It's called The Domain, a big park, and we got off on the other side. The cabbie dropped us there, couldn't get any closer obviously and we had to walk through The Domain and in the middle of The Domain was all the Vietnamese units.

33:30 All our so-called comrades of the South Vietnamese Army, well we take that tongue in cheek cause I lot of them, you could never trust half of them and we were walking the street and me mate says, "Gee, weren't we crook shots?" And I said, "Shut up, shut up, there's too bloody many of them." And we walked up, he couldn't let go and he walked up to this one guy and he says, "Didn't I have you in my rifle sights once?"

34:00 I thought, "Bloody hell, get out of here." Warren Nethercote, he's dead now, I said, "Oh Warren, for Christ's sake, you start something, we're not going to be able to finish it." We got out of there, but I don't feel real comfortable amongst them.

How would you?

Don't ask me what would happen if my daughter ever married one, Jesus.

Okay.

Don't ask that question. I wouldn't be too impressed at all. I am racial. Any person in this country

34:30 who says they're not racial is bullshit. Everybody, even the Chinese are racial. The Chinese hate the Japs, the Vietnamese hate the Cambodians, everybody is racial, but they're just racial to a certain race. No, I couldn't live with them, I'm not comfortable with them, that's all.

Do you think that comes from your dad's participation in the Second World War?

Partially, parts of it, possibly, partially, psychologically it could be. I never

35:00 about it much but it could be and also what I went through, yeah. Orientals, let's face it, it's a well known fact, most white Caucasian people don't really like Asians, yet we're living in an Asian area. We're the only nation down here, in this part of the world, the rest of it's Indonesia and Singapore, Malaysians, all Asians. We're Asians too, when you think about it, in a sense, a geographical point of view. But no, I'm definitely racial

35:30 but I don't openly go out and I lost, one day I filled up the trike at Kilcoy and we took off and we got down as far as the turnoff and we were going down to visit some people up at Peachester, up at the back of Maleny there, and this bloke chased me and he was an Oriental and I'd left, me tank tap had fallen off

and he'd picked it up and chased to me. I said to Kath, "Shit, I'll have to eat my words here, won't I?"

36:00 Don't I feel a goose, "Thanks mate." I thought, "I've just been thankful to a Nog."

I suppose everybody's an individual?

That's right, if I met a Vietnamese guy tomorrow I'd shake hands with him, if it came to that, but I'm not real. We have had a lot of trouble since they've arrived in the country, I might add. I mean let's face it, a lot of drugs have increased. They don't call it Cabramatta any more,

36:30 they called it 'Vietnamatta', don't they? That's a fact, they bring in the bad elements as well.

How would you weigh up now your experiences in the Vietnam War?

Oh, if I had my time over again and knowing what I know now, I logically would like to think I wouldn't do it again. I don't think I would do it again.

Join the army?

37:00 Oh no, I'd join the army, but some of it was great, even some of Vietnam was great. I don't think I'd give up the camaraderie, something I reckon I'll cherish to the day I die, but I could have lived without a lot of it. I'm hoping it won't shorten my life span by much, but it does have a tendency to wear you down, if you let it, and it does wear you down. Look at a lot of old soldiers in homes now? I mean they go they go through a lot of nightmares now, the older they get, the worse

37:30 it gets, and I hope I don't have to get to that age. I dread the day that's coming. But no, I don't regret what I did but I wish it could have been a bit better. But I won't go on the rest of my life, I don't get up of a morning and blame the world's problems or society on Vietnam. You can't, otherwise you'll just eat yourself out. You eventually will kill yourself eventually over it, there's no

38:00 point. You've got to move on as best you can. I've not moved on completely, don't get me wrong, I don't think I ever will but I'm doing my best understand the circumstances. Again like I say, repeating myself again, fifty years from now it's not going to matter. You with me? The same with the mortgage on this, fifty years, who's going to care? I'm not here for a long time, I'm here for a good time and that's about it. I don't want to ever do it again. I wouldn't like to do it again.

38:30 I don't want my children going through it. I took my son into the recruiting office when he joined the air force and I said, "I hope the only medal you get is a bloody long service. I hope you have thirty odd years of an absolute boring time." I do and I mean that. I don't want to big note myself in front of my children too much to the point where they've got to, what's the word? Emulate, is that the right word? To emulate me, I don't want them to have to go through anything to say, "I'm as good as Dad, I'm better, I've done the same thing Dad did."

39:00 I don't want them doing that at all. I'd rather they'd just not do anything. My daughter went to Timor and I was worried sick even though she was only in a very peaceful, peacetime area and it wasn't that bad where she was, it was bad enough for me. I was going through all scenarios. It only takes one bullet, that's all it takes, and I worried sick. I was glad when she was home and I hope she never goes again. I hope my son never goes anywhere. I hope he stays in Australia and never leaves, so that's about it, I don't want any more. I don't want any more

39:30 medals in the chest. I said I didn't want any more after mine, now my daughter's got two. It never ends. Now my grandson, in another twenty years time, he could be in the army. Oh God, I think that's the more worrying part of it, we've survived, now I worry about the younger generation, all younger generation, all young ones.

40:00 I worry about the boys who went to Iraq, the first one, in '91. I was a basket case in '91. I was worried sick about them blokes going over there but there was nothing I could do to control it. I was worried sick about them. I was worried sick about the boys that went to Iraq just recently, not worried sick, I've mellowed a bit. I've learnt to accept I can't do anything about it, that's the psychologist talking to me, he's helping me do that. He said, "Look, you can't control it," and I've learnt that I can't control it. I do have my opinions, but I learn to keep them to myself.

40:30 I keep them to myself, I don't go out in the street and broadcast them, but I do worry about the troops going overseas. I worry about the troops going to the Solomons and it's repeating, I know people now whose sons and daughters have gone to the Solomons and I know another bloke whose son has to the Solomons and it's a lot better if you don't know them. I know that sounds terrible, but it's a lot better if you don't know them. Bad enough worrying about them, but if you know someone actually there, so I hate to think my grandson,

41:00 I don't know how I'd handle and I know I'm already jumping the gun already, see? I've already got him going to war, poor little bugger.

You're a worrywart?

Yeah, I am a worrywart, yeah.

Fine and thank you so much.

INTERVIEW ENDS