

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Brian Millar (Blue) - Transcript of interview

**Date of interview: 26th September 2003**

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/952>

### Tape 1

00:40 **Can you give us an introduction to your life story so far?**

I was born in Scotland in 1947. My parents came out to Australia in 1951. My uncle, my mother's brother had been in the merchant navy, the British Merchant Navy and

01:00 during his world trips around, before the Second World War he came to Australia and his father, my mother's father, also travelled to Australia, but the rest of the family didn't. So my uncle sponsored, after his service in the Korean War, in the Australian Army, he sponsored my parents to come out, which we did. We went down to a place called Greta, which is in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales and we stayed there for

01:30 four and a half years and then my mother got homesick for her mother, so we returned to Scotland. And I finished schooling in Scotland, state school, can't remember what it was called now. The state school before high school, pre high school, that one, and then secondary school in Dundee. And then in

02:00 1964, I came back to Australia by myself under the auspices of the Big Brother movement, which was a movement that's been disbanded by the Labor Party when they got in. It brought out boys only, from Britain, sponsored them, put them into jobs, or in my case I wanted to go to farming so they had a farm in,

02:30 oh just up from Cabramatta I believe it was, in the hills up there, behind Sydney. And then went out to work in Deniliquin on a property, a mixed farm. For a few months then I went droving, brick laying, did a lot of manual work, then I joined the air force in 1965. And stayed in until

03:00 1987.

**Can you give us a rough outline of your trip through the air force?**

Yeah, I joined up originally to be an engine fitter, my father was an engine fitter in the Royal Air force in the Second [World] War and I thought I'd just carry on from where he left off. And after recruit training at RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] Base in Edinburgh in South Australia, I went to Wagga which is a RAAF school, or then, RAAF School of Technical Training, and

03:30 started what called a TM course, a Trainee Mechanics course. And after I suppose, three or four months of that I decided that filing pieces of metal to make them square just wasn't what I wanted to do. That was just part of the training, the basic skill training for trainee mechanics and I just wasn't interested, it was boring. At that time,

04:00 late '65, late '65 yeah, they were calling for drill instructors, so I applied. I'd been a member of the Air Training Corps in Scotland. And, 12-32 Dundee Squadron was for three years I think, in a row, the Scottish Drill Champions squad. And I was a member of that team and I thought I had a fair show of

04:30 becoming a drill instructor with that experience. So I applied and I was accepted and I went up to Amberley and did the course, three months course. I got promoted to corporal which was the rank for an instructor and went back to Edinburgh, stayed there for three odd years. Went to Vietnam in 1969, to Two Squadron at Phan Rang, which was the northernmost base that the air force was at,

05:00 some 200 and something clicks [kilometres] north of Saigon. And 12 months there, then came back to Australia and, I suppose Amberley first, promotion to Sergeant and then onto training instructional duties at Amberley for a number of years, yeah.

05:30 And then onto Darwin for a few months after the cyclone, and then down to Williamstown with an ADG [Air Defence Guard], Defence Guard flight, for a few years. And then I (UNCLEAR) Warrant Officer Disciplinary and served out the rest of my time in that mustering. That's generally the overview.

**No, that's fantastic, Brian, and how about when you came out?**

When I came out.

- 06:00 That was a shock, that was a shock, 20, 22 years in the service and I come out into a foreign world, I did not understand civilian life at all. I mean I was married of course and my wife at the time was a civilian and I had civilian friends, but I
- 06:30 was separated from it, like it was a see-through curtain. I was on one side and the civilian life was on the other and although I could reach through and be part of it, I always came back to the service side of it. So it was very, very difficult to adjust. I think a lot of people, if not all servicemen who stay in for that length of time, they will find an adjustment problem
- 07:00 when they get out, I certainly did. But after a few months, I was given an appointment with the Australian public service, working for Department of Social Security. What a soul destroying place that is, I tell you, what do they call it now, Centrelink. It's gone through a number of changes yeah, and I learned some
- 07:30 very disturbing things while I was there I really did. About that time I started to have emotional problems, like I was finding it difficult to concentrate on things, and life was becoming, I suppose meaningless. I was losing focus, I didn't know what it was,
- 08:00 until I happened to meet an ex sergeant who I knew at Townsville when I was the WOD [Warrant Officer Disciplinary] there. And he said, "Why don't you come down to this place and have a cup of coffee," and I said, "Yeah sure." So I went down, I think I was working by that stage I had left Social Security and was working as a, might have been real estate, or as a facsimile salesman for one of the firms,
- 08:30 I can't remember. I found it very difficult to maintain a job I just couldn't, couldn't cope with the civilian attitudes of doing things. I went down to this place where he said have a cup of coffee, we had a cup of coffee. He introduced me to a lady there, Dianne, Dianne Percival and I found out, in fact, it was like a drop in centre for Vets, Vietnam Veterans. Because it was the office of the Townsville
- 09:00 Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service which was, established by the Federal Government I believe, some few years before that, because of the amount of problems the Vietnam Veterans were manifesting. It was something they had to get a hold of. I went there and had a cup of coffee, spoke with her a little bit, she gave me a questionnaire, she said, "Just read those questions and just circle the numbers that apply to you."
- 09:30 So there was a foolscap page I think or an A4 or whatever. I circled the questions that applied to me - was, do you get headaches, do you wake up at night sweating, do you have black outs where your mind goes blank and all you can remember is Vietnam or some certain things that happened there? And all those sort of things. So I circled what I did and I gave it back to her and I gave it back to her and she picked up a, have you ever done those objective
- 10:00 question type tests, where you know the answer is A, B, C or D, yeah, well they have a mask, a see through mask and the actual correct answer is circled or highlighted in some way and you just sit that over the answer sheet and if you got the cross where the hole is in the thing, you get it right. Well that's what she did, she put a mask over this with all these numbers and what have you, and she said, "You better fill out this claim." And I said, "What claim," and she said,
- 10:30 "We'll talk about it in a minute." And that was when I started to realise, she explained later on, that I was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. Or at least the symptoms that I had highlighted were consistent with PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder]. Yeah, and it just went on from there.
- 11:00 So, the marriage broke up. I left, I couldn't, couldn't bare the... everything just fell to pieces. It was really, at the time, at that time it was very, very difficult to try and convince Veterans Affairs Department that we were suffering, and I say, we then...
- 11:30 Because I came to realise that, with the sessions that I was going back to with Di, at the VVCS [Vietnam Veteran Counselling Service], that there was a whole lot of us like that, and whereas I had been thinking it was me as an individual that couldn't handle the stresses and the pressures of what I'd been through. It wasn't me at all, it was just about everyone who had similar experiences were going through the same thing and...
- 12:00 Yeah, it was a bit of a difficult time really, coming to terms with how I felt about things and knowing that so many others had been affected and were suffering the same way. It was good in on way because you didn't feel left out again, you didn't feel the odd one out, you were part of the group, albeit for the wrong reasons, but, if you understand, that
- 12:30 in itself was a help to a degree, yeah. I don't know what else to say about that at this time. I came down to South East Queensland and lived in a caravan park and pursued with some, some assistance from other people, the claims I was having. I just couldn't get a job, I just couldn't. I was hopeless, not
- 13:00 violence so much as outbursts of frustrations, and anger. There was just no way I could approach anyone, work with anyone or for anyone it was just, you know. Just a sorry state. Yeah, so I just stayed down here. Eventually the PTSD symptoms were recognised after three years or so of pushing and fighting

13:30 and I've been on a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension] service pension ever since.

**Fantastic, that's wonderful as an introduction. And I'll spend the day going through all that in a lot more detail. To start with can we go back to Scotland, and your I guess your childhood days. Exactly where were you and what was it like?**

Well, the city we were in was Dundee,

14:00 which is on the east coast. I think it's the third, fourth largest city, in Scotland. It's on the Firth of Tay, the River Tay, which puts it not quite into the Highlands, but very close. What we do there, school, can't remember much about, primary school, that was the word I was trying to think of before.

14:30 Primary school we called it over there, fights, yeah, school yard fights, I remember few of those.

**Were they something you'd start or just be a part of?**

I remember on in particular, it was not too long after I'd come back from Australia, in '55, so how old was I, eight.

15:00 Eight, nine, and I obviously had an accent of some description, we'd been here four years, and I went out, came out when I was four so I'd picked up some sort of an accent because I went to school in Greta and I think the fight was about my accent. And there was two or three people didn't like it so, we had a bit of a scrap until the teachers separated us, that

15:30 was it. Then just niggly little things that everyone, well I don't know if they do any more, have fights in schoolyards, we did in those days, just for no reason and for every reason I suppose. Yeah, then I went to secondary school, Stobswell Boys Secondary School. At that time in, in Scotland anyway and I think also in England, the schools, a lot of the secondary schools

16:00 were gender segregated, something I believe it should go back to, do not believe in mixed gender schools.

**Why is that?**

I think it causes a problem with the boys. They cannot get their mind off the girls onto the school work. That's my view and therefore,

16:30 They don't achieve as high as they could, that's one thing. I also believe that the permissiveness of the society nowadays, has a lot to answer for, but it contributes to, as well as this mixed gender schools contributes to the lower age groupings or levels of unwed mothers and fathers

17:00 and the consequent drain on society that that put so and not only society, but to those individuals especially the girls if they have these children at such an early age. So I don't, I think that's a contributing factor, so I really don't, for those main reasons. And I yeah....

**Where you're in the secondary schools in Scotland, were there**

17:30 **were the fellas, I mean would they do other things to try and seek out girls? Or would you and your mates for example.**

Oh of course they would, on weekends, Friday nights, Saturdays you'd go to the pictures meet girls or you'd go to, they had cafes, that had juke boxes in those days, and you used to go to those and meet girls. I didn't

18:00 do a lot of girl chasing or hunting around, because as I said before, I was in the Air Training Corps, and that involved Monday nights, Friday nights training and after a few months being in the Air Training Corps, there as a RAF [Royal Air Force], an RAF station called Lucas, RAF Lucas which was in Fife about 40 minutes away drive from Dundee, south of Dundee. And it had

18:30 a mountain rescue team. The RAF still to this day have mountain rescue teams on the number of bases throughout Britain, and Lucas was one and the role of the mountain rescue teams in Britain is primarily to search for downed military aircraft and try and rescue the crew or return the remains. It has a secondary function, then of looking out

19:00 or doing the same sort of thing for civilian aircraft and for climbers and hikers who get lost and what have you. So it's a search and rescue team, military bases, Royal Air Force but used for civilian work as well. They had a team and our officer at the time Derek Weir, he started a team in Air Training Force squadron, we trained with Lucas boys.

19:30 So that tied up just about every weekend of mine. As well, we would go up climbing Friday night up to the, up to the mountains and climb for the weekend, so I didn't have a lot of time to go skirt chasing as such. And then of course, when I got a bit older, I think it was 15 we did glider pilot training, so that was another night a week gone,

20:00 Wednesday nights. You must remember in Scotland in summer, it's light, daylight until 10 o'clock at night, that part of the Northern Hemisphere. So we would go glider training down to Royal Naval Air

Station, Condor, which was about 17 miles from Dundee. So that was another night of the week tied up so I was, I suppose I could say, I was oriented to the Air Training Corps,

20:30 and that's what my life was about.

**What kind of training would they give on the Mondays and Fridays to start with?**

Monday night was non uniform night and that was mainly aircraft models, for displays that we would make for, not shopping centres, but for movies.

21:00 Movie openings, for example the Great Escape when that opened, it's premier filming in Dundee, at the big theatre down there, the Training Corps went down, we went down in our uniforms and we had a display of all the aircraft models we had, and we got in free, so that was good. But that's just the sort of type of thing, what do they call it, public relations sort of things. Yeah, we played soccer, football, in the fitness

21:30 side of, side of it. And, we would do training I suppose you could say, on airmanship the various things that apply to the air force or the air force side of training; recognition of aircraft, a bit of drill, map reading, just general subjects

22:00 that they covered in the military, basic subjects, not trade specific. Lectures by various service personnel, would come in and give us lectures about their time in the service etcetera. Friday night, uniform night, it was parade, that was more drill, and more, what can we say, more official as far as the training was concerned. It was only a two hour night.

22:30 The drill mainly was the aspect on Friday night.

**With the glider pilot training, I mean did you get to go up?**

Yeah. Yeah that was, the certificates up on the wall. We did get a license for it as a certified glider pilot. After, I can't remember how many months training, we did it on Wednesday nights

23:00 and the weekends I wasn't climbing with the rescue team we did weekends down there as well. It was what they called winch, winch lift. There are different methods of getting the glider up, you can be towed behind a vehicle on a long cable or you can be winched up, on a cable and a drum or you had an aero tug or an aero tow where you'd go behind an aircraft and they take off and then obviously the glider follows, and then when you get to the height you're supposed to be at you release.

23:30 And then you just do a circuit or whatever or whatever you're into at the time and land it again. So yeah, as I say, I can't remember how long that lasted, but you had to do three solos I believe, yeah, three solos and walk away from each one without damaging anything and you got your certificate of licence.

**Can you remember your first flight up there in the glider?**

I can remember my first flight. It was in a,

24:00 I think it was called Sedberg, that was the brand of the glider, it was, seats side by side. And it was just an introductory flight to see how you'd handle it. And I had no problems being up there at all, it was exhilarating. Being in the Air Training Corps, once every year or more in school holidays you'd go to an RAF base or an RAF station for a week for annual camp where you

24:30 did flying as a passenger. That was part of the thrill of being there, so flying was, didn't worry me at all. But being in a quiet engineless vehicle was just tremendous, it was just so exhilarating, it really, it's magic. And so I thoroughly enjoyed it, my second flight I was put with my instructor for the duration of the..

25:00 he was a civilian instructor ex Royal Air Force officer, and we landed and I, I remember going up to the chief flying instructor and saying, "I don't want to do this any more," and he said, "Why, you've only had one flight?" And I said, "I can't handle that bloke." He just he was driving me mad, his attitude is wrong, I will not take it.

25:30 Because he was a very, jumpy sort of a person as I recall, and everything was given as a command, "Do this, do that." And it just, frightened the crap out of a bloke you know. I'm trying to learn how to fly this thing and he's up me all the time. So I said, "No way," and this was only the first flight. So they put me with another instructor and I had no problems, yeah great, yeah good.

**26:00 And why the Air Training Corps, as opposed to say ...**

Boy Scouts?

**Yeah.**

I tried Boy Scouts, and it was too boyish. I joined the Boys Brigade. I don't know if they got the Boys Brigade in Australia, they do? Oh okay, the Boys Brigade in Scotland was run by, in those days,

- 26:30 I think a national organisations and their uniform was, I think basically was a white cross strap with a little pouch on it, a cotton little webbing thing and what we used to call a pork pie hat. It's a round hat, it sat up high on your head had a thing on there and it sat on an angle; it was black and it had two white stripes and it looked bloody ridiculous. However, the church my mother belonged to,
- 27:00 St Andrews Presbyterian Church, it had it's own boys brigade, it wasn't part of the general one and we wore Glengarry. And Glengarry is a Scottish hat, you've probably seen it, it looks - it's in some of the Scottish regiments or some of the Scottish pipe bands, you would have seen. It's on an angle, it's that type shape boat shape and it has two tails down and a little pompom, or tourie as it should be called,
- 27:30 on the top. So we wore that with the cross of St Andrew badge, and I enjoyed that, that was good. We used to go camping, did first aid, started learning the bagpipes, but I wanted something else, it just wasn't what I wanted. So I looked around and I thought, when a friend of mine at school, two of my friends in my school
- 28:00 in class, they were in the, navy cadets, I thought that might be an idea, but I suppose leaning towards my father's service which was air force, I joined the Air Training Corps.

**And how did you, what was, I guess, life like at home with your folks, mother and father?**

Yeah. It wasn't the best at times.

- 28:30 My mother tended to be, dominant in the family and I tended to be a bit rebellious. My uncle Gordon, he was known as the black sheep of the family. He bolted young, joined the merchant marine and I took after him,
- 29:00 sort of the yeah, the black sheep. So they, I'm not saying anything against their parenting and everything I wanted was given, everything I needed I was given, but I just, I had more fun, more enjoyment with the Air Training Corps. I'm just not a real family person I suppose.

**Can you, I guess lead us into**

- 29:30 **what kind of things you and your mum would kind of clash about?**

Can't remember. I just, it was just a general thing I suppose. Yeah, I just suppose it was just general.

**Was she a strong disciplinarian?**

Not so, it wasn't physical that sort of thing. I think probably, I'm just... come on neurons...

- 30:00 I'd suppose I could put it down to. I liked coming out to Australia, I enjoyed being in Australia, even though I was only five, six, seven, eight. And when we went back I couldn't understand why, we went back because my mother's mother, my gran was supposedly having heart problems and she didn't have long to live.
- 30:30 That was in 1955, now by 1960 it had become clear to me that that wasn't as dramatic or such a serious problem as it was made out and I suppose I resented the fact that we had to return to Scotland, and I'm not saying that nastily, and my grandmother didn't die. I'm not saying that at all, what I'm saying is
- 31:00 that it seemed to me that that it wasn't a well thought out return. As I found out later, friends of ours in Greta, had said, "Why don't you," Margaret, my mother, "why don't you go back for three months or so, see how your mum is and then come back out and let Harry..." my father, "and Brian stay here. That way you'll still have a house here and he'll still be working and Brian's schooling
- 31:30 won't be disrupted..." dah, dee, dah, dee, dah. Because my father didn't want to return either, but no, down went her foot and away we went. And I resented that and I suppose that was the start and the main drift apart. I thought that was an unnecessary, unnecessary upheaval.

**And what about your dad?**

My Dad acquiesced.

- 32:00 My father was what, I suppose, anything to keep the peace. Let's not have an argument let's just do it. I'm not like that. If that's wrong, I say it's wrong. It gets me into trouble, but, I suppose that's just life eh? Yeah, so and that was another part
- 32:30 I would think, not looking back, and also, and resent is too strong a word, but I can't think of a lesser word, at the time but, I didn't, I didn't agree with his approach. And in later years we became estranged, so I haven't seen my parents in 10, 12, 14 years.
- 33:00 My father's dead now.

**Were you closer to him as a child before I guess that happened?**

Yeah, I would say I was. Yeah, I was closer to him. Maybe just, that was just a son thing, I don't know. Yeah, I suppose that was it, but I don't recall any great

33:30 family bonding, on the whole, I don't recall any great family bonding.

**Do you have brothers and sisters?**

No, no. They might be, might explain it, I don't know.

**An independent spirit perhaps?**

It seems to come in the family, as I say my Uncle Gordon, he came out here, he split from home young, and he joined the navy and his father did the same, he come out to Australia. I can't remember the circumstances

34:00 and he died out here without ever seeing his family again, maybe those genes are in me. Oh well.

**So can you tell us Brian, about you know your first trip out to Australia as a kid, I mean what a, what was it about it that made such an impression?**

Probably that's, my memories start

34:30 as a child then, I don't have a lot of, I mean I was four, four and a half when I came out here, so I haven't got many memories of prior to that in Scotland. I do remember, a scene, of me standing with a scooter, you know those old, they're back in style, but these were a bit different in those days, they weren't fold up. And I had a wheel in one hand

35:00 and the scooter over my shoulder, and that's, that's all I remember. Seemingly what had happened, I had taken my scooter one morning and disappeared and I went up to some park, some fair distance from my house and the pair, my mother and grandmother couldn't find me so they had police out looking for me and, I knew nothing about it. I was just playing on this scooter, until it broke,

35:30 the wheel fell off and so I came back home, that's all I can remember but I caused a fair bit of consternation. But that's all I can remember pre Australia. Australia I can remember there was, the lifestyle was different whereas in Dundee we lived in concrete, or stone tenement blocks, everything was cramped up,

36:00 it was close, living, in Greta, we had our own house, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, a backyard which was the size of a paddock with fruit trees. We went fishing up the river, down to the beach, it was just the lifestyle which was so easy, so free, so open. Yeah, that had to be it.

36:30 The openness of it; I love the open, don't like, where I am now, but circumstances at the moment have me here, but I much prefer the bush. Yeah, the bush, so that's my memory there of going to school, of getting attacked by magpies, old Mr Brown, he was our teacher. He was old then in Greta Primary school

37:00 or state school I think it, probably, I think I was in the open again, a big paddock and the school house in the middle. Magpie season, they'd attack, he'd get out his 12 gauge and shoot them. That's not politically correct any more I suppose, but it was in those days. I don't like political correctness by the way. No I think that was the way to do it. They're still here the magpies, so he didn't kill that many.

**How many in a class?**

Oh, gee,

**Roughly.**

I don't know, I think I have photos somewhere. 20 maybe. I'm not sure.

**And was it a mixed?**

Yeah, yeah, it was a mixed, it was mixed in those days, at that level, yeah. I thought I had photos somewhere.

37:30 **Alright, well we'll pause there Brian.**

## Tape 2

00:33 **I had never heard of the Big Brother scheme, can you tell us a little bit about that?**

The Big Brother Movement was, I'll start by saying this. Have you heard about the Assisted Immigration Scheme?

**No.**

Assisted Passage, you might recall, scheme?

**10 pounds.**

That's it, okay that was for families. Alright between the Australian and the British government, for obvious reasons to bring more migrants to Australia.

- 01:00 The Big Brother Movement was similar but it was for young teenagers. I think the age was 15 to 19, I'm not sure on that, males from Britain, and it was assisted again, in fact I don't think we paid anything. What happened was, that throughout the country there would be interviews held.
- 01:30 You would make an application, I can't remember where but send it away and if the application was accepted, I won't say successful, accepted, then you were interviewed. Your reasons why you wanted to go there, to go to Australia, and general type questions like that. And there was two streams: there was a city stream for those who wanted to work in cities, clerical, or those type jobs, administration,
- 02:00 and there was rural, for those who wanted to work on a farm. I of course chose rural. If you were successful you went out as a group, I think there was, 12 or 15 in our group, we went out on the Fair Sky, Fair Sky, which was a sister ship to the Fair Sea,
- 02:30 which was the P & O [Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company] cruise ship for a number of years, out of Australia. Yeah, so we came out on that, we went to Sydney, we were escorted out by it was normally by let's say, youngish, Australian's in their 20's that were returning from working in Britain. I think ours was two school teachers who had done a trip across to Britain, worked for a couple of years
- 03:00 as school teachers, and then were returning and so they got assisted back to have to chaperone us. So we came back out, or came out to Australia. So, as I said, Cabramatta, which was a farm, we had a farm at Cabramatta, run by I can't remember his name now, big bloke, hard man. Good horseman and a fair bloke, it was a dairy farm with, I think we grew pumpkins
- 03:30 or watermelons as well. The idea was to familiarise the boys with, I suppose a generalising of the farm, like dairy farmer gets up earlier than any other farm, so we were at a dairy farm, just to get you used to the way things were run, and general farming. We stayed there, people stayed there
- 04:00 until they were found placements in properties throughout New South Wales. The boys that went into the city, there was a hostel in the city. They went into Sydney itself and they stayed in the hostel dormitory I think the same as us. Meals were provided, everything was done, and now, I mean they were placed in various office positions. Some blokes when they came into the farming side of it,
- 04:30 when they saw that it was not easy, changed their minds and went into the city side. I suppose, five of us stayed on in the farming area. And I was positioned in a place called Deniliquin, outside of Deniliquin, the closest town was called Deniliquin, it was actually called Blighty, the old British name Blighty, that was the pub. And then the farm was,
- 05:00 a soldier settlement farm just up the road from that mixed farm, mainly dairy but also wheat. I stayed there, six months maybe, found out that I was being underpaid and over worked, so I went droving.

**How did you go from the farm to droving, could you just take off?**

I just said, "I'm leaving Tom."

- 05:30 And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Because you're not paying me the wages. I'm getting seven, seven quid a week and working seven, seven days a week I said the brothers," which was, because some of us were called brothers, from the movement, in other farms around the area and there was one across the road I said, "he works six days a week and he gets 10 quid." And he said, "Oh but he's been there longer," and I said, "That's, yeah," I said, "well that's not the problem, that's not my problem, it's your problem."
- 06:00 Also, I have to put it to you I suppose that in the dairy you had to set up the hot water with a stove, we had to light a stove that's right, and I just happened to look at the paper I was using as kindling one day and it had new award rates for farm labourers in New South Wales. And it had dairy farm, mixed farm award rates and it went by age, experience and how much and I was supposed to be getting 11 quid a week and see I was getting seven see. And, "This one here Tom," because I kept it and he
- 06:30 looked that and he said, "Oh you can work six days, I'll give you Saturday off and I'll give you eight quid a week." And so I said, "Okay." So I took that, but I started looking for jobs, and in those days Australia was employed, everyone had a job, everyone could have had four jobs if they wanted, and it was not hard to get a job in Australia, yes, it's hard to believe what they have done. Anyway,
- 07:00 so I just went from there to, I heard there was a bloke looking for a drover, you just passed the word around. I also played football, soccer for the Deniliquin football team, which, let words get around, you know, who you know, sort of thing. So I went droving, told him I was leaving, packed up and left. I did one, one drive, with...

**Hang on a second, did you know how to ride a horse or do anything like that before you went?**

- 07:30 Yeah, there was a horse, old George I think, Tom hadn't sold the old bloody thing, old George, and I learnt to ride on him bareback and fell off I don't know how many times, but that gave me an idea. And, then when I went droving, I just had to sort of tell old Jack that I could ride.

**So did you get a sore bum first time you went out?**

- 08:00 Yeah, he was a, he was an old mongrel I found out later. Old Jack Holstein. He was a very hard bloke. He carried two 44 gallon drums of fresh water, and he didn't drink water he only drank tea and it was like bloody tar. But I like water, and, he just was very, very strict on the water rationing.
- 08:30 We had a bath once a, every couple of days, and he wouldn't throw that water out, the soapy was given to the dogs and I said, "What are you giving the soapy water to the dogs for?" And he said, "It'll grease them out, make them shitty," is what he said. He was a rough old mongrel. And, so I lasted one drove with him. We got to the sale yards in Hay, it was, that was, two months, three months drive or something like that, got my
- 09:00 cheque and I said, "I'm off Jack." And he said, "What?" And I said, "I had enough of you." I'd heard in the pub the night before when we got there, there was other drovers there, and I was just speaking, and they said, "Who you driving with?" And I said, "Old Jack Holstein." And they said, "Oh that bastard, you get away from him as soon as you can." I said, "Why?" He said, "He took a stock whip to the last bloke he had there." I said, "Your joking?" And he said, "No," he said, "at the stockyards up here, lashed him onto a tree."
- 09:30 So I wasn't going to let that happen to me so I just left him and I went back into Deniliquin and got a job doing formwork on the kerb and gutterings with an Italian bloke, Julio, Julio, some name. I worked there, that was hard yakka. I worked with him for a few weeks
- 10:00 until his brother came out from Italy and then he got the offsider's job so I went and worked as a brickies labourer then for a couple of old blokes, old diggers from the Second War, brothers, yeah they were. They were good to work with, they were good. I was with them for quite some time. I say some time I'm talking two months, three months or so.

**But was this all part of, how long say did you have be**

- 10:30 **doing the Big Brother Scheme, was there a contract, like you have to work for a year or...?**

No. Well if there was I broke it and no one ever caught up with me.

**But how could your mum, being an only child let you go?**

Couldn't stop me.

**So you were legal what after 16 you could make your own mind up?**

No, it was 21 in those days, or maybe it was 18, I'm not sure.

- 11:00 **For the Big Brother Scheme?**

No, no.

**When you came out the second time, because you came out when you were four right, and then you went back when you were eight and then you came back on the Big Brother Scheme and you were 17 were you then?**

Oh, jeez when did I come out, '63, '64?

'64.

I can't remember, 47 from that, what's that, 16 something.

**I failed maths, so you know,**

- 11:30 **16 or 17, when you came out, so there wasn't any contract like okay, well you've got to work for a year in Australia or you know.**

I don't know I can't remember. I can't, I don't even know if I had a passport when I came out. I have no recollection of those details, just not, wasn't interested.

**But you weren't going home, you'd made your mind up.**

No I was staying in Australia for sure, yeah.

**What was it about Australia then that you thought,**

- 12:00 **because you're doing all this hard yakka and you're working for some bastards, were you thinking it's still better than Dundee?**

Yeah, having left as a teenager, Scotland, I realised that summer lasts more than 10 minutes. And that was a big problem, weather. People who haven't experienced British weather have not experienced weather.

- 12:30 I mean I know Victoria's a mongrel place, and you can have all the seasons in one day, but damp cold, in Scotland is, goes, you can feel it in your bones. Doesn't matter how many clothes you're wearing, how



waterproof they are, when you got that fine mist, and it's winter, it goes right through you and you can feel it and it's just miserable, it's just miserable.

**It sounds like it.**

13:00 Yeah, if it's snow it's not a problem, snow is wonderful, you just don't feel it, but if it's damp, that's... No, I didn't like that and, again I, well, I just enjoyed the bush, enjoyed the openness of it. Yeah, I guess, I will go back to Scotland now, not to live, but I

13:30 would definitely like to go back and visit. But not the openness, I suppose it was the openness, the sense of freedom of no boundaries, yeah, yeah that was it. I mean you would drive, you'd go to a drive-in, in Australia you would drive to the, when they had drive ins, you would go to a drive-in, further travelling to a drive-

14:00 in then you would go on holidays in Britain. You know, you never thought twice about it, especially the nearest drive-in was two hours away, so you'd just get into the car and go down with the mates on a Friday night to a drive-in and come back.

**You'd be in France.**

Yeah, need a passport to go that way, but anyway.

**Sorry I got you off track, Brian, you were talking about working for the Italian bloke?**

Oh yeah, yeah.

14:30 It might have been Guido, Guido. Anyway his brother or a friend came out and he took the offside job so I went and worked for these two blokes, can't remember their names now, two brothers, as a brickies labourer and I was all set to become an apprentice brickie to them when I said, "Oh enough's enough, I'll join the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]."

**How did you go from being almost a brickie's labourer to joining the RAAF?**

15:00 A brickie's apprentice.

**A brickie's apprentice?**

How did I? I don't know, spur of the moment.

**Was it your gliding days maybe, thinking this would be good?**

Yeah, it probably, it probably reflected back to that sort of thing. I missed that camaraderie, that, that used to be in the services, it might still be to a degree. The discipline side of it, the team effort, yeah.

15:30 I suppose that's what I missed, and although I did enjoy working in the bush, I think I just needed something else.

**Could you have joined the Royal Air Force?**

Oh yeah. The Royal Air Force at the time actually, a lot of blokes that were in the Air Training Corps in Britain used that as a stepping stone, it was regarded as the, as an introduction to the air force

16:00 in Britain to the Royal, in fact all the cadets, the navy, the army and the air force in Britain, and I would imagine in Australia too at the beginning, they were formed with the object of introducing youngsters to the service before they joined. I'm quite sure that was the reason for the inception of the cadets schemes in Britain, and I would think in Australia too, because most of them started

16:30 during the Second World War. So to introduce youngsters and we're talking people from 13 up to enlistment age which was 17, I think, in Britain at that time, they could get an idea of how to march, how to dress, how to take orders. That sort of thing, yeah.

**So you joined the Royal Australia Air Force, and how did you**

17:00 **do that, did you just go down to the head office, and..?**

Well in those days, in country towns, the RSL [Returned and Services League] handled that. So you went down to the RSL and they had the application forms there, I filled out the application form, I think there might have been an officer, when I say officer an RSL welfare officer type person who would interview you, and say yeah, help you out with the form then it was sent away. Now although I was in New South Wales, Deniliquin was closer to

17:30 Melbourne, so it was cheaper then for the government to send me to Melbourne than to Sydney, and always looking after the pennies, that mob. So I went down to Melbourne for all my interviews and medicals and all that, and then enlisted in Melbourne.

**How did you find, had you been to Melbourne before?**

Passed through I believe.

**How did you find Melbourne?**

It's a city. I don't have much time for cities.

18:00 **You like the country.**

Yeah, it was busy, easy to get lost, it had trams, that's about all, dirty looking place.

**And how was your medical, was everything fine with you?**

Yeah, so, it was a case of, I think, I started all the applications in April, just seems to ring a bell, April, March or April,

18:30 and I was enlisted in July of '65. So I'd had a few jobs since coming out here in August '64 with the Big Brother Movement, August, September I think it would have been. So crammed a fair bit in those few short months, but you could in those days, as I said, jobs were everywhere. Everyone had a job, they were like bum holes.

19:00 Just, I don't know what's happened, or I do know what's happened since, but anyway, another story.

**Did you think that you'd end up going to war when you joined?**

No I didn't. This was 1965, Vietnam was not a big thing at that stage. The battalion, the first battalion didn't go over until 1965, so up until then it had only been the training

19:30 team, and I think the Caribou flight went over in '64, yeah RAAF Caribou flight, in the army support. So it wasn't a big thing. Conscription was going on at that time... conscription had started in '64 I believe. I remember that because, the farm I worked on in Deniliquin, the nephew

20:00 he wasn't conscripted. He was aged, he was 20, he wasn't conscripted because he was regarded as essential services, if you worked in the land, same as during the Second World War, you were, it was called a protected industry. But he volunteered anyway; he was going, which you could do. He didn't make it however, he was sharpening his knife on a

20:30 grindstone, power grinder one day and, he did it the wrong way and the knife went up, hit the ceiling, come back and speared him in the eye, so he lost his eye. Can't remember his name, he was a good bloke too. But he, yeah, so he didn't make it.

**What did you know about I suppose communism during that time when you were just signing up for the RAAF?**

21:00 I knew it existed and I knew it wasn't nice. My mother's sisters both married migrants after the war, the Second War. Chris married a Pole and Nan married a Ukrainian. Now

21:30 Poland and the Ukraine were under communist rule. And they did not have very good stories to tell, these two, my uncles. Julian the Pole, he was kept in a labour camp during the war. I think he was a Polish Army officer, so they kept them segregated after the fall of

22:00 Poland, and Nick being Ukrainian was in the Russian forces. He was a tank driver, and neither of them liked the Russians. You would think, well maybe the Pole, Julian wouldn't like the Germans but he said he was far better treated by the Germans than they ever were by the Russians, when the Russians released them, or took over Poland.

**Really?**

Yeah. He in fact, and Chris used to, they didn't have children, they used to go over to Poland

22:30 to see his people when they opened that sort of thing up, and they come back with horrific stories of how they were struggling in there and the scourge of communism was just so bad. Which is why so many Europeans left Europe after the war. It wasn't just because of the German side of things, it was trying to flee from the Russians, that was the evil.

23:00 They much preferred the Germans. I remember in Greta, just as an aside, our next door neighbour, they were white Russians, as they were called in those days I think, is it, Belarussia, something like that, whatever, (UNCLEAR) and they had terrible stories. They fled from the Reds, they hated them, I mean they hated them. What was his name, the son, Vovo, .

23:30 Vovo someone, and yeah, it was the Russians, they had had Germans occupying their area, their part of Russia during the war and they said they had no problems. The Germans treated them well, there were restrictions, obviously it was a war, but, when the Russians, pushed the Germans out it was terrible, they were just animals. So I did know a bit about that side of the communist thing.

24:00 And also Britain, that was the Cold War and Britain was very, very close to Europe, and Lucas that RAF station I mentioned, it was a fighter base, it had two aircraft on standby 24 hours a day armed ready to go. The whole V Force that was the, what they called the V Force, that was the British Vulcan Valiant and Victor bombers - there was the three, they were strategic long range

24:30 nuclear bombers. They could be scrambled within five minutes, with nuclear weapons as we understand

it, to attack predesignated targets in Europe. So Russia was a threat, communism was a threat, yeah.

**This is all part of post the Cold War and Korea?**

That's right.

**And did you know much about Korea, the 'Silent War' as they.**

No I didn't because it was...

**Silent.**

25:00 The Forgotten War. I knew a little bit from coming, when I got out here because my Uncle Gordon he was, he was like a lot of navy people, the term is jump ship. In other words they say this is a nice place, I'll stay here for a while and so they paid off, and without papers they just stayed. There was a general amnesty I believe.

25:30 So Gordon said, put out during the Korean War for volunteers to form what was called K Force. Which was the Australian Army Force and for those persons who were of dubious entry, they were granted Australian citizenship.

**If they volunteered?**

If they volunteered for K Force, so he did and so he went over to Korea. So I knew a little bit about Korea, but he didn't speak an awful lot, he just spoke about it being

26:00 bloody cold or flaming hot and it was very uncomfortable over there, they were living like rats in holes, and that's about it. And he didn't like any of them from Asia, none of them. Yeah so.

**So you did know a bit then about communism when you first joined up.**

Little bit, general, yeah.

**So how was the training then,**

26:30 **the training was in Melbourne?**

Edinburgh, South Australia. RAF Edinburgh, that's the name of the RAAF base.

**How did you get over there, by train?**

Yeah, train from Melbourne overnight, and picked up by a Commonwealth driver, Commonwealth car from the railway station, and taken out to Edinburgh which is a bit further north of Adelaide, closest town is Salisbury, Elizabeth. No, wouldn't know. Edinburgh

27:00 was a, the base itself was formerly a weapons research establishment area, it, was part of the Maralinga, Woomera rocket testing deal. So it was a number of Royal Air Force personnel on the base. They had, it was Royal Air Force service police, Royal Air Force fire fighters, Royal Air Force chefs, cooks, so there was still a fair

27:30 amount of Royal Air Force technicians on the base at Edinburgh at the time, mid '60's.

**And probably a lot of old boys, were they, Second World War ?**

A lot of Second World War people, were still in the service then, a lot of the drill instructors were Second War blokes.

**How did you find those guys as your instructors?**

Good, didn't have a problem with them.

**Did you think,**

28:00 **I made the right choice I didn't become a brickies apprentice?**

Yeah, I did, I did. I loved it from the first moment yeah, I really did. The air force was, I don't know what the situation was. I remember, problems with uniforms we didn't have, they didn't have any cap badges, gold cap badges, they'd run out, some clown had forgotten to put in an order.

28:30 So they didn't have cap badges for us and I thought this is strange, I mean this is a military outfit and they can't even clothe us properly and I remember that the uniforms, they had problems with the uniform colouring. Because it was dark blue in those days, that was the Royal Australian Air Force colour which I believe they've gone back to now, after their stint with air force blue or grey or whatever. But there were different shades of blue, and again I'm thinking what's going on, why can't they get the (UNCLEAR)

29:00 And you had uniforms which this, the bottom part would be dark blue, as it's supposed to be and your battle dress blouse would be a purpley blue, and it stood out like dogs, and I thought to myself, for a supposed big organisation, this is terrible. So I was a bit disappointed with that, yeah I was. I was also a bit disappointed in the age of

29:30 some of the equipment. Our boots we were issued with were stamped 1942. And I thought jeez, that's 23 years ago, and the sandshoes were those little white canvas things with the black rubber toe caps and they were the same vintage. We were issued with BVDs [Bradley, Voorhees & Day], they're back in now, you call them boxer shorts. They were marked 1942, 1943 and I'm thinking these things, they might be second hand even, you know.

30:00 There was just a terrible, I thought terrible stuff up with that sort of thing. I understand later, they were just getting rid of war stock. They were still getting rid of it in the '70's, there was that much of it made. But I enjoyed the air training, the recruit training, it was easy.

**Was that for three or six months?**

10 weeks, yeah. 10 weeks.

30:30 **How did you find the officers there?**

Let me think, officers, I can't remember them to tell you the truth. I cannot remember the officers, the person we were in most contact with was the Corporal Drill Instructor. A bunch of recruits would come in and they would go into what was called the pool flight, we were all pooled, there were three training squadrons,

31:00 one, two and three. You would go into a pool flight and you'd stay in a pool flight until enough recruits came up to form a recruit class which was about 30. So if you got there to Edinburgh just after a course started you had to wait until about 30 others arrived which in those days, seldom took more than a month. Recruiting was moving. But a pool flight meant that you

31:30 you did all the scungy jobs all around the place, like you went down to the kitchen and you washed the pots and pans and cleaned out the garbage and that sort of... It was just to keep you occupied during the day while you were getting paid.

**Did you have to do that before the others came?**

Yeah, I think I had about a week, week and a half in pool flight. Something like that I can't remember for sure, and then the course started.

32:00 And then went in the proper training.

**Can you tell us about the training?**

Drill, foot drill, and weapons drill, armours drill.

**Foot drill is marching?**

Yeah, and drill on the hop, how to turn, how to stand at ease, how to come to attention, how to wear your uniform, how to keep it clean. Weapon training, which is how to use a weapon, strip clean, assemble, load, unload, drills for when the weapon stops firing.

32:30 What causes it to stop, finding that out, getting it firing back as soon as possible again.

**Were you issued with a weapon?**

Oh yes.

**What were you given?**

SLR. It's a self loading rifle. Designation, it's proper designation was the L1A1, it was made in Australia under license at Lithgow. The weapon itself was designed in Belgium, by FN, which stands for Fabric

33:00 Nationale, Dammes Deger. I think it was based on a John Browning idea, you've heard of the Browning weapons. That, I think that company started by him, he left, yeah he ended up in Belgium doing all his designs there. Magnificent weapon, fired a standard NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] round which is a 7.62 calibre,

33:30 20 round magazine, semi automatic, gas operated, turn spring, top weapon.

**That's great detail, you're telling somebody who doesn't have a clue. That's great. I'd heard some story at some point that the Americans' were switching was it M1s [rifle] for SLRs [Self Loading Rifles] and the Australian's could get one of the American rifles?**

34:00 When was this?

**During Vietnam.**

Yeah, the standard Australian weapon was the SLR, and that was standard infantry weapon, standard rifle, it took over from the .303 [rifle].

**Which was World War II ?**

Which was World War II, World War I so the SLR came in, it came in about '64, I believe, too. So it was still a lot of new weapons being issued.

34:30 One thing I will say at this time, regarding that particular weapon, the weapon was designed so that after the last round had been fired from the magazine, because it was a gas recoil operated weapon, the working parts would be sent back into the body of the weapon and there was a pin which was in the weapon, part of it and the magazine platform or magazine follower

35:00 had an indent in it and it would catch this pin, and when it went up, push this pin up, the working parts would stay to the rear. So that immediately the operator, firer knew that his magazine was empty so that he wouldn't have to think, he'd just change magazines, put in a new magazine release the cocking handle and another round would be chambered for firing. That pin cost about a penny. And the

35:30 Australian politicians, public servants at the time, in charge of procurement said that's too expensive, we'll make the men count their ammunition, that's right we'll make them count their ammunition, as they did in the previous wars, and that'll save us a penny per rifle. Now I don't know how many people were wounded or lost their lives in Vietnam because of that but I do believe that there were a number of blokes at Long Tan who were shot,

36:00 and they still had ammunition on them. It's not a well known fact that the government wouldn't spend that money. The weapons nowadays have them, but back then they wouldn't spend that, that pin was an item, of the weapon. Later on, when I returned

36:30 from Vietnam, and we were doing instructional duties and after that I went to, because I instructed on a weapon, that's one of the things, I went to the ADG flight at Williamstown, as a senior NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] in charge of the flight, I put a pin in my own rifle. So they were available.

**Thank you for telling us that, because I certainly didn't know anything.**

No, not many people, if you didn't know the ins and outs, of the weapon of an instructor

37:00 or an armourer you wouldn't know and you wouldn't know the background to it, to that fact. I did have the paperwork that said how that happened, but over the years I just lost it.

**You didn't know all that then when you were a recruit?**

No didn't know the weapon could have that availability, it was never issued like that. There was no mention made of it, none of the instructors even knew it back then. Just from research I'd done myself afterwards that I found out.

37:30 I couldn't understand why the American weapons stayed to, action stayed to the rear, and ours didn't. There were a lot of things, but you learn as you go on, just life.

**So besides the marching, what did you call it?**

Foot drill.

**And the weaponry learning about that?**

There was field craft.

**Which is?**

Field craft is

38:00 tactical bush work, how to move in the bush so you're not seen or heard, camouflage and concealment speak for themselves. Map reading again, map reading, airmanship was a subject, that covered general air force type things, aircraft recognition, air force terminologies. Just familiarisation with

38:30 the air force way of life. What else did we do? There was the standard military discipline side of things, so we did air force law, we learnt a bit about air force law. We also learned about how to set up your room - you have to make your bed a certain way, every morning you have to strip your bed and makes what's called bed rolls, I don't think they do that any more. But

39:00 the bed roll is, you have one, two, three, yeah four blankets issued and two sheets, so you fold your sheets a certain way and you fold your blankets a certain, well you fold three of your blankets a certain way and you fold your fourth blanket a different way and you put on blanket lengthways folded along your bed, and then you put a blanket, shortened in there and then you put a sheet on top and then you put,

39:30 you make a sandwich of blanket, sheet, blanket. And then you wrap this other blanket around as tight as you can and then you turn it up and you have all the folds facing out from your pillow end and then you put your pillow on top and square it away and it's nice and neat and tight. And the old trick was it wasn't tight enough unless you could bounce a coin off the blanket, the top blanket, the fold blanket. So that was, I suppose some people would call it

40:00 bastardry for want of a better term, but it wasn't. The reason for it was that it made you strip your bed,

so that your bedding got aired, to start with. The fact that you then folded it all up again wasn't part of it, but it looked neat.

**Did you do it?**

Oh yeah, everyone did it, all recruits did that. All recruits, it was uniformity, it was being part of a team, everyone looked the same. I mean that's what the name uniform is, servicemen wear uniform, for uniformity. Yeah,

40:30 you had to fold your bombay bloomers, you had to fold your BVDs a certain a way, your hankies were folded a certain way, your socks were rolled. I still roll my socks the same way to this day, I found it the best way of storing socks you know. The top draw was the handkerchiefs, singlets and, handkerchiefs, singlets and underpants, the next draw was for socks. You never put socks in with underpants because they're from two different parts of the body so you don't want to cross infect

41:00 if someone might have tinea, you don't want tinea in his jocks. So you don't put your socks, people say what sort of nonsense is that, but it's not if you think of it. Most military type things, training in those days anyway, had a reason and a lot of it was to do with hygiene, it made sense to me but I'd been doing that with the Air Training Corps, I knew all that sort of stuff.

**Which would have been an advantage.**

It was oh yeah it was.

## Tape 3

00:35 **Still on training at Edinburgh, there was, I understand there was like a 90 day option with the air force?**

That's correct.

**How did that work?**

As I'm relating this about training, I'm going to use knowledge that I gained when I was an instructor as well as a recruit because

01:00 it ties in, it just might make it, well it makes it easier for me. So the 90 day option was, you signed on the dotted line you went away and you had 90 days. If you didn't want to continue in the air force within 90 days, you signed a piece of paper and you were out. Similarly if the air force thought you were a drongo we don't want you within 90 days we'll kick you out.

01:30 That's basically what it was, and some people did make use of that, some people got in there and thought, "Oh I don't like this Mummy, come and get me," and that's what happened, and we lost them, good.

**And what was it essentially about the air force that they didn't like from your experience?**

There wasn't a lot, there wasn't many but there was enough to know that it was happening.

02:00 I think a lot of them were homesick, because they'd never been away from home before. Some of them were just 17, and some others were just, would not accept discipline, they'd never been disciplined, they could do what they liked at home. They just lived like pigs, their mum did all the cleaning up, picking up after them and so they just,

02:30 I think that was it, those two type things, homesickness, and just wouldn't accept doing things for themselves.

**And how did you cop the discipline at the time?**

Didn't worry me. I'd had how many years of it at Air Training Corps, just, it was easy, it was old hat. So I didn't worry about it. It's necessary, it is necessary to function discipline, everyone's discipline, we have two types of discipline

03:00 there's imposed, or there's self discipline, but everyone has discipline whether people like it or not. They get up in the morning, they go to work, they eat, these type of things, is it is discipline yeah.

**Did you have a preference or a particular, were there any part of the training that you liked or disliked?**

I like drill.

03:30 I liked it all, I liked weapon training. We did in those days what was called NBC, that was Nuclear Biological Chemical Warfare training. So we were shown films and photos of, the effects of nuclear weapons, chemical and biological

- 04:00 weapons, what they do to parts of the body. We were shown training, what they called training films. Of Hiroshima and some of the victims there and we were put to the gas chamber test. And it's not really gas chamber test, it's a gas mask test, it's to test the person's ability to mask up and ensure the mask is forming an airtight seal.
- 04:30 So that's one thing, that's two things and the third thing is to give the wearer confidence in the masks ability to protect. So that's the three things, but it's called commonly a gas chamber test. What it is, they used in those days they were called Capsules Lachrymatory. Lachrymatory is big word for crying, or make you cry, but that's the term, but what they were, they were little capsules,
- 05:00 1942 again, I keep going back, it was a good year for making things. It must have been in the services, and they were just little like glass vials, capsules, and you put them on a heat source, candle something like that and they would melt and as they melted they would release this chemical agent and it was a tear gas agent and they would put so many in a room or a tent, and it was
- 05:30 very specific, one capsule for so many square metres so you didn't overdose people or under dose. And it was put in there, the instructor would be wearing his mask of course, he would be in there, set it all up, and once the strength was where it should be the troops would go in without your mask, you'd have it in your hand. But you went in and you would stand there and you would breathe, and you were made to breathe by
- 06:00 the fact that the instructor would then call you up one at a time and say name, rank, serial number. So you had to take a breath to say it, so then you would feel the effects of this agent, tightening of the throat, burning of the throat, stinging of the eyes, and then when the instructor saw that you had started to feel the effects, he'd say put your mask on, so you'd put your mask on, clear the mask. He would check to make sure that you were breathing properly, that the seal was on
- 06:30 then out you went, and that's virtually what happened. Next one do the same, next one in do the same. And when you got outside mask off, face the wind, don't touch, you weren't allowed to touch your eyes or your face because all you would so was rub the agent in your eyes and make it worse. You stood faced into the wind so it would blow it away from you. You couldn't touch your clothing and then touch your face, because it was absorbed into the material, that was probably the worst thing.
- 07:00 That was probably the worst thing, that's what your question was, sorry it took so long to explain it.
- No, that's fantastic.**
- That was the worst thing because it was damned uncomfortable, yeah.
- And what would you do, I mean once you'd been standing there in the wind, letting it all blow off, what would you have to do after that?**
- Well normally that period was the last one of the day, that training period, so after everyone had done that, then you would clean your masks
- 07:30 remove filters and replace them with new ones, if they were going to be used the next day or just clean the masks throw away the filters. Then you would finish, go back to your quarters, and, shower, hang your clothes out to dry overnight, air out overnight and then you'd just shower it off. So that was why it was the last period of the day, yeah and then that was it. Anyone who was still suffering the affects would get, you know after a while,
- 08:00 hour or two hours still feeling it, they were taken down the medical section. But I don't recall anyone going there, it was just all over within half an hour.
- So there as 10 weeks at Edinburgh, was it toward the end of that that you were allocated or given the option of specific duties?**
- No, when you enlisted, you put down what
- 08:30 you wanted to do. Which trade or, you know, there was airframe fitters and engine fitters, there was radio technicians, air radio technicians, ground general hands, chefs or cooks, cooks assistants, the whole range. And part of the interviewing process or application process was tests, aptitude tests.
- 09:00 I don't understand how they work because the questions just don't make any sense whatsoever to anyone and you're told there are no right and wrong answers, so if there are no right and wrong answers why are doing a test. But it's an American type thing it would seem. It's probably changed now and those tests were related to what you wanted to do. Mumbo jumbo [unintelligible] to me, but if you wanted to be
- 09:30 a cook for example, then you would do this particular aptitude test series. If you wanted to be an engine fitter you would do this particular aptitude test series, just you would have general aptitude. And what these tests did, we were told, was they would say whether you were suitable to do that work and whether you weren't. And it worked for some reason, because
- 10:00 most people who weren't suitable for this particular job didn't get it and did do a good job of what they were told, you would be better off doing this. And that was virtually it. I got through then, to do what I

wanted to do which was engine fitting. But yeah, that's how it was worked out, aptitude tests, psyche tests.

10:30 Probably a better term for it nowadays, see if you're psychologically suited to do the thing, but it was called aptitude.

**Actually it brings me back to another question. Because I know in World War II if you got two arms and two legs and you're willing, you're in, what other kinds I guess, aptitude tests or other tests would they put you through during enlistment I guess just to suss you out to see if you were, you really wanted to...**

11:00 **go into the air force?**

I can't remember now, I know there was a whole battery of them. There was psych interviews, psych tests, aptitude tests, medical examinations, general interviews but I can't remember what they were specifically. I would imagine that some of those tests would still be current, or similar subjects,

11:30 tests, subject matter would be similar now. You still have to do psych test I would think. Yeah.

**Do you recall, can you recall at all what they talked to you about at the interview?**

No, gone.

**Worth a shot.**

Yeah but I can't, no.

**No it's good to know, but...**

Too long ago. There was general mathematics test as well.

12:00 Algebra, mathematics, that was the two standard questions, yeah that's' it.

**So when you went to Wagga that was to do your technical engine training?**

Yep.

**And how long were you doing that before you worked out that maybe not?**

12:30 Yeah, let's see, I went to Edinburgh in July, and I think I went to Wagga in September and then went, again pool flight in Wagga to wait until there was enough people come up to do the trainee mechs [mechanics] course. It must have been, it must have been about the November,

13:00 because the DI's [Drill Instructor] course started in the January of the following year. So, to allow for Christmas breaks, applications, interviews, administrative procedures, two months, so I would have been November. So say, September, October, so two months, two and a half months I decided this is not for me.

**Not too long.**

Nah, it didn't take long. I didn't

13:30 like that filing.

**On leave during this time, what would you get up to, sort of around your training days?**

Let's see. Well there wasn't actually leave, see you weren't entitled to leave in the service until you'd done 12 months. You got 20 days leave a year,

14:00 recreational leave and that worked at one, one and a half days a month, does that work out about right, yeah I think it worked something like that. And, you could take, I think once you'd done six months, you could take leave in advance. But you couldn't take more than you'd accrued in the six months, so you could take maybe 10 days leave.

14:30 But I didn't bother because I didn't have it, so I just, at Wagga [Wagga Wagga] over Christmas, I stayed on the base and I volunteered for guard duty and that accrued me leave in lieu, because you worked seven days. You were entitled for the weekend, that's called leave in lieu, leave in lieu of extra pay I should imagine, because you don't get extra pay in the services for

15:00 working overtime, so we take leave and that, that gave me two or three days leave around that Christmas or just after that Christmas period, which I used in Sydney on the way up to Amberley for the course. What did I do in Sydney? My parents had come out to Australia by that stage, they were living in Sydney, Lakemba, was the suburb, which I'm

15:30 Lakemba, yeah. So, I stayed with them two or three days I suppose. I went to the Cross, as everyone did, met some Yanks, sailors there, who invited me back to their submarine, USS Archerfish. It was second, I think it was, the Archerfish it was a survey vessel

16:00 at that time, the US Navy but I think the Archerfish had fired the last American torpedo of the Second



World War in action. I think I that was it's claim to fame the USS Archerfish. Anyway, I went on this sub.

**What were your impressions of the Yanks [Americans] at that time?**

I thought they were alright, yeah I didn't see anything, didn't have any hassles with them. No I thought they were alright people.

16:30 Yeah, at that time.

**We'll get to that later.**

Yeah, moving right along.

**And what about the rest of the public perception of servicemen at that stage?**

It depended on where you were. I remember on the way up to Wagga

17:00 from Edinburgh, we stopped off at Blighty, because it's on the road up, sort of not far off the track, and we called into the pub. Terry Cain was the publican at the time and a friend of mine who was on the same rookie course as me, was going up to Wagga as well, we called into Terry Cain's pub,

17:30 the Blighty Hotel on a Sunday and we wore uniform which was our 1A uniform which the ones with the gold buttons and the belt what have you, with the cap, with this black bloody cap badge because they hadn't ordered enough gold ones and they hadn't arrived yet. Anyway, we fonts in, opens the door, walks in and Terry Cain's jaw dropped, really low.

18:00 And I said, "What's wrong?" He looked and I took me cap off and he says, "It's you, you mongrel," he said. "I thought it was the cops and we were getting raided," because it was Sunday there was no opening on Sunday in those days. But that didn't worry the pubs out in the country so he was a bit upset about that. Yeah, but in the bush, in those areas, they thought it was great, servicemen were looked up to, they were looked upon I would say, as patriots, as

18:30 doing the right thing by the country. As worthwhile people, yeah, and in the city, I think if you got to speak with someone it would be a similar perception, a similar view but they didn't go out of their way to say g'day to you. But that's cities to me, city's are very impersonal places. So I think that was more the nature of a city

19:00 than it is of the people that are in there, it's just the way of life. But overall servicemen were accepted, were liked, yeah.

**And what were the noises, I guess, about toward Vietnam at this stage?**

I don't recall too much about it, I don't recall a lot being said, or any media

19:30 about Vietnam at that stage. This is, see this is the end of '65 isn't it yeah. We knew the battalion was over there, the battalion was, I believe the battalion was working with 173rd Airborne at that time, it be in (UNCLEAR) hadn't moved into Nui Dat yet. I think Nui Dat was '66 they moved in so it, there wasn't a lot of

20:00 information that I recall coming back because they were part of an American unit. And that's about all I can remember that... no there wasn't thing that I can recall other than that, yeah. There were certainly no demonstrations.

**Bit early.**

There was no, no demonstrations.

**See much, I guess,**

20:30 **support within the community towards...**

Vietnam?

**Yeah.**

No, I didn't, I didn't take any notice if there was. I was, wrapped up in my little air force world, yeah cocooned. Yeah, and not...

**And so what was it like, and your parents had moved out to Australia,**

21:00 **they'd followed you out effectively?**

Yeah, yeah.

**What was that like catching up with them again after a few months?**

Much of a muchness as it was before.

**You got to get up to Amberley?**

I've got ...

**You were eager to get up to Amberley.**

I was eager, yeah, yeah, well it was, a new experience. See at that time,

21:30 I would think in, well in those days most people, at 17 want experiences, and the more the better, bring it on. So that was it, new experience, new life every day different, good, so I wanted to come to Amberley, yeah. So we got up, of course Amberley's out there at Ipswich, the RAAF place there, I've come up here.

**Now I understand you got over the**

22:00 **engine course pretty quickly but why the DI course what caught your eye?**

Well it was about drill and ceremonial work, and that was something I enjoyed, I enjoyed it. I was better than the average person at it,

22:30 from my experience previous. So it was something that I could do, well and it was something I enjoyed, why not make that your job. Or so I thought and so I did, that was probably the reason.

**So can you walk us through what they taught you?**

Drill Instructor course. Yeah, up at Amberley was conducted by in those days it was called Ground Defence Training Flight.

23:00 It was part of the number three aircraft depot, which was an aircraft maintenance depot so to speak at Amberley, one of the major units on the base. What did we do there? Well we did what we did at rookies, we drilled, rifle drill, foot drill, drill at the hop, drill on the move. We did more weapon training.

23:30 This time we did more weapons as well as more weapon training. We did SLR, we did Owen machine, sub machine gun we did the, nine millimetre pistol. We did hand grenades, fragmentation, high explosive and smoke. We did the M60 machine gun which was coming in. We did the L2A1, which

24:00 was the heavy barrel or the automatic version of the rifle. It was the same calibre, same general design, but it had a heavier chrome barrel because it could fire fully automatic as well as single shots. It had a foldable bi pod leg because on an automatic, heavy automatic weapon you need support and it had a 30 round magazine rather than the 20 round magazine - gave you more ammunition - and it was heavier.

24:30 So, weapon training, we did more field craft, we did map reading, we did a little bit of battle craft, minor tactics. We did NBC stuff again, Nuclear Biological Chemical warfare, and air force law, and then on top of that we had instructional technique. We were taught how to teach. We also

25:00 learned man management, in other words a little bit of psychology came into it although it wasn't called that but it's what it was. Man management, leadership training, how to be an NCO in other words. And, that was then, all of that was then put together and we then taught the subjects we were being taught and that was to see if we

25:30 could teach so we learned the subject and then we learned how to teach the subject. And that was the 10 week course.

**And what were some of the main things they would tell you in terms of having to teach new recruits. I mean you'd actually, because you'd been a new recruit, so what they were telling you in terms of how to teach it, I guess in terms of attitude towards recruits?**

I, recruits

26:00 know nothing, so you have to teach them, so you must accept from the beginning that they are going to learn from you. So everything you do must be right because they will mimic you. So it's just, it may well be a case of don't do what I do, do as I say, but as in instructor it has to be do as

26:30 I do and do as I say. So instructor has to do it right all of the time, otherwise he loses credibility. You lose credibility you lose respect, if you lose respect, you're finished, they'll walk all over you, or they'll ignore you. So an instructor has to be as perfect as he can be, or she, I have to say that nowadays all the time. Set an example and lead by example.

27:00 A good example the proper example. There wasn't so much in the instructional side with regards to how to conduct yourself with the recruits as recruits, that came more into the man management and leadership training side of things rather than the instructional technique. As in instructor

27:30 you know, they don't, that's fairly black and white, the man management side is a little bit different because that's when you have to start teaching or responding to people or treating people as individuals. So you have to work out the foibles of Joe as opposed to Fred and that sort of thing, and remembering that the main aim is always to form a team.

**Exactly.**

So at the end of the 10 weeks

- 28:00 every individual has to still be an individual but they have to be an individual team. So you can't take away their individuality, but you must meld that individuality of everyone in there to form a unit, cohesive team.

**This is really interesting, because a lot of fellows talk about getting broken down to form a team, so it's really interesting to hear this.**

Yeah, I remember before I joined up, some of the old people, down here, the old troops, they said to me

- 28:30 in the pub, had said, "Oh yeah, that's where they make you or break you." You see, well I didn't find that to be the case at all, I mean it was pussy work to me. But some blokes couldn't handle it, as I said before, and the, thinking back on it now, over the years, because I was instructing all my service,

- 29:00 it's not a case of breaking people down, that's not how I looked at it, it's you have to start with a platform and everyone has to be at the same position on that platform, the same level on that platform, so some people you have to lift up and some people you have to settle a little bit. And you, because if you don't start everyone on the same level

- 29:30 then you're not going to develop the team spirit as you go because someone's always going to stick up and someone's always going to look bad so you have to try and, I used to say, "You have to reduce them to the lowest common denominator," whatever that might, I know it's a mathematical term, but it's the easiest way I could grab the concept. You have to, and that's an individual, you have to treat the individual, this bloke you know, you have to

- 30:00 give him a little bit of a gee up every now and again. This bloke has to work with, with pats on the shoulder even when he doesn't really deserve them and this bloke's got to be put in his place always and that's the sort of thing, and you really have 30 personalities, if it's 30 you're dealing with, 30 personalities running around, plus your own running around in your mind and you got to try and level them out and then when you get that level, and it takes a couple of weeks, then you can build. It takes

- 30:30 about that length of time, or I noticed it did, about two to three weeks, which takes about the same length of time that they start remembering that the left foot's on this side of the body and the right foot's on that side and you always step off with the left foot first. And you can start to see that their grasping now without having to think it's becoming a habit of doing what needs to be done in the marching the drill, and in the

- 31:00 cohesiveness, cohesiveness starts. They start to become together as they develop as an individual knowing what to do, without having to think too hard about it, then that develops in the team and the team starts to come, the unit starts to develop there, yeah.

**So how did you take to being an instructor initially?**

It was a bit difficult for me because I

- 31:30 I was 18. I think I'd just turned 19 just after I was promoted or the day before I was promoted, and that's very young. I mean that's, most people would say that's too young, because a lot of the recruits were the same age, some were even older. I had no problems whatsoever,

- 32:00 none whatsoever. I remember that the majority of the instructors, all of the instructors in fact that I was associated with the other DI's were all older than me, they were 25 maybe 24 was the youngest, most of them were married. So I associated with them, in social activities, I associated with them during the day when we weren't instructing, when we were preparing

- 32:30 or having lunch or what have you, so I was getting from them, subconsciously, feedback at their age group level. So I was treated by them as being of that age group, whatever it may be, treated as an instructor, as a corporal and, and therefore I didn't consider that I was 18. All I considered was that I was Corporal Drill Instructor.

- 33:00 And I think that attitude, and as I say the unconscious assistance from the other older blokes to put that into me, was what made it so easy. To be an instructor notwithstanding the age, and if an instructor or any leader shows confidence in his own ability or her own ability and does the job properly and well,

- 33:30 then whoever he's leading, will follow you don't have to push them. So yeah, is that what you're looking for?

**Yeah, there's no right or wrong.**

Another one of those psychs again.

**But was it awkward because of that because you were kind of, you were the age of a recruit, but ...**

- 34:00 I never found it awkward, I didn't, never found it awkward. I put that down to what I've just said in the past but also to the training up here at Amberley, which instilled that confidence. And the people I

would think, would most influence me in that, there was two instructors we had that I would say did the most influencing. One was, well both

- 34:30 were Warrant Officers. There was Warrant Officer Mick Seabold, still alive, Second World War Australian Army in the Desert, he was a Warrant Officer ADI, which was an Aerodrome Defence Instructor in those days, which is like the army, infantry type work. He was the Warrant Officer, instructor at the GDTF [Green Devils Task Force],
- 35:00 and he looked after us for the defence, all of the Ground Defence type things, weapon training, field craft, that. The other bloke was the Warrant Officer, was Jack Harris he was the Warrant Officer Disciplinary. He looked after drill side of things and the air force law and they were very, very good instructors, very good instructors. They knew their job and they knew it
- 35:30 well and they had the ability to get the message across. A lot of people are instructors, on, in name only, they passed the course and they say well I'm an instructor now but they don't have the... The instructor, like a school teacher must have the ability to impart the knowledge that they have. Some people haven't got it, they can throw it out there, and hope that someone will catch it or it will stick on someone, but they can't, you know what I mean, pass it on. So these two people
- 36:00 did and they influenced me a lot. I tried to emulate their methods. And I found that it worked.

**And what sort of methods stood out to you as something to aspire to.**

Enthusiasm that they showed to the subject that they were teaching, whatever it was, and it was all engrossing.

- 36:30 Enthusiasm, I mean really, especially with Mick Seabold. He had a nickname the Screaming Skull, he lost his hair from age, he wasn't really, you know real young. But he'd get this bloody gun, do it this way, really into it. And you could see he was fully focused in what he was doing at the time,
- 37:00 he was intense in what he was doing. And when you have that sort of fervour, it catches, it's like going to a football game and everyone's getting up and up and up, and you get the same feeling. Does the same, it's inspiring. And Jack, Jack wasn't as demonstrative as Mick but the intensity was still there you could see it in his eyes,
- 37:30 you could feel it in his voice, the tone of his voice. Law, Jack Harris knew the manual of air force law which was a big book, backwards. He would say, and I remember this, his introductory lecture to law, "Think of anything about law you blokes, ask me a question, anything you think of," and because we'd done a little bit of law in recruit training
- 38:00 we could ask questions. "What section of the act would cover..." whatever the offence was. And he'd say, "That's Section 27, Sub Section A 1 you'll find it on page dah, dah, it's about half way down and there's a note that says this, that," and you'd go to the book, it just comes straight out.
- 38:30 Brilliant, brilliant, so that's the intensity that he had, he just knew it so well.
- And was Mick as enthusiastic when he wasn't teaching, just as a personality?**

Yeah, that was his style, that was him. Jour de vivre, I think they call it. Yeah he was

- 39:00 He went on and he took a commission, he became a Flight Lieutenant Defence Officer and Chief Instructor. He was one of my Chief Instructors when I was at recruit training, in fact when I came down it was Mick that told me that I'd been posted to 2 Squadron in '69, and he's still around, still a member of the association and, he'd be 80, 80 now, yeah.

## Tape 4

- 00:33 **So you were a single chap at that time and you stayed at the base, and you said that there were a few things that you could do recreation wise?**

Yeah, every base had, depending on it's locality, but every base I recall being on, had a

- 01:00 swimming pool, only open when the weather was suitable of course, being South Australia. They had a picture show for the movies, you had a wet canteen, which was your alcohol canteen, you had a dry canteen, which was snack bar, juke box, where you could buy your ablution gear, shaving, soap,
- 01:30 gifts, towels, that general type store. There was a gymnasium with PTIs [Physical Training Instructor], so you could do weights, or climb ropes or vault horses or play badminton on the badminton court. What's that American thing they play, basketball, squash courts.
- 02:00 All the various sporting grounds, cricket pitches, and all the football codes were there as well.

**Did you continue playing soccer?**

Yes, yes I did, I mentioned before there was a RAF, Royal Air Force on the base and they had a football, soccer team and they played in the local bums league around the place around Adelaide and I joined them and played Saturdays with them, trained during the week at nights, can't remember when but, and I played with that team.

02:30 **Were they any good?**

Yeah, got to say that.

**In case one of them comes back and smashes you. Can you tell me what a PTI is please?**

A PTI. A Physical Training Instructor, sorry...

**That's okay, so you had somebody train you there, in the gym for instance.**

At recruit training, I didn't mention that was another subject, was physical training,

03:00 oh I don't know, six periods a week maybe, six 40 minute periods or 45 minute periods a week physical training. Where you would do it was general training, trying to increase the level of fitness by, what they, circuit training, rope climbing, no weight work

03:30 except with a medicine ball. Just general, general level of fitness level, yeah. On normal bases, PTIs are there for assistance for people who wish to develop any weight training or physical fitness, the PTIs will set out a program for them, will monitor them, show them how to do various exercises or, or weights.

04:00 **So you can say I want to lose 10 kilos. Maybe you wouldn't say that.**

Well in the service, when I was in, that was being focused upon more and more the fact that so many people were not maintaining their height to weight ration, and when Kenneth Cooper came out with his aerobic program, the aerobics came into

04:30 bear a great deal. And one of the reasons I think aerobics came into the service, is because you've got such an age group, remember the youngest could be 17 and the oldest could be 54, remember that you don't get out till you're 55, obviously as you get older, say you become less active. Most older people in the services have rank so they're in a supervisory role, so they're doing a lot of administrative work in the offices, sitting down all the time,

05:00 but aerobics is geared, or was in the service, anyway, it was geared to age. So if you're 17 you should be able to run a mile in 12 minutes, for example, I don't know if that's the figures. When you're 35 you should be able to run the same mile in 15 minutes. When you're 45 you should run the same mile in 20 minutes, when you're 50 you run the same mile in 25 minutes. So as you get older so the length of time

05:30 to do the exercise increases, but it still gives you that level of fitness and that was the beauty of aerobics, still is one of the beauties of aerobics. It takes recognition of the fact that as you get older, you can't do things as fast. But you can still do them, yeah, but to loose 10 kilos, as you were saying with the PTI, that would be one part. The air force as I say in my days and with the advent of aerobics, some of the

06:00 nursing sisters were trained in that area of...

**Diet, nutrition**

Diet, nutrition diet and that would be combined so you'd go and see the nursing sister who was dealing with that, she would do the various tests, the blow in that tube and all those other test, resting heart rate, weight, fat tests and then she would work out what you should be for your weight,

06:30 and your height and your age, what you needed to lose, what your blood pressure was, what your heart rate should be resting and then she would give you a program. So say this is what you should be eating, this is what you should be doing, minimum amount of exercise etcetera. And then they would start up a schedule and then you would go across to the PTI and you say this is what I got to do, and the PTI would say well you better start with this, and then he will work out a physical program for you,

07:00 and then it would be combined so that you were not doing one isolated, so.

**That's a good idea.**

A top idea, yeah, just not many people took advantage of it.

**But correct me if I'm wrong, but the RAAF didn't do conscripts, is that correct.**

That's correct, only the army.

**So these would be men volunteering to go into the RAAF, so...?**

Every man a volunteer.

**Would they take fat people and then try to...?**

No there was a medical. And there still is.

07:30 And the services all have, even conscripts had to pass the medical fitness level. What it is I don't know but you had to have two eyes, you couldn't be colour blind unless you were colour blind safe. Whatever that meant, you had to have such, so and so hearing ability. Heart, blood pressure etcetera and no communicable diseases. No flat feet.

08:00 Just general, but everyone had to pass that right, so there would be people that come that would be plump, but they would be fit, physically and medically fit so they would come in.

**What about combat training, Brian, you mentioned to Chris [interviewer] that that was another part, part to the training?**

Not in the recruit course but on drill instructor course

08:30 we did yeah, unarmed combat. The PTIs as I say who do the physical side, they also taught unarmed combat that was the drill instructor mustering which is a term the air force use, or used for jobs. So you have a clerical mustering and you have a trade mustering, a technical mustering, the mustering of drill instructor was part of the mustering group called the

09:00 Defence and Disciplinary Trade Group. It covered, aerodrome defence instructors, drill instructors, service police, physical training instructors, fire fighters and warrant officers disciplinary, that was all in the one group, so it was because that particular group had similar functions. They were all NCOs,

09:30 they were all in a physical, physically demanding role in the service, so they were grouped together. And, unarmed combat was part of the training for all of those people and PTIs were in the group so they did the training, they were the instructors.

**Would that entail being able to kill somebody silently?**

No. No that's

10:00 a specialist type task. These were more along the lines of general defensive moves. We did break falls, running break falls, so that if you tripped over a stick or something during an attack you could roll out of it without breaking too many bones. Defence against knife attacks,

10:30 bayonet attacks. Overt type work, not the clandestine covert type killing with, those areas I don't know. I'm not saying the PTIs themselves wouldn't be trained in that, but those, that's a specialist type job, it takes a certain people to be able to do that and I think that's handled mainly by the commando regiment and the

11:00 Special Air Service in this country.

**So is there a section of RAAF that does that?**

I don't know if there is, I wouldn't know now. I've been out since 1980, seven, so I don't know what they do.

**I was just trying to add that up. It was too long.**

Fair while.

**Tell me what was the music and the**

11:30 **swinging '60s like in Australia during that time? Were you part of that?**

Yeah, I suppose I was, I came out here in what was it, '64 at 17, 16, something 17, the Beatles were huge, the Mersey Sound was huge.

**What is Mersey Sound?**

Liverpool is on the River Mersey.

**Mersey right.**

And so

12:00 the sound became known as the Mersey Sound. Beatles weren't, believe it or not the first, they were the first to reach big stardom, but there were a whole heap of other groups there at the same time.

**That had the Mersey Sound.**

That had what became the Mersey Sound. Jerry and the Pacemakers. He had the Pacemakers, they had that, what was called the Mersey Sound, although he had a piano in it, which the Beatles didn't use until later on in their music. Swinging Blue Jeans, the Hollies,

12:30 I can't think, there's a whole heap of groups, not all of them were from Liverpool mind you. The Stones, which were slightly different, they were from London. Dave Clarke Five, that was a London based group, there were some from, I think the Hollies came from Manchester, but anyway, that type of music

was just given the generic term the Mersey Sound because there were so many groups from Liverpool.

- 13:00 That was just something, it just seemed to be a transition I think, change overnight, as I recall, because I was still in Scotland when it happened. One day we were listening to Elvis, Beachboys, Petula Clarke, Steve Lawrence and Edie Gormet, Percy Faith, and his orchestra, bit of Aker Bilk, Kenny Ball
- 13:30 and the Jazzmen. These are British you probably haven't heard of. Middle of the road I suppose you would call it now, in Britain. We didn't have the heavy, oh Cliff Richard of course, and the Shadows. We didn't have the heavy rock that was in America, coming from the Negroes. There was a lot of groups in Britain who were starting to sing that type of music.
- 14:00 They were picking it up from over there, but it wasn't big as in America. Britain was developing it's own style I suppose which is what happened eventually. So it was sort of middle of the road, easy listening type music with a little bit of jive every now and then. Roy Orbison was big in Britain, very, very big, Roy Orbison and then the Beatles came. And I remember one Saturday night I was sitting down watching TV
- 14:30 at home in Dundee and they had, we had, they used to have them here, 'Bandstand', do you remember Bandstand, they had shows like that in Britain, I think it was called, 'Jukebox', 'Jukebox Saturday Night', something like that, one of those shows and they, I remember, saying, "And here's something you won't have seen or heard before it's going to do wonders we think,
- 15:00 it's a group called the Beatles. They're from Liverpool and the song is Please, Please Me." Everyone is proper, sitting there and out they come and they're wearing black pants, and they look like black pointy winkle pickers, remember the winkle pickers? Boots, black roll neck, turtle neck sweater and black leather jackets.
- 15:30 And they hit Please Please Me. Well the place went wild you could, you could feel it, even from the TV [television]. I could sit there and think, this is just, this is, I still get goose bumps, this is something different, we never heard this before. And they went mad, the audience started screaming then, and then you could see the panel, it might have been Jukebox Saturday Night, anyway, they're away
- 16:00 and that was the start of it. Now that was a Saturday night and I remember it, it was in black and white, and I'll remember that forever and that was the start. Now we didn't know at the time, but the Beatles had already been big hits in Hamburg in Germany. That's where they started their, international sort of side of things. They'd been huge in Liverpool in the Cavern, and they'd already made a recording called Love Me Do, which I hadn't heard, it hadn't done a great deal in the charts in
- 16:30 Britain. It had in Liverpool of course and it did later when the Please, Please Me was the big one in Britain, huge yeah. And then the start, what came after that, How Do You Do It, Buddy, Jerry and the Pacemakers and the rest just started and it was overnight, overnight. I remember the next weekend I was straight down to the
- 17:00 record shop and I couldn't get in, it was packed. Packed. And in those days, in Britain the records, record shop had booths, three, or four, five six booths, depending on the size of the shop and you'd walk in and you'd say record such and such please, and they'd give you a record, say booth three, and you'd go in put on the turntable, put on your earphones, and play it. So you can say yeah, that's the song I wanted, oh that's crap. And then you'd take it back to them
- 17:30 And you'd say what about, and you could just try, try before buying by listening to the music, yeah. Now I believe you can do that now in some of shops. Sanity whatever, you have these little headphones that you can, but they were booths in those days, separate booths, and you couldn't get into the booths, you couldn't get into the shop, everyone was screaming for this Please, Please Me. I still have original Beatle records, down there. Still have the original vinyls. Don't know if I'll every get rid of them. They'd be worth, I'd think a dollar

18:00 nowadays.

**I've stumbled across a treasure chest of music information. So did you wear, in Australia, did you wear the winkle pickers and all that kind of gear?**

Not in Australia. But I did in Britain yeah, that was '63, so I didn't leave until '64 so I had about 12 months I suppose, just over 12 months and, yeah.

- 18:30 Teddy Boys, the, Teddy Boys and Teddy Girls, they were the thing. You called them Bodgies and Widgies out here.

**Are they the ones that wore those brothel creepers?**

Brothel Creepers the big BC's, yeah, loved them, crepe soles, white crepe soles and suede tops. Yeah, shoes and boots yeah, desert boots they came to be called years later as well. And the best ones were the thick white soles with no

- 19:00 heel step, it was flat. You had a heel step, then that wasn't as good as the flat one. You're the first person I've heard say that in 30 years. I say it but.

**I don't why they were called brothel creepers?**

I have no idea, I have no idea, just a term. Stove pipe pants, stove pipe pants, with piping, I remember them. They were beautiful, these teddy boys

19:30 and teddy girls they had dress sense that was phenomenal, I mean it leaves all this modern garbage for dead, I mean stove pipe pants, winkle pickers or, they came in after the brothel creepers, they had a pipe up the seam, so you might have dark blue pants then you'd have this beautiful pink piping, thick pipe up the seam of the pants and around the pocket flaps, around the pocket edges.

20:00 The jacket, you'd have these beautifully tailored jackets, sometimes a bit of padding in the shoulder, wide lapels sometimes, sometimes narrow, they got really good then started doing narrow, narrow lapels, but there would be piping on the outside of it,

**Beautifully made.**

Oh, absolutely and they'd be bright colours too. They'd have lemon, lemon suits with green piping or

20:30 cherry or burgundy piping, just absolutely beautiful.

**Did you have one of those suits?**

No, I wasn't permitted. They weren't cheap mind you, I didn't get anywhere except winkle pickers, that was all I managed to get. And oh, what else was big, black was a big colour in those days. Black shirts, oh yeah, I didn't ever get a black shirt, but black, red and white.

21:00 Strange, black, red and white pull overs, they were big, mainly black but with a red and a white band across and I got one of those. My parents relented, so that was the fashion and the other fashion was with the shirts, the men's shirts they used to wear the collars like that. That was the in thing, you wore it, they didn't use that stupid American term, cool, but you were in if you had this,

21:30 you were there, oh tops. Yeah, and if they wore a jacket without a tie, the collar went outside the jacket, went over the top of the jacket collar, so you had the jacket, with your shirt collar was over the top.

**How did you find Australia in the fashion stakes after...**

Backwards, in a word.

**Well you'd seen all this that had taken off in England and in Europe, and then you came to Australia,**

22:00 **was it just taking off then?**

It was. It was starting to, your bodgies and widgies were trying to get things going. But the one thing I never understood, and it was the first thing that struck me when I came over here, was the lack of dress sense by males mainly who insisted on wearing their pants that far above their shoes. I looked at,

22:30 what's wrong with these blokes, they are they, don't they, go and buy a pair of pants, you know... shoes to, shoes didn't invite your pants down to the party, yeah that's it. Bloody terrible and I looked and I said, "No, no that's not right." But there was just, that was the fashion, I couldn't wear, I never wore it, I just looked dickie, it does. And there's people wear them now. I've seen some

23:00 people still don't know how to wear their pants. I think it came from America, I've seen it. I've seen a few videos of, Chuck Berry and the likes of that, and they seem to have their pants way up there, so maybe that's where the style came from. America, although the music was British, I do think the American clothing influence was more here than it was in Britain and more than the British influence was at that time, when I

23:30 first came out, yeah. Yeah I think that might have been the.. and then Australia developed it's own, in the '60's, I think Australia developed it's own, not code of dress but style. I remember in Wagga when I was on trainee mech's course, so that must have been '64,

24:00 '65, '65, dress was very staid to use an old term, in Australia. And this, Wagga was also the apprentice training school, right for technical apprentices and this apprentice came in one Saturday at lunchtime, we were all in the mess eating, hundreds of us and he wore a white shirt, with

24:30 probably that colour green, similar to that colour green towel, looked like flowers imprinted all over it and he got roasted, I mean that was outlandish. I mean a bloke wearing a shirt with that colour green on it and in the shape of flowers, oh struth. It looked, I think of it now and I think it looked bloody brilliant, in those days I thought god struth, and that's how it was taken.

25:00 That whole dining hall razzed him for wearing that, "bloody poof", this poor 17 year olds, or, no he was young, he wasn't 17 he'd have been 15, 16 year old apprentice, just went bright red, bright red, he had blond hair, bright red and left.

**It was pretty conservative then?**

Conserve, staid's the word yeah, conservative, yeah I just...



- 25:30 But then Australia's fashion seemed to change and we started getting you know, pinks and pink stripes, broad ones and light blues and pinks and, that sort of thing came in and I think that apricot colour used to, apricot colour, I loved those polo shirts in apricot. They had knitted shirts come out in those days too. They were a sort of an open weave knit, sports shirts.
- 26:00 They had a pocket and a button, were very flash, they came out I and I loved that apricot colour, two or three of those shirts over, while they still lasted, I notice that the Australian fashion did seem to come of age at that, American short sleeved shirts come to there, still do, Australian short sleeved shirts came to here. Looked much better, American dress sense is garbage,
- 26:30 always has been. It's terrible, except for jeans.
- I have to ask you, you mentioned before, was it from after being in Wagga, Wagga that you came up to Sydney, after Amberley, was that your first time in the Cross?**
- Yeah.
- So what did you do there?**
- 27:00 I met an Australian navy bloke, actually, because I was in uniform, and he was in uniform and we met at a pub there, I don't know which one it was.
- The Goldfish Bowl maybe?**
- Talking 1965, I don't know. I have no idea, anyway we had a few beers and he said, "Is this your first time here let's go down to one of the clubs." And I said, "Yeah, alright." And so we ended
- 27:30 up at the Pink Pussy Cat, the Pink Pussy Cat, yeah it was, so we watched the show in there and then, and then we went out on the town. And that's where we met those Yanks, those Yank sailors that we ended up the next day on USS Archerfish. The Cross.
- So you didn't meet any women?**
- Oh yeah, heaps of them, they were everywhere. Every bloody doorway they're there. Yeah, heaps of them there.
- 28:00 **This might be a personal question, actually it is, you don't have to answer it, but is that where you lost your virginity?**
- No.
- After or before?**
- Before.
- Before, oh okay, so you were quite young.**
- I was 18, I was nearly 18 by then.
- With a girl down in the country?**
- No, actually at the RAAF base.
- How did you meet a woman?**
- There were WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force].
- 28:30 Women's Royal Australian Air Force personnel.
- Oh right. That was handy.**
- It was.
- That's why you stayed on the base.**
- One of the reasons. No the first, I'd just come off recruit training as you're aware, the first six weeks of recruit training in those days you were not permitted to leave the base so you were on for six weeks and the next four weeks when you could take leave of a Friday and a Saturday night
- 29:00 only. Sunday you had to be back on base by five in the afternoon. You had to wear uniform off base anyway, so it was fairly well controlled, fairly restricted.
- Did you have time to socialise though, considering you were quite busy as an instructor?**
- Oh, this is the instructor side of things now, oh yeah. Once you finished your recruit training, air force virtually goes on a five day week.
- 29:30 You work Monday to Friday, Saturday and Sunday off, unless you were required for duty. Every night's off again unless you're required for duty, so there a lot, yeah. I purchased a car while I was doing the I

course up here at Amberley and drove down, so once you have a car you're very mobile, you can get out and about, go places, do things, go up to the Barossa Valley wineries.

**A new car?**

No a second hand, second hand Vee Dub Beetle [Volkswagen car].

30:00 **Beetle.**

Top little vehicle yeah.

**That was my first car too by the way.**

Was it? Little white one, my father had one but his was an imported model. It'd come from Germany and it beat the crap out of Australian one, it's sealed, everything on that thing sealed properly. The Australian one was a force the door and force the bloody, and it run better. Fully imported was far better made

30:30 than the Australian manufactured ones.

**Did you keep in touch with the WAAAF lady after the recruit?**

No.

**Okay I'll stop there with my questions.**

Probing questions yeah, that's alright.

**So tell us, what was happening there with Vietnam you'd been doing the course, you'd been instructing for what two or three years?**

No, where are we up to, what year are we up to?

**You'd been doing the instructing ...**

At Edinburgh. I suppose the biggest news

31:00 to that comes to mind, the first big news about Vietnam was Long Tan which happened in 1966, August. So I'd been down in Edinburgh since April and then Long Tan came about and I think that galvanised the Australian psyche as to what's going on over there, we have got people over there, and they are fighting,

31:30 and they are being killed and that put, in my mind anyway, Vietnam up in the forefront. And, that's when I suppose, more and more talk about the war was happening in the service too. More and more blokes were saying, oh need to get there need to go over there. As I said, the drill instructor mustering was part of the Defence Trade Group

32:00 okay and in 1966, the same month I started drill instructor course at Amberley. January, a new mustering started in the air force called the Air Field Defence Guard Mustering. Now the Air Field Defence Guard Mustering still exists today and is army oriented, it's an infantry job. So the air force has it's own infantry and it's called the Air Field Defence Guard mustering.

32:30 **That's interesting that the air force you just equate with flight, would have a ground...**

Ground defence capability.

**Do they still do that?**

Yes, oh yes. They're in, I suppose it's a well known fact now, yes there's an element of the ADGs as they're know A D Gs, Airfield Defence Guard, there's an element in Iraq, in Baghdad now.

33:00 There was an element in Kuwait, they went to Afghanistan, they went to Timor, and in fact in Timor the Australian government brought out just before that, various awards, for military service and one of them was Meritorious Unit Citation, and three units of the Australia Defence Force

33:30 only were awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation for service in Timor. First one was Special Air Service regiment, second one is a clearance diving team and the third one was the Air Field Defence Squadron. and the Air Field Defence Squadron was awarded it, on the personal recommendation of Cosgrove, the General in charge. So they're well organised, highly trained unit.

34:00 And it first started, as I say in January '66, my DI course trained with them. So we had a, I should say we had a lot more of an insight and a lot more training of that type of work in our DI course than previous DI courses. So, what was the... '66. Why was I get, oh the Vietnam, right yep, okay.

34:30 So, because this mustering was going, up and running at the time, there was more and more talk in the air force about ADGs getting involved and being sent. That was one of the reason they were formed, to send flights to overseas bases and the first base they went to was to Ubon in Thailand, in '66 and then they sent a people across to Vung Tau. In '66 as well, the first flight

35:00 went over there and then the second flight went to Phan Rang, in '67.

**At this time when you're instructing, you talked about the difficulty before, with being young with older blokes, but did you make any really good friendships there at Edinburgh?**

Yeah, Brian Levins, he was a room mate.

35:30 He was a service police corporal, he and I became good friends. Strawb, I can't remember his name. His nickname was Strawb. He was an EDP [Electronic Data Processing] processor I think, electronic data processing and stuff. He and I became good friends. Gordon Hagen, he was a corporal DI [Drill Instructor], married, he and I became good friends.

36:00 Bob Kinnane, he another DI, yeah.

**Did these mates follow you through into the war?**

No, no Brian Levins went across to Vung Tau before I did. Gordon Hagen didn't know. Bob Kinnane went to Vung Tau before I went overseas. The air force went separately to the army when it went overseas.

36:30 The infantry we call them now, or a unit went overseas, they went as a unit. The unit was formed in Australia or had been formed for years and years and had been trained together, and operated together for years. A battalion went across as a battalion, one battalion, two battalion, etcetera. all the other field regiments artillery, they went over as units, so everyone knew everyone and it was only as a replacement was required for medical reasons, or administrative reasons would a new person go in

37:00 as an individual and then when they'd done their 12 months, that unit, all those persons in that unit all those persons would require. But in the meanwhile, the replacements would be getting trained for months, so they'd come over as a unit again. In the air force didn't happen. In the air force 2 Squadron came over from Butterworth, as a unit and then as people had done their 12 months or part thereof, they were replaced on individual rotation business, same as the Americans. So,

37:30 the corporals and the (UNCLEAR) NCOs from the mustering, the ADG or the Defence Mustering went over went over individually. The troops went over as a group at the beginning, because that's how they got them over there, but the NCOs didn't they went over separately.

**That would have been difficult in a sense because you've been with each other for quite a while.**

Yeah, but you have to remember that the service life

38:00 lifestyle is nomadic somewhat. Everyone gets posted, no one stays at the same base forever, so it's normal practice to say well every two to three years I'll move, especially if you're single, in those days. You got to remember I'm talking 40 years ago now, 30 years, 20 years ago. So, everyone expected to move every two to three years. So friendships were formed, but it was always formed with the background

38:30 knowledge that it's only for a short time and the friendship might end because you might never see that person again. If you do, hey it's a renewal of old friendships, but if you don't, you don't and that's just an accepted part of life and I think that's, that's something that, I won't say had effected but it's had some retention in memories of servicemen, that

39:00 the fact that they form bonds but they accept the fact that the bonds can break at any time. And that, that carries over I believe into a lot of, I won't say the mental problems but the mental outlooks of people.

**It's a strange way to live.**

It is, you got to be cut out to do it, that's why not everyone joins up, or everyone who joins up doesn't stay in, but for those who do and enjoy it, it's the

39:30 best life, it is the best, I would, I would never ever have regretted it, never.

## Tape 5

00:36 **Can you tell us how you went from being a drill instructor getting the opportunity to go over to Vietnam?**

Right, when this new mustering as I said, ADG or ADG mustering started in '66 they started with just training troops okay, so you had ACs [Air Craftsman], LACs [Leading Air Craftsman] like Privates, no NCOs to lead them. The only

01:00 NCOs who had any idea of the defence side of things in the air force were members of the Defence Disciplinary Trade Group, which were your drill instructors, and your Aerodrome Defence Instructors. So, Aerodrome Defence Instructors had done another course after DI, they were all DIs originally, then

they did an other course, become ADIs [Aerodrome Defence Instructor], and that course required more defence work, more infantry style work.

- 01:30 So they became more qualified than a DI to lead in combat situations. So they were used as the corporals and the sergeants with the ADG flights that were sent across to Ubon in Thailand, Vung Tau and Phan Rang. And I knew most of them because I was part of that group. To get DIs
- 02:00 to ADI's, as I said, involves another course, and because this new mustering had started, it was decided policy wise that there'd be no more DI's, or no more ADI's they'd all be ADGs, you would be ADG, level one, level two, level three, ADG LAC, ADG corporal, Senior Sergeant, Flight Sergeant Warrant Officer, to do that you had to do a conversion course. So in 1968, I did it
- 02:30 DI ADG section leader, conversion course again up at Amberley. It was a three month course, and we did more of the infantry style work, radio procedure, more weapons, more tactics, battle craft, battle craft, and minor tactics, we learned how to be, in other words, an infantry section leader. Now section is 10 men in the infantry, in the air force
- 03:00 it's 11. We have a radio operator, in the army they don't have a radio operator in the section they have one radio at platoon level, or as we call them, flights. So we have, had 11 in our section, corporal and 10. So I did the corporal section leader course, conversion course, and in April '68 I finished it and I went straight back to Edinburgh, to the Australian recruits again.
- 03:30 Terrific system, yeah, so, that's where I was, but now of course in that two year time as I said, '66 when Long Tan started, now there was a lot of talk about Vietnam in the air force, especially in our mustering. We had no show of getting across to Vietnam as a DI but once we were an ADG, section leader, then there was a possibility,
- 04:00 two flights over there, one at Vung Tau, one at Phan Rang, two corporals in each flight, so we had a one in four chance of getting to Vietnam every 12 months. I was a little bit disappointed in having to go back to RTU, recruit training unit, so, in 1969, one of the defence officers, now these defence officers were officers trained in ground defence,
- 04:30 and in the training unit's RTU, the Training Squadron's there was a defence officer in charge of each squadron. And the reason it was a defence officer, was that the majority of work that recruits did was in this disciplinary trade group side of things. So okay. We had a panic night, every Monday night in the air force was a panic night, it was called a panic night, that's when everyone who lives in, all the members who lives in the barracks, have to clean up
- 05:00 the barracks, they have to clean up their rooms, they have to polish the floors, wash windows, clean toilets, etcetera, make the place spit and polish, okay. And then the next morning it's inspected. Now in training units it's always inspected, in those days, the officer in charge of the squadron I was in, the training squadron, he was doing the inspection. The morning, Tuesday morning it rained
- 05:30 between half past seven and eight o'clock as it does in Adelaide every now and again. And outside the barracks block, where the bitumen was, there was a few dips and the water had pooled there after the rain. Well this officer came down, this Flight Lieutenant came around and do the inspection and said, "What's that water doing there?" I said, "It just rained sir." He said, "I don't care, this is inspection morning, there shouldn't be any water there." I said, "Can't stop it, dip in the ground, just lies there." He said, "Get rid of it."
- 06:00 I said, "How are we going to get rid of it?" He said, "That's your problem corporal. I don't care if they come out with toothbrushes. Brush it away get rid of it." And I thought this bloke's not the full quid. So I said, "Alright sir, we'll do that." He said, "I don't like your attitude you can have a re panic." And a re panic is when you have to do it again. The whole thing, on Friday night, you stand by
- 06:30 beds, inspection on Saturday morning, now that meant that they had to do it, my troops, but it was my course, so I had to do, so I had to forgo a Friday night. So I had to supervise them cleaning and I had to be there on Saturday morning. Now Saturday morning wasn't eight o'clock, anytime the officer decided to turn up on Saturday morning, you had to be there from eight o'clock, so he could turn up at one minute to 12, and you were standing there waiting there, say and that's what they would do, they would wait until the last half hour so that
- 07:00 you'd screwed your day up, mongrel. Anyhow I thought well this is not acceptable. I'm not taking this garbage, so I went down and I spoke to the Warrant Officer Disciplinary, Graham Quick, and the Warrant Officer Disciplinary is the senior airman rank and he liaises between the airmen and the CO [Commanding Officer] and I said, "I'm not happy with this, this is the situation and I want a parade to the CO." And so he arranged a parade to the Commanding Officer
- 07:30 and I told the Commanding Officer what had happened and he said, "Well I've already had the report from the Flight Lieutenant, dah, dah, and you will go there on Saturday morning." And I said, "I haven't refused to. I'm just complaining about the stupidity of it. How can I stop the rain? How can I..." dah, dah, dah. He said, "Don't worry about that, he'll..." And of course he has to back the officer. I said, "Well, I'm going to put in a formal complaint, in writing." And of course he, "Hey," I said, "I'm
- 08:00 putting in a formal complaint, I'm not having this." Once you put it in writing, complaint, formal

complaint, I think it was 8D17 it was called I think, it went to the Commanding Officer unless you were complaining against him and then it went to the next officer up and it kept on going up until it reached Air Board. I believe when it had an Air Board, it's called a redress of wrongs, or a redress of grievances. And he said, "We can't have that." I said, "Well you're

- 08:30 getting it sir, simple as that." I said, "I'm satisfied, this is wrong." I said, "This is totally wrong." So he called the WOD and spoke with him and called me back in and, "What do you want? What do you really want out of this?" I said, "Well I don't want to be here on Saturday bloody morning, to start with." I said, "But mainly I want out of here." I said, "I've been here three years now." I said, "I've had it long enough." "Humph, where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go to Vietnam."
- 09:00 "If I write a letter and show you the letter saying you're going to get, asking for you to be posted to Vietnam, will that suffice that you don't put in a complaint?" And I said, "Sure, not a problem sir." And so he said, "Well I'll write the letter." I said, "You can't write the letter." He said, "What do you mean you can't?" I said, "The message has just come from messages, a signal, it's just come a few days ago saying, that no person now in the air force
- 09:30 is permitted to say that they want to be posted to a specific locality in Vietnam. You can only say that you wish to be posted to a unit, not the locality." I don't know what the idea was, but anyway. And I said, "All I can do is say I want to be posted to an ADG flight." He said, "Right I'll do that." So he did and he, showed me the letter and away it went and I didn't have
- 10:00 stand there on Saturday morning. I thought this, it worked, the system really does work and it's good to know that the system works when it should as it should. And a few weeks later I get called in by Mick Seabold who was a chief instructor at the training section, "You're posted." He spoke with a bit of a gruff voice, "Posted Corps," an abbreviation of corporal. "Oh good sir. Where?" "Amberley."
- 10:30 I said, "Oh terrific." That was an ADG flight up here, and I thought well if you get to a flight you got a better chance of getting overseas. I said "terrific" so big celebration that night, few boozes dah, dah, dah, everyone's happy when you get posted out of RTU [Recruit Training Unit]. And, I don't know it's a week or two, and he calls me back in his office, "Got bad news for you Corps, post is bloody cancelled." "Shit, stuck in this bloody hole again."
- 11:00 He said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "You just said it's cancelled." So he said, "No they've given you another one, where do you want to go?" I said, "Anywhere north." And he said, "Well you're going about as far bloody north as you can go, you're posted to..." and he said Panrang, not Phan Rang, "He said you're posted to Panrang 2 squadron, how's that?" I said terrific, so that was me posting. I was happy as a pig in shit, I was really glad. So one of the friends of mine, Derek Morgan, who was a Welshman, he was in the Royal
- 11:30 or the British Army as a paratrooper, he'd seen the service in Cyprus, he had a British General Service Medal for Cyprus, he and I were in the same DI course together, we were on the same ADG Section Leader course together and he'd been told some months previously that he was on warning for Vietnam posting, which meant that he had to go down and get issued his tropical kit. Then I come up with
- 12:00 the posting. He was cranky, wouldn't speak to me for days oh he was cranky. Anyway, happens, happens, so that was, that was it I then had to leave RTU because the fact that I'd spent, another year and half or so back at RTU rather than with a flight after doing the conversion course, I had to get what's called flight familiarisation so they posted me back,
- 12:30 or attached me back up at Amberley for six weeks to work with the ADG flight up here. To relearn the skills and any updates in the tactics before I went overseas.

**And what was your personal reaction to hearing about Long Tan, what did you think?**

It's fair dinkum.

- 13:00 I don't believe that I felt much sorrow for the, our blokes that were killed, I put it down to that's the job. Very, very emotional pride in the fact that such a small force had done what it did with regards to the much larger enemy force. That to me,
- 13:30 that would have been I think the thoughts of many Australian servicemen rather than the loss of Australians but the fact that they had such a small amount, a unit, had achieved such results had killed so many of the enemy of such a huge force, superiority that's the first one that came, yeah,
- 14:00 that's the first.

**And is that part of the draw card?**

What's that?

**The fact that there was a pride in what they had achieved?**

Oh yeah. That plus, you've trained and although I say I've been in the service what '65, four years, and I had done DI course

- 14:30 and then a section leader conversion course six months out of that period of time. In the service every day is a training day whether you're fully trained or not because every day you're learning something, you're doing something new so you are in fact being trained or training yourself to a degree. So, after that length of time training, you want to put that training to it's ultimate use, I mean what was the purpose of the training, I mean the purpose of the training was to lead an ADG section
- 15:00 in active service. Now you can't do that in Australia, so when you get the chance to go, you feel the fulfilment of what you've been trained to do, that's, yeah that's part of it. Then of course there's the adventure, eh, this is terrific, another place, another world, another lifestyle, remember also that some blokes had come from Vietnam
- 15:30 down to RTU, some ADGs had done a corporal Instructors course after they'd come back from Vietnam, and were now down in Edinburgh and one of them Monty Dulip, was in my room, and he, he'd been to Phan Rang and he'd come back with all these goodies. All this American equipment. I want my hands on some of that stuff, because it beats the shit out of some of the stuff we've got here, dated 1942.
- 16:00 You know, so there's that side of it too, the personal gain side of it, not the personal military feeling but the personal, me, I want something for me. And then you've got these blokes walking around with the ribbons and the medals, I want that, I want to look like that, I want to look like that, so. And some people might say oh I never thought of that, well maybe they didn't but
- 16:30 a lot of people did. I did, I admit it, why would you not want to have medals if you were in uniform. Those are the days when females sort of liked that, I don't know if they like anything nowadays, that's not being directed at anyone in particular. But, you know, so just, there's the personal ambition the thought in the future of me walking down the road

- 17:00 wearing uniform ribbons up, looking good and the fact also that if you've got them, you've been there. You get people in the service look at you and say you've been there. So there's that attitude as well.

**Now you went over on a Qantas flight didn't you?**

Yes the flying rat.

**Into Saigon?**

Yep.

**Can you give us a bit, that was a**

- 17:30 **very busy airport.**

Tan Son Nhut, yeah it was. You want to know just Tan Son Nhut or before we left Australia or what?

**Well I'd kind of like to get you over there I think.**

Okay, alright, well we left Sydney Mascot, I think it was 11.30 at night. Landed in Singapore next morning for refuel, went to Saigon, go there one o'clock or something in the afternoon I think.

- 18:00 The thing, I must mention this, because it is in fact the first thing I recall,

**Absolutely.**

Flew over the city, I looked out, took a couple of slides, still have them somewhere, we landed and we just dropped the nose wheel down and this, we went over with a lot of army blokes, when there's a voice from the front of the aeroplane says, "I've seen enough, let's go bloody home." And I thought well that bloke's

- 18:30 switched on. I thought shit, anyway we taxied down and they opened the door and it's just like we walked into an oven. I thought oh, now I'd had heat because we'd been at Amberley in January and February when it's at it's stickiest and hottest, that's in the days when it used to rain in Australia. But that place, oh, it was, just I think everyone was covered in sweat by the time they walked down the bloody stairs

- 19:00 from the aircraft to the tarmac, it was just so humid, so hot, oh. And it stunk, there was smell in the air, I mean the aircraft were phenomenal, movements, the aircraft just constantly going up and down, up and down, landing take off, landing take off, constant, so there was a lot of smell of avtur in the air, kero.

- 19:30 Right, a lot of smell of that but there was another smell and I don't know what it was, I just think it was a dirty place that was all. Backed up sewers or something, but yeah, that was, that was the first impression.

**And what was the guy actually responding to before you even hit the tarmac even do you reckon?**

Well it might have been his second trip. Or he might have heard something, I don't know I just thought it was witty.

- 20:00 Yeah I just thought it was witty, yeah, anyway. Then we just waited at Tan Son Nhut while they processed, processed out luggage off and then we stayed at the little demountable building, I think it was, a little bump, bump building. Which was a RAAF air movement section, because we'd gone over with a whole bunch of RAAF blokes, some were going to 9 Squadron, some were going to Vung Tau, some were going to
- 20:30 Caribous, so those were all going to Vung Tau, were all put over there and bussed off to another aircraft and then we just had to wait until there was an aircraft going up to Phan Rang. Which didn't occur until late in the afternoon and we had to go by American. One 23, C 1-23 Provider that's the aircraft, it's small Herc [Hercules transport aircraft], two engined Herc, but it's got two jet assists, because it, two donks are not strong enough, powerful enough to lift it off loaded, so it needs jet assist, get it up.
- 21:00 Once it's airborne it's fine, so they said that's your aircraft and we went down there and there's this Negro crew chief, mucking around getting the aircraft ready and I looked at it and I thought we're not flying in this bloody thing, I mean it was filthy, it was filthy. And that was, just, dirty, greasy, oily looking thing, two flat bloody tyres in the main undercarriage, I mean flat, it was sitting on a lean like that, bloody windows were Perspex,
- 21:30 they were broken, cracked, non existent. We're not going to get anywhere, took off and we landed just on sunset at Phan Rang. I was glad to get out of that aircraft, it shook and shuddered. I thought this is a top outfit these Americans, look at the garbage they're flying. Anyway, it worked.

#### **Your first impressions of Phan Rang?**

- 22:00 Well it was cooler, because it was just on sundown when we got there, met by the Defence Officer, Flight Commander. At the tarmac we had a our ADG truck was there to pick us up, take us back up to 2 Squadron domestic area. It was huge, the base was big, I thought Amberley was big, but this place was huge and that was virtually
- 22:30 I think about the base, that of seeing the base is just it's size.

#### **How many personnel?**

On the base itself? 8000. About a 22 kilometre perimeter. Big base. Big, big base, yeah. I've got an aerial photograph of the base there.

- 23:00 **And, so a lot of Americans about?**

All Americans. It's an American, United, there's the Phan Rang air base, United States Air Force. Yeah, on the base there was the Yanks, there was us and there were Koreans. The Koreans had two, one, oh five mill artillery batteries on the base and civilians, American civilians with

- 23:30 Sealand Corporation, was the private contractor that moved the containers of stuff across. They didn't just use the navy, they used a private contractor. That was the civilian, and of course the Vietnamese locals who worked on the base.

#### **And how much of the base did the Australians have a hold of?**

Not much, we had a hanger and a revetment area down at the

- 24:00 flight line, to the Caribous [transport aircraft]. We had a transport compound for our vehicles which was next to the hangar. We had a administrative headquarters across the road from the hangar. We had our domestic area which is what you would say where we all lived which is, I don't know maybe 200 by 300 yards in
- 24:30 dimension and we had a section of the bomb dump for our bomb crews to work in and that was it, so not a big area at all, not a big, no.

#### **And I guess, got about half a dozen questions in my head.**

- 25:00 **This is part and parcel of you arriving in Vietnam, but what were you actually told, or prepped in terms of Vietnam or the enemy I guess?**

Everyone who went to who was posted there was given a little booklet by the RAAF or the army, and it had certain things in there which I can't remember and I don't know where the bloody hell , books gone years ago but it said, it dealt with their culture, such things as

- 25:30 don't pat people on the head, Buddhists don't like that. Don't, if you're sitting down, point your toes, Buddhists don't like that. Be polite, respect their customs and their traditions, remember you're a guest in their country. The weather is, shitty and when it's not shitty it's hot and shitty or it's wet, hot and shitty.
- 26:00 That sort of thing you know, just generalise things of the place, you get in the Lonely Planet book that sort of, bit of the history of the conflict, not too detailed a lot of it was suppressed. The fact that it was two separate countries, which we knew it wasn't, the fact that South Vietnam had a, the government had invited the Australian government to send forces, which it hadn't.

- 26:30 Those sort of things were in there, do the right thing by, you are the ambassadors, I mean ambassadors in uniform, conduct yourself appropriately at all time. As far as the enemy, there were two enemy, there was the NVA [North Vietnamese Army], regular and there was VC [Viet Cong] irregular. The main concern for Australians were VC irregulars. They
- 27:00 could be the people in the paddy as you walk past, the rice fields, at night, they are VC. What else, they're well organised, well trained, dedicated, there was not these are just peasants don't worry about them, no it was, they were, that was fair dinkum how they described them and respected them as soldiers.
- 27:30 Yeah, their weapons, weapons types, and that was, a bit about their contacts, but more about our tactics, concentrated on our contacts then we should defeat them, that sort of thing.

28:00 **What was, the first few days at Phan Rang, what were you required to do?**

The first few days at Phan Rang, well every, every time you go to a new unit, posted to a new unit, you have to do what's called clearing in, which is from the orderly you'll get a piece of paper and it'll have various sections, it'll have pay section, medical section, dental section, armoury, clothing store, transport section.

- 28:30 And what you do, you go around to these places and you say I'm posted in and they look at you and if you go to pay section, you might have a pay book if you go to clothing store, you'll have your clothing card which shows everything you've been issued with and you hand it over to them and they put it on file and they take a note of who you are when you arrived and then they sign that, clear you in. So that then you are then part of the unit and you can go to these various places and say, "I didn't get paid today," and then they
- 29:00 can look up and say, "Oh well you should have because you got your details." But if you haven't cleared in the pay section and you don't get paid, then it's no good going to pay section because they don't know who you are. So that's just clearing in process to let the base know that you're there. Then, what else, oh we're issued with weapons.

**Which weapons were you issued with?**

Everyone was issued, everyone was issued with an SLR, right and then there was specialist

- 29:30 weapons after that. We had a different sort of set up as the ADG flight. Although everyone on the, every Australian there at 2 Squadron was issued with a rifle that's every ground personnel, the fly boys were issued with a nine millimetre pistol, some personnel were issued with a sub machine gun. Senior NCOs, warrant officers were issued with the F1 sub machine gun, Australian weapon.
- 30:00 corporal, yeah, ADG NCOs were issued with a sub machine gun corporals included, that was classed as their personal weapon. But the ADGs, because of our tasks were also issued separate, other weapons, specialist weapons, like the M-79 grenade launcher, that was issued to the section, and then the M-60 machine gun was issued to the section, the L-2-A-1
- 30:30 the heavy barrel automatic rifle was issued to the section, and then it was up the section leader to decide who got what weapons. So I didn't carry F1, I give that to my radio operator, because he's carrying 25 bloody pounds on his back or whatever it is, he doesn't need a big rifle. He's talking on the phone, he needs something that's small, that can move around and got a lot of fire power, so I give him my F1 and I will take his rifle.
- 31:00 Then, we had an understanding with the Yank 35th Security Police Squadron, which looked after the base security itself and they had issued us M16s. The American rifle, so every NCO in the ADG flight was issued with an M-16 as well and then every scout in the section, every lead scout was also issued with an
- 31:30 M-16 and if you wanted another M-16 you just had to and ask for it, so you can see the photo, I've got three M-16's in my section. Not that they were a better weapon than the SLR, I don't believe they ever were, I still believe they are, but they were fully automatic, the ammunition was lighter so you could carry more of it. And in those type of conflicts you want fire power, as much as you can get.
- 32:00 So we were issued with these weapons and I would just work out who would get them. And I didn't do that until probably the third or fourth day we were there when we did a range practice, there's a range on the base and that was were, we would go down to zero all weapons, and that gives me the chance as a section leader to see how my troops are in handling their weapons safety wise and skill wise, and in their marksman ship ability. Obviously a
- 32:30 bloke who's a good shot with a rifle, I want to keep him on a rifle, a bloke that couldn't hit a barn at 10 paces, I'd give him something else like the M-60 [7.62mm machine gun], you'd just spray it everywhere, and that's it. But that's not exactly the case either, you want good shots, a bloke's a good shot on a rifle, he'll be a good shot on an M-60 as well, so it's a case of coming to the best compromise you can. You also don't give the M-60, or I wouldn't give the M-60 to a bloke who weighs
- 33:00 45 pounds, because the weapon weighs 23 pound so we want someone who's got a bit of beef about him to lug this thing around all day. And you get volunteers, Tommy Randall, for example the bloke in the



photo, he said as soon as he arrived, I want the 60, fine Tom, let's see if you can handle it, if you can it's yours. And you get a bloke who wants the weapon, he's going to look after it, and he's going to do a good job with it. So that was that sort of thing done.

- 33:30 And then there was briefings on the base security system, how we, the fact that we operated with Americans, the fact that there were two radio nets on the base, a little hand held Motorola, and then there was the 25 set, both different nets, both controlled by different people both with different, different
- 34:00 systems shall I say, of procedure, radio procedure. Where the towers were, what the towers did, the dogs, there was canines, where the mine field were, where the gaps in the fences were. Just, rules of engagement, just whole heaps of orientation, virtually to the workings and the functionings of the base. And then
- 34:30 I think one of those nights in the first week, I went out with Johnny Paine who was a Sergeant ADG, he had his section on a night ambush familiarisation so that I knew the area, or one of the areas where we would go, and I would see how they operated, the procedure of getting out through the wire, without getting the seppos ['septic tank' - slang for Yank], shooting us up. And how to get back in the wire without them shooting us up, because Johnny Paine
- 35:00 had been wounded by an American earlier that year on his way back in through the wire because their system just wasn't set up properly. So we had these sort of things that as a section leader, I had to know then I could teach my men. And that was probably the first week. Oh and the stink, getting used to chlorinated water, that was the other smell on the base, when we got up to the domestic area, you were saying, the first night,
- 35:30 "What's that stink of chemical?" Well it's chlorine, the water treatment plant was just down the road from two squadron domestic area and the ice making base, ice making plant. And the chlorinated water, because the water was dragged from the river, off the base and just dumped straight up and then had to be heavily chlorinated. Oh it was vile, concentration was so high, as I say, you could smell it in the air, and it took a week or so before you're olfactory glands, just
- 36:00 recognised and didn't tell you any more what it was, and the taste was just as bad as the smell, vile. Anyway.

**Was there any I guess things that stand out to you that you were told about engaging with the enemy and the like that weren't in the enemy or weren't in those ...?**

Rules of engagement?

**Yeah.**

Learn very quickly that the rules of engagement were written by the enemy.

- 36:30 Or they appeared to be. We did have cards with them but didn't keep them, and the first rule of engagement was you are not to shoot unless you are fired upon first. Defeats the object a little bit, not to shoot unless the person is armed, and you have given three
- 37:00 commands to halt and the person ignores you or takes up a firing posture towards you. You are not to fire in free fire zones if the free fire zone is not in operation within certain hours. You, it went
- 37:30 on and on and on... what it virtually meant was that you couldn't fire at anyone if he wasn't armed, that's what it meant. You couldn't fire unless you'd given halt three times, and the word for halt is "Dunglie," or actually it's "Zunglie", "Zunglie" which we pronounced "Dunglie" right, but that's not how they pronounce it, so they don't know what we're saying. Anyway when we
- 38:00 say to them "Dunglie", they're looking at you, of course they something like "Zun Lai", with the various tonal inflections, they haven't got a clue what we're saying, so it's just a nonsense, but that's what the Americans say we had to do. So, as I say, it virtually meant that you couldn't fire at anyone unless they were armed. What it meant to us was that you always carried spare knives, or bayonets, or grenades, so they're always armed and you don't get a chance to
- 38:30 tell that they weren't armed, so there was never any survivors. So you see the concept of rules of engagement were just a nonsense, your hands are tied but you work out ways to untie them real quick. So by adopting that rules of engagement posture that I would dare say that a lot of people who shouldn't have died, that is enemy and should have been prisoners, weren't. And did die.

- 39:00 **That's wartime.**

It's war.

**We'll pause there...**

00:44 **We were talking about the pronunciation of Phan Rang?**

It's been pronounced Phan Rang by everyone who served there, the American Australians,

01:00 but the Vietnamese pronounce it "Fun Rung".

**And did you pick up other ways to say things?**

Yeah, it's amazing, I was speaking before about the rules of engagement and how we had to stay stop or halt three times to the Vietnamese and, before we could fire

01:30 upon them, if they were carrying weapons of course and in an area where they shouldn't have been. But our pronunciation as Australians was totally different from theirs, so we would say, I obviously can't show the written word, but we'd say "Dungalie, Dungalie", but that's not how the Vietnamese pronounce it, and I don't even know if this is correct pronunciation but it's damn site closer to theirs. The D is not a D,

02:00 it's a Z, and we don't lie anything, we, so it would be something like, I would say like "Zunglie, Zunglie, Zunglie". Now if you can get any closeness of hearing that at a distance, at night to what I had said before, how would you know if you were being called to halt or if it was just a monkey farting up a tree, I mean fair dinkum mate, the rules of

02:30 engagement were crap. Political garbage.

**Can you tell us about the base, we were talking before about the up to at one stage up to 8000 men?**

Well that's what I was told, I don't know if that is true, but a 22 kilometre perimeter, that's a huge area. Big base, I have had or read other reports of 5000, so,

03:00 five to eight thousand, that's a big base. Mind you there's American aircraft carriers that hold 8000 people too and they're not half, quarter, tenth of the size of Phan Rang.

**What was it like socialising with the Americans, did you actually socialise with them?**

Yeah, I did, I was, as a corporal, Australian, I was accorded, I think

03:30 Equivalent Rank Status. Which means that someone, somewhere decided that this rank Australia was equivalent to this rank America. I don't know how they did it but anyway, so a corporal Australia was equivalent to I think was an E4, maybe an E6 America, so an Australian corporal

04:00 was like a Tech Sergeant America. Now you have to understand, I can't remember back this far but a Tech Sergeant American was not necessarily the same as a Staff Sergeant American, because the American services, and there are four of them have different rank stature's. So an American Army bloke sergeant is not the same as an American Air Force bloke, although

04:30 they may have the same stripes up and down, right. And an American Marine Corps, the sergeant isn't the same as an American coast guard so they're a very strange. Anyway, I was entitled to go to what was called the NCO club, and the NCO, Non Commissioned Officers, yeah. and the NCO club was up on the hill in the middle of the base called, well it was always called

05:00 Gulf Three, but in actual fact the name was Nui Dat, now that brings back memories, eh. Because Nui Dat is the name of the hill or the base where the Australian Task Force was in Phuoc Tuy, but Nui Dat is quite simple to explain and Nui, is not necessarily the correct pronunciation, is Vietnamese for hill, so any hill would be called Nui

05:30 and Dat means small. So we had Nui Dat and the NCO club was half way up this hill and we could get into that, as, corporals and, that was a surprise. I mean a surprise, they had poker machines, they had not quite dancing girls, but they had very skimpily dressed local

06:00 maids, maybe they weren't maids, females, bar tending, table serving, not table dancing, table serving, and they had, which I'd never seen before, every post mixes, I didn't even know the damn name for them. But I went up there and, one of the blokes took me up there, Johnny Paine, I mentioned him before, "Come up and have a drink.

06:30 What are you after?" "Well I drink rum and coke," and he's ordered the drinks, and this Vietnamese girl had this pad machine, probably the forerunner of the Nintendo's and she went ... and that was it, and I thought what is she doing and then we had these drinks and this is in 1969,

07:00 I couldn't understand, the technology was beyond me at that time, what is, she pushes a button, and these drinks fall in this glass, she pushed different buttons on the same thing no bigger than my palm and there's different drinks fall in. God, American technology is brilliant, absolutely brilliant, anyway, that was, the NCO club and

07:30 it was good, it was good cheap drink, only 15 cents American at the time, or well 15 cents whatever, script, 15 cents script for a mixed drink.

**What do you mean scrip?**

Script, S C R I P T. That's I suppose what it was called in the Second War, occupation money. The correct term is Military Payment Certificate. I've got examples in

08:00 the photo. Yeah to prevent, in an attempt to prevent black marketing of the local currency, dong, or P, Piastre, and the American US dollar, the money for servicemen in Vietnam, the money was Military Payment Certificates, so you only got paid in this

08:30 paper money, there was no coins it was all paper, five cents, 25 cents, dollar, five, ten dollar, something like that, as I say I've got examples. And all servicemen all servicemen in Vietnam, foreign servicemen were paid in this MPC [Military Payment Certificate] or script. You could use it anywhere in Vietnam providing, see this is the damnest about that

09:00 bloody place, I started saying in the earlier tapes Vietnam, now I'm saying Vietnam, which I can't.

**What is it?**

It's the same place.

**I know but I mean what do the Americans say one and the Australians say the other?**

No, some did and some didn't, just one of these, you come, can't control it or stop it, it just,

09:30 anyhow it was only payed to military personnel and I suppose CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], or I know it was CIA, the mongrels and embassy personnel but, that was the attempt to stop the transference of the local currency to American greenbacks, or green, we used to call it Green, Green means American dollar, in fact I would say today if you went anywhere in Asia and said

10:00 I got green, they'll know exactly what you're talking about, American dollar. And so we had this, what were we talking about?.

**That's alright you had your certificates to use on the base, but what if you went on leave, would you get real money again?**

No.

**Well how could you do anything if you didn't have real money?**

Well, when you say, you have to go back your first question, when you went on leave. Where

10:30 was leave?

**Would you get to go overseas, that was R and R [Rest and Recreation] wasn't it?**

That's R and R, now you're talking about leave or you're talking about off duty time?

**Tell us the difference.**

Well depending on where you were, there was leave, which in military terms is go away from duty, on how can I put it, leave is not

11:00 a weekend off, it's not a night off, it's accumulation like holidays, like five, okay that's leave. Off duty is not working tonight, not working today, not working tomorrow or the weekend, and in, in country, and that's another term for Vietnam, is in country, you could have off duty and leave the base in certain

11:30 Places. Saigon you could leave the embassy, you could leave. In Vung Tau you could leave Vung Tau base and go into the local town, at some stages, sometimes in Phan Rang you could do the same you could leave the base and you could go outside the perimeter, the safety of the base. It didn't happen while I was there, except for one area. And to go off the base you couldn't

12:00 use script, because if you took script off the base, Vietnamese got it, if Vietnamese got it, Charlie [Viet Cong] got it, if Charlie got it they could bastardise the monetary system by giving you understand, green, script for dollar. So if you went off base if you're going to go off base, in those particular places, you would surrender at the, at your pay section how much you wanted to take

12:30 off base, and say I want so much P P is Piastre, that was the local term for the local money, or Dong and Dong was frowned upon, they preferred P because that was an introduced currency from the French and Dong is the national currency, and today now, I know this because I've been back to Vietnam a couple of times, Dong is the currency.

**Really?**

And you can't

13:00 take it out of, or you can, you may not legally take Dong out of the country you can't 'abortionise' it, you can't ablate it, you can't and that's how they're doing it. Anyway, yeah sorry.

**Well it's all very interesting actually Brian, so thanks for telling us that.**

Did answer the question, I keep forgetting the question, I'm sorry.

**No you're offering excellent details so thank you. I guess what I'm curious about also, is was there,**

13:30 **well I've heard stories that the Americans used quite a bit of drugs on the base, was that happening around you?**

Yes it was. We didn't have a great deal of problem with it where we were in Phan Rang, because as I mentioned before, we had our own domestic area, and our domestic area was separate from any close proximity

14:00 to the American domestic areas. We were on a, a ring road around the base and as you can imagine the 22 kilometres is a big base, and there was a ring road around it and we were to one side of that and the opposite side of our domestic area was a feature, a hill okay, and on top of that hill it was known as the colonel's hill

14:30 because the base commander lived there so he had a lot of security and there wasn't too much went in that area as you can imagine, access to his place, that didn't come under scrutiny. And we were the opposite side, I don't know if we went there before he went there or he went there after we went there, but I will say this and I will stick me thumb in me what have you, he picked the best place

15:00 for security on that base on that hill. Because no one was going to get to him unless they came through the Australians, as simple as that, that's a plug. Anyway there was drugs, it's been an unfortunate, awakening I suppose you could say, maybe even

15:30 no I'll say awakening that American's, some, some American's are very easily persuaded to do things, as some Australians are very easily persuaded but, Vietnam was slightly different. We had in our Koala Bar, Koala Bar was the name of our airmen's club

16:00 the wet canteen and, it was open to anyone, not just Australians. Any American club on the base and every unit had it's own bar and I mean, it must have been 30, 40, 50 bars in that place that were known, never mind the ones that weren't known on that base and anyone from anywhere on that base could go in there.

**Despite rank?**

Oh, despite rank.

16:30 But you had to be of a certain rank to get to the NCO Club. But NCOs could get, Americans have a different system. In Australia which, has a mess rank, structured mess system, you have the officers mess you have the sergeants mess and then you have the other ranks mess or club, in America they do not have messes but clubs, they have the Officers Club the O's Club.

17:00 The senior, a member from the club above can invite a member from the club below in, in our when I remember it, in our situation, a member from a junior club can invite a member from the senior club down but a sergeant can't invite a private up.

**That's interesting.**

Well it has a good reason.

17:30 **Can you tell us the good reason?**

Well I, this is my view, okay, in a military situation it requires discipline, which requires at times, unquestioned immediate response to an order, you can't have someone who has been drinking with you or eating with you and saying that's the wrong menu or that's the wrong drink to turn around and say, "I'm not doing that Bill,

18:00 John, no way sport, no." So you can't have that social integration which, which would break down military discipline. So you require the people who are of a, and I won't say rank structure, although it is based on rank, I would put it on a command or control structure, you can't have people who have authority

18:30 to give commands or have control over life and death over the people below them to sit there and drink with them and then be challenged at a time when the decision needs to be made, you got to or to say no, so you require that distancing.

**I understand.**

I can't go much more into that, it's necessary.

19:00 **No that was good.**

American's don't have that, they have a club situation where the officers can invite the sergeants into their club and the sergeants can invite the other ranks into their club. I don't agree with it. That's it.

**So the whole drugs issue?**

Oh sorry, the drugs issue.

**No I got you off the point actually but it's still on the same issue, was that offered to you**

19:30 **or the Australians?**

In the Koala Club, the Koala Club, in the Koala Club that was the Emerald Bar in Phan Rang, there were a number of occasions, very few I might add, very few, in fact they ceased. It would have been, it was not long after I arrived, we were in there one night,

20:00 "What's that?" this strange vegetative smell, no, and we're looking at each other and there's a bunch of, Negroes, Americans up in the corner, sitting down there giggling away, puffing away.

20:30 It's time to investigate, so we walked up, "What are you blokes doing?" .. I hate American language, "Hey man, it's cool," and so they were, they were removed.

**You asked**

21:00 **them politely to go?**

No we asked them what they were doing and then we removed them. And, they never came back and there was never again, as I recall, in the period of 12 months that I was there, any drug problem in our area, in the 2 Squadron RAAF domestic area. There were heaps of problems throughout the American areas, as I said there were, what 30, 40 different clubs because

21:30 every unit had a club and what have you and we were invited to go and we would, as you've said, socialising, sure we would socialise, we go and see how the other half lived, how's the seppo going. Every now and then you'd meet a seppo somewhere on the base, you had to there were that many of them, and you walk into them in the tape recording room, in the hobby club, you'd meet them and they'd say come over and have a drink so you'd, you know, you'd do that

22:00 because there was not much other things to do except go and meet people on a drinking basis rather than a socialising basis. And I'm not saying anything about heroin or, I don't know why they call it heavy, but that, that sort of shit, but there was marijuana being smoked. Without a doubt, but we got it out of our place in a hurry, and it

22:30 never came back, while I was there.

**What about alcohol, did the Aussies have any problems with alcohol?**

Yeah, we couldn't get enough of the stuff. What a damn question that is, did you hear, have you been primed on that?

**That's not entirely what I meant.**

I know, I know.

**I suppose**

23:00 **you know Australians have this reputation of being drinkers, was that very evident in the Koala Bar and?**

Yes. Yes it was, but it was no more evident in the Koala Bar than it was in the 8/25th SPS [8/21st Security Police Squadron] Bar, it was no different than it was in the NCO Club, or

23:30 the Under 21 club or the Yellow Jacket Club or any other unit that had a bar at Phan Rang. It was no worse, it was no more pronounced, it was no less, it was a fact of life. So I won't say that any, what did you say it was,

24:00 purported, or reputation of Australians as being heavy or hard drinkers, I didn't notice any difference between Australian drinkers and American drinkers.

**It'd just be something that you'd do socially with your mates?**

Yeah. It was a

24:30 form of a release, it was also a form of enjoyment, but also it was a form of release. It was a, it was a way to trivialise if you like, a way to trivialise

25:00 what was happening, even if nothing was happening, it was a way to trivialise it, it was a way to, to, geez, get me into thick shit now. I don't, I'm losing words.

**That's okay. Were you aware then of the, what was going on in America with the whole racial, the race movement going on and...**

25:30 No, no.

**What about the white Americans and the black Americans, did you witness any you know violence or upset between the two?**

No. We had a very close contact, I won't say a working relationship because it wasn't, but we had a very close, tasking, tasking isn't even right, training, association with another group

- 26:00 on the base, I spoke before about the 35th SPS, Security Police Squadron, and they were more aligned to your local state police. They had, they had control and powers over thievery on the base and whatever, the 35th SPS also controlled and manned the
- 26:30 The perimeter towers right, which were all internal. Right and then on top of that you had the, 8/21st, SPS. 8/21st Security Police Squadron, okay, that's American Air Force as was the 35th, now the Security Police Squadron was in fact a part of the 35th Security Police Squadron.
- 27:00 But, it was different in the fact that, Security Police Squadron was more along the lines of law enforcement, and that's a stupid term, but law enforcement where as the Security Police Squadron was more along the lines of base protection and defence so they were our counterparts, Airfield Defence, but they weren't allowed off the base either. Okay, that was American policy.
- 27:30 But they had tubes, they had tracks, they had V-100s, they had bloody 79 automatics, magnificent things, they had just so much technology, weapons technology and
- 28:00 they were, as all American units were in those days, a mixed race thing, one of their captains was an American Negro, and I don't believe I struck any racial problems in that unit, is that what the question was?
- Yes.**
- Not a one.
- 28:30 **I'd just heard stories of Australians walking into bars and the white Americans being unhappy with the Australians talking to the black guys.**
- Black blokes.
- Black blokes.**
- Oh yes, probably you can call them African or Negro guys because that's an American.
- African Americans.**
- No, just, there were only Americans and only Australians see.
- 29:00 I don't ever recall any experience of a racial problem in Vietnam between the Negroes and the Caucasians.
- 29:30 Except, except for the time I went to, or came back to Australia on R and R, you know that term, when I left Phan Rang and went down to Camp Alpha and then onto Sydney
- 30:00 there was a, I won't, it wasn't violent, but there was a, a tension. Yeah, there was a tension and I was warned, don't go there. You want me to elaborate, you do.
- 30:30 Camp Alpha was an area of Tan Son Nhut which was a transit area, so people coming who had nowhere to go, or hadn't had on flights, maybe, they all lobbed in Camp Alpha and it was a massive complex within Tan Son Nhut which is bloody massive anyway, and, I think they had no regard, or knowledge or
- 31:00 realisation that tensions build when people are expected, or are expecting to do something, are stuck in a shit hole and not doing nothing, so you have that emotion. Anyhow, Camp Alpha was an area where for us...from Phan Rang, at that time, not every time, but at that particular time, we would go down to
- 31:30 to Tan Son Nhut off the aircraft on a bus Camp Alpha and the organisation was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. You got a ticket as I recall and it had all of your details on it and you just showed it to someone and away you went and you were there, to the bed, in this building that you'd never seen before in your life, you were there.
- 32:00 And the next day or whatever, say it was that you were supposed to leave, you walk out the front and there was this vehicle, waiting, and you showed him that and you went exactly where you were supposed to go on that aircraft at that time, pissed off to Australia and back again. Administration is phenomenal. Anyhow, I logged in at Camp Alpha and this is on my R and R back to Australia,
- 32:30 and it's majority Americans obviously, I'm going for a tub I got me towel and me soap and, I'm walking down the road and this bloke says, "Hey bud where you going?" The guy was, I don't ever
- 33:00 recall the word guy being used you know that, I don't ever recall that word guy being used in Vietnam. It's a new term. Bud, bud was, bud or partner, actually it wasn't part, pard, they put a d, pardner anyway, "Where are you going?" "I'm going for a tub." "Huh?" they don't speak, they don't speak

English Americans, "Shower."

33:30 "Oh, don't shower there, you need to go this end." I said, "Why?" "That's the nigger end." "So what?" "Don't go there." So I goes down the ablution block, walks in and I looks up and all that end is all Negroes

34:00 and I look down that end and there's two or three showers vacant I walks down, showering away, come up have a shave, and Negroes are coming in, and you can see it, push, push, push, and you know the, the body movement the group is push, push, push, and you can see me eyes -

34:30 what's going on, because this time they'd blocked off the bloody entrance the exit, you know, what I mean they're across into... And they're looking, 'what the fuck do you want', it stops them, "Who are you?"

35:00 "No who I am, who the hell are you? What's this pushy shit?" "You're not American." I said, "No I'm bloody Australian. What are you doing here, piss off." "No sweat," and away they went. They don't, I'm not allowed, I can be politically...

**Oh you can say whatever you like.**

35:30 The racial prejudice in America that I struck was by the Negroes against the whites, not the other way around. No bloody way, and when I came back after seven or eight days or whatever it was, I had to go back to Camp Alpha and it was exactly the bloody same, not the same blokes, but the same stuffing, hatred, the same pick on the bloody whites, the same.

36:00 And they got away with it. That's what pissed me off, they got away with it, it was almost bloody mandatory. I hate it, I bloody hated it, oh geez. And, I suppose it's carried on to this day. I hate that bloody racial prejudice that was supposedly white induced, or started, it bloody wasn't

36:30 or not from my experience and that's all I can speak of eh.

**And thank you for elaborating. So can you tell us, you told Chris before, I know I'm not saying the correct pronunciation but Phan Rang, you were saying that in the first week that basically you had to really familiarise yourself with the entire surroundings and that you went out on a night patrol. Night ambush.**

37:00 **What was expected of you as a squadron leader?**

I wasn't a squadron leader.

**You weren't...**

I was a Section Leader.

**A Section Leader, sorry, a section leader, did they tell you right we'll take you around, and then you're expected to know everything pretty much?**

Yeah. You know your basic tasks, and you know that you've been trained as a section leader, you've been trained as a section leader,

37:30 so therefore you know what you've been trained for, that's your basic duties, what you've been trained for that's your duties. The location you go to, the topography, that dictates how sometimes, your support from the base resources, that is arms, armed support dictates another set of circumstances.

38:00 But going out that time with John Paine that was it, that showed, that was, the idea, as I said before, was to familiarise myself with that, one, particular position and two, what was the safe and expected and accepted methods of getting out of the base, getting

38:30 back on the base and surviving in that environment.

**So it sounds like the Australians took care of themselves, they didn't so much report to the Americans at that base. Is that correct?**

We supported ourselves in so far as we were insulated in our domestic area, except that they

39:00 supplied us with a lot of food, and all the water, and all the electricity, and probably all the fuel and I'll tell you one thing else they did, they give us all the stuffing ammunition, because the bastards back in Australia wouldn't give us ammunition. And we needed ammunition.

**Are you talking about the wharfies that, to load?**

Yeah.

**We'll talk about that in a minute actually.**

They're not the only ones. Anyway so,

39:30 I'm sorry.

**No it was my fault. Stop there because we'll run out of tape.**

## **Tape 7**

00:32 **I'd like to start by clarifying the origin of the word seppos because you were telling that it was in a break.**

Yeah, I'd never heard that term before in my life, until I arrived at Phan Rang. I don't even know if it was the first day or the tenth day or whatever day, but it was very, very, very close to the original day of arrival

01:00 when I heard this term, "Bloody seppos" this, "seppos", "oh we got that from the seppos" and, "oh he's a good friend of mine, that bloody seppo." And I'm thinking what the hell they're talking about and eventually I said, "What's a seppo?" and they said, "A seppo, it's septic tank." And I said, "Well I know what a septic tank is." They said, "Yeah well it's a bloody Yank." And then it dawned, a Yank, an American is a septic tank, is a

01:30 seppo and that term has stuck with me since and it will stick with me forever. And I reckon, I do, that that is probably the closest proximity to the majority of Americans you could ever get, bloody seppos. Righto that's it, shitting bums.

02:00 **Get onto the government later, talk about I guess some of the strategies and operations you were doing as a ADG, and I guess working on the perimeter I mean protecting.**

So you want to know our tasks?

**Yeah.**

Okay, well, let's start. There was a flight

02:30 of ADGs at Phan Rang. A flight is the air force term for platoon, for infantry, obviously army will be looking at this, we had a flight commander, a platoon leader, a flight sergeant which is a rank, not a position or appointment. A flight sergeant by rank is the same as a army staff sergeant, and the flight sergeant. I don't know what the

03:00 flight sergeant did, he was a secondary administrator to the platoon or the flight commander. Then we had a sergeant and the sergeant rank in the air force is the same as the sergeant rank in the army, but in the army, infantry, a sergeant is the platoon sergeant, he is the senior NCO go-between the platoon commander and the fighting forces of the platoon, the section. In the air force it doesn't work that

03:30 way and it's been a stuffing failure ever since some clown said that was the way it should be, you cannot have two senior NCOs in charge of 30 men. Because always one senior NCO will outrank the other, so it's a bloody nonsense, and prove it be a bloody nonsense in the ADG flight as I was talking about back then, under the flight sergeant it was a

04:00 sergeant, another senior NCO, but he was a section leader. Now a section leader as I said before, was a section leader of ten men, he was the combat controller of that group, but the other two sections, because there were three sections in a group were corporals. So you've just now, not you, the system has just now relegated a sergeant to the lowly rank of corporal and said

04:30 well you're no better than a corporal because you're only in charge of 10 men. So, and then if you look at it from the bottom way up, you have to look at the troops saying, well I'm bloody AC so and so and corporal bloody Miller's in charge of my bloody section and then, that's bloody Johnno my best mate, he's the radio operator in one section and his bloody NCO is a stuffing

05:00 sergeant, why am I getting led by a corporal when he's getting led by a sergeant? Understand that there is stupidity rife in this concept. I don't know if it's changed, I don't think it has, it hadn't changed in the '80's there was still a sergeant put in charge of a section, because the air force had to fit this bloody flight sergeant in somewhere, instead of saying, "no", as the army did. "Flight sergeant

05:30 you're in charge of supply and administration, step aside." The air force. The air force wouldn't do it, but the air force, and I had 22 years experience of it, is an obtuse mongrel bastard. It looks after, in my experience, officers first and officers need support, and where do they get support from, senior NCOs, so you have this, anyway, beside that, that's getting off

06:00 the track. Is it getting off the track?

**It's getting off the track a bit.**

Yeah, I thought so.

**It's alright, I want to take you off into the bush a bit and get you to describe I guess the detail of any of the operations that you were doing, your contact with the VC and things like that.**



Well our off base, outside the wire, see

- 06:30 that's another thing, that. Vietnam was a very, very strange conflict, very strange, because so much of it was based on French experiences during the French war, not many people know that or accept or understand, but they did the same thing, we did the same thing as the French did. We fortified huge
- 07:00 bases, of supply and defence and attack. When I say attack, we launched attacks from a base and we came back to a base, so what happened was, we were secure in our little in, or big, Phan Rang's environment, but then we would walk out a little bit of distance. And then we would come back and then we would walk out somewhere else around the perimeter and that's what we did. The base itself, as I
- 07:30 said before, had a 22 I think, or 22 K [kilometre] perimeter, the south and east side was bounded by a canal. It still is, I've been back and from the canal away from the base itself was paddy fields. To the north and the west were ex paddy fields, they weren't serviced by that particular canals, but they were serviced.
- 08:00 But that was decided as the areas of enemy approach so all that area was denuded, it was sprayed. By various toxins and no one was allowed to operate in that area, and when I say operate no local was allowed to go in the area, they did, how can you stop them.
- 08:30 It's a huge bloody expanse of area, you can't. Our task was to sweep, was a term used, by day, from a point on the perimeter wire out to, well it was supposedly 2000 metres, but it did extend a little bit depending on how we felt. And, we would
- 09:00 then sweep south, or west or north or east, whichever way we started from on patrol. The task was to, intercept, to reconnoitre, if necessary to engage enemy
- 09:30 forces in that area. So that was our day task, one of our day task outside the wire and that's a term you need to remember because it, I don't know how often it's said, outside the wire is always termed away from the safety of the base, outside the perimeter. Night time, we conducted, night ambush patrols, which could
- 10:00 I suppose technically, or tactically, be regarded as listening posts or even standing patrols. There's a whole grey area of the difference between and you need to ask the army about that and they'll confuse you as much as they've confused themselves about the differences, okay. But let it be said that we went out at one stage while I was there we would leave
- 10:30 about 9, 9:30 at night, sometimes 10, sometimes midnight and we would go out through the base perimeter, move out between one and two thousand metres, at, it's black dark and we would then set up an ambush in an area, and we would stay there until
- 11:00 about an hour before dawn and then we would withdraw and then move around geographically so that we weren't seen to be leaving that geographical area and then come in from another location through the wire. That was the main patrolling activities, or ambushing (UNCLEAR). Outside the wire we also conducted
- 11:30 convoy escorts where the padre would go into the local villages, or the medical staff would go into the local villages for what they called, WHAM, 'winning the hearts and minds' of the population. And that was, that was coined by, I think it was by Wes Moreland coined it, winning the hearts and minds policy. Anyway, we would
- 12:00 escort them because they weren't allowed to be armed, well they were armed, the padre, some padres would carry a pistol because they're allowed to, for self protection and military, no, medical personnel can do the same thing. But a nine millimetre pistol doesn't do much, it's 20 metre range, so we would escort them.

**Pause. Right.**

So that was

- 12:30 another task we had off base, as escort duties. Personally I had extraneous duties.

**Such as?**

On Phan Rang there was a FAC [Forward Air Controller] Flight, right.

**FAC Flight being?**

Forward Air Controller, okay it was a United States Air Force, they had them on most air force bases, what they

- 13:00 were small piston driven aircraft, lighties, as you would call them, Cessna one seven twos or shit like that, and what they would, they would take off at any time of the day or night and they would just fly out and dog shit around here and what have you and if they saw something strange, something out of place especially in a free fire zone or what have you, they'd get down low

- 13:30 and have a look at it and if it was suspicious, they'd radio back to base and say what's this here and they'd give a reference and what have you. And they were the, the open eyes and the ears, and, when they saw something that shouldn't be there and they confirmed it shouldn't be there they would call in an air strike or an artillery strike but more often than not an air strike. And they would, they'd fly around the area
- 14:00 up high and circle down and when they got confirmation that the strike aircraft were inbound they'd just lob down and they'd spot the place that they with place, rockets, or white, willy peter, white phosphorous rockets, and then they'd pull out and say it's marked and then the fighter bombers and what have you would go in do their damage.
- 14:30 I used to fly with them, a lot of ADGs did, not too many as I know were, none of us were every recognised for doing it, because we did it on our day off. But that was one thing, we used to fly as their observers, they used to call us their shot guns, because we used to carry the weapon up there you know, and they were good. And then also I flied,
- 15:00 I flew with MAC-V [Military Assistance Command Vietnam] they had a helicopter unit at, actually it wasn't, it was just, it was on the base but not on the base. Oh MAC-V is a political outfit, CIA, I hate the bastards. And Cliff Evans he was the flight sergeant at the ADG Flight, he's dead now. I knew him from, when I did the ADG section leader
- 15:30 conversion course, he was the senior NCO in charge and he and I got on, you know, some people do. And he got on well with me and what have you and he said, "Brian" he said, "you don't have to do this, but there's something you might want to do, there's no one else doing it." And he took me down and he introduced me to the major colonel, the bastard was in bloody civvies half the time.
- 16:00 He said, "Go out and fly with these blokes in the Iroquois choppers, it's just experience," and I did. I flew with them a few times and we got in a shit fight one time and anyhow...

#### **Shit fight with enemy or?**

Yeah. So there was, there was things that we did, another thing that happened at Phan Rang, Charlie blew the fuck out of the bloody beach.

- 16:30 Now we had a beach compound about 11 K or so, east of the base, I think it was Ninh Thuan, something like that, that's the name of the local village, but it was a sort of a rest and recreation, barbecue, go to the beach day, kind of place. It was a beautiful beach, white sand, except for the noggy turds that floated up, but anyway it was a beautiful spot. And out from it was where the big
- 17:00 American tankers, not tankers, cargo ships would come in and they would anchor up and unload. Beautiful spot, but at one end was Charlie's bloody area, so we were told, I mean I don't even know it that was true, I doubt it ever was, but we had an area anyway and, it got hit one night. Bloody seppos came in and blew the bloody shit out of the place, and, it was a Yank
- 17:30 establishment, we could use it because we were on the base but it was a Yank controlled establishment, it had to be Yank controlled because there was money passing hands. Anyhow, it got hit that night and skins have called me in, Skins O'Lawler and he said, "The beach has been hit and we got a responsibility to put our troops down there and commit ourselves to partial defence."
- 18:00 "Not a prob." So I sent a couple of blokes down and that, from then on, I think it was two blokes every night went from the QRF, Quick Reaction Force, section, spent every night down there augmenting the Yanks and the defence of that area. That was the other off base activity. That's about all the off base activity.

- 18:30 **No it reveals quite a lot actually.**

Yeah it makes me exhausted just thinking about it, how did we do it all? I'm just...

**Contact with the VC, can you, I mean I've got an impression that, from talking to researchers back in the office as well that you didn't really trust the villagers terribly much.**

No I didn't.

- 19:00 It was a failing, an out and out failing to have the locals working on the base.

#### **How did that manifest itself? What,**

Well, I don't know where you live, right, but you live in a community, you

- 19:30 might not know anyone but you live in a community and you consider yourself part of that community, and all of a sudden someone or something takes control of that community, it doesn't affect you because you're still working but puts up a fence around that community and then says, "Oh we need to, we need to wash, we need to wash your gardens."
- 20:00 Or, "We need to, we need to clean your windows, or we need to do this," or something in your community, and we're going to bring all these outsiders in, they're not outsiders, because they live next door so we're going to bring them in, so do you trust them in your house? No.

**If I haven't met them.**

No and that's what happened you see, so you have this situation where there's this airfield,

20:30 this huge base of, people, who are committed by choice, some by choice to doing a task to, committing themselves to this and then you say now all these other people outside of that area that you're committed to fight against, we don't know who they are

21:00 but they look all these people out here. So what we're going to do is we're going to get all these people out here, to come in and make your beds and clean your toilet and cut your hair and serve you your beers. Does that sound strange or...?

**It sounds scary.**

Yeah, so that's what happened, the Americans set up bases everywhere in Vietnam, put all these troops in, all this magnificent

21:30 fire power, technology etcetera and then invited the locals who they've been told are the enemy in and said, clean us, wash us, serve us. Maybe sometime service us, and to us it's foreign because that is not the philosophy, that is not the strategic or tactical

22:00 wherewithal that we know as Australians, what are we doing, these are the bloody enemy.

**And this is how all the Australians felt the whole time you were there?**

Oh shit yeah. Oh no, I won't say that not all, not all.

**Well you.**

I did and the majority of ADGs did, but you see out of the 200 people in Phan Rang you had pilots, you had navigators, aircrew, you had your

22:30 technical personnel and all these personnel, not necessarily aircrew, but the ground personnel, the drivers, the radio operators, the equipment people, they weren't necessarily told the way we were about what was going on or, you have to realise that ADGs were

23:00 the front end. The air force has only a front end, if you ask the air force the front end is the aircrew, and that's true but when the aircrew aren't flying, and you've got a base that has got to be defended from ground attack who's the front end, well the ADGs are the front end so they have to know these things, but the others didn't, so.

**So were there times where you I guess engaged with, locals or enemy**

23:30 **locals that you weren't really sure were VC or not?**

I'll best put it down to something that's recorded in Chris Couthard's book, because I know it's fact, this is just one...

**But is this your, is this a gig you were involved in?**

You only want it from me.

**Yes.**

Then I'll say no, there is nothing that I was involved in,

24:00 except for one.

**That's the one.**

Sometime in 1970 a message came through from home, who gives a shit. I was told to take me section out on a night, actually if we had been part of Special Forces, which we weren't, they'd have

24:30 called it a snatch operation. We had to go out off the base, locate an area wait until a certain individual passed through that area, because that's what the intelligence said, and then snatch him, capture him and we did. We went out, outside a Juliet,

25:00 Juliet sector, and we sat there and sat there and sat there and, it was, three, three o'clock something like that in the morning, and he moved through and we grabbed him and, we took him back to the base and he was a VC guide informer. Yeah. Does that answer the question?

**Well it gives me a bit**

25:30 **a bit of a window into it yeah. I guess extending into that, the villagers, what was it about the villagers that you didn't trust?**

Everything.

**Can you be a bit more specific?**

Oh hell, can I be specific.

- 26:00 I don't know how, I have to by asking a question, or series of questions, and I probably ask it by more of the, of asking you to picture, imagine, feel the same thing. You're in a country that no one speaks your language, you're in a foreign place,
- 26:30 where not only do they not only speak your language, they don't know you. They don't recognise you as being human, you are, totally foreign and that doesn't mean foreign, that means alien, that means you don't exist in their understanding because they got no books, TVs to say that you're white or you're Australian that, they know them you are just like, nothing. You shouldn't be there.
- 27:00 And then all of a sudden you walk in and you start trampling over their producing areas of ground, they've had it for 100 years, 200 years, that's how they survive - they survive by these beasts of burden tilling the ground, with them following, they survive by planting rice, they survive
- 27:30 by doing what they do, all of a sudden you walk in. And you're armed, and the buffalo steps on your foot so you kill it, so immediately they can't produce, they've got no way of tilling the soil, but you can't be touched, you just walk on, disappear.
- 28:00 So what do they do with the dead buffalo, what do they do with the rice that they can't harvest any more. I won't go any further on that but do you understand why?

**It gives me a wonderful picture as to ...**

I'm not saying their right, but that's one of the things that I believe weren't examined properly

- 28:30 by our people.

**So did that, how did fellows cope on the base having to do operations and interact with?**

We didn't give a damned shit. See this, this is the stupidity of that whole damn situation. This is what I believe what made that conflict

- 29:00 so different from so many things. There was no right, there was no wrong. What you did to survive was right, what they did to survive was right, everything was right, but everything was wrong. So we walked through their paddy field,
- 29:30 to go back to the previous example, and we would go through their paddy field and we look and we see behind that stuffing bullock is some prick with an AK [Kalashnikov Assault rifle]. I'm not saying that's happened, this is just a what if, so we know we can't shoot the buffalo, because the rules of engagement say you can't shoot their animals, otherwise you'll have to pay
- 30:00 so what do we do, if we go that way, it gives him behind the buffalo the opportunity to shoot us, that's wrong. So what do we do we sit there and say oh we're stuck, no, we shoot the stuffing buffalo and we shoot the prick behind it and we worry about the consequences some other time. Why? Because it's not going to affect us, some bloody politician's
- 30:30 going to pay him a million dollars or whatever it is for his stuffing buffalo, but Zin Wai [Binh Hoa?] behind the buffalo's dead. He's not going to hurt us, he's not armed, oh that's easy fixed, here cop that grenade, here, here's a bayonet. Who's going to argue, he's not going to argue, he's dead. It was all right.
- 31:00 His way of doing it was right, our way of doing it was right.

**Well it's warfare. Brian, were there operations that you were out, or patrols that you were out doing that you can tell us or that you're willing to tell us about, where you came into conflicts where those rules of engagement**

- 31:30 **flew out the window or you saw those rules of engagement fly out the window?**

Not whilst I was on patrol with a flight, not whilst I was doing our primary task of protection of the base, no. But I mentioned before flying with the choppers, the MAC-V choppers there was,

- 32:00 there was a couple of incidents that. There was one particular incident, I suppose I have to say before, it was a very clandestine war. It wasn't only clandestine military but it was clandestine politically.
- 32:30 There were things, there were operations that occurred that aren't written down anywhere, you have no idea of the secrecy of things. You've heard of Operation Phoenix.

**Only by name.**

Well that itself explains a hell of a lot.

- 33:00 You know.

**I guess it sounds like you could give us a picture through this chopper op that you were involved or at least that you witnessed.**

I mentioned before, Cliff Evans arranged for me to fly with these choppers, they were MAC-V, that's Military,

- 33:30 well there's a few different it depends on what the Yanks want you to know at the time. MAC-V is Military Assistance Command Vietnam, it succeeded from MAG-V, which is Military Assistance and Advisory Group Vietnam and there were,
- 34:00 bits and pieces that flew off that left right and centre suffice to say that military, MAC-V, was United States Army front for the CIA, that's not to say it wasn't all, it just means that every now and then the CIA were in there and were covered.
- 34:30 Cliff Evans got me flying on the choppers out of the MAC-V group in Phan Rang. I doubt if you'll ever find any record of it, I've got photos of them but. And, I flew with them a few times on a, Cliff called it a ground liaison group, because I was ground defence, if the chopper went down I could
- 35:00 assist with survival and protection and what have you. These are only, flew, on the days off, it had nothing to do officially with my duties. One time we took off and we went south west of the base. There's a range of hills around the base and, we got onto a creek
- 35:30 and we flew along the creek for, I don't know a while. The right hand port starboard door gunner was a Negro, and he'd taken the flash suppressor off the M-60. Now the flash suppressor is a piece of metal like that with slots in it and as the projectile goes out of course there's all of these gases, making a hell of a noise. And
- 36:00 it suppresses, or reduces the gases as they come out, so some come out and bang they, shh, bit louder than that and also suppresses the flash so the enemy can't, but he'd taken it off so it means the bloody thing comes out going fucking boop, boop, I mean really, I didn't take any notice of it at the time. Anyway, we flew up this bloody creek and came to a sort of an escarpment sort of thing and the chopper
- 36:30 reached up and I thought, shit, we're into this bastard and come up and over the top and as you get over the top your gut comes from here down to here, you get that, you know that bloody feeling. Yeah and as we're gathering ourselves that this has happened, this bloody gook's down in the creek washing his bloody, doing his dhobie you know, washing his clothes. And
- 37:00 I don't know who, one of the crew, I wasn't wearing coms at the time, one of the crew said something and a grenade got thrown out, a smoke grenade to mark the location. And the chopper flew away and he come back around, and we started
- 37:30 taking incoming and this bloody, this bloody Negro opened up with this stuffing 60, and a 60 without the flash suppressor gives a fearful noise, I mean you, fucking deafens you, anyhow he opened up and you can see the bloody leaves in the trees getting shredded, he's not hitting stuff off, but he's doing the right thing and then this shit comes flying through the bloody chopper and I thought
- 38:00 what's this bloody crap and I had a monkey strap on, and someone's shouting, "Incoming, return, return, return fire!" So I'm hanging down and firing, I don't know what's going on, I couldn't see nothing, except this smoke, he went around and he come back again and there's bloody crap coming from everywhere. What the bloody hell is this, because you know, this just didn't happen at the base, so,
- 38:30 I'm looking at this bloody Negro and he's not taking no attention of me. And there's a bloke, a door gunner on the other side he's bloody well choppers don't open up both at the same time as they fly, they try to cant over so that the blades are higher than the gun, because if they go that way and the gun fires it'll shoot the, you know what I mean? So they're sort of restricted, they're good if they're flying like that, flying forward, but on a flank they're, anyhow.
- 39:00 And I'm looking I can't see stuff all, what the bloody hell you shooting at, I can see the smoke and it's drifting up and of course the sucker, the blades suck up so the smoke's coming, and, then I, they make another pass, and I see this bloody green shit, flashing
- 39:30 they use green tracer, we use red, they use green and I could see this, oh that's not ours, and I'm looking and this bloody idiot, ting, ting, flying through. And I looked and the guns firing on the flank that way and not firing in front, so I had the M-16v that I told you about, at the time, so I thought I'll use this bastard on bursts.
- 40:00 So I put it on auto, and, put out a couple of bursts into that area, chopper's still going forward and then there's this, there's this girl, maybe, hard to tell, age is 20 maybe,
- 40:30 and she's bloody in the firing, I don't know if she's firing it's hard to tell, you know, all you can see is her posture. So I, put a burst down her area and she, they don't get blown backwards, you know when you see them getting blown backwards, that don't happen
- 41:00 they just, they fall down, but anything loose gets knocked and she fell down and her left arm came adrift and the couple of others, streams of tracer coming up and I, I put it into that and, a couple of boys there and they, they went down, they were wearing light blue shirts, short sleeve, light blue shirts. And then we flew, we come back again, not that way of course, and all the leaves are still falling.

## Tape 8

00:32 **Brian you were just telling us then the operation you were talking to Chris about, even though it was, what was the word, clandestine, secret, you were given a medal, can you tell us about that?**

A few, a few days after, in fact the next time I went down to that unit to fly with them

01:00 again, the OIC [Officer In Charge], colonel, half-colonel, I can't remember now, he called me in and he says, "You're not flying with us any more." And I said, "Why is that?" And he said, "We've been directed to stop all non American personnel flying with us,

01:30 but thank you very much, appreciate what you did and this is yours. It's not a recognition. It won't be, it won't be written down anywhere and you really don't," he said, "you don't want to ever talk about this." And I haven't until today.

02:00 **Thank you.**

It was the air medal, it's a nonsense thing, you get it for just flying with Americans in combat, you know.

02:30 I couldn't wear it while I was in the air force. But I've put it on me medal bar now.

03:00 It was a strange war.

**Are you alright to keep going?**

Yeah.

**Something you mentioned before that I wouldn't mind talking about if it's alright with you, is the fact that and you said, thank god the Yanks did give you the ammo because you weren't getting any from Australia, what was that about?**

The only ammunition

03:30 that was peculiar to Australia was nine millimetre, okay, peculiar means singular, all other ammunition was, NATO classed, in other words all the other countries were, and this is stupid because Australia was never part of NATO, anyhow, it shows that we've been sucked, screwed and tattooed, but never mind,

04:00 did I say that? I just did. Nine millimetre was the weapon, the ammunition that we used in the F1 submachine gun and in the nine millimetre high power Browning pistol. The Americans didn't use nine millimetre at all in them days. We couldn't get ammunition.

04:30 It just wasn't forthcoming, we put in orders to get, it was called SAA, Small Arms Ammunition, couldn't get it, it just wasn't there, we'd put our orders and then we'd go up to the bomb dump, I think it was K Group it was called. The air force used to have numbers, alphabetical numbers, or letters for

05:00 supply, L group was clothing, I think K group was ammunition, I'm not sure. Anyway I know L Group was clothing. And so we'd go up and say we need the ammunition, because you couldn't keep the same ammunition in your weapons for 12 months you'd have to get rid of them, they've got an expiry date, and up there, when you've got bloody, the shit weather and conditions up there you can't just leave it there because it deteriorates,

05:30 so you'd have to fire it off or burn it. You had to fire it off, you can't just throw it in the dump because, Mrs Gook who's cleaning your house, is now, or hut is now taking your rubbish out with all... So it wouldn't come, so we just used to go up to the Yanks and say we need some of your rounds of one and five, so many, 40 mikes, so much of this, so much of that and they'd just say, "Whatever you need.

06:00 Whatever you need." It got so bad, I'll tell you, it got, this is the stupidity or the short sightedness or the asinine people that are in charge of Australia then and they haven't changed I'll tell you, they wanted us to pick up brass, you don't understand that,

06:30 I know you don't but if you ever go speak to another serviceman and talk about pick up brass he'll tell you exactly what I'm talking about.

**Could you tell me?**

Oh I will, I will. When you go to a firing range.

**Sorry Brian. It's the camera.**

It's when you go to a firing range for range practice, whether it be to zero rifles or whatever weapon or

07:00 just for marksmanship practice and at the end of the day you have to account for every single round

fired, every single round has to be accounted for and it makes sense because you don't want someone stealing ammunition, that makes sense right, then you have to pick up all the brass. Brass is the metal from which the cartridges are made. The propellant

07:30 are stored in brass cartridges, and you fire the projectile, the lead, copper, nickel, bullet away but then the brass is left, okay. So if you have a firing practice and you fire 5000 rounds, then you should have 5000 pieces of brass at the end of the day. Now that serves two purposes, one it keeps people honest, and two brass is a recyclable

08:00 metal, so it goes back to and it's melted down and it makes more ammunition and we're in a war zone and they wanted us to pick up the fucking brass. Mind you, it was the brass that we got from the Americans that they wanted us to pick up. They had no entitlement to the stuffing thing, they were just trying to make stuffing, some bastard, some bloody politician or some public servant said,

08:30 "Woo, we're not supplying them with brass, with rounds, but they're getting it so when they fire on the range they've got all this bloody brass sitting there, pick it up and send it back." It begs the question where's the corruption, what's going on, here we are, and I admit it was range practice and the range was outside the base shooting against the bases of hills,

09:00 100, 150 metres away but, they want us to stay out there and pick up bits of brass. Which wasn't Australian property in the first place, it was American, some bastard.

#### **Using you as a lackey.**

And making money out of it. Find that in a bloody book, you won't. No, that bloody war was sickening.

09:30 I'm not saying was wrong that we were there, we were doing our job, but there were so many asides to it, it'd curl your toes.

**In their short sightedness as you say there was so much going on in Australia with the commitment and the non commitment to the war, there were politicians that were, oh we'll give them guns but we won't give the ammunition, maybe it's not**

10:00 **giving 100 percent over?**

Maybe, maybe. Commitment is the, there are two key words in my view of Vietnam, commitment and betrayal. There was solid commitment by the

10:30 services in that engagement so much so that nearly 500 died and you can't get much more commitment than that. But there was betrayal...there was betrayal because there was no commitment from the politicians.

11:00 And to this day from that day, I hate them I don't trust them, they're scum, I don't vote for the, I go down to the voting, polling booth and I go down and I say, "So and so" and they scratch off and, "Thank you very much," and they give me the bloody papers and I always carry a big black texta, not a bloody pencil that they use, because you can erase that. And I null

11:30 worth my vote, fold it up stick it in and walk out.

#### **I was about to say.**

And I haven't broken the law by telling you that because I have had my name scratched off. And if I've broken the law stuff them, no, I don't care, no, we were, we were shafted.

#### **The other thing**

12:00 **that we were talking about that we just touched on very briefly was the wharfies and you said well they weren't the only ones that held up stuff.**

No, well that's true, in Christmas '69, we didn't get mail, it just didn't come through, we didn't get Australian beer, and people say, "Oh what a bloody shame you didn't get beer, in a war you don't deserve beer." Well, we don't deserve beer in

12:30 a war, but we do deserve a little bit of support. And, if that, if it happens to be by beer which has a culture, it's Australian then we deserve it. What happened was the Postal Workers Union or whatever it was in those days decided that we had no right to

13:00 be in Vietnam because Vietnam, or the conflict was being fought by the international brotherhood of unions, now I might explain that later. And the wharfies said the same thing, and so what happened was that the postal workers wouldn't give us mail

13:30 and the wharfies not only wouldn't they pack beer but they wouldn't pack ammunition or food either or medical supplies, so it's not just beer. You may have heard of it but in the end the Australian Federal Government was forced to commission the Jeparit which was a civilian vessel at the time, it commissioned it into the Royal Australian Navy and it crewed it with

14:00 Royal Australian Navy personnel, and they were still forced to load it because the stuffing dock yard

workers wouldn't assist. Now, it wasn't that union, and it wasn't the Postal Workers Union that did it, it was the group that controls the union that did it. And who control the union in Australia, who controls union movements

14:30 in any country, the Labor Party. The Australian Labor Party through the ACTU [Australian Council of Trade Unions], ordered that and it happened. Now under the Commonwealth Crimes Act it is an offence against a

15:00 section of the Commonwealth Crimes Act to give aid to an enemy through the means I've just mentioned. No war needs to be declared, and who has the right to lay the charges and prosecute under the Commonwealth Crimes Act, those offences, the Attorney General, the Federal Attorney General, and did he, no, and has he ever, whichever

15:30 one he's been, no. We were betrayed, every stuffing political party and there's only three, been in that position, that's the Australian Labor Party the Liberal Party, Australia and the Country, or now the Nationals, they're the one's who betrayed us, they're the ones who caused, in my view untold suffering to Australian veterans.

16:00 They're the one's who under the law of this country, laws of this country should have been charged and weren't because they backed each other up in their bloody criminal betrayal.

**Didn't they realise though that it was...**

They don't give a shit.

**That the men on the ground were feeling it?**

They don't give a shit.

**And what about the posties and the wharfies, I mean because they belong to the union they just went ahead and said yeah okay.**

16:30 Of course they did, and laughed at it. I told you in one of the beginnings, when you asked about my feelings about going there and what have you, and I said it was about a feeling of pride and patriotism, these bastards don't have it. They're proud, for all the wrong reasons and for all the wrong things, they're not patriots.

**Have any of those**

17:00 **government parties apologised to the Vietnam Vets [Veterans]?**

No, never will, to apologise is to admit wrong. And I'm not just saying it was Vietnam Vets, what did they do to the Korean blokes?

**No one knows about it.**

No, keep that quiet, eh. What about the Second World War blokes, the blokes that were forced to go into the islands

17:30 After MacArthur had already taken them. Did, there was no supplies, there was no food there was no ammunition coming to the southern islands, because the allies, or the Americans had swept through and yet they still made the Australians go in and fight and die for nothing. There's books written on it, I've got the books.

18:00 **I've heard stories too.**

Not stories.

**No, no from the men themselves.**

We have been sucked, fucked, screwed and tattooed for years. By politicians and political parties, mainly political parties in this country, they don't care, why should they? They still get voted for, because we haven't, some haven't realised how to beat them.

18:30 Wrong. But the day of reckoning will arrive.

**Do you think there are any that you have any belief in?**

Any what?

**Parties.**

Political parties?

**Bob Brown?**

None. None. I have no, I have no faith,

19:00 if that's even the right word, put it this way, political parties are anti people. Political parties are anti



democracy, political parties are unlawful. If you look at our political heritage from Britain, which is the Westminster system and that's even the wrong term, but the basic concept is

- 19:30 that representatives, the word itself, they represent, presents the will of the people and no political party ever represents the will of the people, the political parties only represent those who own the political parties and money owns the political parties. We have a system which is preselect,
- 20:00 and select, or elect shall I say, so the constitution says that the people have the right to directly elect their representatives, but the political party says, if we don't preselect you, you won't be elected. So where's our direct election, it's not. Well we, we transgressed and digressed here, but it's an important part
- 20:30 because the politics of Vietnam are more ongoing to me, than the military aspect. The military aspect was over and done with when the ceasefire or whatever it was happened and people died, and people died and I didn't, and I'm thankful for it, but that's war, but the reason they died that's what has to be explained
- 21:00 and it won't ever be explained properly because it was wrong. And it was wrong because of the system the political system and the monetary power behind or which supports and maintains the corrupt particular system, and the money power that does that is as corrupt as it's political system. And that's what has to be realised, and all wars have been the same since the middle 1700s.
- 21:30 Every damn one of them has been done for one reason and one reason only, to give power to some group and that group is the group that has monetary control.

**You said before there are some things that still haven't come out about the Vietnam War. Is that got to do with the politics?**

Oh yeah. Yeah.

- 22:00 Can I quote something?

**Yes of course, we'll stop for a sec [second].**

"The war in Vietnam left an indelible mark on the Australian psyche and was a relatively recent event.

- 22:30 Yet how many Australians can recall the events which led up to Australia's involvement. It has become fashionable now to admit the involvement of us in the Vietnam War was a disaster, and this is true. Why? Because we lost, we lost militarily, supposedly and we lost politically and how do we know that we lost, because we were supposedly fighting to prevent the communist take over of South Vietnam.
- 23:00 But they did, it's a communist republic so we didn't win so. The will of the United States of America to continue the conflict was undermined within the United States of America and we know that. How many countries can proudly
- 23:30 admit that they sent a military force, their own military force into centres of education and shot and killed their own citizens?" You know what I'm talking about?

**No I don't.**

You don't, Kent University, you haven't heard of Kent University.

**Kent University, where's that?**

That's in America.

- 24:00 **In America**

I can't give you the exact date or even year but there was numerous protest movements occurring in America in the late '60s and Kent University I think it's one of the, it's not Kent State, it's called Kent State, it's called Kent State University, but it's not Kent, there's no such state, but it's Kent, four students were shot and killed

- 24:30 by that state's national guard. Now the national guard is a state military force but it's under the control of the governor of the state and whenever necessary when called upon under the President of the United States. And they have whole heaps of means of controlling riots and what
- 25:00 have you including the use of tear gas, they used tear gas, the video films of the actual event show that the national guards, the army reserves in other words, were wearing gas masks and they still went forward after firing gas masks and disabling and scattering the students, they still went forward and used ball ammunition which
- 25:30 is lethal rounds, and killed four students. So a country that will use a military, it's own military forces and authorise and permit lethal force against it's own people, to support or to prevent rightful
- 26:00 disagreement with policy, is a dictatorship a totalitarian evil dictatorship. That's America, that's

Australia, because Australia last year under Howard, set up and authorised through parliament, a law which allows the Australian armed forces to shoot and kill Australian citizens in Australia.

26:30 I'll go on, or am I going too far.

**You just made me think of Tiananmen Square and how everybody makes out that....**

They're bad. Yeah. As President Lyndon Johnson was forced to admit, and I believe this admission was in congress, it was the Zionist, Jewish lobby within the United States using it's control of the mass media such as the

27:00 New York Times and the Washington Post which was the driving force behind the anti Vietnam campaign. This fact was mentioned by the late Sir Reginald Shoal who served as Australian Consul in New York for several years. So, when you look at that, you say why were we there, why was Australia, why was America there? Now, these books I have up

27:30 here, and there are numbers of them, if you read bits and pieces of them and add two and two together, which you can do from many books and they're all based on fact, they all have quotations, you will find in there that the main thrust to remove America from Vietnam was the amount of money that the American government was spending over there to maintain that force.

28:00 Because Israel wanted that money spent on the defence of Israel against the Palestinians and the various other Arab states.

**How did you, when you come back... sorry you've just brought**

28:30 **up a few things there. Chris will probably talk about when you came back to Australia and what happened and that kind of thing. But, when you're in Vietnam did you have any idea of what kind of reception you'd receive on coming home to Australia?**

No, we thought we'd come back as,

29:00 olive leafed garland heroes.

**Gee you were in for a shock.**

And we got it. But no, I just, although I must admit that after the business with the wharfies and the mail and, the beer and what have you, we also had access to Radio Australia of a Saturday up there, but

29:30 there wasn't too much of that, it was mainly sport. I suppose I thought that I would be recognised as part of the other blokes who's come back in the Second War, and what have you. We were part of a big organisation, the defence force is a, or it wasn't then, but the Australian forces,

30:00 or to my mind was huge. It was I mean there was 90 odd thousand of us. Why wouldn't we be looked upon as doing the right thing? Yeah.

**Did they fly you home or did you?**

Yeah.

**So back on the Qantas flight?**

Back on the Qantas flight. We did

30:30 the last, our last, we did our last night ambush on a Sunday, and I think on Tuesday night we flew out and Wednesday morning or Wednesday night we were home. Boom, boom. And that's been a, that has been to me,

31:00 that transition, that short period, has been so very hard. On Sunday night, going back to Sunday night, what did you do last Sunday night?

31:30 Yeah, whatever it was, you weren't lying in a buffalo shit heap waiting for some mongrel to walk down, trying to kill you and you were there ready to kill, you weren't doing that, so that's where we are, lying there, and there's mosquitoes biting and, and what have you and you're there all bloody night and

32:00 you leave there and in two days time you're shit, showered, shaved and shampooed, on the big Qantas freedom bird. On the way home, and you get back to Sydney and you have a look at this bloody garbage that's walking the street and you think what are these things.

32:30 Because they're, what do they call them, hippies.

**So what year was that Brian?**

'70. I don't know if they were hippies, but they were some sort of bloody garbage. What is this and they're walking past you and they look at you as if you're foreign, spit at you or spit in front of you and you think hang on what's going on?

33:00 And you go back and you say, "You done that to me two days ago I would have shot you, you bastard, and gotten away with it and been happy of it." And it hasn't changed in here, in here to me, I would do that today, I'd do it tomorrow, I....

**Are you saying that when you came back to Australia, people, you felt like they were the enemy or you were the enemy? How they would treat you?**

33:30 They were the enemy. Yeah. They were, by their attitude, yeah not all, older people, no, but the scum in universities and,

34:00 and yeah, it was mainly that academic grouping and those that were influenced by them or by smoke and rope and dope and crap. It's hard, you can't walk down the street and say this bloke's this or this bloke's that, or this Sheila's this or that Sheila's that. But when it gets close up, you can feel it.

34:30 There's an antagonism, and, and most people won't have it, but I believe firmly that the troops that had been in contact or combat contact, close situations know it, because the electricity, the atmosphere changes you can, woo this is not right, woo.

35:00 There's a sense, you know people talk about the sixth sense, there is. You don't what it is you don't know where it is but you know it's there and you start to become very, very cautious or you start to get very, very angry and, or you start to want to get violent because it's threatening. And how do you best deal with the physical threat, you destroy it.

35:30 Permanently, and, which might go back to one of the things in the very beginning when I said I was getting problems trying to deal with people with civilians. I just...

**Their antagonism.**

Threat, I just.

**You can feel it, it's almost like you can sense a fight coming on or something like that, you can feel them around.**

36:00 I can, a lot of vets can and nowadays because of, not so much publication but because of the awareness of these, these symptoms, because of awareness, Vets are pulling back, my view. Whoop I'm not going to push it any further, I won't get involved,

36:30 and I know that applies to me. If I go somewhere where I think or perceive that it might happen then I shouldn't go there. So I will withdraw, so Vets..... Kerry's yeah. So Vets don't socialise within the normal mainstream if that's the right word, of society. Why? Because they don't trust them. Why? For good reason, it's threatening.

37:00 And if you can't kill the threat, then don't go where the threat is.

**I was going to say I suppose you'd be handy if you had to walk through a very dangerous area, you could sense it, not that you would want to go to that dangerous area.**

That's right.

**I've just got to ask you out of personal curiosity about stuff you were talking about before, do you think Australia will become a republic?**

37:30 The Commonwealth of Australia or the geographical Australia?

**Us as a nation.**

We're not a nation.

**Will be ruled by what we are now?**

We're not a nation. A nation is a geographical area in which the population or the populous are held together by a common heritage, culture, ethnicity, and religion. Australia is not a nation. If Australia becomes a republic, I would think within five years,

38:00 there will be a civil war and the republic will be destroyed. And unfortunately so will the country. There are enough people still living in Australia who are of the culture, the customs and the ethnicity of the founding races of Australia and they are not going to accept the put down or destruction of those facts by foreigners.

38:30 It might not show, it might not, well it's not allowed to be shown because of political correctness, but when push comes to shove it, they will rise.

**Better stop there.**

00:34 **Okay, Brian you were just talking to Heather [interviewer] about the reception by civvy street, coming back to Australia, but how were you received as a Vietnam Vet within I guess, other vets, say World War II guys and things like that?**

For those previous conflict veterans

01:00 who were still in the services, excellent it was a brotherhood. Whilst before going overseas, we were part of a unit or the service and made welcome by the Vets of previous conflicts, coming back, as I said before, with those little bits of

01:30 ribbon, just made a mountain of difference. I don't recall, in fact it's just never happened in my experience that any veteran of any conflict prior to Vietnam who were still serving didn't embrace us as brothers in arms.

**So is there a difference with the ones that were out of the service, the older ones?**

02:00 I did have occasion to believe when I first went to join the RSL, I think it was in Brisbane or somewhere I can't remember now, but there was an amount of aloofness, maybe even disdain by certain RSL members

02:30 of the previous conflicts, not Korea, no way, Second War yeah, yeah there was an attitude. Bloody thing, yeah there was. And I'd like to point out now, that if history is checked, and if

03:00 the conflict, the conflicts themselves are looked into and if people try to equate to time at the front line or time when actual combat could have occurred or what have you, a lot of the actions that took place or a lot of the areas of the Second World War, especially in New Guinea...

03:30 They may have been there for three years but in actual time of direct and dire threat they were less time spent than the 12 months of the blokes in Vietnam. So I've often tried to balance it out and say, "Well were they wrong or were they also part of the deception process?"

04:00 Maybe they're trying to not cover up but protect their war and say, "Well we only, we only spent two weeks out of every four months at the front line and these blokes spent 12 months straight at the front line. So we're not going to admit that, so we just..." I don't know.

04:30 It's something I've thought about.

**And how did you personally cope with I guess the reception from civvy street when you got back?**

I was fortunate. I was so fortunate that I didn't go into civvy street when I got back, I came back in 1970 and I stayed on in the air force until 1980, whenever, oh shit.

**'87 I think it was.**

05:00 Seven, thank you. So I was in the environment I was in the cocoon, I was military. And, if I didn't want to go to civvy street I didn't have to, it was out there. If I didn't like that, I'd stay on the base. I got married and what have you, but I still had the mental

05:30 ability to disassociate with civilians, so I was protected I didn't have that problem.

**Did you, had you made any mates or know of any mates who came back from Vietnam who maybe didn't fare so well at the time?**

No, no I didn't. A number have since

06:00 committed suicide, got, yeah, good friends. Many, many years later which makes it the harder to understand why, they've survived ten, 20, 25 years, why now?

06:30 But not immediately thereafter, no.

**We'll come back to that a bit later but, I wanted to ask you about how, because you were doing a lot of instructing in our ongoing service. I wanted to know if there were I mean you were doing a wide range of things, but I guess were there particular things that having been in action, I guess,**

07:00 **informed your instructing generally that you didn't have before you went over?**

Yeah. A few things. I would say that, as a student if you were one of my students,

07:30 and remember when I came back I was not instructing recruits I was now instructing ADGs. I was teaching people how to be an ADG, an infantryman and go to Vietnam and survive. If you'd have been one of my students, the first thing that you would have known, that would have emphasised my instructional knowledge

08:00 and therefore my ability to help you, would have been these two pieces of ribbon as I mentioned before.

Because that immediately says to you, been there. He's been there he's done it, he's experienced, he knows what he's talking about. Whether I do or not stuffing there, that's what you see. I didn't mention this before but instructional technique is imparting

08:30 knowledge, that's one side. The other side is embracing that knowledge, 90 percent of knowledge is through which sense?

**Experience.**

90 percent of your learning knowledge for the first time is from which sense, sight. You see much more than you hear, you hear much

09:00 more than you feel. So if you see something that sets the pattern. So if you see the two gongs or the two ribbons that says this bloke is a returned serviceman and he's talking about what he did or experienced in that particular war, I have to pay attention. I have to absorb because he's been there and he's done that. Unfortunately as I said before it could be all

09:30 damn shit because the prick was an asshole, but that, unfortunately, is life. So that is to me one of the two things that coming back from Vietnam not necessarily enhanced but was part of the instructional, the other thing was, there were small things, which are not in any book, you can only learn it from being there and you don't often learn it by yourself.

10:00 You learn it from other people, the first thing is there's a difference between tracer ammunition and ball ammunition, tracer ammunition lights up when you fire it and it's used for a number of reasons. Ball ammunition doesn't, you can't see it. When you have a 20 round magazine

10:30 and you are in a combat contact as was typical in Vietnam, close range, sometimes you can't see, who's firing at you. All you have is an indication by sound, you have to let everyone else know in the section your fire power where they are. No good shouting, some bastard fires, there's a lot of noise, so you have to indicate where it's coming from.

11:00 What's the best way of indication, and at the same time put fire on that person, tracer, so the first two rounds in your magazine, that is the first two out, which means the last two in should be tracer. Not in any book, but it should be. Second thing is you have 20 rounds in your magazine and our stingy mongrel government, as I mentioned before about the pin and the weapon fall back on empty.

11:30 When the last round is fired it's too late to know that you need to change magazines, you need to know that the last round is still there so you got it out as you fire, then you can change magazines with the smallest amount of time lost. So the second last round of the magazine, in other words the second round in, should be tracer. You know that the first two are for indication, your

12:00 troops know that the first two are for indication if you've told them, the enemy don't, so don't give a shit to them. You know that the next time you see a tracer round come out, and you will, get rid of that mag. Not in any book, these are the small things that you can only learn from being there. That's the only two.

**Yes that's fantastic, totally practical.**

12:30 So why isn't it there?

**You mentioned to us this morning briefly the difficulty of settling into civvy street, once you left the service and I guess the,**

13:00 **the onset of what you later found out to be PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder], but I'm just wondering if you could talk us through how it crept up on you and what sort of things started to happen.**

I go back to, I think it was a previous question regarding something to do with when I get out of the service, and I said well I didn't get out straight away,

13:30 I stayed in for 22 years. Staying in, within the service for that length of time after, is a support, you don't know it at the time. I suppose you can say well I'm still living within that fraternity, that brotherhood. I walk down the street everyday and I see blokes wearing the same ribbons I'm wearing

14:00 and I know that everyone here has the same mission, the same goal and what have you, so you're buoyed by that, supported by that. There's a belief in the same reasons of why you're there now as you were before you went, whether it be right or wrong, is neither here nor there. The entity is still part of the sole system of belief.

14:30 So when eventually you sever that, you say well, where am I, 22 years of my life this is it, this is all I know. So now I come out and I look at these people who don't understand me.

15:00 I talk oh, 700, I talk 1500 and they look at me, they don't know what's morning and afternoon in my clock, and I say, what have they done? What have they done as far as living is concerned?

15:30 There is a saying among certain service personnel and you might find it during your interviews, been

there, done that, been there got the ribbons, been there done that or similar such things. What it means is, if you haven't been there done that then you don't know what I'm talking about. And these people, these civilians

16:00 haven't been there, they haven't done it, so they don't know what I 'm talking about, so why should I have to relate to them. What have they done for this country, and I know that's being grandiose, self serving and what have you, but it still gets down to the point, as I mention before about going there in the first place, there's pride.

16:30 I consider that I have done something out of the ordinary, not the only one, 50,000 others, besides all the hundreds of thousands from every conflict before and since, but they are, they also are entitled, in my view, to say well I've done something for this country. I've put my life on the line.

17:00 Right, wrong or indifferent. Now what's that shit over the back done? He lives in a housing commission bloody home, he draws bloody dole every fortnight, he's never worked a stuffing day in his life, and he smoked rope and dope and crap all the time, why have I got to relate to him, why have I got to, associate with him, why have I got to even think...? I'm not, I'm just saying that he shouldn't have any part of my life. So I don't.

17:30 So it's selfish, yep, and it's antagonistic and it's bombastic, yep and I don't give a shit, because I feel that I have a right to be that just as much as that person has a right to be it. I just have more right.

18:00 Because I've done something different. I'm a shit head eh, I don't care.

**No not at all. Not at all.**

I don't care, you know, you ask the question I give you the answer.

**That's exactly what I want. I don't think you're a shit head.**

I hope not.

18:30 **But I guess following on from that, I guess, not having the service there any more and that network gone, but still feeling...**

That was soul destroying.

**Yeah and that...**

It wasn't as I mentioned before that I got out of the service that I started having all these, problems that I started feeling separate,

19:00 or different, or I started having the, the emotional, the flashbacks, the, not nightmares but dreams, the symptoms as it later came out to be PTSD. And different people have said, "Well you know, you blokes that are manifesting with these bloody

19:30 symptoms years afterwards, you've just read about it in a book somewhere and decided to get on a bandwagon." And for a number of blokes that's true, I know that. I will say without fear of contradiction and I will say it anywhere to anyone, that there are whole heaps of blokes who are served in Vietnam who are not suffering from PTSD, who never will suffer from PTSD

20:00 but have conned the system to get the bloody pension, the TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension] for it. And as far as the fact that I wasn't showing or manifesting symptoms for years after I got back, is because of the support as I mentioned before, and the family feeling, the unity of being in the service.

20:30 Hell, I was still there, I might not have been in Vietnam proper, but I was in the units, I was with the people. I was living that environment so to speak, so I wasn't there, physically but I was there. The cohesiveness of the whole thing, and when I got out it was gone and that's when the shit fell apart.

21:00 **Can I ask if it's not too personal, what a flash back constituted, like what is that like, because I keep hearing the term but...**

It comes in different forms; it comes in different degrees of severity.

21:30 It comes at any time, and I don't believe that that is always an apt term for it. But I can be sitting here now and it hasn't happened but I could be sitting here now and

22:00 I'll, I will lose it, I won't be here, what is in here will not be what the eyes see, it will be, it'll be that chopper flight, it'll be that arm getting blown off, it'll just happen, sometimes

22:30 that vision, will stay there. You've had a flash bulb in your eyes, and when you close your eyes it still keeps going and then it gradually fades, it's like that. It'll be there, and then it'll be there and then it'll be there, sometimes it'll disappear within seconds, sometimes it'll take a couple of minutes.

23:00 Sometimes, sometimes it'll bring on crying, or tears of just carrying those, there's nothing outwards

happens except sometimes the eyes just water, jeez what is it?

23:30 It's, if you want, if you don't have it you don't want to have it. Personally I feel that every time it happens, you age. You age.

**When you see the vision of that flashback do the sounds come back as well?**

24:00 No. When I was talking, describing the action to you before, and I was saying how that, that Negro's gun was thump, thump, thumping, when I was actually firing it was quiet, there was no noise. I don't remember any noise, I can only see in sort of slow motion, but not slow,

24:30 but like, I can only see, see what was happening. I mentioned before about instruction, 90 percent visual intake and that's life, and I think that the senses are far more acute than have ever been recognised or accepted and I think when something, something very, very profound happens, whichever sense that a person

25:00 has is the sense that experiences it the most, it takes over and the other senses are put away. That's how I see it, so when you see what's happening to someone, you don't need to know that you're shooting them, you don't need to hear it, you see it and that just shuts everything out and that's true. And it wasn't

25:30 until we'd flown back a couple of times and I realised that what had happened to the three of them, well I'd changed magazines twice in the meantime and I thought, shit they're down. And yet I could hear the gun in the background going pop, pop. So. And it wasn't until we got back to base that the bloke said, "You're bleeding." And I said, "What?"

26:00 He says, "You're bleeding." And I said, "Where?" And I had a bit of shit, cut across here, bit of a, I don't know what it was, you don't feel these things, you don't recognise them, because the sense is on what your main aim or function is at the time and I think the body just concentrates on that, nothing else.

**I mean were you able to let it out at your wife at the time?**

No.

26:30 **She didn't get it.**

She and I were on different levels of...it's part of our separation and what have you. And she said it, she said it, towards the end, she said, you have to remember her parents were devout communists, yeah, very high up in the union movement, the Labor Party.

27:00 Used to be members of the Communist Party yeah, very, very staunch communists. She'd obviously had to have had influence although it wasn't shown at the time and it wasn't for 20 years after we'd been married, she said, when the PTSD was starting to show itself, she said, "You bastards had no right to be there in the first place. You deserve all you get

27:30 every one of you." I thought well it's time I wasn't here. It doesn't worry me that she said it, it doesn't worry me at all, it's just, it...what can I say, it's another intelligence gathering opportunity. Oh there are assholes out here besides him and him and her.

28:00 It just supports the view that I had earlier about communists being traitors, and they are, in their own damn country they're traitors and this is just... You can marry a veteran and you can have children by the veteran you can be with them for 20 years and then you can still turn around after that length of time and then say you bastards deserve all you got.

28:30 Mind wake up.

**And was it before, I guess the PTSD symptoms and that would you have called it a happy marriage?**

Yeah. I'm not saying she, she was to blame except for that comment, which then led me to believe that obviously there was, it was in

29:00 mind views. But no, without a doubt it was the, the symptoms of PTSD that started everything and as I would expect, because it changes the whole concept doesn't it, I mean.

**Were you aware of her parent's political persuasion and perhaps hers previous to all of this, in terms of the communism?**

29:30 Yeah.

**So what did you think?**

This was in 1971 after I come back. I got married in '72, and so I'd been back 12 months or so. I met her three weeks before I went overseas. Three weeks mean nothing and we wrote, corresponded

30:00 while I was there, and then when I came back, she was in Brisbane doing nursing training and I was in

Amberley so we had that, that time. I had questions, about Vietnam. I had questions about what

30:30 are we trying to achieve over there. I had questions about a whole range of things that I didn't have before I went, so I suppose I said, open your mind, sit on the fence, put an arm out each side and let shit on that side and shit on that side go and see which one balances up, so I was, neutral.

31:00 I was open to all, all views and opinions and this and that and because I was in a quandary. I didn't see that what we were doing over there was achieving a damn thing. I could understand the reason behind it but I couldn't see that what we were doing was improving anything. So in that aspect I suppose I was saying,

31:30 "Well, let's listen to her point of view, let's not criticise until we know what it was about." Yeah, 20 years later, boom, boom.

**All in good time I guess.**

Yeah.

**Anzac Day, do you march?**

No.

32:00 I did for a while, I don't now. Why? Okay, Anzac Day is to me a special day. It's in this country, Australia, it's an Australia day, and I'm not denigrating the

32:30 New Zealand sacrifices and efforts at all, but this is Australia, so let's just, let's commemorate and remember the Australian part of Anzac and New Zealand over there can do New Zealand part, that's fine. But that's not what it is, you go down to an Anzac Day parade in any city

33:00 and what's in there? Well you've got the Australian returned forces, and civilians marching under various units and associations, and then somewhere along the line you'll have the Chechnyans marching and somewhere you'll have the Yugoslavs marching, and somewhere you'll have, what do they call themselves, oh the Red Cross girls marching. Now if they're Red Cross girls that served in Vietnam or Second, terrific, march,

33:30 but at five years old or seven years old they shouldn't be there, so they shouldn't be bloody marching, but they're bloody marching. And then you've got all these bloody gooks marching. You got all these pricks that have come over from Vietnam claiming to be refugees, they're all bloody cowboys, they're not many of them Vietnamese if any, they're all bloody Chinese and they

34:00 all bloody ran the brothels, they all ran the gambling, they all ran the drug scene in Vietnam. They were known as cowboys, we knew them as bloody cowboys, they used to ride stuffing Lambros up and down the streets, taking pot shots at bloody Australian, Allied Servicemen, oh yeah. Right, and they were all into the whole nine yards of mullah, black market, everything, so when

34:30 the shit hit the fan and they lost the bloody plot and the north took over the south, in '75, they were all number one bad list, the north wanted rid of them, what did they do, jumped on stuffing boats and went to Hong Kong, went to Australia, claimed refugee status. Not Vietnamese, ethnic Chinese. Have a look at them. Go to Vietnam and have a look at a Vietnamese, we've been back twice

35:00 you go over there and have a look at a Vietnamese and compare it to the so called Vietnamese in Australia. The one's here are bloody white coloured compared with them, they're Chinese. So, they get the right to march, because they say, oh we were in the South Vietnamese Army, ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam], Army of the Republic. "Where's your paperwork?" "None."

35:30 "Why?" "Oh we're refugees, we had no paperwork." So who are they? I've seen their brother like that once. They're on service bloody pensions, Australian tax payers are paying them service pensions, which is a military pension after they've been here for 10 years. Why? Because they're classed as allies, where's their paperwork, there is none.

36:00 They're allowed to march on Anzac Day. What's Australian about that? 1987, the first welcome home parade in Sydney for the Vietnam Veterans. Vietnam Veterans Association organised it. I was at Townsville at the time, I'm going down, don't worry about that, this will be terrific. Then the message comes up

36:30 to Townsville, I was in the 87, I was still in or I was in the reserves. "The Vietnamese community of Sydney are marching." And I said, "No they're... what Vietnamese community of Sydney are marching?" This is the Australian Vietnam Veterans welcome home parade. The Vietnamese are marching.

37:00 So I made further enquiries, and the organisers of the march said no they're not, we will not allow anyone except for the Australian Veterans and certain Allies to march - American and New Zealand. There will be no Asians marching. Bob Hawke, that

37:30 darling little traitor said, if you don't allow the Asians to march, the march is cancelled. Boom, boom, they marched, I didn't. I won't march. Anzac Day is not a parade it's a stuffing procession, we've been



betrayed again.

**Brian I've got a few minutes left on this tape and I have to ask you this one last**

38:00 **question but hopefully we may (UNCLEAR). Given what you told us what kind of advice would you have for someone who came up tomorrow and sort of said, "Oh look I want to go into the service, defend my country."?**

38:30 I would say to them, compare each of the services, if possible, compare what they have to offer you in regards to what you want to do in the service. Whether you want to be a motor mechanic, or a soldier, you know what I mean? Whether you want to be in a civilian oriented trade in the services or

39:00 you want to be a purely military skills operator. And pick the one that closest matches what you want to do, navy, army, air force. Then do it. But remember this, from the day you enlist,

39:30 keep a diary and write down every damn thing that you do, every decision that's made that effects you. Who made it, rank and name and if possible serial number, place, date and time. And when you fill that diary up, get it off the base where it can't be got at and write another one

40:00 and when you can take photos, take photos, keep a record, the most complete record you can of your life in the services.

**To what end?**

To the end that possibly, if the shit hits the fan at some time in the future, you've covered your ass, and when shows like this come about,

40:30 you got the documentary to say this is why it happened, this is when it happened, this is who it happened to. I can prove it and that will only, I feel, assist in the archival system. But, yeah, I would say to anyone, get in, do it.

**Okay Brian, thanks very much.**