



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

Accession number	S00784
Title	(W47951) Day, Reginald Roderick (Dick) (Corporal)
Interviewer	Green, Susan
Place made	Not stated
Date made	5 January 1990
Description	Reginald Roderick 'Dick' Day as a corporal, Volunteer Defence Corps, interviewed by Susan Green for The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-45.

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

> Identification: ... of an interview with Mr Reginald Day who's also known as Dick Day. Recorded by Susan Green on 5th January 1990. End of identification.

> Mr Day, I wonder if you could start by describing to me what was your situation when the war broke out - what job were you doing? How old were you?

Well, I was working with the Hoskins Engineering works because we were all manpowered then and we couldn't leave at all. What else did you want?

> What was your job then? What were you doing for them?

Then I was on the machines, on the radial drill matter of fact, and we were making bombs and Corvette engines which we made, different things during the war. And then I was in charge of dispatch at the finish of the whole place. We became amalgamated with Vickers of England - Vickers/Hoskins Engineering and I was there for twenty-five years.

> How old were you at that time in 1939?

(laughs) Turn it off.

> Let me repeat that question: How old were you at the time?

Thirty-seven.

> Were you married?

Oh yes. I married in '34.

> And with children?

With two ... a girl. We didn't have them then of course, later on. We finished up with a boy and girl and the girl joined the navy. She's a Royal Australian Navy officer in the WRANS.

> Now, tell me, what was your first connection with the Volunteer Defence Corps?

Well, I think it was really ... one of our members, Lieutenant Saunders, who I was connected with the rowing. He was in the printing game. And I think through him he told me about it and I joined and few more of the boys and quite a few around our district in Victoria Park all joined together.

> Was this in fact before it was called the Volunteer Defence Corps? Was this more of an individual home service guide?

No, I think we always thought of it as VDC when I was there in the early stages. But that was before uniforms and everything came into it. We didn't have uniforms or rifles. We had

broomsticks. And then we had the 310 rifles which were old-fashioned cadet rifles, we had those, and we used to go on guard duty with those rifles and with a bayonet. If we fixed bayonets and put bayonets on the end of the barrel, if you fired it it would hit the bayonet. So I worked on a bayonet fitting then, which I have now, and am going to give to the army museum. But I was only doing it on my own, for our own little crowd, we were guarding the Victoria Park telephone exchange at the time and they had a workshop there, and at work as well. And one day one of the army gatherings at the headquarters I was called out and they said, 'I believe you're making a fitting for - a bayonet fitting?'. I said, 'Oh yes'. But 'Have you finished it?'. I said, 'No'. 'Well, get on with it we want to see it'. So I had to - I worked on it then and eventually I had to take it into Perth, into headquarters, and let them see it and they picked on mine as the best one they had. Mine was a very small fitting and then they notified me later on they were sorry the army had altered the size of the bayonets. They used to have the big long, old-fashioned bayonets when we were originally talking but then they changed to a smaller, little small bayonet which was no good so they didn't use it.

(5.00) Tell me, when you first began to go along to meetings or get togethers with the VDC, can you describe how that first started and your very first memories of your association? What happened? How often did you meet?

Ah, I think we used to meet every weekend, then we had - of course the officers came into it from the first war, officers that we had in our battalion - some of were teaching us the new bombs, how to throw them - hand grenades really. And then we went ... we had a bivouac camp - march with all our gear on when we were given gear, overcoats and everything, up to Kelmscott through the bush to the Kelmscott. And then we camped at Kelmscott showgrounds and the Perth crowd, or Belmont crowd I think it was, were a regiment of horse men, they attacked us through the night and we had guards. Anyway, they won because our guards had gone to sleep when they got on the job. But then we ... that was the first feeling, like, of going out and taking part, real part, because we were going through the bush because that suited me because I was an old bushman.

But you'd had no experience of army life before?

Yes. In the first world war we had at fourteen, it was compulsory training, so I had that little background which I was very interested in I suppose, being a boy scout too. But that's the only army experience I've had.

Now you're a member of the No.2 Fremantle Battalion, B Company.

Mmm.

What was the extent of that company? You talk about being a member of the Victoria Park group. Can you remember what were the boundaries of that particular battalion?

No. There was Victoria Park, South Perth and East Victoria Park really on that side. Really, Victoria Park, Como and then Fremantle came into it I think too.

And they each had their own little groups?

Group, yeah.

Did you get together for training or did you always train separately?

We trained separately until the army had taken us over and we went onto the gun emplacements in Fremantle and then the army used to pick us up every Sunday morning ... every Saturday, and we'd go into camp overnight at the ... where the guns were and the regular army used to go out on leave.

Right. Now when you were first training in those smaller groups, and that was before the VDC was absorbed into the military forces, what was the sort of situation then in terms of what were your objectives?

Well, our objective was protecting, well, Western Australia really, because the aircraft guns which we were on, 3.7 at the finish of course, and then we did hear that when the scare came at one stage too that we were going to be posted on Rottnest Island, kill the old ones off first you see. But when the Japs - the Coral Sea I think it was - where the Japs were turned back, they were on their way down because we got - being a bombardier - I got word from ... we were all on standby and we were told to get all our uniforms and guns and things handy and not to say anything to our families, anything about it at all. Don't tell them anything. And when the word came through that the Japs were on their way down, Don R, that's messengers on motorbikes came round to me. I had to get my group together, ready, and take them to the drill hall at South Perth and there we were prepared to issue us with ammunition for our guns and everything else but we were on standby already for that but it faded out and we didn't have to take it on.

Can you remember a date for that?

Oh no. I think ...

You mentioned motorbike, motor cycle messengers and you called them a name. What was that name?

(10.00) Don Rs we used to call them. They were the men from headquarters on motorbikes that went out and took orders out from anywhere. And it was ... I am getting really ahead of it I think but when we were in the ... firing at the drogue. Now the drogue was a big thing towed by a plane and we had to shoot at the drogue, not the plane. And at that particular time we had a shoot in Fremantle but it broke all the windows in Fremantle from our place there so they shifted us to Buckland Hill which is ... Buckland Hill, you know where Buckland Hill is.

Where were you shooting from in Fremantle when you were shooting at the drogue?

From the back of the museum in Fremantle between the school that is now - the school wasn't there of course - on ...

That where John Curtin's senior high school is now?

Is now, yes. There used to be a cemetery there too in the early days. We were shooting from there at the drogue as it went past.

What was the drogue?

Well, the drogue was like a big sausage thing made out - I don't know the length of it or anything - and it was dragged by a cord by the plane and we had to sight on that and fire. Well, we had our command post where the ... they took all the readings and passed them onto us with the guns. My job was number three on the gun which gave the fire order. But the guns ... the ammunition was about, I suppose, it stood about three foot six high, the actual bullets as you'd call them.

So you'd need a couple of fellows to lift that to actually load it?

Well, no. You had to get it up too. We had ... of course, the drill, we were used to going through the drill for all that, and we had our gun crew, loading crew, and there was the elevation man that put the barrel up or down and the ... or turn it round and I had to set the height and everything on the shell before it passed out of my machine up to the man, the sergeant leaning up the top, who put it into the tray and over and Lauchlan, the big chap I showed you in the photo, he was the rammer and he had to ram this thing. You'd hear it rattling up into the barrel as it went up.

Why did you join the VDC?

Well, I think it was ... what would you call it? Our feeling for our country really. We were defending our own, we were preparing to defend it.

Was that a very strong feeling? I mean, how much was there of that feeling of defending your country then or how much did you feel, well a lot of the people around were joining so it was the sort of thing to do?

No. I think the base of them were old world war one men and the feeling was, that was their job, we felt we had to do it. We weren't forced to do it. It was purely voluntary. I'll get short on words to say the right word but ...

And in Victoria Park the groups that you were involved with, about how many men would have been in that group?

Well, it's hard to say, in the army, when the army took over I think it was more or less ... or you mean the whole thing. There was 100-odd for Victoria ...

No, no. In the Victoria Park group?

Oh, the Victoria Park group. I shouldn't know the numbers but I would say ...

Say a couple of dozen or sixty?

Roughly around the fifty I suppose, something like that. And then the same on the other end. Roughly I think B Company I think was 100-odd, well, you'd have those numbers there.

And where did you meet in the early days?

In the early days, Victoria Park, met in the drill hall at Victoria Park, and in the bush. We'd go and we'd meet at different places. Richardson I remember took us in a little church hall in Victoria Park and showing us how to handle the plastic hand grenades and things like that.

Those early days, what was your feeling of the general view of the VDC? How did people see you as a member of the VDC?

I think the public probably thought it was just another crowd, you know, joining up but without any feeling about it until they saw us in mass on one of the marches we had and then I think they began to realise there was something behind it all. That there were people behind them. But ...

(15.00) What about those days when you were training with very simple primitive sort of pieces of equipment? I mean, did that feel a bit odd or did people think that was a bit of a joke even among yourselves?

It might have been a joke to the people but it was no joke to us and we were, I know on Canning Bridge, we were guarding Canning Bridge at one stage and sleeping in the hall, on the floor too, and we had .44 rifles then, ordinary .44 rifles and we stopped anybody from going under the bridge. We thought we'd shot somebody one night. One of the guards had a shot at chap, he was fishing and tried to get under the bridge, and he fired his gun and of course all the guards turned out and everything else. But, oh no we ....

He was lucky. How was the sort of selection made for particular types of duty in the VDC? I mean, who decided who were officers, who decided for example that you should become a bombardier?

Well, the officers of course would be from headquarters.

Just to break in there. You mean to say the officers were regular army people?

No. Regular VDC army officers. See, we had a group of them. A lot of them I can't tell you their names. But Richardson for one, Arney was another one, quite a few but I can't recall the names now. We didn't have very much to do with them. We had more to do with Arney, who was Captain Arney, Saunders was our Victoria Park Lieutenant, he was in charge of our group. And ...

What was Saunders' background?

Saunders was, well I don't know if you know Carol's Print in Perth, it used to print all school books and things like that. I got to know him through the rowing because he used to do a lot of printing for me with the rowing.

You were a keen rowing person?

Oh yes. My wife would say that. 'Cause the lights didn't go out till I, I mean, the lights went I was ready to go home. But Ron, I think it most probably Ron that got me to join up, because he was interested in the start of it. He'd been gathered in, I don't know how, but, of course, he was a considerably young man. So he talked me into joining up and then there was four or

five around me living within cooeeing distance of me. Like our gun crew, there's McLauchlan and Ireland and Lockwood and those groups.

What were the sort of occupations that these fellows did?

Oh, engineers mainly. Engineering and ... well, Dick was with the ... (short break) Richard Lockwood was in the RAC. He was one of their first patrolmen for years and he was a man that I met in the north-west as a matter of fact, as a boy. But that gathering, sort of, we got together as a group.

Was there any feeling that those people who were perhaps better educated or perhaps their status in society was a higher status became the commanding people or that they were more the people that were listened to?

No, I don't think there was any of that feeling amongst them. We were all as one. And we were all treated each other as one, we were all friends really, the VDC, but - all volunteers - but the army used to pick us up on the Saturday morning and take us down, at different points they'd pick up different groups of men on the road - we'd be waiting on the road for them and I think I'm going back over myself here ...

No, carry on.

Well, they'd deliver us to the army in the ports or where the guns were and the regular army went out, and the girls, there were girls working there too. But we'd camp overnight of course and we had our own cook as well.

So one of your group became the cook?

Yes. One of the men.

Right. Who was the cook?

(20.00)... turn it off. Eh, Jack McNamara was our cook and he in private life was a ... had his own butchering business in Victoria Park so he supplied us with good meat, and then we also had the Red Castle Brewery was going, the Red Castle Brewery out in Victoria Park, that was going then so we had the head of that - I don't know his name - he was just a private with us. But he used to supply us with the beer and nobody liked the beer but still.

It was free. (laughs) How did you find it affected your life to be going off each weekend to this training? You were a young married man, to go off to training each weekend and have to hold down a full-time job and were you doing any overtime with the job at that time?

We were doing twelve hour shifts.

What was the affect of all of this on your lives then? Did your enthusiasm wane at all?

No. Oh no, not my enthusiasm. My wife was the one that suffered right through I think especially when there bringing up the children.

Was there a feeling though of ... of a different feeling as time went on about the VDC? Was the enthusiasm of everybody the same right the way through or did you feel that at times it grew ... it increased, that people felt there was more of a threat and perhaps became more dedicated?

I don't know. We seemed to be freer, we didn't seem to know the people outside. We were only VDC thinking of our own selves, I think. That we were doing a job and we were 100 per cent in doing the job. But, no, I don't think there was any ... I suppose the feeling might have grown a little bit. My wife might be able to tell me something along that line, whether the feeling outside ... although she had her job too as the nursing and that side of it. But ... first aid she had committed. But she had her ... no, that was before the children came along and, of course, she had herself plenty of time.

When did you first get issued with regular weapons, army weapons?

Oh, don't ask me. I can't remember the date.

No. But what sequence, what phase of the war?

Well, when we went into the army really and the .303 rifle, army rifles were available. See they weren't available in those times and ... so that's why we had to battle along with what we could get.

You mentioned .44 rifles, I think, didn't you?

Oh well, that at one stage, yes. But mainly they were the .310s rifles, the old cadet rifles that they used to have, breech-loading. But then when we got into the army we had the proper army equipment.

And what about uniforms, can you remember what difference did that make to the group as a whole when you were issued with uniforms?

Well, it gave us the feeling that we were being recognised and we got ... they were green, jungle greens, which were unusual to the people round about. It was a green uniform altogether. I mean, that was it, instead of khaki it was green - jungle green they used to call them. And 'Bombay bloomers', the shorts, as we used to call them.

Do you remember any other sort of activities that you were involved with or were expected of you as members of the VDC in terms of, for example, connected with security?

No. Security you're talking about?

Well, for example, intelligence gathering or any of that sort, that area of work?

Not amongst the group. There could have been certain ones picked for that on the job I suppose but that would come from headquarters. It wouldn't be anything to do ...

It was never felt that your group, this was a part of your role, that you should keep an eye on what's going on in the community and report on anything?

Well, I suppose that came naturally. If we did come up against a thing like ... anything like that and being army we had that feeling of responsibility but I never came across any of it. I suppose ...

You don't remember anybody ever ...

No.

... reporting about suspicious circumstances or activities or anything like that?

No. Probably wouldn't hear ... we wouldn't hear of it even if they did. I suppose that would be kept away from the army, from the ordinary troops, I mean. That would be security. But Reg Nicholson, as you say Nicholson, he was one of that crowd. But ...

(25.00) And you don't remember any reports of that at all?

No. No, I don't remember.

When you were guarding the Victoria Park telephone exchange ...

Exchange, yes. That was overseas and everywhere.

Yes. Can you describe what happened there? Did you guard outside the building? Did you patrol? Did you set up a camp? What did you do?

No. We just reported there at night - I think that was during the week - we took ... different groups would take turns and that. But we patrolled, we were there as - I forget how many there were of us that were controlling. There'd be two on control all the time. The others would be inside the building and then be relieved after two hours or whatever it was. That's when we used to crush all the snails, as you walked around in the dark you'd feel crunch, crunch, crunch. (laughs)

Giving yourself away.

But we used to get some interesting ... we used to listen in to some interesting conversations on the exchange because all you had to do, they had a machine, the men there, a hand-piece that they could clip on anywhere because sometimes people would be using the phone - kids used to get on as a matter of fact and leave the receiver off, hanging down, and that would be buzzing all the time in the exchange. And they'd be hooking on and they might hook on at one place and say, 'Hey, come and listen to this', and it might be a Yank or somebody talking. And then we used to, sometimes men that were stationed over east trying to talk to their wives and we used to think, 'Oh, you're wasting ...', the time they wasted. 'Hello, is that you, dear?' and all the everyday things that could have been forgotten because they're paying so much for the call all the time. We used to feel like poking in and saying, 'Go on and get on with it and don't waste time' because by the time they all got into their ... what they wanted to say the exchange would say, 'Do you want an extension?', in those days.

Did you ever have any connection with the police at all? Was there a sort of a ...

No, we didn't know there were any police I don't think. We were only just our own body. But, no, we had no connection with the police. I wouldn't know who they were in those days. But we were on at work, of course, we were on twelve hour shifts and we'd have a night shift one week and then a day shift the next. But we'd ... so we didn't have much time. All our spare time was VDC.

And when you got together ... Did you get together with the fellows at all just to talk about what was going on with other members of the VDC, I mean? Did you ...

No. We met on duty and that's all really.

What was the sort of political colour of the VDC? Did you feel it was a ... I mean, where would it have stood on the political spectrum?

Well, what, the headquarters of the army or something like that?

Let's just take the group of people that you were involved with, the men? Would they have been more right, more left?

No. They were all right, I suppose you mean. All for us.

More conservative leanings?

Yes. VDC right through. Course you don't know what goes on at headquarters, what they are, but the general ... we never had any complaints, not from them.

Do you remember any particular attitudes towards the Aboriginal people from the VDC people? Was there any sort of feeling of where did the Aboriginal people stand in relation to the war?

No. I don't think, they weren't ... not like they are now, there were the groups here in the city. Of course I was brought up from fourteen years of age with the Aboriginals in the north-west on the station but they were a lovely people. They're not these people we're seeing now. There's a mixed crowd of them now. But, of course, some of the Aboriginals in the early days, some of them went to the war. Of course in those days there was no drink ... you weren't allowed to give Aboriginals a drink or anything like that.

This is end of side one, tape one of an interview with Mr Reg Day recorded by Susan Green on 5th January 1990.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

Identification: ... side two of an interview with Mr Reg Day, who's also known as Dick Day, recorded by Susan Green on 5th January 1990. End of identification.

You've mentioned a couple of times about people making decisions in the headquarters but you perhaps not knowing what those decisions were, was there a feeling of being cut off by the decision-makers? That you really were just told what to do? You often didn't know why you were told to do that, what was behind the decisions?

No. I think that's just a natural feeling of the army. You don't know what headquarters is deciding to do so nobody worried. It wasn't a case of saying, 'Oh, what are they doing this for?' or anything like that, we just did it. We were there for a job and we just had to take our orders. Pity there weren't more of that stage now where give orders and we'd battle down to them.

Going back to that time which you spoke of, which was obviously a fairly critical time when there was a feeling that the Japanese might really invade. I wonder if you could describe again a little bit the feeling about how you felt about that time and whether your group, just your crew for example, felt you really could help to fight off an invasion at that time?

Well, that was the feeling I think that we were there for defence, volunteer defence, but, no, you didn't get any ... we said, 'Well, we've got to go, we've got to go', sort of ready. If they did come we were ready to take over. We had another thing we used to do in the early stages before the VDC formed was putting barbed wire entanglements down around South Beach and around that way because they thought they'd come in there. And digging manholes ... oh, not manholes but holes where you could get into and attack them coming down the street and all that sort of thing.

You were involved with excavating bunkers and things, were you?

Yes. Oh yes. Bunkers, what they call bunkers. No, it was trenches really. They were trenches although when we were on the ack-ack guns at Fremantle with our first introduction when we went down there was to see the girl, army girl - I don't know what they class them as then - in big army boots and blue dungarees sort of thing in harness to a wheelbarrow full of dirt. They were excavating a hole in the hill, underneath it was all limestone there, which they turned out and made a sort of a little amphitheatre or whatever you call it underground, and all the ammunitions was parked. They dug up these holes and put the ammunition in.

Did you have any idea what was the sort of extent of the entrenchment at Rottnest? Had you ever been there?

No. Oh, I had been there as a boy at one stage but just feeling that ... not only being a Fremantle boy we knew that was the island, we hadn't been there much. It wasn't opened to the public like it is now.

But you did mention that you thought you'd be posted to Rottnest, didn't you?

Well, that was a saying. They had guns at Rottnest of course, and we thought at one stage that that's where our crowd would be posted, to Rottnest. Whether that was right or whether it was just a rumour ...

So you were never given any advance notice of what was available there for you to use or what you might do there?

Well, it was just a case of 'They're coming' so get down and get ready for them.

Yes, were there any contingency plans if, for example, you had to fall back from these emplacements, what was the plan that you would do then? Would you go bush or what?

(5.00) Well, that wasn't planned but it would be a natural thing I think for us to get somewhere that we knew that they didn't know. But, oh no, it was just ... I think we had that feeling that we were in that, that's what we were doing, defending, had to be prepared to defend Fremantle really, being a shipping port. But, no, I think that ... our heart was on that particular job. We didn't ... no feel of fear or anything like that, it was just ... Of course, we had a lot of young chaps too - younger than I am because I'm eighty-eight now, coming up eighty-eight - but there were some ... a lot of younger men in the army then and the majority of them were - when I say majority I suppose the majority of the VDC - were ex-army men from the first war and those are the men, the officers particularly, how they got their promotion I suppose. They had the experience of being officers in the war, and that's where they were formed from.

Was there ever any insinuation that you were getting out of active service by being at home? Did you ever feel that?

I don't think so because we, as far as I was concerned, we were manpowered on a job. We had to go. I was to be posted down to an army - what was it called - defence like unarmed combat and all that sort of thing but the firm wouldn't let me go. I was manpowered and I had to stop there.

So there was a feeling that you were doing ... you were contributing to the war by your work.

That's it.

Which came first? Was it your work in the engineering works that you felt was a real ... the main contribution to the war, or was it your VDC work?

Well, we didn't have any say in it. Of course, if you're manpowered, you're manpowered, by the Government and we couldn't get out of it. I've known some of our - one of our boys particularly in the rowing with me, he was only an apprentice but he ducked off over east to join up in the air force. He'd just more or less nearly been accepted till the officer called him up and he said, 'Do you know you're liable? You've broken away. You've got to go back'. They shot him back, he had to come back to work.

Yes. When I asked that question I was really meaning in a personal sense, where did you feel that your main contribution lay? Was it the fact of what

you were doing at work or was it ... did you feel you were contributing more to the war effort through the VDC work?

No. Well, we knew that the job we were on, I was on, was needed and we had to do but if it was straightaway defence we'd go, we'd get down there. I don't think there'd be any ... no qualms about that. They'd say, 'Right, you go down on the job'.

And were other people in your work place also involved with the VDC?

Yes, quite a few, in the different places that they came from. There was even some Victoria Park boys and, well, there was quite a few of them there at different times. I know one man, Corey, was one but they couldn't carry on some of them, their, healthwise. When they came into the army we were all attested by the army and we had ... and they paid us - I forget what they paid us now, something, something very small - but we had to go before a medical and, of course, that knocked a lot of them out when it came to a medical.

So that, again, I guess must have made you feel that you were a much more active force, the fact that you were now being tested and standards were being laid down?

That's right. We were under orders from the army headquarters, I suppose, then in those days.

Did you talk much at work about it? Can you remember whether there was a sort of swap of information about what they'd been doing on their particular exercises?

To the outsiders?

No, no. To other people in your work place, people who may have belonged to other groups of the VDC?

Oh, no they wouldn't be there because, see, it's the Perth place so it wouldn't go very far. It might go as far as Midland or something like that, or Guildford. There was the Guildford crowd, they were all up that end. They were mainly horse, you know, men. I don't know what their jobs were. But they had their jobs too because there were - even in Fremantle - there was the crowd, I think they were part of us. Well, then, there's the crowd that took over the forts of Fremantle. You know the big forts down there. Well, that was another group of VDC, another ... I don't know what their battalion was or what company, where they come from.

Which forts were these at Fremantle, can you remember?

Well, there were the forts at Fremantle.

Where were they located?

They were located at the end of High Street. You know the museum, the ...

Yes, I know where you're talking about.

... well, there. Just up on top of that. And the other ones were at North Fremantle, and they were guarding the entrance to the harbour I suppose. They would have been put out at first pop. But then we had ...

> No, they weren't actually manned then by the Fremantle Battalion. It was a different battalion, is that what you're saying?

No. They could have been Fremantle but not one of our group, see, because we had, they had smaller guns that were all situated around North Fremantle and Fremantle there, smaller guns but they were VDC men but not attached to B Company. They could have been A Company or what have you, I wouldn't know.

> Right. So they were not with the Fremantle Battalion which was B Company. These were a separate group you are saying.

Yeah. They were Victoria Park, Como, South Perth - all around that area.

> Was there a very strong feeling among your people that there was a distinction between what each battalion was doing? You mentioned that up in the hills that there were more horsemen and people working with horses there.

No, we weren't interested. They were doing their part too and we were doing ours. They mightn't have been entirely on horses all the time. See, they had all their army drills I suppose like we had. Oh no.

> And what was your feeling at the end when it was disbanded? I mean, was it a sort of sense ...

Didn't know what to do with ourselves.

> Suddenly it was being at home each weekend instead of ...

Yes. I had to cut the lawn then. But, oh no, we ... with all our spare time ... see, we were on guard duty. See, they didn't come together, the army and the original start of it because on the original when we started we were in little groups guarding the bridges up around, all round Victoria Park - everything is built up now, it's different from those days, there was more open spaces. I had one group, I took out at Kent Street with my group and at night we were skirmishing through the bush and we had a local postman with us and he had a hearing aid and he was deaf and when I gave the command to retreat, to go back, when the patrol was over, when we got back he was missing. He didn't come back. So the next day when he did come up with him I said, 'What happened to you, Reg?'. 'Oh' he said 'The mosquitoes are that bad I turned my hearing aid off and I didn't hear you'.

Then at one of the shoots we gave at Buckland Hill, I knew I was going to have the shoot so I told the brother-in-law who had been in the VDC with us and had, on health reason, given it up, he drew driving the car and taking the wife and his wife and a niece, and a little girl with them. And I said, 'Well, if you go down opposite Buckland Hill' - there used to be a bridge over the railway to the rubbish tip - and I said, 'If you go there you'll see us when we're firing the guns'. So, now I don't know whether he intended to stop there, but anyway, when we were going to shoot - that's right he was going to stop there - when we were going to shoot the Don

Rs, as I was telling you, the motorbike men again, stopped the traffic on Perth end, and stopped the traffic on Fremantle end and the drogue came over and we got the command to take post. But when it did, I'm trying to, I was on the emplacement of the gun and I'm waving like this to get my brother-in-law to get out. He was under the fire of the guns.

Your brother-in-law was already there?

Yeah. And he didn't see me of course and we had the command 'Take post' and we had to get onto our drill positions, and to our positions, and the wife said when they started firing three guns and she said, 'It's like big tongues of flame coming out' and this little girl said, 'Oh, big guns going. Won't get Margaret', and she was frightened.

Big guns, what?

Won't get Margaret. But they ... he couldn't get out of it then. He was ... the army on either side and he was in the middle. But, yes, she said, my wife said, 'All hell had broken loose', she said, and the flames that came out of the guns.

(15.00) Did you have a lot of opportunity to have these exercises with live ammunition or, was there a good supply of live ammunition for you to practice with?

Oh, well, I don't know what the supply was but we used to have the shoots, I couldn't say now. We didn't have it every weekend, but say fortnightly or whatever it was because we had to rely on a plane to pull the drogue across. But we were very efficient, our group down there, the whole lot of them. And a lot of the permanent men, sergeants and instructors, instead of going on leave when we went in, they volunteered to stop behind because we would listen, we were anxious to get on and we'd listen to what they had to say, although the army were ready to get out, you know, on leave.

That's the end of the interview with Mr Reg Day recorded on 5th January 1990.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B