J.R Right, now first of all if you could just tell me a bit about where you grew up, and how you got into the army?

G.B Well, I grew up here and I went to Sydney when I was 18, to work, and then from there I went into the army from Sydney, when I was called up.

J.R You were called up?

G.B Mmm.

J.R Right. How did you feel about the call up?

G.B Oh, I looked forward to it actually, because I had a brother, you know, he went in before me...

J.R As a Nasho?

G.B Yeah, yeah, he was still in when I went in yeah.

J.R Right.

G.B And I was really looking forward to it actually.

J.R Right. What was he in?

G.B He was in the infantry too as a, in 5 RAR. Although he didn't want me to go in the infantry after him being over there, you know? He reckoned I was mad, but that's the way, you know, I wanted infantry and I got it.

J.R How did you enjoy the basic training and corps training?

G.B Oh, it was hard, I suppose it was something different, it was just.. I think if you done as you're told you got through alright, if you,.. I done mine in Victoria because there was only so many, you know, Wagga was full and that's when we went to Melbourne,

there was 100 of us went down there, Puckapunyal actually.

J.R Right.

G.B And it was alright, only I got down in Victoria, that was the only thing. (Big laugh)

J.R Too cold?

G.B (laughing) Yeah well I was cold, we went in April.

J.R Right. So where did you do your corps training?

G.B Singleton, infantry college at Singleton, which wasn't bad.

J.R And did they ask you at some stage whether you wanted to go to Vietnam?

G.B Ohh, no, they could've done, I don't recall. you know, they could've done, but, you got to the stage, or I did .. just speaking for myself, when you train, you know you train for something and you want to apply that training, you know, you're really looking forward to it.

J.R Were the fellows who were doing the training, had mostly been over there, I guess, had they?

G.B No, no, no I don't think we had one, right through recruit training or corps training that had actually served in Vietnam.

J.R Right, right, so was there much talk about it?

G.B No, .. oh yeah there was a lot of talk, because you knew that you were heading there and ...it was more or less instilled in your training that it was either life or death, so what you put into training might save your life. You know eventually....

J.R You took an interest!

G.B Yes, so you more or less...

J.R Yeah. And so when did you get sent to 9 RAR?

G.B Well, that was... we done corps training and then we went to reinforcement wing, you know which is in Sydney, we didn't get sent to a battalion, we went to reinforcement wing. And we were sent to Canungra, then we come back from Canungra and we were given 4 days leave and we were told that we would probably be in Vietnam within 2 weeks. So when you went home on these 4 days leave, tell your parents that you'd be .. Anyhow, we got back, you know after the 4 days leave we got back and we were told we weren't going to Vietnam that they were fine, because at that stage 9 RAR hadn't been formed, hadn't even been heard of. And they told us that they were forming a new battalion and 70 of us were going with 9 RAR over in Adelaide, which, they kicked up a hell of a stink, I remember that they walked off the parade ground and said "We're not playing armies if that's (laugh) if that's what's going to happen". And they were all National Servicemen, it was funny because they, out of that 70 blokes they asked who wanted to go, who didn't want to go, and there was only 2 who didn't want to go to Vietnam, out of the 70 and they were all National Servicemen. Oh the blokes were going to write to the paper1and they were going to see politicians and, which you know it made a mockery of all you were reading in the paper at that time about conscientious objector, that out of that 70 they all wanted to go, two didn't want to go, anyhow we were all sent to Adelaide to 9 RAR.

J.R So you all went as a group..

G.B Yeah...

J.R Over to 9 RAR?

G.B Yeah, we ended up pretty clicky because at that stage when we got to 9 RAR there was hardly any of the others, there was only

about 3 or 4 blokes there, we were the first ones into this battalion, you know, which come about when we did go we didn't have .. it went in November and we were due out in April next year. Some of them only done 3 months over there. I did more because I went AWOL, I was away for 3 months (big laugh) so I had to do that and me two years.

J.R We'll get to that, we'll get to that. Alright, so there you are in Adelaide, battalion's just been formed, and when is it now it's about ...

G.B This is November in '67.

J.R '67, right, right.

G.B Mm, we went in in April '67 and this was November. The battalion was officially formed on the 13th November, I think and we got there just after that.

J.R Right, right. So, then what happened? Training, more training?

G.B Well, yeah training ... well actually most of the blokes got the good jobs, you know we had a choice, we could, if you wanted to be a storeman you had first pick of all the jobs And a lot of the blokes did take them, you know storemans jobs, and cushy jobs, but I wanted to be ..

J.R You wanted to be a rifleman.

G.B I wanted to see what it was like to be shot at so I ...(big laugh).

J.R Why, why?

G.B Eh?

J.R Why did you want ...

G.B Well, just one of them feelings I suppose, if you're going to war I suppose, no good sitting back flaming somewhere ..

wasn't real pretty when you're finally shot at, you think what the flaming hell did I do this for, anyhow but that's ...

J.R Yes. So you, how long were you in Adelaide?

G.B We were there 12 months, ah, yeah, it was 12 months because the battalion was formed on the 13th November, 67 and it sailed on me birthday on the 9th November in '68.

J.R A good way to remember it.

G.B Yeah. (big laugh) that's how I remember that.... So it was 12 months actually.

J.R Right, right. So was there a feeling of excitement as you sailed off?

G.B Yeah, oh yeah.

J.R Did you get a big farewell?

G.B Oh well, I suppose, not really because, you see, 9 RAR, they come from all over Australia and I suppose you're down there, well you know your parents can't be there or anybody there, but I suppose I got a fair farewell.

J.R So, you sailed over to Vung Tau?

G.B Yeah, we landed at Vung Tau. From there we replaced 3 RAR, yeah.

J.R Right, right. So did you go up to Nui Dat?

G.B Yeah by truck. [J.R by truck] to Nui Dat.

J.R And then everything was set up, you just moved in ...

G.B Yeah we just moved in, what 3, we took over from 3 RAR and we just moved into their area, they moved out, we moved in. So we didn't have to do much as far as building or anything. More or less got stuck straight into er.

J.R Were you comfortable at Nui Dat?

G.B Oh yeah, it was, well actually in our area, D company, it was quite nice 'cos it was in the bloody .. banana plantation the of banana plantation sorta' and you know it was

J.R Any bananas left?

G.B Yeah, there was trees there, you know, it was quite good actually, shady and grass, I suppose you wouldn't (?) expect it to be (big laugh)better.

J.R Well no.... And what was life like there? Did you stay in the base much?

G.B No, actually you hear talks of different blokes you know different battalions and they done this and done that and they played cricket and played football and we spent most of our time out in the scrub, you know, we were very rarely back, you know, I think our battalion commander said "my boys will do it" and that's ..we spent a hell of a lot of time out in the scrub. You used to go out for 3 week ops and come back and then you'd have a bit of time back ....

J.R And then go back out again.

G.B Oh you appreciate it when you come back.

J.R So it was home

G.B It was home [but you didn't spend too much time there] yeah, put your head down.

J.R So, tell me about the time out of the base?

G.B On the leave?

J.R No, on ...

G.B Oh, out on operations.

J.R How did you refer to it? Out in the bush ....

G.B Out in the scrub, 'ops, scrub, 'scrub bashin' and going out again, you know just things like that .. I suppose you had your, there was different periods, all depends on what operations you were on, we had a real bad one, it was Goodwood, you know, we were forever in contact with enemy, you know, and that was 3 weeks of that. Other ones you go out, you might go out for a week and not, you're scrub bashin' all the time but you might not run into an enemy.

J.R One particular part of the province most of the time?

G.B No, we, we were up, further up more so than in Phuoc Tuy province, we were up in, other side of Bien Hoa and up. I know there was one operation, I think we just ..

J.R Was that Goodwood?

G.B No, it was just, yeah Goodwood was up the other side of Bien Hoa, it was during the Tet offensive and that, '68, '69 Tet offensive. But you know, when you got like that you were forever on your toes, I suppose you're ...

J.R So did you, you had to walk to wherever you were going?

G.B No, we were choppered mainly, a lot of units, you know they were in carriers, APC s but we worked with choppers mainly, you know, there and back in choppers

J.R Platoon sized ..?

G.B Oh, battalion, company, platoon, you know .. so even when you were back in base you might do a little patrol just around the base of one night only, you'd go out with the storeman and the clerk might, you know, they spend the night out or something

like that, and you go out with them, called TAOR patrols. Some of them were quite interesting.

J.R What sort of things happened?

G.B Oh there was one there, I wasn't on it, but there was one there, you know you'd go out 5, 6 or 7 blokes, 7 I think was the most. And one night they were out there, and you'd go into a position and you'd go in a fixed, they were set, set areas, and you'd just go out and listen for the night and maybe pick up a bit of movement or something, charlie moving around, and a cobra, a big cobra snake (big laugh) came at these fellas and come straight at them and got over the machine gun, 'cos they all took off and got away and they left all their weapons lying there see, and this cobra came over and sat over the machine gun, they were over there for 2 hours, and they're throwing stones at it (laughing) You know trying not to make a sound because they didn't want to give their position away.

J.R Right.

G.B What are we going to do if the flaming charlie come, you know, we've got no weapons! And anyhow they reckon that after a while the snake got sick of this and away it went. (laugh).

J.R Yes, yes. It would be all you'd need wouldn't it.

G.B Oh but you know, you had your moments, it's funny how things are like that, it doesn't matter, you know you're in danger and that you always laugh at something, humour always comes out.

J.R Do you remember the good parts better than the bad parts?

G.B You tend to, yeah, you tend to. You know humourous things and all that you laugh at things, funny things, yeah.

J.R After you came back from being on ops, did you talk much about what had gone on?

G.B Not really, no, you know you had a few beers, I think, you did, you'd pick up the papers you know, they might be a couple of weeks old, that's what you tend to, you know just read about home and talk, you know, more on home, I think than what you actually done out, you know.

J.R Did you find, were you pretty tense when you were out in the bush?

G.B Ohhh, yes, yeah, well you're on, you're on edge, well you see I went over as a 2nd scout and me lead scout he got shot in the arm*, I took over from lead scout, well you tend to get very, you know, up front and that you get, there's times, you know when you do it easy, other times when you know that you're in a, you're getting contacts, well you're really on the ball, you know, and most of the time you're waiting for it, you know, and that's you know, times like that when you're

*Not sure if this is “in the arm” or “anyhow”

J.R Right. And was it easy to unwind? When you came back in...

G.B Yeah, over a few beers, it was, you know, I think Australians had the tendency to unwind, over a few beers, you know, like you never got a lot, but you had that, I thought we did, you know unwind, SOME DIDN'T, you know some people, some people, I don't think, not saying, not skiting meself, but some blokes oh, should never have been in infantry, you know, they just weren't suited, well these blokes, it affected them.

J.R How, what sort of way did it affect people? Did they get twitchy or..?

G.B Yeah, oh yeah, but not ...

J.R Aggressive? ..

G.B Not really, we were lucky, I never seen a fight, or a you know, in the whole time I was there. You had your arguments, you know, but I was only thinking about that the other day that very, very, for all the, you know on edge, like you were, there wasn't much of that went on at all, you know, you'd think them'd be a lot more, but you know just at work you probably see more, arguments and that, and I suppose it was a, a bond really, that you knew that you had to look after each other, I suppose (laugh) ... you didn't get off side with anybody.

J.R Did you get on alright with the NCO .s and officers?

G.B Well they had to.

J.R Yes.

G.B You know, they had to get on with us, not so much the other way (laugh) but that was the first thing they said, you know get over there, forget this Sir business, we're just one of the blokes over here.

J.R So it was fairly relaxed was it, when you were out

G.B No, you still, yeah, yeah you still knew who your bosses were and all that. (Talking at the same time) yeah, yeah, yeah, they just sort of, I suppose there was some officers, I don't know, our, our, see we were very lucky we had a, our platoon sergeant, he went through Korea and Borneo, he was a very good soldier he was, a real good digger, and he just had that calming influence you know he'd been there and seen it all sort of thing, he'd been at Kapyong and that in Korea and all that, they had a real ding dong one day, in the bush and the Luie he was only young actually, he was only young, he was only 21 himself or something, and we were trying, we were in this, we were trying to get this bunker system, anyhow we were having a great ding dong battle, cos the old sergeant used to go straight, up the front, anyhow, this day they're yelling out loud, battle going on, bang, bang, "What's going on sergeant, what's going on?" Course every time the sergeant opened his mouth they'd fire at 'im, see at 'is voice

in the end he got sick of it (laughing) "What's going on sergeant..?" "For Gods sake shut you you'd so and so mouth" you know (big laughter) "Sergeant, Sergeant, your talking to an officer" (lots of laughter) and you're sitting back behind a tree laughing your head off, you know ....

J.R Right. And did anybody have any disciplinary problems when you were out ...?

G.B No, that come back again.. we had a good 0.C, and you know a A.D,7accidental discharge of your weapon, one that they'd call nearly a shootable offence, you know. Well normally you go up on a charge and you get charged, but he used to charge them and then get back and give them a talking to, and say "Don't you do that again you naughty boy", and tell them he wasn't going to send them on leave or anything like that, but when they got back he'd forget about it as long as they didn't do it again, and that, I think, you know, was a better thing than really charging a man because they're accidents and they shouldn't happen, but they do, I suppose accidents happen....

J.R Yeah... And was it much the same when you were back in Nui Dat? in the base?

G.B Yeah, yeah..

J.R Right. They didn't tighten up..?

G.B They did, they did a bit I think that, I suppose that (talking at the same time) yeah, I suppose if you, if you were really a naughty boy I suppose it would, you know get a charge, I never actually seen one .....

J.R Right, right. So most people sort of fitted in, worked okay?

G.B Yes, I think there was a certain fear because, you know some blokes, you had that opportunity at all times to .. I know, I think there was a letter put under the CSM, we had over there, the first fellow, he was a bit hard, he got us all out on parade there once, he'd got a note "Behave youself or you'll find a grenade under your bed" or something like this, to this effect, you know..

J.R Do you think it was a serious threat?

G.B Oh yeah, yeah.

J.R Was it, did you ever hear of any..

G.B Yeah, well B company, they shot, they threw a grenade in there,

J.R In your battalion?

G.B Yeah, in our battalion, B company, yeah. Threw a grenade. in and they killed one of the officers. One of the 2nd Lieutenant you know...

J.R Did that cause a stir?!

G.B Yeah, he got caught, he went up for murder, he got charged.

J.R Right, mm.

G.B But that, I think a lot of that went on, you know, it, you know at some stage.

J.R For what, because officers sort of niggling at people .... (talking at once)

G.B Yeah probably ...

J.R It wasn't to do with sort of ordering them out on operations...

G.B No, I think doing the wrong thing, they must have thought they'd done wrong, you know, hard done by or something to... Oh it's in their mind, I, 'cos my sergeant, cos we never got on, you know, we never ever got on, yet I admired him as a soldier but not as a man, but he was, cos one night I went over

J.R This is the experience ..

G.B Yeah, he, see when me mates, cos one of, like they come home in February, yeah February, so I had to stay there see and I went over, they were leaving the next day and you used to have to get permission to leave your company area, and they were all going to be over at admin company, and you used to have to get permission to leave the area, and anyhow I didn't get permission, I just wandered off and went over, cos I thought well, we usen't to get on, if I asked him he would have said no, so I thought oh well I'll go anyhow (laugh) Anyhow, it was my luck, had a few beers, and when you go in the boozer, you know, you all put your weapons up against the wall, course when I come out me armalite was gone. You know, 'Lose your weapon', oh dear. Anyhow I reported it to the duty officer and he came round and I said "Somebody's knocked me weapon off". So I went back and first thing in the morning I went and seen the staff sergeant, you know I said, he was a top bloke, and I said "Somebody might hand in a weapon, and for God's sake don't let Feathers know (he was the sergeant), you know, he said "she'll be right, "anyhow, so we were down in the magazine, what were we doing, I don't know, we were filling the magazine up with ammo, he said "I haven't seen you carrying your rifle around" and I thought hullo, he knows, "Where is it?" and I said "Oh it must be back over in the tent", and he said "You know it's a chargeable offence if you're without your weapon at all times, "and I said "Yeah", I said "Who told ya?" (laugh) He said "I've got you at last", you know he said "I've gottcha," But ..

J.R So what happened?

G.B Well, he wanted to put me on a, he was going to charge me, but

I, I said I didn't want to go up before those, I wanted to up before the battalion commander, I want to go to the top, I said he'll listen more than these other fellas' I said "Are ya going to charge me, I said, I said, how can you charge me, I said it wasn't my fault", he said "I'm not charging you on that" he said "I'm charging you with not getting, with not reporting, you know, with not getting permission to go". He gets you on one.

J.R Yes, yes.

G.B I said "Well don't to go up anyhow" and when I said that, well he said "Well alright, I won't charge you, but I'll, you'll take my punishment", so he sat me on the gun all night, you know I wanted to ... this was back in Nui Dat, you know, and you just had to sit on the gun all night, and he said "If I catch you asleep, then I'll charge you". But anyhow.,

J.R What was the deal, if you were charged you went up before your company commander?

G.B Company commander, yeah.

J.R Right. And what sort of punishments did he give you?

G.B Well, loss of pay mainly .

J.R What a few days?

G.B Few days, weeks, whatever, it was up to him, his discretion. But I never heard of anybody charged, you know, in our company, it went on elsewhere, but I think, you know, most ...

J.R And was it similar if you went up to the battalion commander? Similar sort of ... penalty?

G.B Well I found him more, see cos I never got on really with me company commander, he reckoned I was a bad bastard (laugh) to be honest, see the way he was, you know, I had a couple of AWOL's up me sleeve and all that before, and then another charge and disobeying a lawful command.

J.R What were those incidents? When did you go AWOL? What was this 3 month AWOL?

G.B Oh I went AWOL when I was at corps training at Singleton. I was In Sydney and Ray Charles, you know the singer Ray Charles?

J.R Yes, yes.

G.B He was in Sydney at Sydney Stadium and I always wanted to see him, you know, I like his singing(singing) But I had to be back, somehow on the Monday, on the Tuesday, that's right we got 4 days leave from Singleton, had to be back Tuesday morning, and he was at Sydney Stadium Monday night, it was the only time I could get a ticket, and I said "Damn it, I'm going to go and see him" ... it's the only

opportunity I got, and I went see, and I missed my ride back to Singleton, I had a bloke and he was going back Monday, afternoon, I rang him up and told him I wouldn't be going, so I didn't get back there till Tuesday night so that mean t I went AWOL for a day...

J.R Right.

G.B So I got fined, and lost 3 days loss of pay and confined to barracks, which is CB, ... actually you're confined to barracks, you're not allowed down to the boozer or anything like that, you know, and they give you any work, extra work they want to give you. So that was one there. And the next one was when I was in Charlie company in 9 RAR, and see, cos we went, the battalion was going in November, well that mean t we'd only have 3 months over there, and the CSM of charlie company told me one day, he said "You won't be going to Vietnam because you won't have enough time...." So anyhow, a few of us were on the grog there one day and I said "Well that's no good to me" I said (laugh) "I came here I want to go over there", so we packed up one Sunday and away we went, a mate from Melbourne, you know, we head off. I went to Melbourne for a couple of weeks and I come up here for a couple of weeks and I went back to me mates in Sydney, so I spent the rest of the time there. 84 days actually I was gone..(laugh)

J.R And were they looking for you?

G.B Oh I don't know. Anyhow I run out of money, so I went and gave meself up.

J.R Right. (laugh)

G.B It was funny too ...

J.R Were they pleased to see you back?

G.B I was at Marrickville, I didn't know, I thought it was a regular army base at Marrickville, but it wasn't, it was an Army Reserve base there. And I just walked in there and "What can I do?" and I said "I've been AWOL," I said "I want to, I just want to..."

J.R Get back in ..

G.B "Get back into it again", and he said "Oh this is only, you've gotta go out to North Head" and I was flat broke, I said "I got no money, I can't get out there", so he rings up ..... cos that was Military Police over there. And they said "Tell him to get over here". I said "I got no money...", so they had to come out and get me. Then, so I went up on a charge there, I went and faced the C.0. there, old Major Morant, and I got out real light actually, I was expecting to do flaming time, you know, out at Liverpool, in the Military Prison, because normally if you go more than 21 days you, I got off real light. I had to, you know, I just had, actually I only got a $20 fine, 84 days, plus I had to do the time, me two years had to do the time I was away. But he was quite

good about it. 'Cos you know he asked me and I said "No reason" and he said "Oh you must have a reason", so I told him the truth, and that's the way it was, well he said "You don't listen to a ? talk soldier, that will be $20" and I stood there, you know, and he said "What are you waiting for?" and I said "the rest of it" and he said "If you don't get out of here, I'll give you the rest of it." So he said "report to the RSM for your reposting and I. went in there and he said "Right, what are we going to do with you" and I said "I don't know" "Where are we going to send you?" I said, "I want to back to 9 RAR" he said "You can't, you can't, once you've been AWOL out of a unit for more than 21 days, you can't go back to that unit". I said "Well I want to go to Vietnam .... I want a reinforcing wing", he said "No, you've already been to reo you can't go there" and I said "What's the next one?" and he said 5 RAR's the next one to go to Vietnam after ", but he said "By the time you're due out, that's going till next year, so you won't".. I said "this is no good" .. turned and walked out the door, I said "I'm going again if I can't get where I want". He said "Get back here Soldier", he said "I've never ever done this before", but he said "If you go to flaming 9 you want to go to flaming, get yourself killed", he said "You go back to 9 RAR". So I went back.

J.R Right.

G.B Yeah. They were all pleased to see me, because I owed a few of them money (laugh). So, and that was me AWOL experiences. So they put me in D company, cos I used to be in Charlie company and when I went back I was put in, oh and that's right, this is how come I fell out with the sergeant, he, when I got to Adelaide, I got the train to Melbourne, and I got tied up with these couple of sailors. Anyway, we were on the grog, we got to Adelaide and I rings up, see and they said "When you get to Adelaide, ring up and they'll probably have a vehicle there to pick you up". And I rings up Adelaide, you know, 9 RAR and I was talking to this sergeant, anyhow I said, "There's supposed to be a flaming landrover here to pick me up" and he said "Who are you?" and I said "I'm just back from AWOL and that", and he said "Well, you done flaming..." I said "AWOL's flaming .....(?)anyway, we had an argument on the phone, and I said "Well, I'm going flaming back to Sydney then if you..." "No, wait there, wait there", he said "we'll see, you go out tobarracks and we'll pick you up from there". So I give him a lot of cheek on the phone, this sergeant. Anyhow, this sailor and I ended up getting on the grog and I think I got there at 12 o'clock that night (laugh). I ends up back out at, and they put me in D company. Gets on parade, cos they'd been on leave, anyhow on the Monday morning we were on parade and he's going through the roll call. "Butcher, Butcher, where are you?" I said "Here" "You're the cheeky.." this was the sergeant, see, he ends up he's my platoon sergeant. Well from then on we never hit it off, from there on.

J.R Bad start.

G.B (big laugh) Yeah, all my fault I suppose, but we just never hit it off from there. He even reckoned I tried to shoot him one day, I didn't, but....

J.R Apart from the AWOLs, once you were in and over there, were you a good soldier there?

G.B Ah that was only out here, probably more, I just 1k me good times too, you know ... (laughs).

J.R So what was your platoon like? Good platoon?

G.B Yeah, we all got on real well together, you know, real well. You sorta' sort yourselves out, you have a few good mates, you know, but you just stick, you sorta

J.R Were there any misfits?

G.B Oh not really, no. Not really. I suppose I might have been one, I don't know (big laugh).

J.R And how about the Nachos and the regulars, they get on alright?

G.B Not really. No.

J.R What sort of ..?

G.B Well they, they were of the opinion that,—this was even before we even got over there, that they shouldn't have to be infantry, they should have all the good jobs, you know ... [these are the regulars] yeah, transport, any good base job, they shouldn't have to be out fighting because they joined out of, you know, and the Nashos should be out doing all the fighting, they should have all the good jobs, course this was, most of them looked this way too.

J.R Didn't any of them want to be riflemen?

G.B Not really, not, not the ones, only the old ones, you know that had been in the army for years, but all the newer ones had just sorta joined up, they didn't expect ...

J.R And were the National Servicemen, were they happy to be in infantry?

G.B A lot of times you didn't get a choice. See, when you first went into recruit training you had three choices, which would you like to be, course everybody used to put all the good ones up and infantry last, but if they needed so many, you know, the battalion, like they needed 300, well they'd take 300, whether you, whether you're flaming .. some good job, you know, school teacher or anything, they just took you, but if, you know, they didn't, there was no call well you might've got your, what you preferred. And when you got in infantry, they asked you again what unit you'd like to go to. Well most put down, I think it was 8 RAR at the time was in Malaya, well I think that was a 2 year

posting, that was a real sweet cop, everybody trying to get that one, but, that one was mainly married people got that one, which I suppose is a good thing. But I found it, you know, infantry, I would not, even if I had to go back in again today, I'd go back into infantry. Because it seems to, I think, 'cos you were doing most of the fighting and it seems to, it seemed to draw you closer to each other, the blokes, you'd have that bond,

J.R So was there, even when you were over in Vietnam, was there still feeling between the Nashos and the regulars? Or was it just when you were in Australia?

G.B No, more in Australia I think, I think they were used to winging a lot because..

J.R So within your platoon was there any...

G.B There wasn't that many regulars, you know, probably a dozen, [what a half?] No probably a third I suppose.

J.R How many were in your platoon?

G.B There was only that officer, one, two, and the three section commanders. There was only 5 of us out of 33, 5 regs.

No, you know, you had a job to do and you just done it, I think that was simply that the National Serviceman, he was as good a soldier as any regular, you know, he ...

J.R Did you feel you were well trained, were you confident?

G.B No. Oh we thought we were, I thought we were when we went, but when you got over there, I didn't think we were.

J.R What not enough

G.B Not enough ... not enough live firing and all that, they should've had more.

J.R What, was it a lot different?

G.B Yeah, well actually, when you know you were actually getting fired upon, you should, I reckon, should've been more, you know, crawling around on the ground, they should've been standing over you .... You might've seen photos of the Palestinians Liberation and all that, stand over them firing right near their heads and all that...

J.R Probably lose a few.

G.B (laughs) They probably do too. (laughs) But that's the thing, you know, the actual crack crack when you're actually bein' fired at, you know, that's it. This is fair dinkum. I think that's the thing that you need more than anything.

J.R So could you tell me about some of the operations you were on?

G.B Actual contacts, or ....

J.R Well describe a three week thing when you went out in the bush, did you .,...

G.B You just go go go, a lot of times you went into a fixed position and you patrolled out of a fixed position, other times you just might've started from point A and you just went, for 3 weeks and you just kept moving, you know, day in, day and day out, you know ambushing and moving the whole time. It's, you get that way in the end you didn't know what day it was, you know/you didn't have a clue sometimes what day it was ..

J.R And did you ever have any idea if you were going to have a contact or not, or..

G.B Ah...

J.R Did you get a feeling for the area...

G.B Yeah, yeah, as a scout I could, you could smell 'em, smell the air, especially if you were coming into a bunker, what they call a bunker system where they actually lived, you used to get their smell of cooking and all that, and you could smell it a fair way away. Plus you'd notice where they'd cut down trees and they'd camouflage, they'd cut one down here, this is for building their bunker system and that, and they'd cut one down here, the more you'd see cut down, oh you'd start, you know you'd really get up on your toes and, that was when you really, you started to get frightened, you know, but that was with you, but I suppose you had a job to do and you had to do it. I used to look at it this way, you know, as a scout you'd say well it's either him or me and I reckon I'm as good as him if not better so you know, it's either out of him or me, I think....

J.R Did you enjoy the sort of the contest?

G.B The actual contacts, were frightening in themselves, but after, as I've said to the wife, that the adrenalin, I never ever thought about it .... you know you're on a high, you'd be comin' down off it, it's something. After a contact, I suppose that you were still alive and you got through it, but you'd come down off a high, you really would.

J.R Did your platoon or section suffer casualties?

G.B Yeah, we suffered, we were lucky we never lost anybody, but ah gee I was only there, what 7 months, we lost about 20 wounded I think.

J.R What rifle fire or...

G.B No, mainly, rifle fire and mainly from RPG s, grenades, different times.

J.R So what sort of injuries, were they very bad ones?

G.B Ah, a couple of them were, ah me forward scout, he got shot about three different spots. I only heard, we had a battalion reunion, he'd been in a rat house for years, ...

J.R In a what?

G.B In a rat house, you know....

J.R What's that?

G.B Psychiatric hospital, I suppose, you know, (big laugh.) It must have affected him ......

J.R Did that cause a sort of bad feeling in the section, people depressed or anything?

G.B No, no, no. The only thing that caused, I wasn't there actually, that day, I was lucky, I flew out the day before, I dived in a river, actually the scout he got shot twice, he got shot one day, he stood up, he was out in the sentry and there was a contact going on, I think it was A company about 600 yards away, and we were just in a fixed position, and he was in sentry and he stood up to come back in, and he was walking back in and a stray bullet from this contact, you know, just hit him in the back, just came over and whack, bowled him head over heels, you know, he thought an arrow had got him, 'cos he reckoned it just sounded like Robin Hood, you know, an arrow went shwoosh through the air, he said arrow in, arrow in me back (laughing) .... no arrow in your back anyhow put a big bruise and broke the skin, but you know, anyhow he, so they flew him out and give him a restand then I took over as scout, and we dived in the river this day and I split me hand I dived on a rock, pulled up and had a swim, anyhow it got infected and wouldn't heal, you know, went all pussy and all that, and I couldn't hold me Armalite properly. So Egan (?) come back, he come off the chopper and I went out on it, you know, anyhow the day after they run into the enemy and that's when he got shot, and they lost, we lost another one too, another bloke he got badly shot up. Out of that, our Section Commander got a military medal out of that fellow and he never done a thing, you know, that was a sore point because-I wasn't there,--but they said this Section Commander never done a thing but he got a military medal for going out and saving this bloke, and bringing him back, but he came back on his own steam, you know, when he got shot, this forward scout, but anyhow I think some of these officers liked to award 'em because it made them, their position higher if their men got medals.

J.R After somebody got shot and choppered out, did you see them again, or were they ....?

G.B Actually we seen them, was when that operation finished we got 48 hours leave at Vung Tau and they were still in hospital and hadn't been flown home, so we seen 'em. But that's the extent of it, you know, we were lucky we did see them that time but other times you never got to see them... you just... which

is you know, a bad thing in some ways 'cos you're with them all that time and then they go and then you never see them again, you know, that was a bad thing.

J.R Can you follow them up, I mean is it easy to find them if you want to when you get back home?

G.B Oh dunno, only now 9 battalion, this is their 2nd reunion they had last year down in Adelaide, I went down to it, I went to one in Sydney before and then I went down to Adelaide, and through one another saying, I know where so and so is, that way you tend, you know, we run into a lot of old mates down there, you know, it was a good, quite a good reunion that was.

J.R Anyway, go back to the sorts of operations, a lot of patrolling?

G.B Yeah, mostly all patrolling, you know..

J.R Ambushing?

G.B Ambushing, yeah, ambushing, ah...

J.R Did you go into the villages at all?

G.B No, oh very little no, we never... probably only one village that we actually went in there, you know, we were mainly up in scrub system, you know.

J.R Did you have a problem with mines at all?

G.B Only down in the Long Hais, that was the badly mined area. We, I think 2 RAR were in there, they were the ones that really copped it, years before we got there, I think it might've been 18 months or 2 years, and they took so many casualties out there I think they said there was never to be anybody to go back in there, you know, anyhow, 9 RAR, they decided we were going to go back, they sent 9 RAR back in there, and we did lose, you know, blokes and tanks and you know, on these mines 'cause.... I nearly trod on one, one day, that's right, the old snakes (?) going through and he said, "Whatever you do don't step back" you know, "Why" and here's a mine, it was under a bit of leaf and all that and when I moved ,me foot it, here was a mine just sitting there, only a little anti-personnel mine, only enough to blow your foot off, you know, but that was the only one I actually seen, well I suppose we were lucky, yeah, you know you're conscious of them all the time. Think when are you going to tread on one. (laughs) Funny a bit, we were going through there one day and there was a bit of a gully and I think we actually come down into a bit of a gully, and I just got into this gully, like you know, we were going through and in company, and they holed up further up and next thing I heard "mine", you know, I laughed actually, somebody heard the click, and I was down in the gully and had me back to it and they come over this, well I never seen so many blokes coming over and they were diving (big laughing) the looks on their faces, I didn't actually laugh then, I laughed

later, when it was, ... it wasn't a mine, actually somebody trod on a bottle and broken glass went crack, you know, 'cos that's the way they used to go, and these blokes they all just headed, you know... (laughs)
'Cos when we first, the engineers, when we first got there they were telling us about these mines, these jumping jacks, you know, they used to come out ... and blow you, and he said, "I don't know how", what did he say "Does anyone know what the world record is for 100 metres?" And some said, "Oh about 11 seconds", and he said, "Well if you tread on these you want to be doing it in about 5 seconds" (laughs) [That's how much time you had] Yeah, I think you only had 2 seconds or something from when they click, 'cos you couldn't even, ... they show you putting your foot on them but that wasn't right. Although they were getting unstable at that stage, they'd been in the ground for a few years, and some of them didn't jump, you know, they didn't jump out, they'd go off in the ground, because we had one bloke, and they done what they showed in that picture, cut his boot off and left it.

J.R Oh, I haven't seen the show yet. [“Vietnam” the TV series]

G.B I only seen a bit of it and there was that much rubbish I didn't watch any more, and the little bit I saw...

J.R You didn't like it?

G.B Oh gee no. It was pathetic.

J.R Not accurate, or?

G.B No not accurate, far from accurate. No, I only watched a bit of it and I wasn't impressed at all, with the little bit I started to watch.

J.R Was there resentment that the mines had been put there by the Australians?

G.B Yeah, in a way, because whenever you put a minefield down you got to watch it, you don't leave it. The Australians put it down when they put the fence through, and then they watched it for awhile and then they left it to the South Vietnamese to watch. But, they didn't watch it see. But they were clever buggers see, they put anti lifting devices under them, they used to come and and lift them at night, see. the Australians said once they put them down they wouldn't lift them again, never, and these charlies are lifting them at night in the dark .... oh they were a good soldier, yeah.

J.R Were they, I was wondering...

G.B They were a top digger. Especially the North Vietnamese. You know) to see them, they used to come in under fire, intense fire to get their wounded and they'd take them out, their dead and wounded, you know, if at all possible they'd come and take them out.

J.R Did you actually, I mean when you have a contact would you

necessarily see the other ...

G.B A lot of times. not, it all depends what position you're in, you know, wherever contact starts, you might be going on patrolling, well the scout up here might get a contact, see by the time you go through your contact drill, you go through your drills out in Australia, you might do them say out on an oval, you know it's very simple, where you can see it and control it, but over there in your thick scrub it just doesn't work, never works, it takes time, you know where it might take 5 seconds to go into your drill out here, over there you might be there for an hour, you know getting into a position where you can really do something. And a lot of times you don't, all you know is you're getting fired upon. They can see you and you can't see them, they might be doing the same thing as you are, they might be firing at sound, you know. That's a lot of cases, especially if they're in their bunker systems, well they're using their bunkers and they're firing out of their bunkers.

J.R So most of the contacts you saw, where they when you were out patrolling? Or bigger sort of ops?

G.B No, always on ops, you know, you'd be either on a platoon level or company level, or you know you'd be in a battalion level but you'd still be patrolling, you know one company might be in a company here and then it comes back to ... company 1 platoon might be here and another one over there, you know, you're never all sometimes it breaks you down to sections and you might go into a fixed position and from there you go out on patrol you know, and you patrol out of a day and come back. Actually we were only on one of them, we were up out of Bien Hoa air base we were up on top of this hill and it was during the tet offense of '69, and we used to patrol out of there, well they were pretty scary ones because ...

J.R Were you with American forces?

G.B No, thank God. Wouldn't want to be anywhere near them.

No, actually we weren't far from Bien Hoa air base, you know the big yank air base, and another time we were scouting in force, in battalion force for the Big Red 1, that's American 1st Division, like we had to go and find them, and when we found them they'd chopper them in and into 'em see, 'cos I think that's the way they used to work, they didn't like scrub bashing I think, the yanks, but that was probably the only way to fight the war, to me they didn't fight it properly.

But you know little things... well that one when we were up there, you go out on a 7 man patrol well I think we were told the smallest unit that would hit you was I think a battalion or anything up to a Division, you were going to expect, and all you were up there for, you go for about 2 mile out and you were listening posts. You'd get set, you'd call artillery and then you just sit there and listen. They were expecting these big units to come and try and get into the Bien Hoa air base, see and you were only out there... that was pretty unnerving to think there

were only 7 of you out there, you were only .

J.R the bait...

G.B Yeah, that's all.

J.R Well why did they use you for that do you think and not their own?

G.B Well I don't know, I don't know why, I don't know why it was, they might have had their big units further up somewhere, I don't actually know, we were never actually told, you just go here, go there.

J.R And what about Goodwood, was it a fairly ...

G.B That was a big, about that time, that was one we took.....I don't know, I don't know if it was right or not but we were supposed to have taken... and they took more casualties than any other battalion, and I think you know, at that stage even... it was bad, you know you were going the whole time and you were continually running into enemy, you know.

J.R Where was this?

G.B It was up out of Phuoc Tuy Province, it wasn't in our Province, next one up.

J.R Was it near a fire support base?

G.B Oh, wherever you went you always had fire support, you always worked within the range of your artillery, always. When you got out of range, well they moved you.

END OF TAPE 1

J.R Sorry to interrupt you in the middle of that. There you were behind the...

G.B Oh the anthill that's right getting fired, and that time we tried to move another platoon in, you know, we were firing, we thought we had another, ... 11 platoon was over there, well we thought they were coming that way to try and, .. so we could move forward and put down fire across so we could move forward into this bunker system. And actual fact they were this way, in heavy scrub you couldn't see each other. Well they asked the gunner, one of the gunners, 2nd gunners to lay down a covering fire that will fire through. Well it turns out, yeah he fired, but he was firing here and I was behind the ant hill and when he fired the bullets come straight through and they were this far from me feet, see I got the sniper's gun this way and then he opened right.... and they nearly got me, geez I was yelling to the Lieutenant to stop him, you know to get on the radio and stop
this. 'Cos I couldn't come round this way.... (laughing) that was pretty frightening, you know, especially 60 hammer (?) and all that, you could see the bullets chopping through the grass, anyhow he stopped him, and he was from Inverell, Terry Moore he was the one that had the machine gun. And they got the snipers, and in the end we ended up getting about 5 (?) and Terry Moore's section came round, and he got killed just after that, he got shot. And we got 5 wounded and we took a, they opened up a RPG – on us, so we had to pull back. And then they brought the bombers in and they bombed it, you know and they put a, bombing run in and it was just getting on dark and they put the bombing run in and then they brought up the tanks the next day and we had to go back in when they brought up the tanks so we went back into this bunker system next day. That was more frightening than anything working with them tanks (laughing) 'cos you had to work ahead of them, you know. And they're pushing down trees, and you're running along (laughing) they're going to run over you, I'd've sooner done without them.

J.R Did you work with them often?

G.B No, that was about the only time I ever seen them.

It was funny too, because one of the crew commanders of the tank, when he was going I heard this bloke yelling, 'cos they were having trouble with it, you know this tank's playing up, and I thought geez I know that voice, it turns out when we were doing recruit training there was a, one of our instructors it was a corporal, and he hated it, he was a tankie and he wanted to get back to his tanks, he hated this instructing see, which was a 2 year posting. So anyway, one night I don't know if it was a deliberate setup or what, but - he asked some of the blokes to come around and they had their own but for a drink, which wasn't allowed, you're not allowed to drink in the lines, anyhow while they were having a grog on, a bloody duty officer caught 'em so all these fellas were charged with drinking in the lines, the corporal was charged, and he thought, he thought beauty/he'd get out of this, anyhow all they did was broke him back to a private and left him there. Anyhow, it turned out this was this same corporal, and he ended up getting his tanks, he got to Vietnam

with his tanks, he had to wait his turn I suppose. Yeah, this was the same fella.

But oh, you know, we didn't .... a bit hard working with them in real heavy scrub, you know, you just can't operate.

J.R Did you ever travel around in APC s?

G.B Oh, a bit, yeah, yeah.

J.R And in choppers much?

G.B Mostly we got ferried in and out in choppers, you know back from Nui Dat, from the Dat up to where we were going, mainly always in choppers, we were very rarely with APC s.

J.R Did the soldiers have confidence in the RAAF choppers?

G.B Yeah, yeah.

J.R To come in and get them if they ....

G.B There was nearly always yank dust off choppers, I mean the medevac choppers, you know they were nearly always yanks, I don't think we ever seen an Australian one, but we worked always with the 9th Squadron, that's the Australian ... no, they were pretty good, I think they were too frightened to lose one I think, too much paper work. They had a good... their commander was a navy man, he was a... big red beard I don't know his name, he could put a chopper anywhere, sometimes, like he'd have to come in first and check it out, he'd just drop it in and get out and say I want that tree cut down up there, you know if we were getting resupped, or anything like that, you know, he'd have to come in first before he'd let the other fellas come in, but he could fly a chopper that fella, yeah, he was some high-up navy commander or something like that.

J.R Did you have much to do with the Vietnamese local forces? The ones on your side?

G.B No. No, very little, very little. Never went near them actually, I think we only ever had a lecture one day, a Major lectured us one day, went back in the Dat, quite interesting you know, He told us a story, they were in a convoy, this Major, and he was in charge of the convoy, Vietnamese armed (?) convoy, they were going up, you know, what you can see if you keep your eyes open, and they were going along this road, and he said there was some kids, they were in the lice paddy, and they're down behind this bun, and they got their hands over their ears. “Bring them kids over”, like they went to take off, brings the kids over and they grabbed ‘em, brought ‘em over and "what have you got your hands over your ears for?" "Oh nothing, nothing", so he said all kids they like a lolly, so he said he give them a lolly, "want more lollies?" "Yeah", "Whets matter with you", "the Vietcong put a a mine up the road” (laughing). Waiting for it to go off!!

But, ah, we never had anything to do with them really. Oh there was a bit of a base over behind us, and, I think at... Baria it was and the Australians, they used to take some NCO .s out of their units and they used to go over there for training purposes occasionally. There was yanks and Australians. You know it was only the odd one went over there. They used to bring back all this grog the yanks used to get (laughs)[useful too] Yeah.

J.R What about civic aid project, anything like that?

G.B No, we never done anything like that.

J.R So did you see much of the local Vietnamese? Only on leave?

G.B Yeah. [right] No, you know you might, just around the villages if you done patrols around the Dat occasionally, you know, you done, oh we done a search of a village there one night, well we only actually went in around the village and then they brought another company in that did the actual search through the village during the day. Even then you know, that was another time we had a laugh, like you see, ... picture shows actually the extent the Australians used to go to not annoy the locals..... you know, really pushed down their throats at all times, you more or less had to be fired on before you fired back, which was, didn't go over real well, but I know that night, we'd come in around and the charlie tried to get out, and they tried to get out through 10 Platoon, I think there was about five of them, and they run into them see, and they called "Halt", and they took them back into the village, well, we were on this side on the road and they tried to come out again, well they called "Halt" to them 'cos they open fire, on the gun that was on the road, 'cos the Louie yelled out "Stop firing", because we were told not fire at all into the village, don't fire. "Stop firing, stop firing", and the bloke's' yelling out on the gun "But they're firing at us" “Well fire then!” [laughs] Anyhow, you go through and they pick them up next day.

J.R Which village was that, do you remember?

G.B Don't remember.

Terrible, isn't it, I know it was only over the back, it wasn't Hoa Long? (??) Don't know what it was. 'Cos we walked from Nui Dat, I know that. I'd have to get a map and have look at it. That wasn't long just after we got there...

J.R During the time you were there, 7 months, how did you think the war was going?

G.B Good. As far as Phuoc Tuy province was only, you know, more or less, it was, the Australians more or less had it under control, they did, like you only had your local force more or less. But like outside, you know like... it was going well, I thought it was, you know I think they had them, but I think there was, that resentment, the only resentment was that you were doing most of the fighting the ARVN like around

where we were, weren't pulling their weight, I think because, I suppose in some ways you can't blame them, I know there one night they hit Baria there one night, we were on standby to go into Baria, we were back at Nui Dat, and we were put on standby to go in and one of the NCO s, like I was just talking about him, he was with the AVRN, they killed a few of them that night when they hit; and I think he said out of, how many they killed is, half of them were the soldiers they were training during the day, but they weren't actually commos or anything, all they were doing were they were getting double pay, see they'd get paid, they'd go out and fight for the Viet Cong in the night, you know do a bit of moonlighting (laughs). That's what they told him, you know that's what they were doing, I don't know if there's any truth, but that actually, you know he was telling us that, they'd killed them in the same ...

J.R Did you have any Vietnamese scouts or interpreters or anything with your...?

G.B Oh they'd call one in if you needed him, you know. We didn't like them around anyhow. Didn't like them around... But you know, the kids, used to always have fun with the kids, you know, you'd tell them their father was Viet Cong and all that (laughs) ..

J.R Did they know what you were saying?

G.B Oh yeah .....You know they'd ask you for cigarettes or something, ask you for something, you know you might be on a patrol around Nui Dat where you'd run into them all the time, or something, and they'd ask you for cigarettes and they'd say "Me dai loi No. 1" "No, get. you're not getting any." "Me dai loi No, 10, Viet Cong No. 1" (laughs)

J.R Do you think the Vietnamese liked Australians?

G.B Well, I don't know, I think they had more respect I think for the Australians than they did for the yanks, I honestly do,.. I think they hated the yanks, you know there was one instance down at Vung Tau, we were on 48 hour leave, and we come out of a bar, there was about five of us or something and we were going into another bar and anyhow there was this old fellow there with an ice making machine, used to be a glass top, like a barrow type thing and glass top, anyhow a couple of yanks come out of a bar, and there was all these kids, and the kids were giving them hell of a cheek, giving them cheek, you know, these yanks calling them everything, and one of the blokes said to the yank, "you don't take no rubbish like that from them", "Oh she's right..." ..... said "No" and he walked round grabbed one of these kids and he kicked him up the backside and he said (laughing) "that's for giving cheek like that" and we had a flaming rock fight and we got behind this flaming, this poor old fellow, he got hit on the head with a rock and down he went and his glass machine... his ice making machine, we were having this big rock fight with the kids, see 'cos the yanks take off .... (laughing). But I think

they did, they seemed to respect Australians, I don't know for what reason, too patronizing or something them yanks, I don't know there's something about them.

J.R You didn't like the yanks?

G.B No, I don't like them.

J.R Where did you have contact with them?

G.B Ah, when I went on R & R leave. There, and Vung Tau when you're on leave or when I went on R & R, they're very naive people, I don't know.

J.R Where did you go for R & R?

G.B Taiwan. I was sitting next to one, I had a laugh at him, I think there were 3 or 4 Australian went there and he was sitting on the plane and I was sitting next to him and I said to this yank "Where are you at?" "What, man?", I said "Where are you at in Vietnam?" "Dunno" I said "You must know", he said "No", I said "You don't know where you are? are you fair dinkum?", he said "We flew out of America and we flew to Germany, in the plane", he said "We got off Germany spent one night there and then we flew to Okinawa", and he said "And we got off there and got on another plane and flew into Tan Son Nhut airbase" and he said "And from there we got out of that plane and we got in a caribou" and he said "And I'm a half hours flight from flaming Saigon" (laughing) that's all he, a half hours flight. I said "You're not fair....." he said "I don't know man." I said "North, south, east or west?" and he didn't have a clue. And I think a lot of them were like that, that's the opinion I got, they just did not have a clue what was going on, you know, sent there to do a job, we're here to do a job and that's..." [Right, right]

You know and the ones, the ones I seen on R & R themselves, you know, with the girls, you know... some money, they're funny. Funny.

J.R Did they understand you when you talked to them?

G.B Who, the yanks?

J.R The yanks.

G.B Oh no, a lot of things they can't get, you know, they can't catch. Yeah, it makes you wonder about their education 'cos they don't seem to have a clue, I don't think half of them knew where Australia was. (big laughter) Oh well, I suppose there might be Australians like that too. [Yes]

J.R Now, your health when you were over there, you hurt your hand, anything else? You were treated for?

G.B No, no. When I went on R & R I had trouble with me shoulder ... pains, damn terrible pains...

J.R What from humping a pock

G.B No, I did it because it was cooler and there was just sort of, you know I said to the Doctor and he said "No, that would be rheumatic rheumatism" he said because a lot of infantry just sleeping on wet ground and all that. He said that, you know when I got out of the army I asked him and he said that's what that would have been. He said the cooler weather would bring it on, he said you'll probably suffer from that, which it does you know, it comes and goes.Other than that no, I had no other... loss of weight that's about all. (laughs)

J.R What is that from working hard?

G.B Yeah, just,.... I was down to about 7 stone.

J.R Yeah, a few infantry people I've spoken to have said that, they got really thin.

G.B Yeah, 'cos you're going, see, you're going, you're carrying such huge, you know, and when you first go there you got a full complement of men, everything's right, but after you started getting sickness and wounded and that,, replaced and you're down, we were down and you still have to nearly carry the same ammo, so you've got to sort of carry double .... It knocks you about and I suppose... the tension...

J.R Were there many people coming and going from your platoon?

G.B No, not really. there was only wounded and sick ...

J.R So most people would go over there and see out the full 12 months?

G.B Mmm.

J.R Full twelve months, but you didn't, [No] 'Cos you were due ...

G.B Due out.

J.R So when the time came for you to go you just ...

G.B Said goodbyes and jumped on a, no I came out on a flaming, it was up the Long Hais too, we jumped on a flaming APC to come out of there and we spent the night on a mortar base, and I thought this will be my luck, I'll run over a flaming mine, I'll get blown sky high, you know coming out, we were lucky anyhow.

But that, that's the terrible part of it, you just fly, you know one day you're there and then I think within a week you're back here in Australia. You just come out of the scrub and bang/you're back home and it takes a bit of time to....

J.R So what, you just flew straight back to what, Sydney?

G.B Yeah, back to Sydney and come home, you know. A couple of weeks leave and then you had to go back in and you know, you had to wait for discharge.

J.R So how was it when you got back? Were you twitchy or...?

G.B Oh, ..not really, you know, some people can't adapt, I suppose take a bit adapting, but a lot of people can't, didn't seem to worry me. I suppose I had a holiday over there at the government's expense, I seen another country I suppose, another couple of countries, I don't know... no, it didn't seem to worry me a great lot.

J.R Were you worried by sleep problems or anything like that? No.

G.B No, that's one thing an infantryman can sleep.

J.R Yes, yes. Did you suffer from sleep problems when you were over there? Were you sort of tired?

G.B No, you see you just go, and when you put your head down, bang you're asleep. Because you work that hard, you know, you're really ...(laughs) But when you come awake, you know, you only just got to be touched, you know, whether it's turn on picket or something like that, you're awake instantly, and then you do your gun and you go back and you go back and you lie down. See I know over there one night, me mate he, 'cos you're always nearly in two, you pair off in twos, you know, and he come off gun picket, he woke me up. "You right" he said, "you right?" I said "nothing wrong with me." He said "I couldn't hear you breathing" he said "I listened" and he said "they gotcha" (laughs) "You're dead". Anyhow, he said "I felt you and I couldn't even feel your heart beating let alone wake you up" (laughing) .... I must have really been ....

But no, I had no problems sleeping whatsoever, that's, when you're asleep you're asleep and when you're awake you're awake.

J.R So you haven't had any health problems since then?

G.B No, me nerves. One period I was on valium but I didn't like it, but that's what the Doctors put it down to.

J.R Was that long after you came back?

G.B Oh, be 18 months I suppose. But I was told by a, a Repat fella' told me when he was asking, you know, when I was being discharged, what I done and that, and I told him I was a forward scout over there, and he said "Well I'm not supposed to tell you" but he said "you'll end up with, nerves, everyone does, forward scouts, they always end up with bad nerves". And I said "Oh I don't think it will worry me", but there were these things, you know, I went to the Doctor I didn't know, I didn't just put it down to nerves, but he said that's what it was.

Oh you know, the kids suffer a lot. You get cranky and all that. You know it is, but there's not much you can do about it, but I don't want to go on, you know, anything like that.

J.R Do you think it is connected with your Vietnam service?

G.B Well I don't know see. You can't tell, you might've been ... happens, see. I'm not one of them fellas that go out holding their hand out for lots of things, you see blokes up at the Repat and you know damn well thQ0-not entitled to it. I don't want to do that.

J.R What about the Agent Orange business?

G.B Well that's another thing, I don't know, we were playing volley ball there one day, it's the only flaming time we ever played sport, one day I got a game of volley ball and they came over sprayin' for mosquitoes, the yanks, you know, home players? and they near killed us all. 'Cos somebody said "what do they do?" and they said "Oh spraying for mosquitoes" and they said "what is it?" "Oh I don't know, but..." And some of the blokes said "I don't know about the mosquitoes, it'll kill us"... (laughs) But I don't know what it was, but that's the only experience, some say, you read, that that's what they used to do, it was the same stuff, but it wouldn't've been Agent Orange, see the trees never died or anything like that [No, no] So I don't know. I never, that's the only time I saw any spraying or anything like that.

J.R And what about when you went to the battalion reunions, was there much talk about people suffering from stress or other ill effects or anything.

G.B No, not really.

J.R It's not really a big worry amongst people when they get together?

G.B No... no, there wasn't. I thought there'd be more. You hear different blokes with problems, you know, like another one of our 70, what they called us when they took us out of that 70, ... they called us the "slack 70" 'cos they couldn't get us to do anything when they told us we weren't going to Vietnam, we wouldn't do anything they told us, and they, and they were going to charge us all. Anyhow, I heard one of them, Humphries, he originally come from Mildura, he's down in Melbourne, well one of the blokes said he seen him and said he's a complete wreck, you know. That's about the only one, oh, plus me forward scout somebody told me, like he's in the rat house, and been in the rat house.... Other than that, no I don't think...It wasn't discussed, actually.

J.R What about drinking problems, was there much drinking over there?

G.B Oh, Oh I suppose like most Australians they love their grog. Some more than others. No it wasn't....

J.R And what about other drugs, was there any problem with marihuana, or?

G.B No, no. You could've got it, I've said you could buy it, 'cos I know one bloke there he bought some, that's the only time I ever heard of it, you know. But I thought somebody'd said they'd done a thing on it, the yanks couldn't work out why, there was two western countries one was heavily into drugs and the other one... and it come back the Australians appreciated their beer, coming back off an operation and just sitting down relaxing with a beer and...

J.R Yes, that's what I was going to ask you was that, that was enough relaxation?

G.B Yeah.

J.R You could unwind alright? Just doing that?

G.B ...Yeah 'Cos you're only entitled to so many cans and that, 'cos you got that way, you know out there you wouldn't eat much, you know eating out of tins and all that. I don't know your stomach'd shrink or something 'cos you couldn't drink a lot....

J.R Water would be the problem wouldn't it?

G.B Yeah, well water was a problem 'cos the dry season, you never seemed to have enough water. No, no there wasn't much drinking problem 'cos you couldn't get enough grog to drinking..... (laughs) it was always in short supply.

J.R What about the situation back home when you came back, was the war popular or...?

G.B No, I was very disappointed that people just, uncaring or something, you know about the actual digger.

J.R Did people sort of react to you and...

G.B Didn't seem to want to know where you'd been, what you'd done, they just sort of weren't interested.

J.R What about back here in Inverell where you had family and friends, did they all say, "Hey what was it like?" Just didn't ask? ..... Were they scared to ask?

G.B They might've been, they might, I think a lot of people tend to think, see you get some blokes and they won't want to discuss it whatsoever, ..'cos actually me mate from Melbourne, his mother and father come through, I haven't seen her for years and they come through here last year, and you know, I think we were just building that memorial, and the difference I suppose in a bush town and the city, like they come from Melbourne, but they were saying then that their son had never discussed it. Ray would never discuss Vietnam with them, but they never asked. So I think a lot of people think, you don't ask because they don't

want to talk about it. You know a lot of people want to talk about it, but if people don't ask, but they just don't want to go off and..

J.R It's hard for people to ask questions if they don't know anything about it, I suppose....

G.B Yeah I suppose this is right...

J.R ... You sort of say "What was it like?".. "Oh you know, it was alright". Doesn't help much to get people talking does it?

G.B No, well see...

J.R And were there other people from round here who'd been at the same time as you, or about the same time that you'd got together with?

G.B No well you see I, as I say I went in from Sydney and when I went to Puckapunyal, there were only 100 New South Welshmen, the rest of them all come from Western Australia, all that sort, Western, South, Tasmania. Well I ended up with them, and I ended up with all Victorians, Western and South Australians, Tasmanians, and no New South Welshmen in the end, oh there might've been a couple of us. So you know you were tied up with them all the time, and, actually when we got into the battalion itself, it started, because another bloke here Terry Moore, he come into the battalion from here, actually there was two others, another bloke, you know getting hurt in a car crash down in Adelaide and he never went, but there was two from Inverell. But see like Terry, he doesn't have anything to do with it, he, he just doesn't have anything to do with us at all. I don't know why, but I suppose everybody's got their reasons. They've got their own different...

J.R Most of the people round here who were in Vietnam, most of them in the legion?

G.B Yeah, most of them I suppose, yeah. They might be in it, but they don't participate in a lot of our things, you never see them, you've really got to drag them along. I think maybe you get more now, I think if they've got family, the family's starting to grow up a bit and that, you know, and there, I think you'd probably find a lot more become involved.

J.R So when you first came out of the army and came, and for the first few years, did you have anything to do with other veterans then?

G.B No, no.

J.R Would you have liked to have? I mean did you want to get into the RSL or anything like that?

G.B Yeah, well I did, I did join the RSL. But I found, which it's

right, they didn't seem to want, don't want you, we don't want you, you're too young, you get these old buggers you know, well that's why, I went along to a couple of meetings and that's the opinion I got and I just stopped going then, and I think you'll find most of the blokes were the same, that the RSL just didn't want to have anything to do with you because they didn't want you in there mucking up what they'd built up I suppose, I don't know. But they're finding now that they need you. Although still, they want you) but they don't want you, you know they want you to sit there, they want you to be a member but they don't want you to flaming make any decisions for them or try and take over.

J.R It's been their Club, I suppose.

G.B Yeah, I suppose to a lot of them it's their life, their whole life now, you know, whole life of bowls.... they're getting to that age and that's all they've got.

J.R So what do you think people think people think about Vietnam veterans? What sort of image do you think they've got?

G.B Oh I don't know, as an infanteer, .. a lot of people I suppose you know, a lot of people think everybody that’s in an army, fights you know... (laughs) Everybody thinks that [Rambos] Yeah, You know, even base, what we used to call base wallahs. you know like the ones that just live in the base, we had no time for... I suppose you get a bit uppity, you know you're the one doing the fighting, you know, you used to make.... yeah you're the one doing the fighting, yeah you're the one on the lowest pay (laughing) everybody sitting back at the base there, and they get better pay and that, but... I don't know what people think, that's the only thing that upsets you, they think all people fight when they don't, you know some people can't,,.. you know they think army's army. Everybody goes to fight, but they don't.

I run into a bloke I went through recruit training with, over there, he was at Vung Tau, he was a truck driver or something, and we were riding shotgun one day for the engineers, they were carting sand, they were building a dam, and we were back and had to go riding shotgun, anyhow I run into one of these fellas', he said "Hey how ya goin'?"he shook me hand, he patted me on the back and he said "I'm so flaming proud of you'se fellas up there, you know, we're down here copping it easy and you'se are up there doing the fighting” and he raved and rambled, and ..... it made you feel good, at least somebody appreciated us. (laughs) But, there wasn't enough of it.

J.R Did you think that people back home appreciated...?

G.B I don't think so. I don't think they did appreciate the effort that you really put into it, you know.

Really you know, ... the Australian, the flamin’ Australian he was a good digger and that, you know when he had to fight he fought, and he put ..... on the whole, he was conscientious, you know he had a job to do and he went there and done it, especially for National Servicemen

sort of, you know, I think they were one of the majority, and I myself think they did a real good job, and the people just don't appreciate this effort that went into it, you know was put into it. I think you hear the dead and the wounded, but you don't hear the effort that was put in.

J.R So are you interested in this Welcome Home thing that's going to be on in Sydney? In October?

G.B Yeah, it should be a good thing.

J.R Did you feel because you didn't come back with your battalion, because you came back separately, was that a, you know did you regret that?

G.B Yeah, I would've liked to have come back with them, yeah, they marched through Adelaide, yeah, you just jumped off a plane that was it, bang. I suppose...

J.R Are you going to go to the...

G.B yeah, I'm going, yeah.

J.R Many from here going?

G.B Yeah, there are, probably 20 odd I suppose. Yeah they're all keen.

J.R They're talking about having 30,000,

G.B Yeah well there's 1200 yanks coming out for it isn't there?

J.R Are there? [mm] .. I've only just seen it on the news....

G.B Hired .... 'cos you see a few of them went over, the Australians went over, they had a big one over there [yes] and, these yanks, they're supposed to have three Jumbo Jet loads of, hired, you know, of come out or something, 1200 of them. Something to that effect a figure was mentioned. And they're talking about the Air Force flying over ones in Western Australia, flying over ...., so Oh they'll probably get them you know, see even in our reunions you, we had that one in Sydney, well there was only flaming 50 odd turned up, yet there was hardly any from Sydney, they were all from you know, Queensland and Victoria and the bush. [that was the battalion...] Yeah and the one we had in Adelaide last year, we had 250, it was a real good show, you know they come from everywhere. I think it's only now they're coming, you know...

J.R Yes, why do you sort of need 20 years almost to sort of pick it up again?

G.B It's a funny thing, it must

J.R Seems to be, it's sort of a common thing in other, 2nd World War too, [Yeah] People would come home and just go back and not worry about it and then a few years later they'd..

G.B To me, I think it comes back to family, you get married and the young kids, I think when your kids start growing up and, I think that's when it comes from I think it's just getting, you're occupied with your children and that, and they're becoming of the age where you can start doing things, you know, involving yourself in things. Where the children aren't getting in your road sort of. Maybe nowadays you're involved with children, most units and that involved with children and everything, where RSL didn't, nowadays with Vietnam they're trying to involve the wife and children in everything, which is a good thing.

J.R And when you came back did you think you got enough assistance in resettlement and, did you get any benefits?

G.B (both together) War Service loan (?) that's about the only thing.

J.R There was no retraining or...

G.B Oh I suppose if you wanted to apply for it, but I didn't, it didn't worry me.

J.R But your job was waiting for you or...

G.B No, see I worked in Sydney and when I come home .. I couldn't, after being home I just couldn't handle city life, you know heading back to the bush for me, you know, the hustle and bustle of the city, that was the only thing I couldn't stand you know, the hustle and bustle.

J.R Do you think it was easier for country blokes?

G.B I think so, I think it might have been. You see 'cos I couldn't get out of Sydney quick enough and get back home up in the bush, and I think, I think, when you think of it you do know more people and people say "How was it?" initially .... and I suppose in Sydney, you know, you're, you just go back into your sort of rabbit warren and there's so many people and that around ......

J.R Did any of the city blokes who'd been called up find it hard sort of out in the bush or anything?Or did they get used to that?

G.B Oh trainin' I suppose, yeah.

J.R And how was it working in the army compared to working in a civilian job?

G.B Well I suppose [can you compare them much???] Oh no, not really, it's a different thing altogether, it's a different thing altogether, you know 'cos you get paid 24 hours 7 days

a week and that's what you actually worked. It mightn't be all the time, but you're there. Ah, well I didn't mind, I wanted to go in see, I didn't actually want to go and join the army but when National Service.... A lot of blokes hated the idea of even going in, well I think they found it hard, where I wanted to go in but I still just didn't want to take the discipline, you know.... (laughs) Anyhow, got over that, but I think a lot of blokes affected them, you know whinged and whined the whole time, "I could be out getting this much money" and they were getting.... But it just didn't worry me.

J.R And did you miss the excitement when you first came back?

G.B Yeah. I still miss it. I do, it sounds a bit ....

J.R Do you go shooting or anything?

G.B No, never do that, I just, there's something in my life, you know I suppose you don't like saying it because people think geez you're queer, you know. But I'd go back tomorrow, I'd be first cab off the rank if war broke out tomorrow. I suppose I'm getting that old I wouldn't do I but, you know I'd hate for me son to have to do it, but I'd do it meself but I'd hate for me son.... But I'd like him to do Officer Training, I'd like .....

J.R How did your father think about you doing it?

G.B Yeah, well he had two of us. He never went to war, like he had a dicky heart and, they never said anything, no, you had to do it you had to do it, it's as simple as that.

Well I suppose cause on me mother's side, she had five brothers and they all went through the 2nd World War... so I suppose...

J.R Regarded as a fact of life.

G.B Yeah, yeah. You just done it... But some parents, you know they used to whinge about their darling sons, and all that, I suppose that goes through all walks of life doesn't it? [mm] You know you used to get them when you were gambling or something and their sons used to do all their money and they'd write home for more money and say they'd done it gambling and then the mother would be ringing up the army "what are you running down there" or something like that. So everybody'd get a kick out of that. Kicked for gambling so they'd have big raids and cut out gambling for awhile, until all the mothers were satisfied and then they'd start up again, things like that ... (laughs)

J.R But looking back you were glad you went ...

G.B (talking together) I'd've done it .... For me it was something, ... in some ways it's, you're privileged, you face something in life that other people haven't, you know, to me that's my opinion, I went through something that is not an everyday occurrence, thank God, in some ways, yet you don't wish

it upon anybody. I'd never like to see war again, but for the experience, just the experience alone to me was worth...

J.R Did it have any good sort of long term effects on you, I mean were you more disciplined?

G.B Yeah, it did..

J.R Were you better at doing things when you came out?

G.B Oh I wouldn't say that...

J.R Or getting on with people?

G.B I think it's just the period in your life, I think most, you get that rebel in you, and you go through, that was just that part of life, you go through that stage, 18 to 20 and 21. 'Cos I used to be a bit of a wild fella' even before I went in, you know, and..

J.R Were you quieter when you came out?

G.B I think so, yeah. Yeah, it did. It really made me appreciate Australia more than anything, you know you've got the best country in the world and that really made me appreciate it, yeah just even going to Vietnam and Taiwan R & R and just seeing other people and all that, that made me appreciate how good a country we have got here. See at the moment) I'm all for a new flag, see I don’t like the old RSL and we don't get on real well, that's a bone of contention (both talking together) (laughs)....

J.R A bit overwhelming isn’t it? [looking at flags, photos etc in RSL room where interview is taking place]

G.B I was very disappointed, I went to a Legacy Dinner the other night,*and I’ve always had- invitations, so anyhow I went the other night, not to the dinner to the meeting, changeover you know, and they got up and the Guest Speaker was, General Murchison 2nd World War fella', 'cos he was all for the flag and he raved and ranted, course that didn't go over real well with me, but then they got up and they were singing the National Anthem, they sung God Save the Queen. There was no Advance Australia Fair, oh dear, oh dear, I was very disgusted.

* I've never been.

J.R That's the sort of RSL, what about in the Vietnam Legion Group, is it more progressive or is it..?

G.B No, they sort of follow on, see one night I had to record my vote against it, 'cos they voted to support the retention of the flag see, and I ...

J.R So are they going to end up being as conservative as the RSL at the same age?

G.B I think so. I think so. ...I say, We're Australians, when

are we going to stand on our own two feet.

J.R What flag are you supporting? [he is wearing a Eureka t-shirt]

G.B Yeah, that's me shirt, and that's, but I look at it this way, that's the Australian flag as it is, ... I say we should have a new one, we've got to get away, stand on our own two feet. And be recognised for it. ..... We kow-tow to the yanks we kow-tow to the pommies, you know, I'm still a revolutionary? in that regard, maybe I'm wrong, but I'd like to think Australians should be proud to be Australians on their own. See they do, they say they fought for flag, well, I never fought for no flag [they, do they still? Do Vietnam people say that? that they fought for the flag] I went over there as a sense as adventure, that's what I.....

J.R Yes, did you ever see Australian flags much over there?

G.B I suppose they used to raise them at the base, you know, Nui Dat they used to raise every day, but you never took any notice, it was just part of the day's, but No, I went as a sense of adventure, you know, to me the proudest time, I suppose, the day they issued you with a slouch hat, to me because, I go back to, these fellas, that's... and really when you look at the others they didn't fight for no flag or King, King in those days wasn't it? They probably went over 'cos their mates were all going, "let's go overseas and..

J.R Probably be pretty similar to your

G.B Yeah probably, when you think of it, it's doing something different, 'Let's go and see what it's like: Not real pretty when you get there, but... (laughs) As long as you're waking up every day, yeah, you say I've got through another day, that was the thing you used to..., before you went out on an operation, you were waiting there, waiting for the trucks to take you over to a chopper pad or something, and you'd look along and you'd see them all sitting on their gear, all in the, own little world, you know you'd look along, I used to look along and think, wonder who's not coming back out of us lot this time, you know. Never yourself, you're always coming back, but.... (laughs) Who else wasn't coming back. Little things like that you used to think of. And when you come back, you got through that one, there's always the next one. When you come home you think, well it wasn't too bad after all. I suppose for some, for some blokes, you know, like I had another one of the slack 70 fellas', Johnney Hallam, he came from down in Tasmania, well he got both his feet blown off, well that doesn't worry him, he's been to both our reunions, you know, he's on top of the world, he had no regrets, no, not bitter about anything, but some blokes you get are bitter and that. But I suppose them fellas', I don't know what walks of life, you know or why they might be bitter about anything... you don't know. I suppose they'll never know, will they, these fellas', whether the war caused it [No, no] or...

J.R It's a very hard thing to tell.

END OF TAPE 2