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NORMAN JENSEN

J.R First of all, just a bit of background, how you got to be in the army? Why you joined up?

N.J Well the army joined me actually! Basically what happened, I'd been working in a Bank for 5-1- years, National Service was brought in, I volunteered for National Service, I've probably still got the letter somewhere that sent, they sent back to me saying "Thanks very much, but volunteers are not required at this stage."

J.R When was this?

N.J That would have been in 1965, yeah would've been first, yeah when it first started, so it would have been '65. My number came up in the lottery towards the end of '65, and because I was working in Western Queensland, I didn't actually go into National Service at the same time as others of my age, I went in, in the 4th intake which was April 1966.

To start off I went to Singleton, as a Recruit, after about 3 weeks we, some of us were selected to go to Officer Training Unit at Scheyville, where I did the 4th intake, and graduated from Scheyville in September of that year, '66, and went back to Singleton, this time as a Platoon Commander into Recruit Training Battalion, Recruit Training Company rather, and in about September I think it was, September/October of 1967, I was posted to Reinforcement Unit at Ingleburn in Sydney prior to going to Vietnam in November '68.

J.R And you were keen to get in to the army, was it because of Vietnam, or family background?

N.J I guess probably the family background had something to do with it, 'cause Z remember when I initially graduated from Scheyille I had planned to go into the cavalry where my father had served. But I graduated in a sort of off-season for training for cavalry officers because they only had a basic training course twice a year, and I graduated mid—stream, so I went into the infantry.

J.R And that was your second choice after cavalry?

N.J That was my second choice, yeah. And as I said, my, one of my father's uncles had been in the Light Horse; Dad had served in the 2nd World War, with the 7th Div Cavalry; his cousin, they'd both joined up together. Dad was wounded and came out and bought a shop in fact off, off the, off his uncle that had served in the 1st World War. And the other cousin stayed in the army and went to Korea with 3 RAR, and was at Kapyong. Course I don't think I knew that at the time, I found out most of these things later on.

J.R So did you sort of grow up on stories of army life a bit or?

N.J No, no I didn't because Dad said very rarely, spoke very rarely about the war, but I was aware of his involvement because he was heavily involved in the R.S.L in the local small country town, and in fact was one of the founding members of that R.S.L Club, which was in the, in the Bowling Club, and it was called Bowling Club, and he's I think held every, just about every office you can hold in a, in a sort of a Club like that and is in fact currently a Life Member, he was awarded a Life Membership of the R.S.L a few years ago. But I was aware of, of the army, but Dad never spoke about it at all, and even today, I don't think he talks much about it except when he gets with his mates and they have a bit of a chat about it.

J.R So do you think nevertheless that was your motivation for wanting to get into the army? Was it connected in any way with the Vietnam war?

N.J Well I guess it probably must have been, because I'd been in the Bank for 5½ years, and I was getting a bit sick of handling other people's money and I thought it was about time for a change. I had in fact applied for OCS before National Service, I forgot about that, and I was not accepted for that, I had to go down to Brisbane for interviews and stuff and I wasn't accepted, but I was subsequently accepted for Scheyville but they did put me through a second psych test because I'd failed one before.

J.R How do you fail a psych test?

N.J I don't know! (laughs) I think, it was an interesting situation, 'cause it's exactly the same psych test that they give you each time, but under that, at that particular time when I did the first one, I wasn't thinking, I was, I was, had a few emotional problems.

J.R They may have been looking for different things.

N.J No, I was having a few emotional problems and I don't think I was 100% switched on at the time.

J.R That makes psych tests mean something!

N.J (laughs) But when I went to Scheyville, and as I said they, they gave me a second test because I, I'd already failed one once before. Basically all they did, the way they started as I understand it was, if you had a certain education level your papers were stamped "Officer Candidate". And they worked from there basically, you were sort of looked at from there and you were asked if you wanted to go to Scheyville, if you wanted to go you were taken one step further and you did your psych test and if you passed that you then did the usual sort of tests that they

give nowdays for RMC and, for RMC where you go through the, it's a sort of, how would you call it, it's a teamwork test I think, where they put you through obstacles and all that sort of stuff.

J.R Right, And did you find the training fairly tough? The Scheyville course?

N.J Ah... [Did you enjoy it?] I enjoyed it yeah, I did actually, it was a challenge. I wasn't terribly fit when I went in, I was a lot fitter when I came out. No, I had no troubles with the training at all, I enjoyed it, I enjoyed the challenge, and,- you really didn't, for the first five weeks you didn't have much time to think because you were flat out all the time. [Kept fairly busy] I read a few bits out of Gary McKay's book, and it sort of brought back memories because .....

J.R (talking together) Yes, it's a very good description, I mean it reads like a very good description. [Mmm]

So do you remember what views if any you did have about the Australian commitment in Vietnam at that time?

N.J No I don't, in fact, not at all, I wasn't a political animal I don't think in those days. My parents were always, I guess conservative. We had a Country Party member at home and I know, pretty sure they used to vote for the Country Party. I had an uncle, who was conservative, but his daughter was wildly sort of radical Labour, and she spent a bit of time in Canberra early on. But I wasn't that much involved in politics. I remember having one regret that I, that Bob Menzies resigned before I had a chance to vote for him, I think, that was, that was (laughs) that's about the only thing I can remember about politics (laughs)

J.R Your misspent youth (laughs)

N.J No, I don't think it was a political thing, I really can't, I think it was, I guess it was a combination of, I was looking for a change, I guess, and the army came to me at about that time.

J.R And once you were in, say 50[1]wyville, apart from the fact that you were so busy, was there much talk there about, do you remember, about Vietnam or?

N.J No, in fact...(talking together)

J.R Was there talk in the training that you know, this is the sort of thing you'll need to know if you go over there, because presumably most of the Scheyville recruits would have gone to Vietnam.

N.J Yeah, I guess most of us did, um, although some of the course went into other corps that didn't go, but, um, it's hard, I really can't remember now, I don't think there was too much,

we certainly got lectures about Vietnam, what Vietnam was like. I seemed to recall more of those though when I did my preembarkation training at JWC [JTC] at Canungra. One thing I can recall though *is* that after the battle of Long Tan) there *was* a, oh I remember it was one night we had an extra lecture put on, which was a sort of an explanation of, of what the battle of Long Tan was all about, what happened, who was involved and that type of thing. But really no, it was more general training, just general training I think, yeah. There was a bit on military history, but I can't remember a lot of that now, it was all a blur. (laughs) All happened so fast!

J.R Anyway, so you went to Singleton [Yep] and then from there?

N.J Went to Ingleburn, I was there for a couple of months, spent most of my time trying to dodge admin tasks, like being the Q checking officer and all that sort of stuff whenever there was a range conducting officer required, I used to make sure I was a volunteer for that. Always been interested in shooting and weapons, so I was no, they've never ever bothered me and I was always happy to get out on the range. In fact I got advice that I'd been posted to Vietnam when I was out running a range practice in fact. That I'd been posted and that I had to pack up and go to Canungra the next day.

Interesting, some of the people that were at Ingleburn at the time, Barry Peterson was there, he was one of the instructors there, and there were a couple of, a lot of ex 1 RAR guys, I seem to remember one corporal who'd won an MM, I can't think of his name now, it was a french sounding name, but there was a few of those, there was quite a few of those sorts of people there.

J.R And so were you pleased to be posted to Vietnam?

N.J Yes, that's basically what I was in the army for, as far as I was concerned, yeah. Yeah in fact, no I was, I was very pleased to go, yeah.

I had a friend, I had a couple of friends from school who were my, both the same cohort, both the same age group, who we went to school with together, but I'd spent, they'd gone to High School in Ipswich and stayed at home whereas I'd gone to a Boarding School, but they both went to Vietnam. In fact one of them came home on the same plane that I arrived on, from the same town. There were three of us that I can remember, there may have been more, but certainly out of my group at school, there was the three of us that I can recall went to Vietnam.

J.R And was it a disadvantage going as a reinforcement officer rather than already in a unit?

N.J Yes, I think it was, to a certain degree because I took over a

platoon whose platoon commander had been promoted and posted elsewhere, that was the first platoon I took over.

J.R That was in 2 RAR?

N.J That was in 2 RAR. We'd sort of, we were given platoons in the reinforcement unit, and responsible for basic training and initial patrolling practice, we used to do patrolling close to the perimeter, very close. In fact we were, one patrol I was on in the time before I went to 3 RAR, we were involved in the first contact that 3 RAR had in country because we were patrolling in their AO, we'd been attached to them, so it was a very fleeting sort of a contact.

J.R And did the people stay very long in 1 ARU usually?

N.J No, generally not. They moved.....

J.R What days or weeks?

N.J It varied, sometimes days, sometimes weeks, second time I was there a bit longer. I was hoping to have stayed with 4 RAR when they came over, but they'd come to Vietnam from Malaya, so they had, in fact they had people waiting to come. So I wasn't able to do, I had to wait till 3 RAR got, needed reinforcements, in fact the guy I took over from was a National Serviceman who'd gone back to Australia, and their first platoon commander had been killed in battle of, battle of Long Dinh during Tet, guy by the name of Taylor. So I was their third platoon commander.

J.R So how was it settling into that? How is it sort of coming you know the sort of officer outside coming into a platoon, is it...

N.J I really never thought about it, I don't think, as such. I guess we...thinking back I suppose there was a little bit of difficulty in sort of settling in. Probably felt a bit strange, probably thought you had something to prove. What I found interesting was that, when I arrived with the platoon in 3 RAR, they were towards the end of the tour, this was August, and they were sort of thinking about, 'cause we went home in November, and a lot of them were ready to go home, and I don't think they were too keen to get stuck into anything too sort of exciting, but I, I'd still, still reasonably sort of keen, I guess. But, yeah, 'cause they were, very early on in the piece they'd been attached to the Americans at one stage and they got involved in quite a major contact -this was the 2 RAR platoon I had —they got involved with a major contact up, up towards Saigon, in a bunker system and they weren't real keen on bunker systems, and I was still a bit gung-ho in those days.

But yeah there was, you certainly felt that you had to, to prove yourself. But, no, it seemed to go okay.

J.R Did you sort of feel confident about commanding a platoon at that stage? Did you rely pretty heavily on NCOs?

N.J Yeah, I guess you do, particularly in my situation where I'd arrived in a platoon that had, that had been in country before. Most of the NCOs we had at the reinforcement unit were, were posted for that reason, they were sort of, they were there on training, they weren't actually, there was an element of them that were training and not, not posted as reinforcements...

I've lost the train of thought now...

J.R Oh, relying on NCOs.

N.J Yeah. I've always been one that's been prepared to, to listen to NCOs, I can recall I used to have a practice of whenever we stopped, when we were on patrol, it was standard SOP for the NCOs to come into the platoon headquarters and we used to just have a chat and run over a few things. I had pretty good NCOs, so, yeah I was quite happy to, to rely on them, I never felt that, I never felt let down at any stage, by any of the NCOs I had. Or any of the soldiers for that matter, most of them were very good, especially the National Servicemen. But then I was biased!

J.R Was there a difference?

N.J Not really. [between the] No. Some of the older soldiers that had served, that were on, maybe on their 2nd tour, had served in Malaya and Borneo, there was an element of old soldier there, yeah sure, but generally no, there was, I didn't myself notice any friction of that sort, no.

J.R Was there, somebody at one of the papers at the history conference implied that it may have been a disadvantage that some of them had been in Borneo or Malaya, which I found very surprising, I thought it would have been the opposite that it would have been a big advantage to have had experienced NCOs.

N.J Certainly from my point of view it was, because, they'd, you know although admittedly it was a different sort of war, there was less, from what I can understand, there was less contact, it was sort of a more of a platoon commander's war, the platoon commander was on his own, whereas in Vietnam we very rarely went out in less than company strength. Although I did a number of patrols from the Horseshoe in sort of half platoon strength, at the time when I was there. But no, it was, I was quite happy to have people that had had experience before, they never used to make a big thing about it.

J.R And was there any difference in attitude between the, say amongst the privates between the National Servicemen and the Regulars?

N.J I didn't notice any, no, no.

J.R And can you remember what proportion of your platoon was [No, no] Nasho and, No?

N.J No, we never used to worry about it too much. You'd sort of, you'd sort of know by the numbers I suppose, we all had a, all National Servicemen had a 7 was the second digit in your number, so you knew who the National Servicemen were, were from that point of view, but I can, I don't really ever recall looking upon someone as a National Serviceman and saying, he's a National Serviceman, no, any different way, no.

J.R And what about, how much turnover in the platoon was there, how long were you with 2 RAR?

N.J I was there for, well it would have been [3 months was it?] 4 months I think, yeah, I joined them in February, so I left, I left when they came home, I think it was June when they came home. So I was there for 4 months.

And as I said, I was their second platoon commander. And in 3 RAR I was the third platoon commander. And that was because, in that, as I said the first one, guy was killed, the second guy was a National Serviceman who had completed his two years and they were automatically sent home. The only difference with National Servicemen and Regulars was that, to go to Vietnam a National Serviceman I think had to have 12 months, or it might've been 9 months, there was a minimum term that they had to have still left to serve before they were able to go to Vietnam. I can't remember what it was now, I really wasn't into that.

J.R But was there, was there much sort of disruption to the platoon because of people finishing their two years and then being posted out?

N.J I don't recall that there *was* more, you know you could say it was no different to the disruption caused by people going on R & R and R & C, or people going into hospital for malaria and stuff like that. Sure, you know it was...

J.R So there was a bit of, sort of a trickle of people coming and going was there?

N.J (laughs) To be honest I don't, I guess there must've been, but it wasn't something that sort of [It wasn't a problem obviously?] I must, I have trouble remembering a lot of the names of the people that I had in my platoon. I can remember the faces, I still see some of them around Russell now, but I see pictures, I'm still debating whether to go down to Sydney in October or not, but yeah, no, I, you know it’s gee whiz it’s over 20 years ago now.

J.R It is a while ago isn't it, yes, yes.

N.J I guess, I guess if I would’ve, I s’pose, I s’pose now that you think about it, if I would have gone to the battalion from Sheyville

as some of us did and got a platoon, trained that platoon, took them to Canungra on a course as part of the platoon, as part of the battalion, went to Shoalwater Bay, yeah I guess, yeah, I would, certainly, on reflection yes, I would have to say that would be true. And that's probably why I can't remember a lot of them, because of that.

J.R Yes, you weren't with them all that long.

N.J I can remember the odd one, but not many. And I can remember the characters I suppose more than anything, I can remember guys like Jean-Pierre Grimlenu, who was a French, ex French foreign legion guy, who was as mad as a hatter, didn't matter where his section was, as soon as the first shot was fired he was at the front. You know, and guys like that, that I can remember. But, but no, and I guess that's probably the reason why, because I wasn't with them from the start to finish, like some of the guys were. So yeah, I guess that's, that probably explains it.

J.R Did you enjoy, when you were with the battalions, did you enjoy patrolling and...

N.J That was the best part of it.

J.R What was good about it?

N.J Well I guess, what was good about it? Well we weren't in camp for a start, not that there was anything wrong with Nui Dat, but I used to find that you'd go on patrol, and you'd come back, and you'd be back for three days, you'd wash up, clean up, have a few beers, and you'd be ready to go again. In fact ...

J.R Was this a general feeling you found, most people found it a bit sort of boring being in Nui Dat?

N.J Yeah, yeah, I think that was right. I've got a thing somewhere that's, must be down in the trunk, it's a Julian calendar where I used to mark off all the days that I spent in the field.

J.R And when you were out of Nui Dat was it pretty much similar routine each day?

N.J Yeah, I guess so. Except for the Horseshoe of course, which was different...

J.R And did you spend much time there?

N.J I was there for about a month, during Tet in fact.

J.R So what went on there?

N.J It was, Horseshoe was a defensive position on an old volcanic piece that overlooked Nui Dat. It was a start of a mine field that went down to the sea. We used to patrol out from there, in the area around Dat Do which was a major sort of regional centre

I suppose, not like Baria it was more of a sort of a, it was more of a series of hamlets in a massive sort of, great big sort of round circle. And there were regional force posts dotted along the wire down to the sea, and there was the infamous mine field that ran down from there.

J.R It had been laid already when you were over there?

N.J Yeah, yeah, that's right, it had already been laid. And we also did, when I was with 3 RAR we did some operations down in that area, down in what was called the Long Hai Hills, land clearing operations where we protected the dozers. That was pretty boring.

J.R Why were they clearing the land?

N.J To, they were clearing the land to reduce the amount of area that the, the Vietcong and the NVA could move around in, and also to enable movements to be spotted much easier, because it's very easy to move around in the jungle, and what they were doing was cutting it up into trails so that people had to sort of go across, and their movements would have been identified much easier, much easier to see from the air, sort of thing, there was a lot of mines down there. We were very lucky, I was very lucky, we didn't get tangled up with mines.

I can remember one time where we went down a track, which had little holes all along the side, about every 3 or 4 feet, and we got down to the end and it was blocked off and there was a piece of paper on it, and when I got back I got it translated and it basically said "Beware of mines". Obviously what had happened was the track had been, the sides of the track had been mined, not the track itself, but the sides had been mined, and the mines had been taken away, 'cause the holes were still there. That was interesting.

There was some areas we didn't go to, that was an area called the Long Green, which was called that because of the way it looked on the map, and it was, we used to patrol past that, and scoot around because of the mines that were in it.

J.R Was there a sort of view at your level of the mine field?

N.J Um, the fact that it was a waste of time (laughs). Ah ...

J.R (talking together) Well, that's being fairly charitable perhaps? ....

N.J Well I can see more, you know I can, because I wasn't involved in any incidents where, where my troops were killed or injured by our own mines, didn't affect me as greatly as others. I know some of the battalions had that view, but its (1, basic principle of military logic as I understood it, is you don't put an obstacle in unless you can cover it by fire. And by using regional forces, which really weren't interested, in covering it by fire, and, I, you know we didn't have any proof,

but we always reckoned that there was, the odd VC was just using the RF force as a cover. So you know we weren't surprised that the mines were lifted, and sort of used against us. They were certainly not a particularly brilliant piece of work from what I can recall.

J.R Anyway, going back to the Horseshoe, how did it operate? Or how did you operate from it?

N.J Well, we had, there was a full company there, there was a couple of American guns, and we lived in bunkers, which are in some of the books I've got, pictures of them, very good pictures of them the 2 RAR book, it explains what the Horseshoe looks like. In fact, give you an idea of what it was like [Presume he hands Jane a picture] and we used to patrol from there in and we'd ambush and patrol from there. And each platoon had its own sort of major sort of lookout point, and the company headquarters was down in the centre here [Points it out to Jane]. There's the, can't remember the mine field, I can't remember what the, yeah, there's the mine field running down there.....

J.R Pages 94 and 95 of the [The Anzac Battalion] The Anzac Battalion. Yeah, they're good photos aren't they?

N.J Yeah, there may be some more, few more, in fact, and it goes on to... (looking through book) Yep, that's the sort of thing we used to do, we used to man check points and, that's me there actually, that's my bunker.

J.R Page 96 [yeah]

N.J One of the things I can recall from the Horseshoe was, there was a - that's artillery positions - But there was a very nasty incident where a mine was placed in the school house, in the gate of the school house, in Vietnam kids used to change over in the middle of the day, I never actually saw it, but, I *was* aware that it happened and that the mine had gone off in this period of changeover and it was quite a, quite a nasty incident.

There was another, there's some pictures in the 2 RAR book of, of a vehicle that was ambushed while it was operating in the Horseshoe as well, I'll just see if I can find that for you. Here it is here. That's on page 111. That was an ambush at Dat Do, now that was, was one of the other companies that was there at the time.

J.R How did the soldiers feel about the Vietnamese? By, say [it varied, it varied] ones on your side and on the other side.

N.J It varied. I think the general feeling about the ARVN was that they were pretty useless, although I believe on reflection later on, that the ARVN troops themselves were probably quite good, but they were very badly led, and they were led by people who were political patrons, if you like. It was a sort of a family thing. I didn't have that much to do with them, as such,

but it was the general feeling throughout the people that I worked with, was that the ARVN were a pretty useless bunch, the Thais weren't much better. I can remember one incident when we joined them, they were escorting a convoy down to the border of the province and we picked up the convoy to bring it back. They wouldn't travel inside the APC s, they'd only travel on outside, we used to travel on the inside, and they were an interesting bunch of characters. Koreans were considered, we didn't have much to do with them, but general consensus was that the Koreans were pretty mean sort of bastards and you didn't mix with them. They had a typical oriental attitude I think. That's the oriental way of, life was life, and they really didn't have much regard for life at all as far as I can recall.

J.R What about the civilian Vietnamese?

N.J I think it varied depending on what your experiences were. I can recall... As I said, it seemed to vary with experiences, we we did a cordon-search during, of Hoa Long during the Tet offensive, this was when I was with 2 RAR, and we lost a corporal in the village. We'd been told that there was no-one there, in fact, no enemy there was expected, the boss didn't like Intelligence corps after that, that was Chick Charlesworth. And, he was very angry that day, I seem to recall, I was in the battalion headquarters, and he was very very angry and he was, he made a statement in, in the mess, that it was time that, he was just talking in the mess, he said "It's about time we took our kid gloves and got stuck into these guys", in fact that was reported in the press, there happened to be a reporter in the mess, it got reported in the press in Australia and the boss was matted over that and, there was a, he was a bit slow to get his DSO and there was a bit of a feeling going around the mess, in the battalion that, that it was because of that incident that he didn't get his DSO as early as possible, and I think if he wouldn't've got DSO there would've been a mutiny in the battalion because he was a top guy.....

J.R Was there sort of a feeling then do you think that you were being restrained?

N.J No I don't think so, I think (talking together) I sat there and listened to someone at the War Memorial conference, "no names, no pack drill", talk about massacres and rapes and murders and all that sort of stuff, and I seemed to, I was getting angrier and angrier by the minute, as I sat and listened to this stuff because, certainly none of the people that I worked for were involved in anything like that at all. There was the odd incident where, you know, you might've said nasty things about the local Vietnamese, but I certainly was not aware of any rapes or murders or massacres or anything like that that went on, it was, and it's just such a travesty that you know, people talk like that I think... I digress!

J.R I didn't exactly mean that, I meant, you know, if a sort of a, an officer, he was a what, a company commander or the battalion commander?

N.J He was battalion commander, Chick Charlesworth, yeah, he was a battalion commander.

J.R Right, right, if he was saying you know it's time we, we got stuck into these people, I mean does that indicate that he thought the battalions were being restrained for political reasons from fighting as effectively as they might have.

N.J I really, I really couldn't, I don't know, it's the sort of question you'd probably have to ask him I think.But I know, he was very angry because, because of that situation that we'd gone in and we'd been wrongly advised, and I think he felt it was time that, yeah, maybe we shouldn't pussyfoot around when we went into those places where we knew they were, or expected them to be that we should have been a bit, a bit sort of tougher.

J.R Was there ever any indication to you sort of implicitly to you as a, as a platoon commander that, you know, don't take too many casualties or...

N.J No, no.Although I can remember one incident where, it was towards the end of the tour, we were in, up in the north of the province, and I was patrolling on my own as a platoon, and we'd come across a bunker system, in fact we had a contact. And I believe I was probably a bit lucky because one of my guys was a bit quicker on the draw than, than the Vietnamese, and we found the weapon that had apparently, I didn't see it, that had been aimed at me, but, well been aimed in my direction, anyway. And one of my guys was a bit quicker off the mark than the other guy and fired and, we found a bunker and that was at the time that I said that I felt that the platoon I was with, we didn't really have, the other two platoons were a fair bit away, and they'd already been in trouble in bunkers before and they weren't too keen on sort of getting around into it. So we pulled back, and an air strike was called in, on the camp, and, we were not allowed to go into the camp after the air strike, and in fact we subsequently found another camp that had been abandoned and there were caches, what had obviously been caches, were pulled up, so it was quite obvious to me that, we went into the camp that was abandoned, as a company, and here was all this stuff lying around, it was obvious where the stuff had been, it had been in the camp that we had sort of bumped the day before. That was a bit, I suppose from my point of view, I was a bit galled about that, because, you know, I believe that we probably should have gone in and, and had a look at the camp that we'd sort of bumped the day before, after the it had been, been bombed, we were pulled back and the air strikes were put in. But no, the lads weren't real keen on getting too involved, and I suppose on reflection, you can't blame them. 'Cause we were only a platoon.

My first con - my first major contact-was up in the north, that was involved with a camp as well.We were patrolling as a platoon and just about to turn around and come back when we found a, a laundry rock in the middle of the river, and we bumped into a camp, and did a bit of a recce, and a few shots were fired and there was no-one there, effectively, and we were supported by, kiwis came in the next day, took us, helped us, we secured

the camp that night, there'd been a couple of blood trails from our first contact, and we followed them up the next day and had a major contact, but, that was when I wrote, there's a letter in there that I wrote to the old man about that, I wrote it to Dad [Oh that would be interesting]. And we, my first contact hadn't gone real smoothly and in fact when I got back the boss said to me "I was going to kick your arse Jensen" he said "But I can't kick it now "because we did much better the next day. And the next morning in fact, we found out later that one of the people that we'd killed had been a company commander of some sort, that was the word that came back to us, and the kiwis were, Victor company, the kiwis had been involved with very heavy contact that day before. I think, the feeling we got was that they were chasing us, but by that time we were back safely battalion headquarters. And after that contact the battalion pulled back to where it had been before.

J.R And what was the feeling after a contact, was it a sort of excitement or an anti-climax after...

N.J Anti-climax I think, you really didn't have time to think when it was going, when it was on. Yeah... no, the adrenalin was going, and your training was working, in fact in that particular contact we sort of were following the trail and we saw movement up ahead, and we did a recce and there was about half a dozen dotted around the clearing in sort of groups of two, and what Id planned to do was to send, put one section on the high ground to sort of cover the sort of the little clearing and then send another section down to sweep up from the bottom. And they got sprung, the second section got sprung as they were moving into position, and we just sort of, just all hell broke loose in fact, we called in the mortars either end of the clearing and you know, it was sort of all over and we tidied up the mess, picked up all their bags and weapons and stuff and headed back to battalion headquarters.

Ambushes were a little different, well I suppose they were the same, I suppose the way I had, I had a couple of those go off, I set so many of the damn things.

J.R Yes, was there sort of a, was it frustrating doing it every night...

N.J Well it was in fact, 'cause you know, some guys'd go out every night, not every night but every time they stuck their nose out of the wire they'd get shot at, whereas the platoons I used to take out, we, we never got shot at that much at all. We had one ambush go off..

J.R Say on a, about a 4 week average operation, or a bit longer, a bit less?

N.J It depended, as I said, I think I can recall I had 1, 2, 3, 4, I think I only had 4 major contacts the whole time, no 5 - well 5 if you count the one when I was with ARU – that I can remember.

J.R And were any of your soldiers wounded in those?

N.J No. The only time one of my soldiers *was* killed was when I was not with the group. That was when I was with 3 RAR, they were on a, what they call TAOR patrols which were out from Nui Dat, it was out towards Dat Do in fact, just south of the, the Long Tan rubber, in fact it was on a corner of the road went out and went down, and there was a contact, and, Lance Corporal he was, Tony Quiggley, - was killed. He'd apparently, there was no officer with the platoon, with the group, although that's not true, there was an officer, there was the guy from Vung Tau, from the canteen service in fact, had come up to go out on a TAOR patrol. Tony had not long come out of hospital from malaria, we'd been a bit short, and I needed someone to go with the patrol and he volunteered, to go out, and he was in fact in charge, it was only in fact a small group. And apparently what happened, from what I can understand, he, the patrol was on a courier route, and Tony had been a bit, a bit twitchy apparently, talking to the boys afterwards, that night, and he stood up to go and check the gun and wore a burst. This guy just happened to be walking down the track, and, I never saw the body so I don't, so I don't know, I saw plenty of other bodies, but I never saw one of our own, I don't know how I would have handled that. The Vietnamese bodies didn't bother me, as such, but yeah, Tony was, Tony was killed almost instantly from what I can understand.

J.R And did that seem to have much effect on the, the other people in his section?

N.J Well it did, because it was towards the end of the tour, and I think we were looking forward to going home. And yeah, yes I guess it did. In fact I met his girlfriend in a pub in Adelaide, when we got back, happened to be chatting up a couple of girls in the Noahs Hotel, pub in the Arker?, was it, yeah, the Arker bar in Adelaide and just happened to be chatting about the war in Vietnam and, she said, "oh my boyfriend was killed in Vietnam".... and it was Tony Quiggley, who was this particular guy. I sort of, most... [what a coincidence] Yeah it was a sort of a bit of a put-down really, I felt sort of, dropped out of sight, she was a nice girl too. Yeah, no, that was the only one, that I was, that I was responsible for, yeah.

How are we going, am I talking too much?

J.R No, no, no, no, I was just checking the tape 'cause I don't want to run over the end.

Yes, so was it a problem, sort of tension on patrols?

N.J It depended, it depended on what you found, and where you were going. I can recall, talking about tension, we'd been ambushing a track, this was during Operation Coburg, with 2 RAR. We were up in the north, we were up north of Fire Support Base Anderson, and the battalion headquarters, the battalion in fact was concentrated on a river, where a railway

bridge, a blown up bridge that had gone across the river, railway line, and platoons had been taking companies and platoons had been taking turns to go out, no, hang on, it was a company, that's right, not the battalion it was a company, we were in this area where in fact the battalion headquarters had been before, and we were, as a company, this is just before we went off to the horseshoe, and we'd been ambushing this same track every day, and one of the platoons had a contact, and they killed about 3 or 4 Vietnamese I think and they'd come back the next day, and we went back out again and, no, it was the battalion headquarters, yeah, I got it wrong, it was battalion. There was anti-tank platoon, myself, pioneers, pioneers, myself, yeah that's right, and we used to go out and ambush this same track and they had a contact.

END OF TAPE 1

TAPE 2

N.J And then we went out one day, and when we come back the bodies had been moved, someone had come in behind us and moved the bodies, and we were due to go out that day, and the order went out for the platoon, the helicopters had been delayed and they decided still to send the patrol out and I seem to recall seeing the boys go out to ambush this track, the day after someone had moved the bodies and they sort of, I got their feeling that their feet were about six feet off the ground as they sort of tippy-toed off and then just as they got across the river, the choppers appeared, and I got the distinct impression that there was a certain sigh of relief as those guys came back across the river to jump on the choppers.

Yeah, yeah, there was tension, I suppose, on patrol, it depended on what you found and where you were. I found the jungle quite beautiful in fact. [Did you?] It was quite, it never bothered me at all, I liked it.

J.R Just continuing on with the sort of problem of tension and then relaxation, how did people unwind? When you came back into Nui Dat, and could you relax at all when you were out on patrol? Or was it 24 hours a day?

N.J Well I guess it was 24 hours a day, but if you didn't relax you would've gone ga ga. You had to relax, it depended on where you were, what you were doing, at the time. I seem to recall the ambushes that I used to set, we used to operate on a 50%. 50% on, 50% off. Yeah, you know, you couldn't stay awake all the time, you had to relax.

I, you know, I can recall being able to sleep in those sort of situations, you know you really had to.

J.R Did you get tired during the course of an operation?

N.J Not, not really I don't think. I, I, you know, thinking back I can't think of any particular time when I was particularly tired. I've been, been under more pressure and feel much tireder in some of the exercises I've done in Australia since I've been back.

When I was with 3 Task Force, up in Townsville, I can remember periods of you know working flat out for 4 or 5 days in a stretch, well I never, we never did that in Vietnam really. Sure, you were on patrol, but you were still able to sleep and rest.

J.R And when you came back into Nui Dat?

N.J Okay, the first thing we used to do was usually sort of clean up, clean weapons, that sort of stuff, and throw out your socks; and because we had a company, company boozer, it was a sergeants

officers-sergeants mess. We very rarely went to the battalion mess. I went to the battalion mess when I was in 2 RAR because I was on battalion headquarters and that was my mess. When I was in, when I moved down to the company, we very rarely had it. We in fact moved into the, I was in the company that, the mess that had been built by D company 6 RAR after the battle of Long Tan. They were literally, as I understood it, they were pretty well taken out of action after that and never really got into any serious fighting after that, spent most of their time building a very nice mess (laughs). Various stuff that they'd filched and knocked off from Vung Tau and various places. It was one of the best company boozers, officers, sergeants boozers in Nui Dat I believe, and 3 RAR was much the same. It was more, it was a tent, I seem to recall it was a tent thing actually, it wasn't quite as salubrious but it was quite good. I've got some pictures in here somewhere, I think, where's the 3 RAR book? Yeah.

But it was, you know, I, I, it was good to get back, but as I said before we were quite happy to get up and go away after, after about 3 or 4 days, because it was, you know nothing much to do.

J.R Was there a problem at all with alcohol and drunkenness or anything like that? Fights or anything?

N.J Not really, no. No, no, not that I can recall there. I can remember putting a bloke in the boob once for, for, for getting on the booze, but no, it wasn't. Sure the guys used to drink, but it was, I never, we never, had that much trouble. Well hang on, I suppose when you think about it, now that I think about it, one of my platoon sergeants was a bit of a dipso. Yeah, he used to relieve himself in the middle of the night, and he relieved himself on me one night and he got walloped. But that was our mess there, dining mess... yeah. [showing pictures] You can see the difference, that's the main officers' mess and that's the company mess, which was a tent. That was my company commander, actually. But that was what the tents were like, but you know what they look like.

J.R Pages 72 & 73 of 3 RAR's book.

Yes, so what about if people had been hitting the booze and then went back out on operations, was there any sort of ...

N.J We never used to drink on operations.

J.R No, not on operations, but I mean the sort of day after, were they, was there a problem with hangovers or (talking together).

N.J Australian soldiers are usually pretty good at handling a hangover! In fact it was probably the best thing they ever did, was to get out in the bush and, and get a bit of work into them and sweat the booze off. But it, I never noticed it, never

really affected the work. Not, not, not to the extent that I think some people may have alleged.

J.R What about any other sort of drugs, was there any problem?

N.J Oh we had no drugs at all that I was aware of. I heard of problems after I came back, there were stories of people shipping drugs home in speakers and that sort of stuff.

J.R Were they more than stories do you think?

N.J Oh no, they would have been [they were true] true. But they were very rare, very odd. You know probably the, the worst things people used to ship back were, were the odd pistol here and there, and too many pairs of boots. (laughs) I remember they sort of shook down all the, they used to check the trunks before they went back, and if you had more than about half a dozen pairs of greens and half a dozen pairs of boots, they were sort of taken off. Because you know guys used to horde them up, yeah, but, no we didn't have any of that trouble at all.

Even when we used to go on R & R, although when I was in Bangkok, I teamed up with an American guy, we were staying in the same Motel, same Hotel. And he was in fact with the American Intelligence group I think, from memory, one of the Intelligence companies, he was with the Mohawks, which were the American Intelligence Aeroplanes. Americans had big Intelligence battalions in fact that fly their own aeroplanes and everything, and he was involved with one of those. And I believe he was on pot, marijuana, because the girl that I sort of teamed up with, shall we say, was a massage parlour girl and the girl that he teamed up with was a bar girl. And the bar girls were A. cheaper and B considered to be less, less classier than the, the massage parlour girls. And the girl I was with, she said to me "You keep away from this guy he on happy weed." And I believe that, we'd hired a taxi driver, and I believe she indicated to me that he got the taxi driver to get some marijuana. And she sort of indicated to me that guys that used to get on marijuana used to beat the girls up and all this sort of stuff, and she didn't want me to get on that because she didn't want to be beaten up.

But that was really the only inc, they're the only incidents that I can recall of about drugs. But, yeah, alcohol's always been a problem I think, probably more of a problem in the army than people are likely to admit.

J.R What about other sorts of troubles, say general troublemakers, people going crazy, any sort of [Yep] incidents like that.

N.J Yeah, there were a couple of incidents like that. When I was with ARU there was a guy that sort of ran out, it was on Christmas Day in fact, he ran out through the wire, with a rifle and had to be dragged back. And there was another case where a, one of the guys got hold of, he was in the machine gun and got hold of a M60 with about 300 round belt dragging in the ground, and went looking for the RSM. Fortunately every time he pulled the

trigger the gun jammed because the belt was too long. They're the only incidents that I can recall, there were other incidents, in fact, the platoon commander that, 9 RAR moved into our area, and the platoon commander of 9 RAR that moved into our lines was the guy that was blown up by a grenade, so I found out afterwards. In my tent too.

J.R Got out in time.

N.J But yeah, but you know the worst thing that I ever had was a bottle thrown on top of my tent one night when I, the boys were... I used to let them, you know I wasn't too heavy on them as long as they didn't upset people and make too much noise. And they weren't supposed to drink in the lines, but they used to take the odd can down there and they used to play cards and, provided they were quiet, and they just got over the top one night and I got stuck into them, and, that was the night I put a bloke in the boob. The trouble with that you had to sit somebody up to guard him (laughs).. I wasn't very popular over that. Yeah, you know, I sort of, I was usually pretty reasonable and that, same thing when I was in 3 RAR when I came back from Australia, and when I came back to Australia I'd walk into the boozer and basically say I'd be back in half an hour and I expect the mess to be closed. And you know, it used to work pretty well. People used to look after their mates. I never had that sort of trouble 'cause I used to let them sort themselves out. Fortunately we never had to close the kiwi boozers, that would have been interesting. Kiwi officers used to do that.

J.R They were a bit more wild were they?

N.J They were a bit rougher. In fact the white kiwis were probably the worst (tape goes a bit funny) the maoris were usually pretty happy, provided they were allowed to keep singing and having a few beers they were quite happy. Some of the white guys were a bit dodgey...

J.R So what was R & C and R & R, were they a sort of high point of people's tours?

N.J Yeah, I guess so, I was a bit lucky in fact, I had a trip to Singapore as well, over and above R & R. I applied for language training, and they were doing, I applied to do language, and they tested us down in Singapore, flew us to Singapore, and *we* went down to Singapore and spent a week in Singapore and then came back again. And then I went to Bangkok for R & R and I, we went to Vung Tau a few times, yeah. Yeah, there was an interesting nurse down there I found out later on she died of leukemia, not long, in fact she had leukemia when she was in...

J.R An Australian nurse?

N.J Yeah, she had leukemia when she was in Vietnam I believe, the only person that knew about it was the Matron. She was a great kid actually. Yeah, I found out when I got back to Australia.

J.R And did those sort of trips, what sort of impact did they have on the soldier's attitudes towards Vietnamese do you think? Did the average, say the average soldier form his opinions from the Vietnamese me met while he was on leave down in Vung Tau, or?

N.J Yeah, I suppose, yeah I guess we probably would have because that would have been where we would have had the most contact with them, in Vung Tau, Baria. It depended on what you were doing, 'cause some of the people in the battalion, like in the Q stores were on laundry runs to Baria and all that sort of stuff/and they would have had a lot more dealings with Vietnamese than, the civilian Vietnamese, than what we did. We didn't have that much to do with them, no but yeah I'm sure it must have. We used to go to the odd bar at Vung Tau, but...

J.R Were you involved in any civil aid projects?

N.J No, ah, closest we came to that was Ap Suoi Nghe, I think. We were involved in a little bit of that. We used to do cordon searches of the villages, but, no, I wasn't involved in any civil aid, that, that, the majority of that happened after I left in fact. Cause I left in sixty eight...

J.R And were you involved, after the village had been moved to Ap Suoi Nghe, or were you involved in the actual move?

N.J No, we weren't. We were actually involved in a sort of land clearing operation out from Ap Suoi Nghe, after Ap Suoi Nghe that was when I was with 2 RAR I think can't remember now. I'd have to look that up. No, we had a, yeah it was a land clearing op just out from Ap Suoi Nghe. That was the closest we came to that village. Cordon and searches were interesting.

J.R And you did a few cordon and searches?

N.J We did a couple, yeah, yeah. There was one incident where they sent the chopper up, the day before we were supposed to go in, the chopper appeared over the village and in very good Vietnamese told everybody to get out of their house and move, the village was surrounded, and of course they left, they were a day early, we, the guy got his days wrong.

J.R Well surrounded, yeah.

N.J Yeah, that was a bit embarrassing.

J.R So did people, did Australian soldiers do you think have respect for the Vietnamese?

N.J Well I certainly, I certainly, probably had more respect, you know I respected them, or I felt, they didn't bother me, as such. I know other people were, were anti—Vietnamese, but I can honestly say that I never saw, that I can recall, any <u>real</u>, what I would call racist attitudes, you know <u>really</u> racists, real <u>pasty</u> racist attitudes. There was a general, I think there was a general feeling of indifference. And that the fact that we probably felt they weren't really doing that much to help themselves.

But, I didn't have that much contact with them, honestly.

J.R And what about the feeling say amongst you and other lieutenants of, of how the war was going, did you talk about it and say, you know, it's going alright?

N.J Well we used to watch it on T.V because we had American forces, armed forces T.V. Yeah, we used to get, when we were in camp, we used to watch it. But there wasn't that much talk about it in the mess, I don't think. Although I indicated in the diary there that I'd sort of made a comment about, Johnson had stopped the bombing in the north, and that was in '68, so you know, must have, we must have had, we must have had some talk, 'cause we used to get the American Stars and Stripes newspapers as well. Don't seem to recall too many Australian newspapers.

J.R So you didn't have a sort of overall feeling of how the war was going or..?

N.J Well what we got was off the T.V.

J.R Right, but you didn't form an opinion about Phuoc Tuy and the Australian Task Force?

N.J Not really. No, we just knew we were doing a good job that's all. (laughs)

J.R And what about the attitude from back home?

N.J Well, I, I seem to recall we were a bit disappointed in the attitude. One of the things that springs to mind, I was in Vietnam when the mail strike was on, in fact [one of the many mail strikes] Talk to John Bullen about, about mail strikes and "punch a postie" because it was his machine that the `punch a postie' posters were sort of printed on. He was in the 1 Psyops unit I think. Yeah, or something like that. No,1 Field Survey unit, he was in charge of 1 Field Survey, and I think they used his printing press, he used his printing press to produce these things. 'Punch a Postie', yeah.

Yeah, there was a certain anti attitude to that sort of thing, because mail meant a lot to us, as you'll see when you read through the diary. You know, we liked our mail.

And I can remember one guy, one of the platoon commanders who later went on to command the north force in fact, he was the first commander in the north force. And he got a sort of a Dear John tape, this was when I was with charlie company, he got a Dear John tape from his missus, that knocked him around a bit. Yeah, there was a bit of that. I remember getting a Dear John myself when I had a 20 mile route march one day (laughs) Back in Australia [Oh back in Australia] It was when I was in Singleton. That was the girl that decided, that was the one that I was engaged to before I went to

Vietnam.

J.R So when you got to the end of your tour and were going to come back, and did come back, how were you received when you came back? As a Vietnam soldier?

N.J Okay, ah, I didn't have any problems, I, I had a girlfriend in Melbourne that I'd met, a girl that I'd met in Canungra in fact, she was a trainee teacher, and, I didn't come back on the boat, I managed to get back on the aeroplane. I went over on the aeroplane and came back on the aeroplane, I was a bit lucky in that respect, because she was having a Graduation Ball from Teachers College. And I drove down to Melbourne when I got back, and I quite happily wore my uniform - I've probably still got a picture of it somewhere - to her graduation. I didn't, I didn't have any problems, they had a party for me at home,, I seem to recall, when I got back.

J.R You didn't come back with the unit? Did you?

N.J No, well I did, I came back with the advance party of the unit, but I didn't come back on the boat. That was probably, that was another reason I think why, thinking back why I didn't sort of know the troops as well as some of the others because I didn't have that period on the boat, so I guess I've missed out on a lot of pre-and post-Vietnam companionship if you like. And sort of training, because I didn't train with the battalion, with either of the battalions, and I didn't come home really with the battalion as a group.

J.R Did you partake in the battalion march?

N.J No. No, because I, we'd gone by then, the battalion came home after that. No.

J.R So if you were in the advance party, and then when the battalion came back, you didn't reform as a battalion?

N.J No, we all came back and just disappeared. On leave, some of us were posted, some of us never went back to the battalion after that. We just sort of, we arrived in Sydney and just dispersed, basically, when we came back on the plane. But they did march in Adelaide I believe.

J.R Yes, and did you feel a sort of a sense of let down? Just coming back and being posted elsewhere?

N.J (together) I don't think so. I don't, I don't recall, well I was, I was still with the battalion because I was, I was on leave and I was still posted to the battalion, so I stayed with the battalion.

J.R And then you extended somewhere?

N.J Ah, [Or transferred your.....] Yeah, that's when I transferred, in fact, what happened, I, I'd initially, I'd initially, I'd signed on a short service commission to go to Vietnam for

five years, and I'd thought about a permanent commission, and I thought no, I'd wait and see if I, if I fit in and if I liked it. And frankly I wanted to know whether I could. handle it or not, as a platoon commander on operations. And I felt that I could, so I applied for a permanent commission, and, took a while to come through, I eventually, it eventually came through after a couple of goes, but I eventually got it through. But no, in fact I applied for a short service commission, that's right, five year short service commission, and I eventually got that extended to a permanent commission when I came back, after five years. That was when I was in the Intelligence Corps. So, yeah, I transferred to Intelligence Corps, why did I transfer to Intelligence Corps?Um, well it was sort of getting towards the end of, seemed to be getting towards the end of the war, and I didn't particularly like the idea of, I was only a 2nd Lieutenant, and I didn't like the idea of going back as a platoon commander again, I wasn't senior enough to go back as a company 2 IC, so I would have had to go back as platoon commander. And I thought what's the point, I've been there, done that, and -1Le. Intelligence Centre was at Woodside, and I'd spoken to a few people and I, it seemed like an interesting area to work in. So I applied for corps transfer to Intelligence Corps, and was successful and transferred across in February 1970.

We got married in 1969 in fact, I got married a year, a year after I got back. I met Wendy after I got back.

J.R Did you have any health problems when you were in Vietnam?

N.J No, no.

J.R Were you hospitalized at all?

N.J No, no.

J.R And any health problems since then?

N.J No, no, not really. I've always had headaches, from sort of that age. I had a couple of serious headaches when I was in Vietnam [What, migraine?] Yeah migraine type, not sort of vomiting type migraine, but nasty enough. I recall one night in ARU I had a bad one, and I have them periodically here, but no, I've no health problems at all. You know I joke about it when I sort of do my chewy occasionally, I say must be Agent Orange or when I beat the kids up or something I say ah, its Agent Orange sort of thing, but no it's not, I'm pretty ambivalent about that sort of thing, I, I, my feeling is that, I don't have any proof of this, but I believe if it was researched properly you'd find that soldiers that have come back from all wars have got a similar problem.In fact reading one of the, reading one of the newspapers, one of the ship board newspapers for the troops coming back from Vietnam.¯from Europe¯there's a note in there, a soldier had written to Aussie, probably got a note on it in my note file, where he'd sort of made this comment about soldiers had been through a lot, and they had a lot of

adjusting to do and they would have problems and people would have to appreciate this. And, so you know, I, I, that sort of set me thinking that, that men have gone to war, and, men and women for that matter, have gone to war and there will always be those sorts of problems when men and women have been subjected to, to that sort of situation. War's a nasty business.

J.R But you didn't feel any of that yourself did you?

N.J No.

J.R You didn't find you had a problem readjusting.

N.J No, not really. I came back, it may have been different for people who came back and went straight into civvie life. I came back to a unit, a battalion, so we were training. We were starting to build up to go back to Vietnam the second time, and so you know I had things to do, I was still in the army, I was still a professional soldier, as far as I was concerned. I still am. And I didn't have any problems.

J.R Did you feel that you'd been changed at all?

N.J Not knowingly, I suspect I probably grew up a bit, I felt that, I found my father I think when I was, a little more, because it was interesting, I, Dad's a pretty hard sort of guy to get to know, he's a very solitary sort of person, and I got the impression that he used to like my little brother more than he used to like me. I was the eldest, and he was always pretty gruff and tough with me. And in fact at one stage there I used to write "Dear Mum" I never used to write "Dear Mum and Dad". And not long before I graduated from Scheyville, and, I happened to be talking to Mum about it and I got the impression, that although he wouldn't admit it, Mum had mentioned something to me about what Dad had said at an R.S.L meeting or something, and though he wouldn't, he wouldn't sort of say it to me, but he was obviously quite proud of the fact that I was graduating and coming out of officer school, and in fact, he came to the graduation parade with Mum, and from then on I think, we seemed to get on better.

J.R Had your father been an officer?

N.J No, no. Dad was a corporal. He tells the story that, well Mum says anyway that he sort of was offered a sergeant's rank, but didn't want to take it because he was, he wanted to stay with the boys. I can imagine that because he's that sort of guy. He did a, he was well educated, he's no fool, he did 4 years of High School, matriculation, didn't go to University because of the war. He came from a farm, but he was, you know, he's no fool, he's no slouch. And he probably could have been an officer I suspect if he wanted to be. He certainly had the ability, and the leadership ability, he proved that, he proved that after the war in his involvement with, with the community, that's one of the reasons he was awarded the Life Membership of the R.S.L. He was involved with everything from school committees to boy scouts to R.S.L s to bowling clubs and then the Lions

Club towards the end, after we all left home. So you know, I guess that's one of the reasons I've done similar sort of, similar sort of things I suppose. Yeah there's a lot of, I suppose a lot of the old man in me.

J.R Yes, I think we all sort of replay the, replay the themes a bit.

Well why do you think some people have problems? Have you had any contact with many veterans since, in the years that you've come back?

N.J Yeah, well I guess, yeah I have, mainly serving veterans, and people that have been there, people that I'd either served with or have had contact with. Why? why? Aah...

As I said, I think there will always be a percentage of people that have been to war, that are affected mentally and physically, in different ways. And that's and that's why, you know, war's a pretty nasty business, it's not, there's no fun in it at all. And I think frankly that, that my own experiences were probably chicken feed compared to the experiences of my father say, for example. Or the guys who served in the trenches in Galipolli and, and France, and even the guys in Korea who, guys that were involved with 3 RAR. Probably the closest thing you came to that in Vietnam was some of the battles like Coral and Balmoral, and some of the other battles later on. But even then it wasn't constant, we weren't, we were never under constant attack. [No, no, no] You know Nui Dat was only ever attacked [days and weeks and months] once I think, once maybe twice. And that was just before the battle of Long Tan. And I think there may have been a couple of mortar bombs in while I was away, out, but, you know, we, and I often thought about that, I've often thought about that, that quite frankly I had a pretty easy time of it, and I think most of us did, although, there were exceptions. There were people who were, who saw their mates blown up in front of their eyes, by mines, their own mines. And that was a pretty nasty experience I'm sure. A friend of mine was blown up, a guy that I'd been at, he was an officer at Singleton, Johnny Fraser, he was, he was a, well„ we weren't close friends but we were platoon commanders in the same, the same unit. And John went to Vietnam, he was from Southport, and he went to Vietnam and he was blown up by a mine, killed by a mine. He got a bit of publicity in the Southport papers. And he's one of the guys I always say a prayer for on sort of Anzac Days, and those sorts of stuff, 'cause he was a friend of mine. So I always say a quiet prayer, I don't march in Anzac Day parades, go to dawn services, but I don't march.

J.R Why not?

N.J It's a personal thing. I guess it's probably because, is probably really only struck me now that I've been talking to you about the fact that I went over as a reinforcement and I didn't go over with a unit identity. And I suspect that's probably got something to do with it, because I don't have a, although I served with units, I don't have the same sort of

background as what they did, and I just find it's a private, private thing, I've been going to dawn services since I was old enough to walk, with my parents, with my dad, 'cause, that was Dad's job, dad used to, help co-ordinate the damn things. I've marched, in fact I've marched in Anzac Day parades as a school kid as a boy scout, but I've never marched in an Anzac Day parade, I don't think so anyway, as a, as a, serving, never even as a serving soldier. I've marched, I've been on parade in 3 RAR on Kapyong Day, I've carried the Queen's colours, and been very proud to do that as a young subaltern, in 3 RAR, but that's different, I've never marched in..... (talking together)

J.R You sort of think as Anzac Day as more of a 1st World War, 2nd World War, Korea thing?

N.J No. no, no, it's not that. I see it more as a commemorative thing, as a sort of a commemoration if you like of man's inhumanity to man, and you know, it's a pity it's got to happen, and why can't we stop it. And you know, although I'm a professional soldier, I guess, part of us wants to exercise our profession, and part of us would be quite happy if we didn't have to, but if we had to, we'd do it.

J.R How do you feel about Vietnam now, looking back?

Do you think it was a thing we should have done or?

N.J Yeah, I've got no problems about it at all. And in fact I'm about to look at it from a historical point of view because I'm about to look at politics, you know I've got a tute paper to write for the 'fifties, (disturbance on tape) and once I get this essay out of the road... I believe that our government went in there for, what it saw at the time as very good reasons. I think you've got to look at, what was happening at the time, the cold war was on, there was this anti communist feeling throughout the west, the Korean war was, was sort of there, and I guess the domino theory was a pretty real fear, I think. Listening to Menzies talk, and in fact I had a listen to some of his tapes for one of the tutes not so far, not that long ago, and you know I think rightly or wrongly I think at the time the government felt it was what it had to do. I've got no hang-ups about it.

I can recall a couple of the platoon commanders from 3 RAR getting bloody, getting involved in a march, in an anti Vietnam march in Adelaide and punching into a few university students.

J.R When the battalion was marching?

N.J No, this was when they were back there was a sort of a, there was a demonstration and they were in civvies and they went down and they got stuck into a couple of these guys. They were put in the, confined to barracks for a couple of weeks after that.

But I think that was the general attitude, you know these guys

were RMC/OCS graduates, and hadn't been to the war, but were going to the war,-this was before the second trip - And I don't think many of us had much sympathy for the protestors, we certainly didn't have much sympathy for, for draft dodgers. It was an interesting feeling at that conference to have someone get up and sort of talk as a draft dodger.

J.R Well, he wasn't a dodger exactly.

N.J He was a conscientious objector. Wasn't he?

J.R He was a conscientious objector, yes. He went to jail.

N.J Yeah, well he's not a dodger I suppose if he goes to jail for it. But it was an interesting, interesting experience.

J.R Do you think Vietnam, sort of from a historical point of view had much impact? On Australia?

N.J Yes it did, I think the division in society, there was certainly a division in society. Yeah, I guess it did, it had, we haven't had that Tute yet (laughs)

[referring to courses he's taking at ANU]

J.R You haven't got to the 1960's or the 1970's?

N.J No, no I'm sure it will be an interesting thing because we've got a pretty mixed bag, in, we've got a group of people that are, that are sort of obvious pro/anti/Vietnam I suppose.

J.R But too young to remember are they, or are they your age but...

N.J No, in fact one of the girls in one of the Tutes we had, her brother was, no, I think she was involved in them, but, no, it was her brother that was involved in, in, wanting to lay a wreath, this was a public school in Melbourne, in a country town in Melbourne, private school, wanted to lay a wreath for women raped in war, you know this was a sort of 14, 15 year old kid, which was an interesting, that was an interesting discussion. But yeah, I believe it certainly changed society, there's no doubt about that, and it's interesting I think, Michael McKernan I think wasn't he an anti-Vietnam, wasn't he involved with the movement?

J.R I don't know, I don't know.

N.J Talking to people I get the impression there are a few of them working at the War Memorial now that were involved in that [quite possibly] sort of era ....

J.R I don't know that many, the ones I know at the War Memorial are too young to have been involved in anything...

N.J Which is an interesting, which is an interesting statement about society I suppose, and I guess that's probably some of

the things that poor old Flemming was getting at, I got the impression there was a bit of that, that he was sort of not getting on with, some of the more acadaemic, younger academics that he was having to work with I think that was probably....

J.R Better not have this on the tape (laughs)

N.J Take it off, yeah.

J.R Anyway, I've come more or less to the end of my particular questions, is there anything else you want to...

N.J No, I don't think so, as I said I'm not sure whether, you know I didn't do anything that exciting and I've never become famous after that, so really there's not...

J.R Most of us don't.

N.J I'm just one of the many guys that have been, and sort of served and come back again. And I'm quite proud to wear my medals, it's no skin off my nose. And while you know, I don't sort of go into the University campus and sort of flaunt my uniform around, I prefer not to, I've always felt a bit out of place in uniform, but I don't think it matters now as much as it used to. I would suspect in the 60's.

J.R Especially not in Canberra, I think people are quite used to it.

N.J And I think in the '60's I think it would have been different, I probably wouldn't have got past the front gate. But I seem to recall things like a certain revulsion about the sort of jostling that Roden Cutler got at the Sydney University when he did the, they had a parade there, I seem to recall...

J.R There was a lot of trouble with the regiment at Sydney University.

N.J Yeah, that's right. And I don't know, does the regiment still exist, I'm not sure.

J.R I think so.

N.J There's certainly none here in Canberra.

J.R It was next, the building it was in was next door to the building where I used to be working.

N.J But now those units, those regiments more are used as officer training units ....

J.R Alright, well thanks very much, I might wind it up there.

END OF TAPE 2