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INTERVIEWER: Gary McKay

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This is Tape One of two (three) tapes of an interview with Peter Schuman conducted by Gary McKay for Delta Four - Australian Infantrymen in Vietnam. Recorded on 27 March 1993 at Fremantle, Perth, Western Australia. The topics covered on this tape are training for war, nashos, people and jobs.

Peter, why did you join the Australian Army?

Why? I guess a couple of reasons Gary; adventure and I think the second one was get away from, and it is hard to say, but to get away from my family. I had four older sisters and in all honesty they used to drive me into the deck or that was the feeling at the time - as a young lad growing up in Sydney. The other reason I guess was the credit squeeze that was on at the time, there was very little on around the place and the Army offered me a way out and I jumped at it.

You enlisted in Sydney; Australia's operations overseas at the time; did you know anything about them?

Yes. A form of entertainment I guess in those times was the movies and news clips used to come back... Look, if I can go back a bit. Being born during the war, I was three years old when the war finished. I can recall troop trucks running up and down the Princes' Highway just outside of Sydney where I lived. I can still remember aircraft landing at Mascot airport. The Sea Furies and Spitfires and aircraft like that. I can still remember bombers flying over Sydney as a young lad. I can still remember the news clips and newsreels of the Korean War and of course the Malayan War was fairly topical at the time that I joined the Army.

You enlisted as a soldier for six years so you were fairly determined to make the Army your career then?

Yes. I was, yes. I had left school at the age of 15 and I had no... I wasn't a good student - I can say that. I was pretty good at rugby, so there was more brawn than brains I think on what I was doing. I joined the Post Master General's department as a technician and stuck that out for a while, but I just, I guess I just wasn't cut out for the technical fields. It was interesting but not just what I wanted to do. I guess I just wanted to be - somewhere in the back of my mind - a soldier.

The recruit training you did at Kapooka - what are your impressions of that?

Recruit training at Kapooka. In the middle of 1961, freezing cold, long hours, ex-British Army instructors with no feeling, stoking coal fired furnaces for hot water. Spaghetti, Quonset huts, brown uniforms, blanco.

You went from there to the Infantry Centre at Ingleburn, as it then was. Was infantry your first choice?

Yes it was. Yes, I thought there was... if you are going to be in the Army you should be in the infantry and everything else revolved around that and I was pretty right in my subsequent soldiering. Ingleburn was a camp, not dissimilar to Kapooka on the outskirts of Sydney. We had people from different intakes out of Kapooka coming there to do their

corps training. It was very interesting. It was when we starting to be introduced to the array of infantry weapons that we were looking at. The three inch mortars, the Energa anti-tank rifle which was known at that stage of the game, the grenades in more detail. In fact the skills, the finer skills of hunting and fishing. The instructors were very good. If I can recall they were all ex... Where our drill instructors at Kapooka were either mad Irishmen or ex-Brits, the fellows at Ingleburn were guys from the Korean and Malayan campaigns and they were top shelf. They had been chosen very well. In fact our commandant at that stage was one Colonel Dunstan and there was no war on but they trained us very hard.

So you joined a very small Regular Army of only three battalions in those days.

Yes, I think the whole Regular Army was from memory, was about 15 or 16 000 people with three battalions. Your right yes.

And after serving as rifleman in 1 RAR for a short stint, you then opted to go to the SAS Company, as it then was?

Yes. Whatever the equivalent of the *Army* newspaper was and I think it was the *Army* newspaper was advertising for people for an extra seven shillings and sixpence a week. I think that was right Seven and Six a week. That was parachute allowance. So that sounded fairly flash so I was into that. (Laughs)

Did you have to do some sort of a selection course to get into the SAS Company?

Yes, there was a selection course, in fact the cadre course was run by one Captain (P.M) Mike Jeffery, or a Lieutenant, I can't remember at the time- Captain or a Lieutenant. With a group of thugs sent over from Swanbourne and we did our training at Ingleburn. We were selected from units throughout the Eastern seaboard and it was mainly conducted in the Ingleburn area and down as far south as Kiama on the South Coast. Very tough training, long marches, sleep deprivation, all the other things. Much, much harder I think than whatever we had experienced in our battalion training.

Do you think that the training you got at Kapooka and Ingleburn was hard enough and tough enough?

Yes, it was. For the period of the time. If I could just... my feelings at that time, I didn't know this at the time. In reflection there were two great forces in the military. There were the old 'Koreas', now this is just my perception, there were the old 'Koreas' who wanted to drill into young soldiers the benefit of digging holes, having machine gun arcs, being able to fight at night as probably as they did when they trained for Korea. There was the other school who were a complete 180 degrees, the thought that the next war, the next battlefield would be in South East Asia and you had to be jungle smart. This was the conflict that I grew up with as a young soldier. I could... in fact it wasn't a conflict at all for us because we were taught by both schools. We could march with shovels on our backs, we could dig in over night in hard ground on the Holsworthy Range, we could also go to the rain forest down at Kiama and patrol like a.. I won't say a Malayan veteran, but we certainly had the skills of how to navigate in dense jungle areas or rain forest areas.

You spent some time as a trooper in the SAS Company and then you decided to go to OCS. How did you get into that?

Well, we didn't really... I didn't really decide to go, it was the Adjutant of the unit, Paul Greenhalgh. I guess like any officer then and through his career should identify potential soldiers for officer training and I guess there were three of us that went through our early military training together. There was Graham Henry Ross, Trevor Roderick and myself. We were called the 'Three Musketeers', we used to stick around together, I suppose we were the... what you called, the three 'mates'. Anyway, Paul Greenhalgh identified that the three of us had some potential and we all applied for - with his help and guidance - in fact he helped us do some after hours study on some of the skills we would probably need at Portsea, like a little bit of military history and military etiquette. And from that humble beginning we went ahead. It was his encouragement that really got us to Portsea.

What advantage did being a soldier give you, or what assistance did it give you when you became an officer?

Feeling. Feeling for others is the only way I could describe it. You.. If you know what it is like to stand on a parade ground for 40 minutes and have been trained to have that discipline, then when you are an officer you can understand what the soldiers are going through behind you I guess, and you take that into consideration with the decisions that you make. I use the parade ground, because the discipline learnt on the parade ground certainly transponds through to the battlefield. There is no doubt about that in my mind.

Okay. After graduation you went to 1 RAR again, this time back as a second lieutenant, and then back to the Special Air Service Regiment and then you saw a tour of duty as a troop commander in Borneo. If we can look back now on the Borneo and then your time in Vietnam - still within the Special Air Service Regiment context - what was the main difference between those two types of conflict?

Well if I could just take a couple of seconds of your time. I was very lucky in going back to the SAS Regiment. You can imagine going back to a unit that you were a soldier in, going back as a second lieutenant facing - in my case - my old platoon sergeant who became my troop sergeant. I was <u>his</u> officer after he was my troop sergeant some one year before. I can remember walking into the troop office and he looked at me, and he was a fellow by the name of Joe Flannery. Joe was a hard bitten, I guess at that stage, 37 or 38 year old ex-Brit, a veteran of... if I remember correctly, he had three bars to his General Service Medal from Aden, Cyprus and Malaya. And I walked back into the troop office, Joe looked at me through some black and gnarled, smoke stained teeth, put his glasses on said, 'You're now the wheel - act like one'. So, with that advice and Joe leading me by the hand - and almost every day - I survived. If it wasn't for him I think I could have crumbled.

What did you look for from Joe Flannery?

The support. The support where he could hammer the corporals into line, if they ever got out of line - which he did - and to guide me where I needed guidance with some stupid decisions that young platoon commanders or troop commanders make.

Peter, you have been in a really lucky position of having served with soldiers in the Special Air Service Regiment and the Royal Australian Regiment and you are probably in a good position to comment on discipline within those organisations. where does the discipline come from in a trained soldier?

Self. Self discipline. It is the only discipline and it is just the degree of self discipline. In the RAR it is high, but in the SAS it's a bit higher. But when it goes, when the discipline goes, it goes slowly in the RAR and the discipline breaches are fairly mild. Where in the SAS if a discipline breach goes - it's really bad.

Catastrophic?

Catastrophic. Yes, it really is. That is the degrees.

What drives this self discipline?

Honour and the name of the Regiment. Yes, to be part of.

So, it really comes back to esprit de corps?

It does, yes, that's the word.

What do you remember about your first tour of duty in Vietnam? What sticks out most?

With the Special Air Service Regiment - long patrols, being continually wet and very sharp, violent contacts. At the end of the period you were either standing, in fact most times we were standing - thank God. Yes, there was just immediate, quick, smashing violence. They were the contacts. That's what I recall as a... That was for about five months then I got pneumonia, or started to get sick, and I could feel my confidence just going down the gurgler. For about the next two months I struggled on but at the end I just couldn't fight any more. I was just bombed out.
What had happened was the strain on a person of having eight months in Borneo the year before, coming out of that campaign, re-equipping, leave, and then gearing up and training again for Vietnam.

Not much respite for the body.

No. As a young troop commander you are on the alert all the time. I am not saying we had more work than anybody else, but just the drain on the system, together with just living like a mongrel dog. When I say 'living like a mongrel dog' I tried to live like the enemy and that was the way I thought we could survive better. So we used to live on the ground and didn't have the creature comforts. We were a little bit sharper than the baddies were. If you didn't sleep in warm blankets you were awake half the night and you got the baddy when he was sleeping.

I have often heard an analogy that the Special Air Service fighting patrol is like a tiger, but a Royal Australian Regiment fighting patrol is more like a elephant. Did that worry you when you went back with Delta Company 4 RAR?

No, it didn't. I felt very protected with 130 guys around me. It was very comforting.

Did you think that Delta Company was well prepared for Vietnam?

Yes. This might go against the grain of a lot of common thought, but I think the only reason we were was because of the persistence of an autocrat like Franz Kudnig. He kicked arse from the time the day started until 11.00 o'clock at night, seven days a week. He was just a horrible.....cut that. .... an autocrat. He had read the books on leadership of how to train and there was no doubt about Delta Company that our battle drills from section level and the radio procedures and the FO procedures, and the re-supply procedures we practised in Australia worked extra well when we started the campaigns. They did not falter in the first contact which is the ultimate. I will go on later about Franz Kudnig because I would like to dispel a few things that might have crept in. I was very close to the man as you can imagine, living with him in the same bunker for a long time.

I think you will find just about everyone has said the same thing you have. Was Peter Schuman well prepared for his second tour of Vietnam?

Well, he was just a professional soldier that got the nod for another tour. I was just saddled up and went again. I hoped I had learnt the sums. I had served with some good 2ICs like Terry Holland and Geoff Chipman. I saw how they worked and I said I would model myself on those guys. I knew what a company 2IC had to do - all the books had been written many years before. I knew I had to look after the administration, the health, feeding; that was on the domestic side of the house; the ammunition resupply and artillery and air to ground fire during contacts and looking after the casualties and the resupply of ammunition and food during the contact stage, and I had no doubt that I could do it.

I will jump across now to the people and the jobs. You were the Company Second-in-Command, but what did you see as being your principal job in Delta Company?

The health and welfare of the troops. Leave the tactics in battle and the leadership bit to the OC. He was the guy that had to train and give them confidence that he was the leader, so that was the link there. I had to keep the guys well-equipped, shod, healthy, mail. All the little things in life to give that product to the leaders. I found myself standing aside with guys like (Staff Sergeant R.J.) Bob Hann and (Warrant Officer Class Two) Noel Huish. We stood on the sidelines a little bit and plastered things onto this big painting where there was the company commander at the top, three platoon commanders, the platoon sergeants, the corporals and the troops. We kept on putting things on to make it happen. If a bit of that plaster we had, be it mail, or whether it food, or whether it be tents, or ammunition didn't get there, didn't get onto this mosaic, the whole thing fell down. We keep on putting these handfuls of cement on.

How much of your job was really understudying as the battle commander?

The words have been written about understudying but you can't study a man's style. All you can have is your own style and if, as happens, the leader falls over, the first thing you have to do is paint your own style on the troops. You can't be somebody else's man. You can understudy the battle procedures and the drills, but not the style.

Did you do much of that?

Yes. I used to listen to every conversation that company commanders made with Battalion Headquarters so I knew what the patter was. I used to listen to the conversations between the company commanders and their platoons to get the patter, because that is the way the company works. It is no good on this understudy thing if a company commander falls over, that you start using a different style of patter. When I say 'patter', you have got to get to know when the platoon commander is talking about 'hooking to the right' you know exactly what he is saying - he is hooking with the whole platoon, or a section or what. That only comes with your personal experience with the platoon commander. As a 2IC you are left out of it because you are looking after the 'A' echelon type of things, ground to air and the artillery. I used to take every opportunity to try and learn the patter of the relationship and bonding between the platoon commander and the company commander, and the company commander back to battalion.

So, it must have really got up your nose when you were left behind in Nui Dat?

Yes. Well, sometimes it had to be because the responsibility of running the...how do you put this? There was a great conflict. On one part the base of Nui Dat had to be defended and you can shirk your responsibility and go out on operations, a company, and fulfil your role as a battle 2IC or you can accept another part of the responsibility and be the defensive 2IC back in Nui Dat. On one hand you are doing well by 130 guys out in the scrub; on the other hand you are putting a hell of a lot of responsibility on the CQ, in this case (Staff Sergeant R.J.) Bob Hann, to run a defensive position with some 20 or 30 guys back in Nui Dat, plus all the other problems running a rear echelon and doing the resupply. I was a bit of a mongrel I guess - I would rather spend more time out in the scrub than I did back in the base. Well done Bob Hann.

I would like to go back to training. We all went through Canungra. What do you think was so special about Canungra?

There were two reasons for Canungra I guess. One was that it cleansed the Army's collective corporate little heart that we did the best for our soldiers before they went to the campaign and anybody who was killed it was there own fault.

Did you think Canungra was necessary?

Yes. For the Army.

What about for the rifle company?

For the battalion commander it was. For the companies it wasn't. I think we did enough training at High Range at sub-unit and unit level. Sorry, at platoon and sub-unit level, for us to know that we had our drills right. But it was for the battalion commander, I think, to be checked and given the stamp of approval by some higher authority.

Did the Special Air Service Squadrons go through there?

No.

And they still had a pretty good track record?

Yes. I rest my case.

> When you look back now on the training for Vietnam, was there anything that surprised you on the second tour that you weren't prepared for?

Yes. In training, I guess I never learnt my lessons well or wasn't exposed to them long enough. I didn't have enough exposure to working with 'FOs', working with armour, working with APCs. That was my gap in training I suppose after doing the years with the SAS and coming straight into a battalion. I had been in a battalion in '64 and the next time I saw a battalion was six years later. So, I had missed that interim period of working with things like ....in fact the only experience I had had, was my days at Portsea, I suppose, when I had dropped a few rounds or put a few rounds in with artillery, and at Puckapunyal firing a troop of tanks.

> That would have been the only time you saw tanks, wouldn't it, until you got there?

Yes. But it comes back pretty quickly. It is all sight and sound. I can remember at the Battle of the Suoi Ca, (Lieutenant G.V.) Greg Gilbert and myself...the trees were so high that we knew the rounds were clearing the trees but we didn't know whether they were hitting the bunker system because it was so thick that we couldn't see the primary explosion. It wasn't until we started to get air bursts of our own shells hitting the trees, that we knew we were pretty close to the target. So, we just sat there, laying on our backs, calling in artillery until we saw the trees blowing apart above our heads and thought 'right'.

Delta Company had never worked with armour prior to going to Vietnam - I am talking tanks; main battle tanks.

> Did we not once see a fire demonstration of APCs at High Range? Of main battle tanks we didn't. We saw a demo on the Nui Dat Range before we went out on operation.

That's right. We did. And gunships as well. That was the first time we had seen rocket-firing gunships.

> Right. And there we are, all of a sudden on the Soui Ca, doing a company attack with a troop of tanks.

We are doing a company attack with a troop of tanks. And the first one had been shot out of the firing line driven by Lieutenant (I.D) Farrant I remember. We had a heap of gunships over to the right flank that were trying to get into the battle; we had a heap of F100s about another four kilometres out trying to get into the battle; we were pouring artillery into the site, and I was the director while (Major J.H.) Jerry Taylor was trying to run the ground battle.

> Why did it work when we had never seen tanks before?

We used our common sense and held things off in echelons I suppose. We knew the tanks were there and on line, so we used those first. They were handy. We kept the gunships

circling until their fuel ran out - in fact we used them about 10 minutes before they were fueled out. And the F100s we never used - we just sent them back home again. We didn't need them.

Was that your first contact with the company?

I think I had some smaller platoon contact with them before that, but as far as the Company Headquarters, yes. In fact that was very untidy of (Second Lieutenant K.M.) Kev Bryne getting into a battle like that. It was a nice quiet day until ....

Was there anything that scared you when you were out on operations?

Which tour?

Only talking second tour.

No. Whatever I was doing, and sometimes I couldn't protect myself, the Company Headquarters, because of resupplies and the nature of the work Company Headquarters was doing, at times you were just a mobile office in the field. I can tell you honestly I don't think I fired my rifle on the whole tour. But a lot of guys around me protected me and fired their rifles and died. Not for the Company Headquarters. It was just part of the deal of soldiering. But I just had an office with four telephones, I think. There was the FO net, the admin net, the ground-to-air and the company internal net. Sometimes the MFCs; the MFC used to be part of our racket. So, I just walked along like a junior executive of a company with five telephones around me and five telephone operators, some highly prized staff, and just ran things from back of the firing line.

We are talking now of being a Captain 2IC on company operations, what was the hardest part of your job?

Praying that the company commander didn't die. Because if you were in a fire fight, and that is the logical time that a company commander would go, to try and take over and the whole burden falling on the FO of coordinating the rest of the company stuff, you knew because of the weight of the job something would fall over. And you were vulnerable. I think that best thing to do would be to either win a VC or just pull out of it. Doesn't matter if you were on the verge of winning or not. You've got two choices; either go forward or get back and consolidate and get your own feeling back into your troops. Because the loss of a company commander is absolutely tragic. Whether it be through enemy action and as we had with (Major F.J.) Franz Kudnig, of being relieved. There is a big down, and you can't fight when you are down. Psychologically.

Was (Major F.J.) Franz Kudnig relieved?

No. He went to see the CO. Franz couldn't sleep, and I put this down to his Teutonic upbringing and his training where he was so responsible, and you used to really live and breathe the military, he could not sleep out in the scrub. Every transmission; every hour the checks on the radio sets; every hour for platoons and every hour from battalion back down the line again, Franz would wake up and say, 'What's going on'. That was day after day, after day, after day. I could sleep on a barbed wire fence and I could sleep all through this and get up at 3 o'clock in the morning to do my three-hour shift and then sleep to first

light. I knew there were people around and I had the confidence of people around to protect us and warn us if anything was coming,

> I guess the only person around who could answer this is Franz, but didn't he trust people?

I don't think it was trust. It was that intense responsibility. I am trying to get into someone else's mind here, but the fear of failure. He knew his training was good; that people knew the drills, but he didn't know whether it would stand up because it had never been tested. If we had had a contact early in our tour Franz would have mellowed and said, 'Holy Hell, I'm right - I've trained my guys. I'm not going to be drummed out. I'm not going to be a failure. I am going to stand high amongst my company commanders.' But it just never happened. All the other companies had small contacts but D Company just sat and waited for the big ones! And Franz just couldn't wait. He just drove himself into the ground before it happened. When I say he was an autocrat, I can remember when we would stop at night and I would know that he was dog-tired. He wasn't to the stage of hallucination but he fought all the way to try and stay in control of the destiny of the company. But I couldn't get to the stage of speaking to him and saying, 'Go and have a rest'. It was just his whole being.

> You were the man closest to him. Why couldn't you do that?

It wouldn't have worked. He was just so intense.

> Those six week patrols that Delta Company seemed to relish. From your previous experience with SAS where I imagine most of your patrols were of shorter duration - were they or weren't they?

They were longer.

> For a rifle company charging around in the bush like it did, did you think those patrols were too long or too short?

Well, it is up to the IO and CO. With long patrols you start to smell like the jungle; you start to look like the jungle; live like the jungle. They are good, the long patrols. I don't know what the statistics were. Whether the long patrols were more beneficial than the short. The breakdown was every fortnight when you got resupplied either by APCs or choppers. That was the flurry on about the twelfth day people knew where we were in the jungle; there was no doubt about that. There was that period of resupply then two days to shake out afterwards when we were all brand new with mosquito repellent. Then the noise factor dropped down again. There must have been a noise graph in the jungle like that I guess. Most contacts you go through probably occurred on about day five or day seven of that new period. Things have got to fit in I suppose between other operations that are going on in the area. The R&C program and little riots that happen down at Hoa Long and another company goes down there and does the job. The availability of other supporting arms around the place. I don't know. During the dry season it is pretty hard when the water resupplies have got to come in. That's when it kills you. As soon as you are getting water resupplies you may as well get out of the area (in the campaign we were in). You've blown your cover. The longer you can stay there as a wild card, just a wild elephant running around in the scrub you are going to bump into something.

Franz Kudnig left the company and you took over for a short time as the acting OC. What was that experience like?

That was... it wasn't exciting at all actually. It was bloody terrifying. You become the man at the top and instead of being linked to all the people, your platoon sergeants and the administrative train through to Battalion Headquarters, you are now only to talking to one guy and that is the CO. He is your guy and three other platoon commanders. I suppose, luckily, it was towards the end of a six-week period where I think we only stayed in the scrub for another week and a bit and then we came back to Nui Dat. But taking over, I suppose the word gets around that the 2IC has taken over. But because you are on operations you can't get all your soldiers together and stand on top of a jeep and say, 'Hey fellows, this is the way we are going to do it from today onwards'. All you do is continue the status quo and talk to your platoon commanders and keep on operations. There is no change at all. And just hope that you do well if the contact starts.

Were you, and I am not trying to create disloyalty or anything, but what was your reaction when Franz left the company?

I thought he was very manly about it actually. One day he just said, 'I'm going back to see the CO and I don't think I will be returning.' He just left the company and didn't return. I don't know what his conversation was with (Lieutenant Colonel J.C.) Jim Hughes, but I am pretty sure he just said he was bombed out and for the good of the Army just salute the flag and just left. I have got to admire the guy. I like autocrats at times. They are needed when an Army is just about defeated, like at the gates of Moscow, where fellows shoot other fellows in the head when they try to run away. (Major) Franz Kudnig would have been good then.

What was your reaction when you found (Major) Jerry Taylor was appointed (OC Delta Company)?

I had a completely open mind. Jerry was running Admin Company at the time I think. (Second Lieutenant P.F.) Paul Darby and (Lieutenant J.S.) Jack Catton, the QM, speak very highly of Jerry Taylor. You used to meet Jerry in the Mess, but he was Admin Company. Nobody ever danced with those guys. They were always the wallflowers, except Jack Catton who could swing some pretty good deals on clothing, and Paul Darby who had been one of my students at Portsea who could swing even more bits and pieces. But the other people we just didn't deal with - they were just non-combatants. Jerry just came into the company and said to me, 'I am going to walk in your footsteps until I am confident enough to take over', and I thought, 'Hell, am I a great example for this man. A major'. So he walked in my footsteps for a few days, and the day before the battle of the Soui Ca, he said, 'I think I am ready to take over'. I said, 'You've got the helm, Sir'. The next day he won a Military Cross.

What a way to start.

Yes. But he just followed my footsteps and asked, 'What are you doing now?' He had a notebook there, took all the notes down, I gave him the viewy-tui with all the things. I would initiate the calls with Battalion Headquarters when we had to do our reports and

told him what we had to stay and gave him the full report and ran him through it. And after a few days he had it all and he was bright. He was bright.

When you joined Delta Company had they been formed or in embryo stage?

September 1970 was the embryo stage and also the self - cleansing stage. We used to have a few guys, and I can't recall their names, but there were a few guys that had been in some of the other battalions that had somehow got into 4 (RAR), because they were never going to go back again or might have been a safe place to be, and they were what I called the gang-plank fever outfit. There were a few of those that had to get cleansed out of the company who didn't know whether they really wanted to go back or not. Max somebody. There were about five of them, corporals mainly. So they were cleansed. Then, there was the great spate of not under-aged people, but fellows who were not Australian citizens and you had to be Australian citizens to go overseas. I remember there was a great stuff up with that at some stage of the game - a few guys, whether they were Brits, that got sorted out. And then on Battalion Headquarters, (Lieutenant Colonel) Jim Hughes had just finished going through the cleansing stage of getting rid of some of the bung company commanders and officers from the battalion, and we were about the last of the Mohicans to come in. The officers had been cleansed; the purge had been done and we were purging the last of the soldiers and starting to get into the section and platoon training when I arrived.

What was your impression of Delta Company?

Pretty good mixture. I think I might have been about the second oldest guy there. They were very young I can recall. Pretty wild, high-spirited, good sportsmen. Not a great deal of soldiering about them yet.

I would like to talk about leadership. How would you describe your style of leadership?

By example, I suppose. I think there is only a couple of styles of leadership. The authoritarian and the person who leads by example; who puts himself on the line and says, 'Look, the good things that I do, take from me and we will do it together. The bad things - just never... Tell me I am doing bad things and just never do those yourself and we will have a better world'.

How would you describe Jerry Taylor's (style of leadership)?

About the same. He is an example leader.

What did you find the main difference between working for Franz Kudnig and working for Jerry Taylor?

Franz was an authoritarian trainer.

And Jerry?

An example leader. As I said (before), I think there are places for both people. Training establishments... In fact an earlier comment right back on what were your impressions of

recruit training, were these retread old Brit sergeant instructors. I don't think I would have been such a smart soldier unless I had those guys. They were to me.. that was The Army when I joined. There is a place for those, and I think the Army tapers off as you go along. You need those authoritarian people at the start and you can taper off to the... You know it is almost like the police when you have the good guy and the hard guy in the cells when you have done something wrong. 'I'm gonna throw you into the slammer', and the next guy comes in and says, 'Hey, look. Tell me what you can and I'll get you off'.

So those hard guys to bash you into shape and then leaders afterwards.

The leaders come in afterwards, but where are the leaders formed? They are formed through the same system, in exactly the same system but they develop differently. Some of the authoritarian guys never lose it because they identify themselves with the military morons as I call them. The military morons are there till the, they are either in rank or also in time and place. They are in three dimensions. But you have got to cut them off, and you learn from those guys as you go through this web at the end of it you become a leader. If they survive that line and don't get shot or stay on that side of the fence they become leaders but military moronic leaders and you have dire consequences with those guys.

Okay. We will stop on this tape now and flick over to Tape Two.

This is Tape Two of two tapes (Ed: Three in this series on Schuman) of an interview with Peter Schuman conducted by Gary McKay, recorded on the 27th March 1993 for 'Delta Four - Australian Infantry in Vietnam', at Fremantle in Perth, Western Australia. And the topics covered on this tape are battle, casualties, honours and awards and relationships.

Peter, what do you think is the hardest part about fighting in the jungle?

The passage of information. He who has the information usually wins the day. And the information source, of course, comes from the...on the broader sense your intelligence assessment of the area and what you find. And from that you should be able to work out what's likely to happen. When it does happen, it is the forward scout, it is the training of the forward scouts and the corporals, the section commanders, to get that rapid information back so that you can do something that is all important. Without that...I shouldn't say without that. It just depends who on the day does it fastest. Whether you do it or the enemy does it who wins the battle. It is as simple as that.

So, you are really looking at instinctive reaction and speed?

Drills, drills and drills. If you have got the right drill at the start, you are off to a flying start.

Other than drills, what other parts of battlecraft do you think are important?

Well, the soldier skills must come first. You have got to be able to survive in the jungle. Look after your health, be silent, observant and be able to fire through jungle. Through jungle, just see a fleeting target and be able to fire through; don't worry about leaves and

sticks and anything else that gets in the way - just go for what is at the end of the tunnel. And train every soldier to do that.

> In that sort of situation then, was the SLR the best weapon we could take into the jungle?

The SLR was the sledge-hammer of the jungle. It was beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. It just went through... I can recall people going, baddies going, not with 4 RAR but with my other life (SASR) baddies going to cover behind soft tropical trees and being able to drill them through the tree. It would hit people like an express train. Yes, the SLR was certainly the weapon that won the day. And the long range too. When you were caught in other areas like padi fields.

> What do you think makes a sub-unit click?

This might sound funny, but discussion periods with your subalterns and senior NCOs all as one group. Even down to the rank of corporal, getting them all into a discussion period on problems, on procedures and drills. Now there are certain things that have got to happen within a thing like a battalion with the SOPs that nobody... that everyone has got to go along with, and you have just got to teach those things. But within your own sub unit there are things that you can implement that are pretty slick, and new, and innovative that everyone can contribute to. And it's the method of rapid redeployment; the method of stand to in crisis; things that are not the norm. And you can discuss these and come up with pretty good operational drills. That's a bonding thing that everyone has to contribute to; guys go back and can talk up their sections and say, 'Yes I told the company commander about this and I had my input', and the soldiers start to get a little bit involved in this. The other thing, the other great thing of course is sport and I really believe that the... it has been said a million times that the senior and junior leaders of the military are born on the sports fields. And it doesn't matter whether you play volley ball or rugby or Aussie rules, as long as you get out there, take a bit of bark off, get smacked around the ears a few times by your soldiers and smack them around the ears a few times. That's the essence of it.

> What were some of the things that you thought Delta Company did well in their battlecraft?

The drills. The drills were absolutely superb. On the first contact you could hear the patter, the talk started from the forward scouts to the section commanders, you could see... As soon as a shot was fired you see three right arms go up and three machine guns move from the forward platoon. It was that good. Behind me I could hear the rustle of the second platoons closing up in position and the platoon commanders starting to call their sections together into a battle formation ready for deployment. Now that was all done in two seconds. From the first shot at the front you could hear all this drill going on around you. That was confidence.

> It all comes down to training doesn't it?

It does.

What would you say was the minimum time that a sub unit, such as a rifle company, should be given before it can launch itself on operations?

Well that is looking at a mathematical thing now I guess where...

Given that it is going to have all the resources to train.

All right. Three months for a...well the biggest weakness. I will start off in the reverse. The biggest weakness we have got is that we can only train a... the best the Australian Army can do at this stage and it was proved through the Vietnam era, was it takes us six months to produce a platoon commander - at Scheyville. That was a good system. That's to produce the platoon commander, not the infantry platoon commander. It then takes us another x number of months I guess to link in with his troops and go through his sub-unit (platoon) training, and then his company training before he fits into the battalion environment and we are looking at twelve months down the track. A soldier on the other hand, we are looking at three months recruit training, three months IET training and that guy is just about ready to roll onto the battlefield given a good platoon commander. So the weakest link we have got is platoon commanders. So, keep on producing platoon commanders whether we give them platoons or not. Just get them trained, get them blooded somewhere. Send them to Somalia, send them to New Guinea, send them to... lend them to Woop Woop Land. Get them experienced. Send them to the North West Frontier.

You mentioned National Service before, what was your impression of.. because you joined when there was no such animal as National Service in that 'two year' type of environment. What did you think of the National Servicemen we had in the company?

Fantastic. I saw the Army go from a internal looking, internal feuding - between the Old Guard and the New Guard. Not knowing where it was going outfit to 35 000 cleansed, professional Army fighting in Vietnam. That was on the good side and on the bad side when our battalions and units came back from Vietnam, the Regular Army could not get rid of the festering sore called National Service fast enough. These kids that had served us well for two years, we threw them on the scrap heap of society. Didn't invite them to join the 'brotherbund' of regimental societies, or old boys outfits or encourage them to get into the RSL, or even say thank you for serving us.

Was that because of the unpopularity of the Vietnam War that caused that?

I think it was. We just couldn't get rid of this scourge that had been inflicted on us fast enough.

Was National Service good for the Army?

Good for the nation, terrible for the Army. Destroyed the fabric of old three battalion system of... And this internal, but good for the Army yes. It questioned some of these stupid values that we had. It questioned some of the traditions we had and I suppose and traditions in some people's minds are just bad manners. Sure, but you've got to realise that we had some fellows that had spent four years at university in a pretty free thinking environment and came into our battalions as professionals in their own right and really

questioned why we stood on parade grounds for and hour and a half; stomping up and down; saluted flags and things. And we had to come up with a good answer or get rid of it. (Laughs) And most of the time we came up with a reasonable answer that people accepted because they wore the same uniform, but I think the Army of the, the Army of Vietnam, after it finished there was a better Army than..sorry a much slicker and open Army to suggestions than it was before we went into the campaign.

> As a company 2IC, having already two campaigns under your belt, you had a pretty good opportunity to look at Duntroon graduates, Portsea graduates - like yourself - and Scheyville graduates. What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Yeah, okay. The three training systems. Fourth Battalion certainly had their share of each category in all of the rank structures except for the CO. (laughs) Platoon commanders. All of the platoon commanders were on a learning curve, that is most, in fact all of them had either graduated from their respective areas and I really, I don't think there was much difference at all. The learning rate was, no, from what I could see the learning rate was about the same, and all the platoon commanders we took to Canungra must have learnt their lessons well because they all went to Vietnam with us. The captain 2ICs. Both (Captain T.W) Trevor (Roderick) and myself were Portsea - same class - (Captain C.H.) Chris Babington, who was the other 2IC? (Captain J.D.) John McAloney (MC), yes he was our class too at Portsea, so yeh, so I suppose we were the, in fact we were all second tour people, and I suppose that is why (Lieutenant Colonel) Jim Hughes chose us. We had been through platoon commanders' deal and we knew the, at least knew a little bit about the deal. On the company commander side, Franz Kudnig - Portsea, (Major R.R.) Bob Hogarth - from RMC, (Major R.E.) Ronny Boxall, and...

> Is your Alzheimers disease playing up again?

Yes.... Who was the other company commander?

> Jerry Taylor.

No, A Company.

> No, they were Kiwis.

Oh yes, we only had three did we?

> Yes. Three rifle companies.

Three, oh yes that's right. Yes, and out of those, out of the first lot that, the first tour, (Major R.R.) Bob Hogarth I guess being an RMC guy and a pretty good student of military history certainly stood out in my mind as the brighter of the company commanders. Not only was he bright, he was also more...he led by example, which I liked. In fact I think I could have got on quite well with him, but (captain T.W.) Trev Roderick was the man and that's the way the cookie crumbled. (Lieutenant Colonel J.C.)Jim Hughes was an old RMC graduate and a Korean campaign, or Korean and Borneo veteran, had his head screwed on right and he insisted on the administration being spot on through his... through the Battalion 2IC, (Major D.S.) Don McIver, (RNZIR) and

that's the way he drove the battalion. He drove the administration first and when that was all squared away - the operations followed. He could.. Jim Hughes was a guy that could say at any minute, 'The battalion will march', and he knew that there were 900 pair of boots, 900 rations and 900 rifles ready for the soldiers ready to pick up and go with. And with that confidence we went to war.

> Without sort of looking at personalities, were there any deficiencies in any of those groups? And I am not talking about people, I am talking about the type of training they had gone through like Duntroon or Portsea or Scheyville. I mean for example, a National service officer, where was his greatest weakness?

Oh, just exposure. It was really just exposure, but by the time we left, the leveller was the battalion. Whatever the weakest link was, and I guess it was the National Serviceman, and the National Service platoon commander, when the battalion started training. But after a while the National Service kids could out run, out shoot, out communicate, out lead some of their professional guys that had been wearing the uniform for five and six years, so it didn't matter.

> It has often been said that after a certain amount of time on operations you couldn't tell the difference between the two. Is that true?

There was no difference. We were all soldiers of The Battalion. Yep, and that's the way... It was conscious within the Fourth Battalion within the officer corps, at my level and above I suppose to make it that way. That everyone was.. the word 'National Serviceman' was never used unless it came through on an official communique where you had to refer to the person as a National Serviceman for some reason. Otherwise he was just a member of the Fourth Battalion.

> What was the most memorable incident of your tour with 4 RAR?

Most memorable. Happy or sad?

> Doesn't matter.

I can't remember the cove's name, but it was the day that (Second Lieutenant K.M. Byrne) Kev's platoon shot one of the scouts. I can't remember his name.

> My Platoon. When my platoon (11 Platoon) clashed with Kevin's (Second Lieutenant K.M. Byrne)(1O Platoon).

Kevin's? Yes.

> And one of his scouts was killed.

That's right.

> You had to do that investigation didn't you?

Yes. That was pretty tragic. I can remember (Major J.H.) Jerry Taylor just, he was a pretty responsible guy and thought at that stage of the game, 'Well, look I should have checked',

and I remember speaking to him straight away after the (incident). I got out to do the investigation and he just said, 'Listen, I am going to have to go. I should have checked the patrol routes, the arcs and everything else'. But on reflection and I still maintain to this day, it was just an error of the scouts. You come across a great log that you can't navigate through and you've got to walk around it and no person could foresee that type of obstacle would be there. And nobody could foresee that you would have to do a loop back towards your own troops to get around such an obstacle. It was just one of those accidents that happen in war. But it absolutely devastated the unit and the best thing, in my mind at that stage of the game, was get the investigation out of the way, exonerate everybody and get people moving again. And that's what we did. When I say 'we' that is.. they were the words of Jim Hughes to me so you know, make your judgement and if it all looks peachy fine and above board, get it out of the way and get the mob moving. That was the way to solve it. That was real.. that was pretty late in the tour and I could see, you know, a mob that had been together, we had been through the rough and the good at that stage and all of a sudden there was another rough that was not enemy instigated that was going to really drag us down and I wasn't going to let that happen.

> The battle on the Suoi Ca. What images come back to you when you think of that day?

Well, sitting with (Major R.R.) Bob Hogarth. They had had a contact just before that I guess, where we had moved through B Company's area and he'd briefed us on the skirmishes they had had with people going back towards the river system, so just another day in Vietnam I suppose. And we patrolled on with KB's (Second Lieutenant K.M. Byrne) platoon forward and sometime later as history tells it, KB's scouts hit a contact and as was the drill, and they could see the enemy withdrawing, I think that was the way it happened, the forward sections charged with Company Headquarters, we charged with them and unfortunately for us we landed up with Kev's Platoon inside a bunker system with Company Headquarters straddling the outside bunkers. Not a very comfortable area to be in with two platoons a little bit further back deployed in pretty bad positions; one on the down side of a river system and the other one on high ground. Neither could bring any fire to bear onto the contact area in the initial stages. Yeh, it was just a case then of really getting information back to see what we had got and that took some time and it wasn't, I don't think it really was until (Lieutenant G.V.) Greg Gilbert (RAA) was.. we were both having troubles. We knew where we were, but we just couldn't see the fall of shot because of the lay of the land. It was land sloping from the right high to left lower into a creek system and we just could not see the fall of our artillery, whether it was impacting onto the backside of the bunker system. The intensity of fire was fairly heavy actually coming out of it and it wasn't until we got a couple of Centurions down into the combat area that things started to take a turn for the better. We knew that Kev's platoon had taken some casualties and I think the first tank into the firing line was driven by a Lieutenant (I.D.) Farrant. And he and his driver were both wounded and I think Bruce Cameron, Second Lieutenant Cameron (MC), got out of his tank, got Farrant's tank off the firing line and then got his tank into the firing line and started to lift the first lot of bunkers. One of the little quirks of warfare I suppose was while we were directing Cameron's tank to lift the first lot of bunkers there was a little bit of extra protection there with 52 tons, so I positioned myself with my sig, (Lance Corporal P.M.) 'Paddy' Leahy, towards the rear of this tank and what I had forgotten about was this exhaust pipe pumping out about 5000 tons of carbon monoxide over both of us as we were trying to call the battle back to Battalion Headquarters. And I think it was (Warrant Officer Class Two) Noel Huish who

dragged us both out of this gas chamber that we had created for ourselves. (Laughs) Anyway, things like that happen in the heat of battle. Yes, so the battle raged for a while, there was a great cock up that day, I had called back to Battalion for an ammunition resupply and (Major E.H.) Ted Stevenson, the Operations Officer, countermanded the order and said that ammunition would be on the Tango Alphas (APCs) that were coming in. And the ammo wasn't on board the Tango Alphas and I got a bit pissed off and a day later I was at the stage of going back to Battalion headquarters and blowing Ted's head off and I was stopped by (Captain J.D.) John McAloney. It wasn't altogether Ted's fault, he had honestly thought and was given the advice that there was small arms ammunition - there was - there was .30 cal but not 7.62 (mm) stuff on board. To the best of my memory I think that was the stuff up of the stuff coming in. Anyway we got the choppers in later on. Sorry, the first lot of carriers coming in didn't have any ammunition on board - that was (Captain R.M.) Rod Earle's outfit, and we started to get the dead and the wounded out, and there's a tip for young 2ICs. Don't put dead casualties in the same carrier as live casualties because they don't mix. We had taken about four of the wounded, mainly legs and stomachs, laid them on the floor of one of the APCs, we had about three APCs, and it was my intention was to put the dead into a separate carrier but in the heat of the battle with RPGs exploding around the place, when we got the first dead out of the firing line, they were wrapped in ponchos and I pointed to the carriers, and of course the fellows carrying them out, carrying the bodies out of the firing line just threw them into the nearest carrier. Threw one of the bodies into the carrier with all the live guys or the half live guys. And they kicked him out! One of their own comrades! This dead body that was wrapped in a poncho, they just physically kicked him out with legs that still worked and hands that still worked. Just didn't want a dead body near them. Yes, so that was rather a tragic mistake and there was a bit of screaming that went on. Anyway we calmed those guys down and got them away. One of those things that happen.

> What was the hardest part about driving the company that day in that (battle)? Because we eventually got two up and one back, and we have got the tanks with us and we are driving through trying to clear the system. What was the hardest part about that?

The hardest part was the controllers trying to know where people were. At one stage of the game, (Major) Jerry Taylor got just so frustrated, that he jumped on the back of.. in fact at this stage of the game I think (Lieutenant B) Cameron's tank had advanced fairly well up to the line of Kev's (Second Lieutenant K.M. Byrne) forward troops and Kev still couldn't see anything. Nor could any of his guys, they were just every time they put their head up they were getting machine gunned and your platoon, Gary, (Second Lieutenant G.J. McKay) had got around to the right flank and Spingo's (Second Lieutenant G.D. Spinkston) was back up against Company Headquarters and we still couldn't use him because of the nature of the ground. And Jerry jumped up on the back of this tank to try and see what was going on and what we could do next and at that stage of the game the RPGs almost tore trees apart all around him and I thought, 'Holy shit, I'm going to have to take over here, old Jerry Taylor's going to go'. But, anyway thank God, he won an MC and lived instead. (Laughs) It was about that time, with the loss of another couple of bunkers with the firepower of the tanks that we were able to start isolating, I guess we isolated their command and control system - we might have split it in two halves - the bunker system. With your platoon coming in from the top end starting to blow bunkers one by one with your grenades and claymores going down the line, and that is what

probably saved the day. And it was a hard run in fact and didn't finish until last light on that day starting at about..

Somewhat slower than the hundred metres in fifteen minutes in the pam?

Ooohh yes! She was, if I can recall while the tanks had passed us, would have been a good twenty metres ahead, blowing bunkers out with the platoons still trying to advance ahead of us; (Second Lieutenant G.J.) McKay's platoon on the right flank taking out bunkers, my part of Company Headquarters with the Battalion Admin net, the Battalion Command net and still bring in artillery, was still pinned down by a machine gun which was about three metres away from us. And we still hadn't taken that out yet. We just couldn't find it. One of the reasons was it was an M60 (machine gun). And we still thought it was one of ours - either Spingo's (Second Lieutenant G.D. Spinkston) right gun or Gary McKay's left machine gun that was still firing not on its' correct arc and we just could not work it out. This was about two hours into the battle and we just couldn't... The fog of war, yes. This guy would just open up every now and again and take out, or have a shot at somebody or fire a burst. Whether he could see us or not, I really don't know. Anyway he went to the happy hunting ground later on in the day.

When the big battle broke out in September, you were back in Nui Dat?

Yes.

What was your initial reaction when you heard what was going on?

The first calls we got, that there was some sporadic contacts, and of course the normal drill was get ready for the first line resupply and we were just starting to get the magazines.. We never used to; the magazines were all held there and we used to load the magazines in the company base. We used to get fellows up from B and C Company to load the magazines. The magazines were never held with the springs compressed.

Not pre-packed?

No, we used to load them on the spot. It only took about half an hour to get a company's worth. (Staff Sergeant R.J.) Bob Hann and his mob used to go across and get the grenades and the link ammunition and broke it up into the section lots and I'd supervise the loading of the SLR and 5.56 (mm) magazines. We were about half way through this particular... it was just a normal drill for us, so as soon as the first contact started we would just get the first line going. And all of a sudden the call came through from down at Headquarters to say it was a big one and we had better start, whatever we had there, to get it onto the choppers and then start another first line going. And then the whole battalion's effort was put into getting ammunition ready for also the Ready Reserve Company - I can't remember who it was.

B Company were out, because they were in contact too.

Yes, well for the Ready Reserve Platoon who ever it was.

Did you know much about what was happening to B Company that day?

No.

You just really concentrated on Delta?

Just concentrated on D. Yeh. Yes, we still had a few guys from R & R that had come back and we had about 19 guys I think, back in Nui Dat. So, we saddled up about twelve we could muster that would have left about seven on the firing line at Nui Dat to defend the company base (laughs) but anyway that was the way that things went. So we had saddled those guys up and the ammunition and down to the LZ and we just kept on waiting. Then the casualty reports started to come in and the choppers started to come back either to Vung Tau, and we got the word through and we started packing up some of the gear of the casualties. It was a long night.

What was your reaction like, can you remember, when you started hearing about Delta Company dead?

It was, 'Not again, not again, not again'. I think we had had enough. We'd been.. we had soldiered hard to that stage of the game and it was getting very close to going home time, and in fact we didn't know we were going to stay longer than anybody else. But we thought we'd had our fair share and we had spilt enough blood on the battlefield, it might have been somebody else's turn but it wasn't. Anyway, the guys did well.

What do you think was the toughest time you experienced over there?

The end.

In Vung Tau?

Yes. I didn't know whether we were going to get done over or that the Army of North Vietnam were going to stand on the hills like Zulus and salute us as we left the shores. I never knew any day, and they could have taken us out any day because we were just a.. I don't know whether some deal was struck with them or not, but we were certainly vulnerable and one company with a few APCs and 600 logisticians weren't very much match for old D445 if they wanted to have a swim one day. Oh, we would probably would have put up a good show I suppose and had all the fire support that the American Army could muster for that particular battle. I don't know whether it was because we were very close to and locked up next to the town or not and the political climate just wasn't with it, but they certainly left us alone towards the end.

What was the funniest time you can remember?

The funniest times. Ohhh, it might have been between the big battles when (Private) Ian McDonald, he was the battalion sig I think, battalion sig or the admin sig. Big, lanky National service deferree; engineer in civvy street, blond headed bloke. I think he had his twenty first birthday when we were out on this (operation) in the middle of absolutely nowhere. We had had a couple of small contacts around this little knoll and we had been there for about two or three days. (Second Lieutenant) Kev Bryne and (Sergeant D.K.) Daryl Jenkin and had got a couple of kills. (Corporal D.J.) Dick Heatley had got a couple of kills. There were a couple of little section contacts around the place. Anyway, old MacDonald had his twenty first birthday and we woke up this day and I said, 'Gee, you're

not looking real flash today Mac'. And he said, 'It's my twenty first birthday!'. And I said, 'Well, we can fix that'. So I turned around to old (Lieutenant) Greg Gilbert and I said, 'Give us twenty one guns Greg'. So he fired a twenty one gun salute for him out in the middle of nowhere! So it cost the Australian taxpayer $600 times twenty-one! (laughs)

What was the saddest time you can remember?

Sad times. Saying goodbye to Nui Dat I think. The end of the era. That was it, that was the.. we came and we saw and we didn't conquer. Respect. The soldier likes to walk off the battlefield with either his shield held high or carried on his shield, and I don't know we dragged it behind us I think. We couldn't do anything else.

Talking about men in battle, what do you think drives men to overcome fear in battle?

Training and knowledge. When you're good, when your training is right, when I say it's right you are all focussed to what you're doing you get this state of mind. Where you go out and it's not just you wake up one morning and it all happens. But you get this, and its individually I think, you get this feeling of confidence that 'tomorrow I am going out onto the battlefield and I am going to do all my drills well and if something happens, I am going to kill someone'. Instead of, 'Jeez, I've got to go out today and I might get killed'. It's really just that turn of mind where you feel so good in yourself and the team around you. The drills, the superior weapons, the quickness of your responses, what you know you are going to come up against, what you have been trained for and you're going to do pretty well. If then you come across a mob that are ten times bigger than you and you get sat on your arse, well that's just bad luck. That just happens. But if you come against an outfit that is ten times smaller than you and you don't do them over, well then you have been bludging. You haven't really trained well and you've got to really question yourself. But if you come across that mob and you do them over, (claps) hey, you're good. And that is what it is all about.

How did you personally handle fear?

Training. I'd.. could always class myself as a hard trainer, and I learnt this from the Brits that trained us at a place called See Kong, near Seria in Borneo. This was the first campaign that I was in. They taught us the battle drills of the 'shoot and scoot'. We always knew that when we got up against the Indonesian Army there were going to be more of them than us. There was just no doubt at all. We had either three or four man patrols and they were in at least platoon strength - at least. Carried mortars with them, so you had a lot of things to contend with. There was usually about two kilometres of uphill border, when I say border, we were usually on their side of the border in Kalimantan, to deal with before you got back to your own protection where they wouldn't follow you. In fact some times they did, but that was the imaginary 'Texas border' I suppose. (laughs) The fleeing Mexican banditos to get back over the skirmish line. And the whole thing was worked out on a drill of shoot and scoot, that is blinding the forward scouts, killing the forward section commander of the enemy and getting out. And we used to practice that for eight hours a day, five days a week until the forward scouts, when we were training, you could say, 'What do you see?', on the fifth day and he would say, 'Grass, I just see bloody grass'. And they were exhausted. That is the way we used to work our scouts. And we could guarantee that these guys could pick up a bird flying, a strange bird flying in an area

would indicate something moving either a man or an animal and that would put us on the alert straight away. We could tell by flies leaving an enemy shit pit coming towards us. We worked out that flies could fly 50 metres in the jungle when they saw or smelt us. Now it would either be a dead animal, a shit pit or another human being. So that alerted us. We were 50 metres better off than anybody else in the jungle. It was just knowledge, in fact I can remember just laying up with my patrol of four guys and we must have smelt like the jungle and just sitting in our positions and a bird coming and landing on one of my guys. And he was just part of the jungle and taking off again, and I said, 'Look we've got it pretty well made'. That was the training system I suppose we went through and that just carried on to my... all the time after that. It's really just practice, practice, practice. And if it works - don't change it until you have to.

Do you think men can run out of courage?

Oh yes. Yes. I have been there. I've been there. It's working.. it happened to me working in small groups, and as I said, the training with these drills was so good and so fast that we could escape. But you knew at some stage you had to run out of luck. When you ran, you were running blind. And you had to run into the canyon. You were just, and the old Indians would get you just one day. You just knew it would happen, it was just luck. You just either ran into a river you couldn't cross, or you ran onto the edge of a clearing and you were surrounded. It just had to happen. But it didn't we were always just that lucky, but it was always that.. The first phase always went well, it was that second phase when you were trying to break the contact that used to wear you down. And sometimes it used to last for five minutes with no follow up and other times it would go for a day where you were just hounded and hounded and hounded, and you would be fighting and knocking off the next scout, or trying to knock off the next section commander to blind them. Getting lower and lower on ammunition and you could feel yourself, you get to the stage, you really get to the stage where you say, 'bugger it, let's just fix bayonets and just sort it out'. Yes, 'someone's got to win we can't keep on going like this'. But you knew you couldn't win, you just had to keep on going.

So, you are getting into raw fear at times, can we train to combat fear?

Yes you can. Knowledge will do it and then training will do it. If you have got the.. if you know your weapons systems that fire straighter, faster and better than the baddies - it's just the operator is the difference between their weapons and yours, you can overcome that, if your guys can fire more accurately, you win the day. That guarantee that your artillery will be on target faster than the baddies - that is always a great comforter. And the comfort that if someone does get wounded, and the first time that you have casualty in your particular unit, don't stop the battle and look after the casualty - never get fooled into that, but get the casualties into a safe area and win the battle first - then look after your casualties. You might lose guys, but as long as you have got that drill and everybody knows about it within the company that that is what you are going to do; get rid of the danger first, then we will look after our casualties; that is a great comforter with guys. Otherwise if someone gets hit they will start thrashing around the place, screaming and yelling, 'Everyone look at me, look at me, help me, help me,' and people will - because it's a natural instinct. So, no that's not the way we are going to go fellas. What we are going to do is put you into a hole for a while, put your tin hat on your balls so they don't get shot off, you hold that and we'll win the battle and come and get you later on.

You must have been disappointed when Delta Company had to leave its casualties on the battlefield in September (1971)

Yes.

Were you able to come to grips with that, or did you feel that we hadn't tried hard enough?

No it happens, I had experienced it before. Sometimes you just can't do it, but as a principle, the best principle is that is what you should strive for to instil in your guys. It does destroy guys if they know they are going to be left, because if the dead are left and the half wounded and the..

Who's next?

Yes, who's next. Where do you draw the line? And sometimes it's unavoidable. You have got to head for the ideal, but if the ideal is not achievable and there are too many baddies. You can't risk lives to, and I hate to say this, but it is foolish. Risking lives to save dead; to save corpses. That is just dumb soldiering.

How important do you believe honours and awards are?

They are very important. They are like the colours, they are like the regimental badge, they parts of the trappings of being a soldier.

What did you think about that alleged, or it may not have been alleged 'quota' system of medals they had in Vietnam?

I don't know about a quota system, but... I don't know of any of the awards that were... I certainly had a hand in nominating people and not all of them got up. For what reasons I don't know. I never worked in the honours and awards area and I wouldn't really know what gets up and what doesn't get up. But they are important, yes. people should... people that have served the Regiment well should be given a pat on the head.

Okay. What can you say to a next of kin when you're writing to them on their loss?

Every one of them should start off, 'Your son, or daughter as it might be these days, fought well for the Regiment.' Describe the battle they were in, not describing their particular part, just describing the battle in general and just finish off with your son will be remembered on a memorial in the Battalion chapel and leave it at that. If the family wants to.. at least it gives them a... sometimes if the guy was a forward scout and he gets dropped with the first.. doesn't even see the bullet that hits him. You just still say that he.. and which he did - he fought well and that he should be remembered. And if a guy has been outstanding - do it. But it gives the parents comfort that their son or daughter did the right thing and that's all they really want to know I guess.

Okay. End of Tape Two (Side B)

This is Tape Three of three tapes of an interview with Peter Schuman conducted by Gary McKay for Delta Four - Australian Infantry in Vietnam. Recorded on the 27th

March 1993 at Fremantle, Perth, Western Australia. The topics covered on this tape are casualties, relationships, the enemy and the aftermath.

Peter, whilst you yourself were never wounded, you obviously got to visit guys in hospital. Any incidents out of that?

Yes, I certainly did and also I was in hospital myself after I had...we were talking about courage and fear and the other things and it was towards about eight months into my first tour of Vietnam after Borneo that I started to go down the drain. And I think it was partly with the work rate that we were doing; carrying heavy loads, long patrols; living like mongrel dogs through the wet season. And I contracted pneumonia so I was... I think it was about October or November of '65. I was taken to the hospital in Vung Tau for a check up and whilst (I was) in there one of the medical orderlies went berserk with an Owen gun. (Chuckles) A few holes through the.. and 1 Field Hospital at that stage of the game, was a row of tents going up towards the hill which was the Officers' Mess. And I was lucky because I had a hootchie up next to the officers' living quarters just near the 44 gallon drum toilets that they had that were fuelled by throwing a cup full of diesoline over the crap and setting it on fire as you left! I was just about to... In fact I had my pistol with me and there I was laying down behind one of these crap houses and defending myself from one of my own comrades. (laughs) This medical orderly who went berserk. The other incident that happened while I was down at Vung Tau at that particular time, was a guy by the name of Frank Barton, who was a captain of transport who fell in love with one of the local gals from Vung Tau. In those days it was verboten to fall in love and marry the locals, but Frank thought, after a gut full of grog, that he would swim back to Australia with her. (laughs) So, with rifle in hand and woman in his other hand, he decided to swim from the beaches of Vung Tau back to Australia and... what's more he was put in irons by the Military Police and sent home. Frank was a good guy because he was the fellow on our first tour who shifted all of our SAS stuff from Vung Tau up to Nui Dat. He was a good officer of transport until he fell in love. (chuckles) Yeh, (inaudible). (laughs)

What do you think your main role was when you visited the hospital, to visit the wounded and the sick, as a Company 2IC?

Main role. Oh, I suppose just tell them how the guys were going. That was all the questions. First of all how are you, make sure that the guy was getting the right treatment. And our treatment was very good there - there was no doubt about that at all. I think we had the best surgeons and the best medical staff that money could buy - and that's the way it should be. A hospital fit for heroes. Strangely enough, one of the greatest worries of the guys was, what's happened to my gear Sir?, was one of the first questions that they asked you. And we were always meticulous, and I guess this is another little tip for 2ICs, for the dead and the wounded. Make sure that you go through the trunks and the personal effects of your soldiers before you send them back to Australia and you have got to know every soldier. It is no good of sending back a trunk full of porno photos to the good Baptist mother that the young fellow left six months before. It doesn't go down well with the Army, nor the family and you have got to be a little bit hard nosed and you have got to play the role of censor - no matter what the Freedom Of Information Acts or any other Act says. You have got control over a lot of peoples lives and if you know that Joe is married to Judy and you find a letter from Caroline in amongst all his gear - it gets burnt. So it is a judgement that you have to make. SOPs will tell you where all this particular

gear goes and make sure that when you go down to the hospital that the wounded soldiers get a list of the stuff that you packed up for them. That their stereo that they treasure when they come back from patrols to listen to, or the radio or their camera has been logged; has been registered and it's in a safe place for them when they get better. It really is a comfort to them that your looking after their kit.

> I would like to talk about relationships now. We spoke earlier of your relationship between the company commanders, and we talked about leadership styles probably more than relationships. How would you describe your relationship with (Major) Jerry Taylor?

Very good. Jerry was always a seeker of knowledge. There was no doubt he was a very bright guy in his own right. And it wasn't that he was unsure of the question he was asking, he was really reinforcing the knowledge that he thought that he had picked up through his study or observation of others. He wouldn't ask in a patronising way he said, 'What do think you would do in a situation like that or this?', and seek your advice. And I always liked him for that. He was a very just man also. He could see the rights and wrongs of different misdemeanours that came up. But he would also be... he would always tend towards the sterner side of punishment than the lighter side.

> When (Major) Franz Kudnig was the company commander, it has often been described that (Captain) Peter Schuman was the meat in the sandwich. Did you ever feel like that?

Oh, well Franz, yes I did a little bit. But Franz (Kudnig) must have been terrorised and jumped on when he was a platoon commander and thought that was the way to train platoon commanders. I had a slightly different attitude to training and I used to try and temper it. I suppose one of the stories that I can tell that Franz used to always try and catch (Second Lieutenant) Kev Byrne. (Of) Course Kev was notorious for being late on parade, and I used to make it my - so that the company would have a quite day - I would get into work at half past six and get Byrne out of bed (laughs) so that.. and get him spruced up so Franz Kudnig wouldn't hit the roof and terrorise everybody else. So, that was the, I suppose I did play the peacemaker a bit but I could see both parts. Franz was a perfectionist, there was slackness in Franz's eyes in other peoples' make ups and if I could see both parties I could solve the problem by doing small little juggling acts and that's what I used to do.

> You are almost nine, ten years older than the young platoon commanders, how did you see your role in your relationship with them?

It's very hard being a 2IC I suppose. You're almost a company commander and something like a senior platoon commander and that is the light that you should be seen in. Someone with the knowledge that is.. that you have led a platoon, and it doesn't matter whether you have led a platoon in battle or not; you have had the respect of 30-odd guys; that you have been through that mill for a few years; you have learnt your trade at that particular level and now you have become an administrator. And you have got to be a friend and I suppose an adviser on one hand, but also an example to say, 'Well listen when you guys finish this particular phase of your training, this is the next step and this is what you have got to be like.

How did you see your role with the platoon sergeants?

They were the 'doers'. I guess my immediate family when we were back in base was (Warrant Officer Class Two) Noel Huish (CSM), (Staff Sergeant) Bob Hann (CQMS); Noel Huish on the ammunition discipline side of the house; Bob Hann on the supplies, administration and the running of the camp. (Sergeant J.C.) Joe Ryan (AACC) with the baitlayers and then the platoon sergeants through. Then the web started to go out from Noel Huish and Bob Hann then to the platoon sergeants and the corporals for the different levels of administration with clothing, with ammunition, all the where-with-all to equip people for battle. And then put over the whole top of that of course, was the orderly room staff that I controlled that put the administration in place that looked after the pay, that looked after all the other 957 000 things that go on with people during a day from newspapers, to stamps, to money changing, to petty cash to you name it.

With Atts and Dets such as the company medics who were down from Admin Company, but seemed to live with us all the time, and the FO Parties who were virtually permanently allotted to us; how did you see your relationship with them?

Well they just became part of the family. As I said earlier on I was, I guess I was just like a junior executive of this company with five telephones around me and they were things that I did every day of my life whether I was in the scrub or in base camp.

What do you think, on leadership, the most important quality or qualities a junior leader should have?

A junior leader. He has got to be brave and fearless, there is no doubt he has got to be a (Sergeant D.K.) Daryl Jenkin. He's got to be not stupid like, if I can say it, and wildcardish, yes, the best example I could have is (Sergeant) Daryl Jenkin I suppose. A fellow that knows his (stuff). You have got to know your drills and your skills; have faith in your platoon commander; corporals can't work for dull platoon commanders they will kill them. They will kill one another. That might be blind leadership and regimental loyalty, but both of them will get killed in the end. You can't do that. So you have got to be terribly brave; you have got to train your forward scouts to respond to your commands. They have got to be your eyes and nose. And your soldiers have got to work like troglodytes. They are the cave dwellers; when you let them out they fire, they just blast and move at your command and you've got to train them hard and hard until they drop. If you haven't got that, every time you put your hand up and put it to the right and your machine gun doesn't move - you're not a section commander. You're not a junior leader. It's got to be that instinctive. That is on the battle ground, and on the parade ground they have got to be the smartest soldiers in the world.

Smartest looking?

Best drilled, and if they're not get them out there again and do it again and again and again until they are.

What about officers? What are the qualities you think are important there?

Honesty; never tell a lie. That is the first thing. Never tell a lie. Learn your sums well.

Are you saying know your trade?

Know your trade. Yes, yes. Know your soldiers, you have got to be their mother and father because they have left (behind) all those. They don't have a mother and father any more. You've got to be it. being as young as you are you have got to the mother and the father. You have got to be their financial adviser; you have got to be their father confessor; and you have got to know about everything from syphilis to rotten feet; to car repayments to divorce; to hire purchase. You've got to know all those things, or look as if you know it. And carry a platoon commanders notebook with all those things in it.

What pissed you off the most when you were in Vietnam?

The corruption with the Vietnamese Government I think and the yahoo attitude of the approach to warfare. The uncoordinated approach. I had seen structured campaigns in the Malay Peninsula and Borneo that I had fought in, and the way to do it. We were structured in our province, you know we put the Task Force in and we spread out over our period and dominated our province and pacified Hoa Long; destroyed Long Tan because that was a thorn in our side; (we) controlled through some horrible mechanism Baria, the Provincial capital, and then attempted somehow through a corrupt South Vietnamese - Military Police-American influenced envelope to run reasonable operations in that environment. I think we had a pretty fair hand in our own area.

What made you feel good when you were in Vietnam?

The comradeship of the battalion or whichever unit you were with. Once you belong to that team and the team has done well it's.. there's no Grand Final involved but you are certainly up there with First Eleven and you are batting away, putting runs on the board - it's good.

You had an opportunity to see all those guys who got into trouble from a discipline point of view, get marched past your office probably, or your tent. What got diggers into trouble the most?

Booze. The grog.

What are your thoughts on alcohol in an operational area?

You can certainly tolerate it, but we don't have a mechanism to control the abuse of alcohol. That's just part of the Australian way. And I don't think we will ever come to grips with it. Alcohol was seen as the better evil to drugs and there wasn't a great abuse. And out of the 130-odd guys that we had you could, after the first couple of company shows - even before we left Australia - platoon sergeants; (Warrant Officer Class Two) Noel Huish; myself we had certainly identified the guys that couldn't handle the grog and also the ones that were piss heads that were carrying a bottle of whisky in their pack even on patrol. That certainly ceased after the first couple of operations. Things were just that tough you just couldn't carry any extra kit. That changed a bit when we went down to Vung Tau. Grog was certainly a problem with the guys going into town there, but that was just a bit of frustration being let off. But, there is no doubt that drugs started to creep in, it was just the cheapness of the marijuana that was available, but that got knocked on the head fairly quickly. After the first incident of one of the forward bunkers down at

Vung Tau. We used to do an inspection every day and there were marijuana butts spread all around the place. Nobody was charged over the incident but (Major J.H.) Jerry Taylor got everybody onto the parade ground the next day and just said, 'Well we can all get back to Australia alive or the baddies are going to come in through the particular bunker that is bombed out on the 'wacky-backy' and we will all die. Which way do we want to go guys?'. And there was a self cleansing I think of the unit. We were also lucky too, that a few of the pogos from the LSG got knifed at a restaurant not long after, so that dissuaded people from going into town and getting availability to the drugs so we were lucky in both ways. In fact I think one guy got his throat slit and died. Not one ours, one of the pogos. But, this was all.. this was, I suppose attitude. Things to.. where we were the heroes from the Dat, and it just leads me onto another thing; heroes from the Dat, and there a couple of of incidents of fellows from the Logistic Support Group that had never seen I suppose the battle area and because the battle had finished, or the war had finished for the Australians, they decided to jump into a vehicle and drive up to Nui Dat or the 'bad lands' and take some photos! And all of a sudden they were very surprised when their vehicle got ambushed and they scrambled into a Vietnamese Police post and some of our guys that were rostered as the Ready Reaction Platoon said, 'Go and get rooted!'. (Laughs) Jokingly! (laughs) You know, these guys had been told not move outside the wire, they have broken the rules - so they should pay the ultimate price!

Gulp!

Yeh, so we decided to make an example of these turkeys. We rescued them, brought them back and said the next mob that go up there we just won't hear the transmission for help. These are the rules guys - don't leave this particular perimeter. But our fellows got a little bit selfish I suppose, we said, look, we've been there, done that, we don't want to go and rescue arseholes.

What sort of methods did you use to get to know your men and your subalterns, your NCOs? What is the P.J. Schuman method of getting to know your men?

Just greet them and be with them and talk to them; just be yourself, just mix naturally I suppose. I don't know any other way to do it.

Be approachable?

Yes, I suppose that's it. Kick the, take the door of your office. That's the way to do it I suppose.

Okay. What did you think of the enemy?

Local guerillas; they were an embarrassment I think to their Army and nuisance value to ours. They were probably good outside their village area knowing the track system and being able to control caches and things of that nature and also with a little bit of village support when it was needed, for units coming through. The Regular North Vietnamese units I thought they were pretty good. I had been into positions where I had been able to observe their forward scouts and section commanders in battle. They used very similar drills to ours, such as machine guns to the right and high ground. In fact very similar section commanders' commands with their field signals. Once you took the section commanders out of the battle, or the scouts, there was a definite pause in their battle drills

until they got things moving again. It was almost that the platoon commander had to come up or the next leader had to come up to get them going. There was a leader and there was no natural progression within that first echelon to take the initiative. And I only say this through observation that I had been in a lot of contacts where I have knocked the guiding lights out in that forward element and its really delayed any further action or follow up.

Did you think they were good fighters?

Yes. Well I have got two theories. You could say, 'Gee, that guy was pretty good, he stood and fought and died'. The other theory, or the other speculation I suppose is, what else do you do when have got a wall of artillery falling behind you; 130 angry Australians in front of you and surrounding you. There's only two ways to go. Either fight to the death or put your hands up. And a lot of times we were so quick in our contact drills and bringing our firepower down, that that's the way we caught them. There was nothing else for them left to do and they weren't going to surrender. We knew that.

Were the enemy as you had imagined them before you went to Vietnam and you got over there and you saw them?

Yes, we were fairly lucky. The Special Air Service Regiment had advisers in Vietnam for many years before. Even when we were in Borneo, we had some of our troops from our Borneo campaign went to Vietnam because we knew that was going to be the next stepping stone. Whilst we were in Borneo, I can remember us having to read... Alf Garland, and he was a great military historian and teacher. He was our squadron commander there. We were reading things like *Street Without Joy, Peoples War, Peoples Army, The War of the Flea* by Giap; so we were yes, guys like John Murphy who had been with the Training team in '63-'64 in Vietnam, so we had built up a fairly reasonable picture of what we were going into. So, no, they weren't a surprise.

Did you ever feel sorry for the enemy?

Yes, I did as a Christian I suppose when we were searching the bodies when you came across rosary beads and holy pictures and things like that and they were Catholics from the North fighting for whatever their philosophy was. Here we were Catholics from Australia killing our own religious types and yes, that saddened me a bit.

You described what was the most difficult part was serving in Vung Tau as probably you felt vulnerable, what else was there? Was it because it was boring?

No, it wasn't real boring. There was plenty to do, it was just the.. when I say plenty to do it was all 110 volt television sets, tape recorders and all that stuff to destroy. There was container loads of foot powder to pack up and bring back, and barbed wire. Bundling star pickets day after day after day and working at the docks.

Stevedores?

Stevedores, yes, stevedore managers. Stevedore trucking, things like that.

I would like to talk about our Allies. What were your impressions of, and I am talking of the second tour here, our Allies; the New Zealanders; the Americans; the Vietnamese?

I thought the Kiwis were pretty good as long as they didn't have a can of beer and a guitar in their hand. They were pretty wild boys, in fact if I was Vietnamese forward scout, I would hate a 16 stone, Maori with a head band screaming towards me. I would just give up, that would be the end. Yeh, the Kiwis were good, the Kiwi staff that we had, Don McIver and those fellows from Admin Company were very good. They were in the tradition of the Kiwi Army they were..

Professional?

They were professional and so were the gunners. There were no great worries there. The US guys, the 155s across the road, whoever they were, they certainly gave us some support every now and again. The US Air Force Phantoms and gun ships from Bien Hoa; always on time and on target and did the right thing. They were pretty professional. You can't beat the US firepower and the coordination - it was very good. It was just excellent. The only trouble is being able to use it, there just seems to be, in our terms, there's just so much at the one time for it to use. There is just not enough room on the battlefield to get it all in.

The ARVN?

I felt very sorry for them. Mislead; conscript; fighting a long way from some of their villages, for a cause that was corrupt that they didn't believe in, and we just held it all together, hoping for a miracle that didn't happen.

In 1971, on your second tour, there was probably the peak I guess of Vietnam protests. Did they have any effect on you?

No. No, we had, I suppose it was an unwritten policy of never letting the, hoping not to let our soldiers think above battalion level. That the battalion was where life and death started and finished. If people thought outside the battalion, they might want to do that, but the conversation quickly came back to the life in that little one square kilometre of earth.

Did you take R & R?

Yes, I did I came back to Townsville to my family.

Was it hard to get back into the swing of soldiering when you went back to Vietnam?

No, it wasn't because I went, just through a stroke of luck, just before we pulled out of Nui Dat to Vung Tau. So, it was really going back to a barrack type protectionist environment.

Like an American environment?

Yes.

What do you think you learnt most from your time in Vietnam?

The value of hard training, the value of getting a team together as fast as possible, the value of getting rid of weak links around the place - whether they be officers or NCOs or soldiers - I suppose ethnic cleansing might be a good term that we could use. You have got to get rid of them, there is no value in having whingers, bitchers or people who just won't play the game as part of your team. Get rid of them. If they're not... if someone says, 'I don't believe we should be in Somalia', get rid of them ASAP, out of the unit. Just don't tolerate them, don't let them, don't give them a second chance to say, 'I'm sorry, what I really meant was..'. Everyone has got to be committed from that day and you just don't. Everything you do as a leader from that day onwards, whether it be company commander right down through your platoon commanders is directed internally towards the company. You receive things from on high, but the company is as far as people think. You might let them think then about the battalion, but that is as far as the world is - that's the world. Everything lives, dies and is born within that.

So you keep the focus within there?

You keep the focus within there. Yes, or when something happens outside you can say, 'Don't worry about what happened over there, it will never happen here, that's not our style'.

Okay. Was our involvement in the Vietnam War worth it?

Training wise - yes. We still have guys that have taught a generation. Sorry, if we ever go back into a south-east Asian environment, we have a generation of soldiers now that have been trained by those who fought there, so those skills are still relevant. What we haven't got is the diversity of those skills. We haven't got the desert people any more, we haven't got the Koreas that could do the defence, the defensive type operations that I suppose that I was raised in. Soldiers learn quickly, it only takes six months to completely change the direction of where you're going and you notice (Operation) Desert Storm, what did it take about four and a half, five months to assemble a European woodlands-type army from around the globe and train into a desert army. So, given the kit and the motivation and the direction for people to go in, we're right. But what we've got now is a very good basic officer corps from CGS down to the rank of lieutenant colonel that all know about warfare. Now that is going to last for another say five years. After that it is anybody's game. But, in the tradition of the Australian Army, we'll do pretty well.

Peter, are there any questions that you would have liked me to have asked you?

I don't know Gary.

Are there any comments in there that you would like to have a look at?

I'll just have a look.

Can we re-visit tough times Peter?

Yes, tough times. It was at the battle of the Suoi Ca when we put in the casualty figures and they were finished by I suppose just on last light. And I can remember at about eight o'clock, that same night, things were still fairly tense and the odd shot around the perimeter. (Private A.R.) Alan Mackay, and I can't remember whose platoon he was with, a big blond headed bloke.

Ten.

10 Platoon? He wandered in with stiff legs and sometime during the day he had been hit by RPG shrapnel from a tree burst and just didn't know about it. The back of his trousers were ripped apart, but just the adrenalin and fighting during the day - it just didn't hit him until he started to get cold at night. Anyway, he wandered up to the Company Headquarters through the darkness where (Corporal M.J.) Mick O'Sullivan had a look at him and instead of sending him back to his platoon, I gave him my bed for the night and put him down. After doing all these, what I thought were kind things, we then sent another casualty report through to Battalion Headquarters and got a great blast back about our accounting system and not looking after our soldiers! (laughs) So, at that stage of the game I think I threw the handset at (Lance Corporal P.M.) 'Paddy' Leahy, my sig, and told him to tell who ever was at the other end of the line to get rooted and I was going to bed. I found the tracks of an armoured personnel carrier and promptly fell in between the tracks and went to sleep, and thank God it didn't move off during the night otherwise I wouldn't be here. So, in a pique of stupidness that's what I did.

Contacts, can we talk about contacts?

This is the first contact I was in and just my reaction to it. It wasn't with the Fourth Battalion, it was with SAS. We had found a.. I was leading a four man patrol, I was a second lieutenant troop commander. We had found a fairly good track system. I was observing the track, which had heavy footprints moving in a certain direction, so we had done all our calculations; moved off the track into what looked like an old either a bomb crater or a depression where a tree had been pulled out. I had my back to the track. Bubbles Murton, I think was the sig at the time, and Jock Thorburn was the troop sergeant. Anyway, as we were coding the message to send it, I remember Jock raised his rifle and I just glanced up out of the right of my eye and the rifle was almost pointing towards my head, and I thought to myself why is this guy going to shoot? Then the blast of the rifle took my hat off. I flipped backwards, at the same time looked around to where the bullet was going and it smacked into a black uniform which was about three meters away on the track. Instinct I suppose of training for ambush and bits and pieces like that I raced to the track and claimed the body. In fact I knelt over the body like an eagle or a lion or something - that was ours. And running off down the track were another few uniforms and I can recall hitting one, he went to the right of the track and the other one dropped on the track further down. The rest of the patrol had burst forward past where I was, claimed the body, and were firing into the contact area at these other two VC. Anyway, the immediate danger had finished, the two guys had moved into the long grass and I remember flipping the body over and this great heap of blood that must have welled up in the chest from the bullet wound, rushed out of this guy's mouth and went all over my chest and face. I can remember vomiting on him - now this is in the middle of a track. This guy had spewed blood all over me; I had vomited on him and I thought, oh shit! (chuckles) This is just not good, so I stood up and kicked him in the head, as dead as he

was, and took out a water bottle and washed myself down. It just wasn't like in the movies! Yes, so anyway that was welcome to the war.

First Contact

First contact. (laughs)

Okay, well we will end that tape there at this stage.