Richard Henry interviewed by Mike Cadman 19/09/07
Former National Serviceman Citizen Force Missing Voices Project

	TAPE ONE SIDE A
Interviewer	You were saying that you come from a long line of a military family. Could you just give me a brief background of your ancestry and tell me about how you ended up being called up for the military and so on.
Richard	My great, great, great uncle served in the Crimea and received a VC, and his brother came to South Africa and served in the eastern front with the Royal Artillery. And his son was my great grandfather. And my grandfather served with the South Africans on the western front in the First World War. And then he also served in the Second World War but he was a bit older by then, so I'd say he was a paymaster in North Africa. My father was with the Transvaal Scottish from about 1950. And then he joined the Westpark Commandoes in about 1964, and he served there until into the eighties. And we were always interested in a military line. I was called up in 1976 and did my National Service 1978. First with 11 Commando at Kimberley, that was only for about 3 weeks, and then for the rest of the two years with 2 South Africa Infantry Battalion group at Walvis Bay.
Interviewer	That was in the former South West Africa?
Richard	Yes. And then post National Service I was posted to regiment President Kruger in Randfontein. Which I did for 4 or 5 camps with. And then in 1985 I transferred to Transvaal Scottish where my dad had gone back to the Transvaal Scottish, and I served there from 1986 until 1996 about.
Interviewer	So then, let me take you back to when your call up papers arrived. You're at school and like most white South African males at the time you get this document and it's from the military and they want your name and your address and everything else. Then they send you your call up papers with your first number, which would have been 76 something or other.
Richard	76 yes.
Interviewer	What was your feeling when your papers arrived. Was it an onerous thing or did you think I've got to do this, it's the law, or how did you feel?
Richard	Yes, it was pretty much, it's the law, I have to go. I was reasonably excited…nobody really close to me had previously served in the army, although my sister's boyfriends had been there. But, no, I think I was pretty positive in going there. It was different to what I expected. As growing up you've got a sort of a British soldier in red, as in guards around Buckingham Palace type image, and the army is completely different to that. So yes…I was thinking at one stage of joining the Permanent Force.

	But when I saw that a sergeant was locked up in DB for coming back late from his leave, I thought, no, this is sort of a monkey thing, it's not really for thinking people. And maybe I was a little bit soft mentally, not as strong as some of the other guys are. It was a bit of a shock to see actually sort of how hard nosed you had to actually be to survive.
Interviewer	When you say hard nosed, in other words you had to carry out orders and do things that, as an individual, you might have thought about and thought well, maybe that's not right or maybe I wouldn't want to do that.
Richard	No, not really that. It was just I was always there thinking you sort of ask me to do then I'll do it. This thing about forcing you to do it, I was a bit rebellious when it came to forcing me to do something. I would give my best and if my best was that well that was it. there afterwards my best was gone. So I was often running at the back of squads. One of the problems. I wasn't really fast at running. I can walk far better than I can run.
Interviewer	Ok, so you get to Bloem (*should be Kimberley*) and you spoke English at home I presume given your background…
Richard	Yes.
Interviewer	You get there, you're not entirely sure what you got yourself into. Was there any perception of you as an English speaking youngster? I mean, did they judge you by your language and give you a hard time because of it?
Richard	To a certain degree but not as much as the other people. I was taught Afrikaans by an Irishman at school, and Afrikaans was probably one of my better subjects. My grandmother was Afrikaans, not that we spoke any Afrikaans at home. So I learned *suiwer* Afrikaans and when you came to the army the Afrikaans that we spoke was completely different. I've never heard so many swear words in my life before, and it was quite comical actually. But all the instruction was in Afrikaans…and yes, I think I did quite well in Afrikaans.
Interviewer	You must have been the only person in Bloemfontein that had learned Afrikaans from an Irishman.
Richard	Probably yes, remember I was in Walvis.
Interviewer	Also in Walvis…I said Bloem, you went to Kimberley and then you went to Walvis. Alright, and then you start off your training as a young guy, there's lots of running, lots of exercise, shooting, etc, etc, How long did that period take?
Richard	Well if I go back to 11 Commando, at 11 Commando it was hellish hot, say about 35, 36 degrees. And what a complete mess around. The instructor would take you to the hall and some other instructor would say what are you doing here? You've got to go here, and you'd run backwards and forwards, completely messed around, nobody knew what was going on. And then after 3 weeks

	they shipped out about 250 guys from Kimberley to Walvis Bay…two companies more or less. When we got to Walvis Bay, what a difference. We landed at Rooikop which everybody…where there was a thing that we were on the way to Durban and we were on the way to Bloemfontein, so when we landed at Walvis Bay everybody had a bad thing about Walvis Bay and didn't want to go to Walvis Bay. But we landed at Rooikop and from then onwards things ran smoothly. We were greeted by some platoon sergeants and a sergeant major, and we were broken up into 20 and got onto the Bedford, drove off, went to the quartermaster, drew our beds and our equipment, loaded on to the Bedford, went to the base in town, offloaded and we were allocated a platoon sergeant, went to our bungalows, lay the thing down, went had something to eat, and from then onwards it was, I'd say, firm but fair. On an odd occasion everybody got stuffed around before something, but generally speaking I had two Permanent Force officer, Lieutenant Grobler, and a short service platoon sergeant, who were both very, very *paraat*. The platoon commander, the lieutenant, became commanding officer of the SP guards later. And Corporal Uys was an exceptional sportsman, a PTI as well. They were very, very firm but fair, and the sort of rondfok was dropped completely.
Interviewer	Just for the record, *paraat* in a military sense in those days means fairly rigid and stuck to the rules very closely.
Richard	Yes, very prepared, like Lieutenant Grobler when we did platoon attacks, I would come up after going in the sand twenty or thirty times, I'd look like shit, and Lieutenant Grobler would dust his trousers down and ready for inspection. So he just had just a mannerism really, a way of being prepared and ready and looking the part.
Interviewer	When you say, when you got off the aircraft some of the guys when they realised they were at Walvis they weren't so happy, they didn't really want to be there. Why would that be?
Richard	Well it was a sort of general thing that if you were in Walvis you never came home on passes. The facilities at Walvis Bay were more primitive than other places. Dry, hot…well everybody thought it would be hot, but Walvis Bay is not really that hot. The temperature runs from about 15 to about 20, and then about August you have the hot winds coming off the desert which goes up to about 25, 26. Actually Walvis Bay is pretty cool, and misty in the morning.
Interviewer	So now you go into your infantry training…during that period was it purely military or was there any political aspect to it…did they explain to you why you were doing your military training, who you were meant to be fighting? Or was it a case of you're a soldier, don't ask questions?
Richard	No, there wasn't much political thingie, there was mention of the Communists. The Communist was the threat. There was no black

	African Nationalism, that wasn't mentioned. The Russians were mentioned to a certain extent but it was mainly Communism, fighting Communism. When we got to Walvis Bay there was a thing, that Resolution 435, which was sort of agreed to in 1977 or '78, had just come into a thing so that it was sort of a general thing that within a year or two, Namibia, or South West Africa, would be independent. Would have free elections. So…the local population had that sort of idea, although Walvis was still supposedly part of South Africa and wasn't part of the agreement. The training that we did, the basic training, we started again. The basic training lasted until the end of April. So from the beginning of February really until the end of April. There was no time for yourself whatsoever. Always on the go, full time. The only day you had really off, partly, was Sundays. Saturday was half day work day as well.
Interviewer	And during that time you do all your infantry training, when did you then get your first pass?
Richard	We got our first pass at the end of April, after four months. We got some buses from Wierda Tours, they organised that, and they took us to…I can't remember now…anyway I remember when we got home I had about 36 hours at home, that's it, and then you had to go back. Some of the guys…we came by bus the whole way…some of the buses broke down and the guys had 6 or 7 hours at home and then they had to go back. A bit of a waste of time. So there was supposed to be a couple of days, but it took us 50-60 odd hours to get home.
Interviewer	And then you get back to Walvis and then what happens?
Richard	The first thing, we travelled in our step outs, both there and back. And the first thing as we got off the buses the instruction was, *voorste posisie af,* we're going to knock the civvie shit out of you. You didn't even get out of your step outs, you just did your PT straight away.
Interviewer	So your step outs are your fancy clothes that you wear for going out in public.
Richard	Yes.
Interviewer	And so these guys were determined that you haven't forgotten that you're in the infantry unit. And then what happened? Was there more training before you get sent to…?
Richard	So we did basics and then we broke up after end of basics. People that wanted to do support weapons and people wanted to do infantry companies. So most of the guys in my bungalow decided to stay with the infantry thing, because we were going to stay with the Corporal Uys. And some other guys then went to the support company.
Interviewer	What does the support company do?
Richard	The support company was the support weapons. There was a

	mortar platoon, a Vickers medium machine gun platoon, assault Pioneers platoon, and a 106 platoon - 106 recoilless rifle, American imported anti tank rifle. So the support company was slightly bigger than the infantry company. We had 3 platoons in the infantry company. Then we started with our second phase. At this thing, I then had a new lieutenant, a Lieutenant Steiner, a German speaking guy from South West Africa, who was a patriot, you could say, and was determined that his troops were going to fight the last thing for Namibia. So there was no time to mess around. It wasn't fun and games with him, it was for the good of his country and we were going to be taught. At the same time there was another German officer in one of the other…in the support company. A guy called (Schweizfigger?). And Steiner and Schweizfigger made it their ambition to sort of look at each other's platoons and to see who was stuffing their platoons around more. So they tried to outdo each other in that case. The Corporal Uys that we thought who would be coming across to us was then made the company PTI and we got a corporal from Natal, McEwen. Who was completely over-ridden by this officer. This officer Steiner then took over all things. most drill was done by Steiner, most instruction was drilled by Steiner and Corporal McEwen was just hanging on really. But he seemed to enjoy that to a certain extent. We used to think that…maybe as an English speaking corporal that we'd sort of have some rapport with. On occasion you had but generally speaking, if you did get to this Corporal McEwen, he was just the same. He'd speak to you in Afrikaans, crap you out…no particularly good feeling between English speakers there.
Interviewer	And how did you feel about the lieutenant?
Richard	Well…he was a dog actually and was quite a good athlete, a very tall guy, very thin guy, quite capable of distance running and things like that. So there was a hell of an emphasis placed on your ability to run and run fast. We did our 2.4s, run 2,4 kms. Your basic thing was that you had to do it in 12 minutes, which was rated as 60% fit. 11 minutes was 70%. 10 minutes was 80% and then things. And I often used to run it just around about 12 minutes. Just acceptable. Sometimes it was just over, and the fastest guy in the company used to run it in 8,20 odd. So he was running probably about 90% fit or something like that. Steiner would also do it in about 9 minutes or so, so he was pretty fast. So we did enough…in our first phases we did section attacks and platoon attacks, but on the conventional basis. So then we also did platoon weapons. So we did the Sten and the Uzi, we did the Browning machine gun, all hand grenades, the M6 and we did the rifle grenades, we did the theory part of the flame thrower. We did all the platoon weapons quite thoroughly and then we did, after the end of the section attacks and platoon attacks, we were trained for conventional forces as well. So after that both the support company and the infantry company went out into the desert for 3 or 4 days, with all the facilities that we had, all the equipment, all the weapons that we had. Drove out in Bedfords.

	We dug trenches and did attacks. The trenches kept falling in from the sand, couldn't really hold it, and below the sand was rocks. So those little picks and shovels that we had bent, they weren't really good enough. So thereafter wards, after the conventional forces at a later stage we were then given bigger picks and shovels and were made to dig better defences. But that was at a later stage. And then after that we went and did COIN instruction, Counter Insurgency Operations, and that also lasted a fair…there again we started off by…sorry, in the first phases, yes, we also did things like camouflage*, (inaudible*), the correct way of movement, directing fire, fire observation, battle observations, radio procedures. So we did all those things as well. And then battle handling. And then some of the guys went and did a junior's leaders course for a while. And then we did the COIN Operations when they came back. Which was more or less camouflage and battle things. At that stage we received new R1s. We were issued with very old R1s that were worn out, and the first time we went out to the shooting range you had to shoot a balkie *(a badge awarded for shooting skills)*, you had to shoot 175 out of 250 I think it was. And the first time the company shot the scores were running at about from 80-120 about. And when we received our new R1s brand new out the box, I can still remember the number. The rifle number was…the last three numbers were 63 because the first guy in the company received 00 and it was *(inaudible)* and then Hattingh before me received 62, and I received 63. So you could easily remember, if you found a rifle that was unattended you could see more or less who it belonged to by the number. And based on that…although the R1 was set to a specific standard they all the same weight, and the ones that we had were nylon butt. They were supposedly all exactly the same. But when you stood guard and we stood guard often, every second or third night, if you had your rifle in the guard hut and you had to go out, you didn't want to switch the light on and disturb everyone else, if you grabbed the rifle and it was somebody else's rifle, you would know it just by the feel of it. no notches, no cuts, you'd just know exactly that that's your rifle. 378963 that was my rifle. And then the rifles were then withdrawn for a while and then they were painted in a camouflage pattern. We go those back. And then we went up to Oshivelo for a week. We drove up with the trucks to Oshivelo…
Interviewer	Oshivelo is in northern Namibia?
Richard	Northern Namibia just north east of the Etosha Pan. And that's where we were going to do a week's COIN Op training. Because remember in the desert we didn't have any trees or bushes so we were all spread out equal patterns like this and camouflage was a bit difficult and things like that. And we had to learn drills, mine drills and we had to do Buffel movement, we had to do immediate action drills. So we were well prepared but we went up to Oshivelo and the company sergeant major took over charge of a lot of the instruction. What a difference! Because we only had one week that we had to practice and do all those things, it was

	hard, hard training where we did all our attacks and things and we had plenty of ammunition to use. But it was to train us not to stuff us around. To make sure that we were trained. And it was hard, we started at six o'clock in the morning, we went through until seven o'clock in the evening where we had supper and we practised the same thing that we'd done in the day as night attacks. We were able to do everything that we had trained by night as well. Using full illumination mortars, the 60mm mortars, 81 mortars, everything else, so it was a very good week's training. At Oshivelo we put up tents and we slept in the tents just on the floor though. There were about 20 guys or 30 guys in a 16x32 tent, and they were told to roll their sleeping bags up, but some guys just folded it, and when we came back from training at night, they climbed in the bag, and 2 or 3 guys were bitten by Night Adders. One guy lost his thumb…got bitten on his thumb. Another guy was also bitten on the foot.
Interviewer	So those are the first casualties you took.
Richard	Yes…and I…ok, I said there was no stuff around…there was apparently somebody…there were ablution facilities, were pretty primitive and one guy had taken a spade and made a hole just outside the perimeter of the thing. The staff found it wasn't covered up well enough so the sergeant major then said that somebody had messed in the lines and I think just as per normal he then stuffed everybody around, the whole company. The instructors were put in the Bedfords and we had to push the Bedfords around on the sand roads there, and the instructors then aimed for the thorn trees on the sides. So you had about 15 guys pushing a Bedford, but as you pushed towards the thorn trees on the right hand side, obviously all the guys on the right hand side stopped pushing so the Bedford came to a stop. Then you had to start again. So that went on for a couple of hours.
Interviewer	So this is just straight punishment?
Richard	Yes, just punishment, general punishment, general training. One of the things was train hard fight easy. Tears sweated now, blood saved later. So a lot of that.
Interviewer	But the lieutenant that you mentioned it sounds like he would go out of his way to make life difficult for you, physically exhaust you just for the sake of it, rather than for the purpose of training. Whereas this exercise you got lots of good training…
Richard	There was a lot of good training but I must say that one thing that came with this a lieutenant that meant anything the army could throw after that was easy. It was nothing. I found that the guys of a lower education standard they didn't seem to mind anything. They just seemed to float along, they became like a zombie. Guys with some sort of qualification, or a thinking mind, or from a reasonable family, their minds sometimes played more up than the physical side of it. The mind would flip before the body. And one thing I definitely learned about the army was that when you think you're tired and you think you've had enough, your body

	can still do about five times more. So vasbyt, carry on, and carry on, and carry on.
Interviewer	But that's where the mind kicks in.
Richard	Yes, then you just click in and you say ok, I'm a zombie…we had a…well I used to have a thing that the day started at 5 o'clock in the morning and I sort of ended at 10 o'clock or half past ten when they switched the lights out. I can run five o'clock until ten o'clock. I can be stuffed around the whole day, no problems. So if that's how it is, that's how it is. Talking about stuffing around, we would do some training in the desert at a place called Wortel. We got a new Permanent Force staff sergeant who joined the unit and he organised that they'd have extra rations brought out to us. So it was curry and rice, I think it was. And everybody had a serving and then he said, *kom manne, daar's nog meer vir jou*. Everybody went and they had some more curry and rice and the chef's dished up far more than the guys wanted. So they ate as much as they could and they buried and the rest in the desert sand and there were grains of rice laying on the top of the sand. And this staff sergeant saw this thing and used this as an excuse, said*, die terroriste gaan julle dood maak!* You're leaving signs of your existence here. *Maar voor dat die terroriste jou dood maak sal ek jou dood maak!* So then he took all our things and…close to Walvis you have often a sort of a hard pan and then had sand dunes sometimes in a sort of circle around us. So he broke a company into four or five and the instructors he said, ok, there's your men. And so we're in a small area they made us run up these dunes, roll down, carry your friend up, *baba dra, skaap dra,* roll down, roll up and down, things like this. That went on from about 1 o'clock after lunch till about 4 o'clock or so. Again, we really had similar things day in, day out, so it wasn't all that difficult. And then Wortel was about five kms out from the base, and then we were told we're going to do fire and movement all the way back. And we did. So it was *blaas, hier af, blaas, is jy op, blaas, jy's a*f. Down and up, down and up fire movement the whole way.
Interviewer	And you were using live rounds?
Richard	No, just blanks So we were doing that drive the whole way through and we eventually came there, and this officer, it was the only time I've really seen him annoyed, how dare somebody else mess his men around. He was the one that was doing the messing. So there we went back to the base, and then we were told we still had to have our PT period. And we were going to run a 2.4 as well. So we got back there and this officer said, no ok, I want you to get out of your battle gear and put on your takkies and we just went for a nice easy two kms sort of jog around the thing. So that was the one time that he was nice to us. But generally speaking, yes, he pushed us as far as possible. After basics, after about two weeks or three weeks in Walvis Bay of basics, we never ever saw PT gear again. All our exercise, all our PT was in battle gear, *staaldak, webbing, geweer.* It was

	standard thing. With a full water bottle and our magazines. So we were training to carry the equipment the whole time.
Interviewer	Ok, so after your training at Oshivelo, then what happened?
Richard	Well we came back, that was about October, November. We came back and now we were trained and they didn't have much to do with us, and this is when the RSM, we had to have extra instructions and training again re. things that we'd learned. Then we were sent out to the desert, you prepare a Russian defensive position. So we went and we cut down poles and trees and things where we can in the Kuiseb River and we lined the trenches with these poles and we dug the things. So we built a Russian defensive position, for about three weeks we worked in the desert or something like that. I remember the one time there was a massive tree stump, probably four metres long, maybe 750mm in diameter. And there were about ten of us or something, and we were trying to pick this thing up and everybody wasn't working together and we were taking it quite casual. And the RSM Smit, a very red headed guy, came and said, *kom manne, tel die ding op*. And we sort of half tried to pick this thing up. So he pulled out his service pistol and he fired three or four shots right next to us bang bang! And that thing just went up like it was a matchstick.
Interviewer	Firing live rounds next to you?
Richard	Yes, firing live rounds, yes. The other thing….
	END OF SIDE A *(counter at 412)*
	SIDE B
Richard	Talking about live rounds, up to this stage live rounds were second nature to us. There was a thing that we'd heard, a Spanish ship carrying 7.62 ammunition had been caught in South African waters and their ammunition had been confiscated. So in Walvis Bay we had plenty of live ammunition. From after our initial planning of section and platoon battle drills we did live ammunition, we went out to the range, we did bush range shooting with live ammunition, we had more than enough ammunition. We shot, shot, shot, shot at Oshivelo, we blew away thousands of rounds of ammunition. We had hand grenades, we had shrapnel mines, we had claymore mines, all ammunition that we required we had it. There was no restriction on ammunition that we required. Again talking about shooting things, our company commander was a Lieutenant de Wit, and we were doing an evaluation…this is in second phase in the desert so we do a platoon attack, and as I say, your even numbers, your rifle men are numbered 1, 3, 5, 7. So 1, 3, 5, 7, get up and move forward. 2, 4, 6, give supporting fire. So I was apparently just always a second or two slower in getting up and following up like this, and this Lieutenant de Wit saw this, and he saw that I was slower than the rest of the guys, I was lagging behind in the line, and he apparently also fired with his R1 two or three rounds close to me, in training and I was completely unaware of it. He said to

	me, *hoekom is jy so stadig? Ek se, lieutenant?* He says, *het jy nie gesien dat ek het langs so geskiet het? Nie lieutenant, glad nie.* So you can't be scared about live ammunition coming close to you, something like that, you know. I mean, the same weird guy that you met on the first time when you joined the army, long hair and no teeth, that swears at his mother, has got a sister that's about 14 with a baby. This same guy is the guy shooting live ammunition a metre or two past you, so you've got to trust the guy. And everybody was then brought down from whatever level they joined up, down to a standard level. Everybody was in the same uniform, same haircut like that, so you had to trust this guy.
Interviewer	Did anybody get injured with live rounds?
Richard	No, there was a…Sergeant Major *(inaudible),* there was a guy that made a bit of a mess up with a thrown hand grenade and Sergeant Major *(inaudible)* grabbed it and threw it, otherwise he dropped it in the trench, didn't throw anything, so he threw it, but that was the only thing that I know of. We also talk about at the same time we did the hand grenade training, we did the 3.7 inch bazooka. So we fired…the rugby was quite important in Walvis Bay, so everybody that was playing in the rugby side had to go off to rugby practice and so they had to fire the bazooka first. Now the bazooka you have two guys in a team, one guy puts in on shoulder and the other guy takes a round and places it in the back, and there were two electrical wires, puts it around two little sort of springs, which makes an electrical contact. And as you squeeze the trigger, dynamo sends an electrical cable to the springs which sets off the things. So it happened the rugby guys went first, one of the locks went first, and were told to sit with your legs wide apart and things, and he fired his first round and the eye piece from the side, he didn't have it right against his eye so it came back and cut his eye like a boxer above his eyebrow and it threw him on his back. So everybody now was quite apprehensive about shooting this. It came to my turn and my number two placed the thing and then tapped me on the head as if to say now he's ready you can fire. I squeezed the trigger and nothing. So he put it back on safe and he tested the wires again, and said ok, I put on fire, pulled the trigger, nothing. So the third time this happened I thought aagh, this thing is not going off, and all of a sudden this massive bang and this 3.7 inch rocket went screaming off. So I don't think many people, at least not in 1979 were firing 3.7 rockets. We also did the French Strim anti tank. And the rifle grenades with the spring casing with the hand grenade lever on the side, which were fired wit a blank charge, and as the shock of the thing leaving the barrel, a little slide on the hand grenade handle, the *hefboom*, would slide off which would then arm the hand grenade and the hand grenade would be thrown for 50 or 60 metres.
Interviewer	You said you were using a French anti tank missile, the Strim. Was that a permanent weapon?

Richard	Strim. No, it wasn't all that common. It was also fired from the R1. The practice one's are blue. It's sort of like a missile. Had an empty tube that you put over the barrel and then you fired it with a blank charge. It's an anti tank weapon.
Interviewer	Was it an effective weapon?
Richard	I think it was…armoured penetration was about 18 mm, about 100 metres or so.
Interviewer	And so now this is 1979 coming to an end. And then you said eventually you ended up getting transferred up into Ovamboland.
Richard	Yes, and then we came home, I was home for Christmas, we had a week at home. And then we went back up to Walvis Bay. And then in January 1980, again we went by truck, we went up to Opuwa in Kaokoveld. Some guys were kept at Opuwa as a base protection, very few of one section, and then the other guys went to a place called Sodalite which is a mineral that's mined in the area. Sodalite is about 6kms from south of the Kunene on top of a hill. The sort of last hill before you drop down towards the Kunene River. So we had a company base there. We had a new company commander…captain…I can't remember his surname now, but he'd become a captain because he had studied, he had done some studies towards being a dominee. So he was quite a nice guy but he'd just recently become a captain and that was cause for concern because there was a major in charge of the base at Opuwa who threatened his men. They used to have a selection of meats and a selection of food like this but he was stealing all our wet rations. So the rations had to come from Ruacana, they were flown in from Ruacana into Opuwa. He was taking half our rations and we were dealing eventually only half rations. And very few wet rations at all. So were just getting tinned food really. And we went hungry. For three weeks I had a potato a day. And I was about at that stage, I probably weighed about 87, 88 kilos, and when I left Sodalite after 3 months I was 61 kilos. I lost a lot of weight there. Whenever we went out on patrol, we had generally speaking for ten guys in the section, we had one tin of meat or like *Ovambo Piele* they called it, sausages, or clutch plates, those hamburger patties, and a tin of peas and a tin of beans for example, for 10 guys.
Interviewer	Did nobody complain about this guy stealing?
Richard	We complained. It's the duty of the company sergeant major to ensure the welfare of the troops. He complained and he was going to go to Opuwa to complain there and make it and the company commander prevented him from going, and more or less restricted him to base. We were out on patrol so we heard that there were bad feelings amongst the company commander and the company sergeant major. And the company sergeant major was an older Permanent Force member and more experienced than the company commander. It was Captain Louw, that was his name. And somebody in the base…one of the

	few places in the base…there was rock rondavel with a thatch roof with a large gap, probably about 500 or 600 mm between the rock and the thatch to keep it cool, and this was the company commander's sleeping quarters and sort of office. And he had a desk in there and somebody had taken one of the stones or rocks there, probably about 30 or 40 cm diameter and lifted it up and pushed it in between this thing which had fallen on this guy's desk and splintered it. And somebody else had taken…had killed a wild cat they'd found there and put a note on the cat's fangs on his doorstep saying you're next. These guys were really agitated. So we got instruction that we're out on patrol and that everybody must come back in. So we came back into the base and our rifles were drawn from us…Everybody's rifle was taken back. And we thought well what's going on now? And the company commander said to us ok, somebody wants to kill me and there's people who are upset about this and people have now used this rock to attack me type thing. So he got the medic, which we had there, was to supervise or to look at this *opfok* that he was going to give us, this PT that he was going to give us, and everybody had to grab a reasonable sized rock. So for the next couple of hours we had to run around the mountains, the hills there, with this rock, lifting it up above our head, lifting it down, things like that. Which wasn't …he thought it was hard…we actually took it as a bit of a joke. It wasn't that difficult, we had really had far more difficult things than this, and he made a big mistake by telling us, ok, run with your rock down to sort of a dry river bed about two kms away and back. And that was a bad mistake because then he lost all control, because everybody then just took their time. But the guys that came back first had to mark time with their rock and stand and do PT with their rock and wait for the last guys to come who took their time. The company commander eventually said to us, ok, now we want to start anew and we want to get rid of all these frustrations. If you've got problems you must come speak to me, and things like this. So he said, ok I want you to take this rock…and the guys up to this stage have been messing around with the rock and then the guy would say, pick up your rock. *Ek kan nie meer, ek wil nie*, and putting their rock down and putting their rock on top of their helmet, and just messing the company commander and the instructors were forced to just go along and assist with this PT but most of the guys were sort of completely against this thing. So he says, eventually we had to pick up the rock and throw it into the veld as hard as possible with these words, *fok jou kaptein*. So we had to throw this rock in, *fok jou captein.* So everybody threw their rock in, *fok jou captein*! But some guys had their own thing, f*ok jou, jou fokken poes*! So the captain says, *wie het so gese*? And the guys said, *ek se so*. And *he said, ek het nie so gese dat jy moet fok jou, jou fokken poes gese! Maar kaptein ek se so*! So the guys were a bit aggro to him and eventually we went back, the company sergeant major was restricted from doing his work and he was sent back to Walvis Bay. And when we got back to Walvis Bay after the three months, which we didn't really have any contact with SWAPO at all, there

	was no things, there was just walking along the Kunene River. Although the first patrols we went inland. Why, I wouldn't know. In about 80 square metres, you got one watering point, you're going to walk around in the middle of the Kaokoveld, things like this, there was absolutely nothing happening there. It was a complete and horrible stuff up. And after that they realised that the only way really to walk patrol was along the Kunene River. So we walked about, from Epupa waterfalls either back to the base or out to Epupa waterfalls, about 70 kms. And then when we got back to Walvis Bay after the three months the Permanent Force officer's wives had set on us tea and cakes for us, and as we filed past the Captain Louw and his wife and Sergeant Major (name?) and his wife, everybody just greeted the Sergeant Major and ignored the captain completely. In front of his wife. It wasn't very nice of the guys but we didn't think very highly of him. He should have gone to Opuwa and complained about the rations. We were really bloody hungry.
Interviewer	For a young man who's very fit to go from 86 kilograms down to 61, that's extreme. And that's because somebody was stealing your wet rations.
Richard	Yes, they were taking our rations. We heard afterwards that the same major in charge of the Opuwa base he was a Major that used to use a helicopter to shoot the Kaokoveld elephants.
Interviewer	Around about that time there was quite a lot of SADF hunting there?
Richard	So then the guys in Opuwa, they would get a selection of meat and a selection of desserts. I had bread once in three months there.
Interviewer	It's interesting that you mention that elephant thing because the SADF were accused of a lot of hunting in that area. Was it ever proven that that major was shooting elephants?
Richard	No, I don't think so.
Interviewer	It was just a rumour.
Richard	Just a rumour and sort of what I've learned at the Museum*,(The South African Museum of Military History – where he is employed*). sort of quite possible. I think there was a somebody that was prosecuted for that type of thing, that was found guilty…I think there was someone.
Interviewer	So there you are being starved by your own men, let alone the enemy.
Richard	Yes!
Interviewer	So then you get sent back to Walvis where you ignore the Captain and…
Richard	We came back to Walvis, we had a new Officer Commanding who had come from the Parabats…Roux. And he had a different

	outlook completely. Before we'd hardly ever see the commandant. And being in 2 South Africa Infantry Battalion group we had armour and artillery attached as well, and there was a naval attached to Walvis Bay as well. So there was a full Colonel in charge of 2 Walvis Bay military area. But the Commandant, I think we only saw him once or twice for inspections, he had hardly anything to do with us. This Commandant Roux was an ex Parabat and he had far more to do with things. But new troops had arrived and they were doing their training and they seemed to be treated more respectfully. He was there to train, there was no *rondfok*. And the first time we came back this commandant said to us, *manne welkom terug, jy kan maar sien daar is nuwe manne heirso, hulle doen opleiding.* They're doing training here and hier *(inaudible). Dis my manne. As hulle opgefok moet word sal ek dit doen. Julle los hulle uit heeltemaal uit.* So we were then restricted from having any interaction with these new troops. So there was nothing about getting guys to do things like that, they were separated, we were taken out of the base most cases. We did training and more digging trenches in the desert and we didn't come anywhere near them.
Interviewer	But that order was made because historically the guys, the *ou manne* who'd been there for a while, even though you might have been the same rank, you nevertheless…there would have been a sense that you could order the new troops around because they were new.
Richard	Yes. But in my experience we had no thing whatsoever with them. We ate at a slightly different time, we never stood guard with them, we were never on parade with them. We did *(inaudible)* training so we learned things again and radio procedures and some of the things that we did again. And then…that was now, we came back in April. We came away for…we had seven days pass in our first year and 14 days pass in our second year. So I think we got 14 days leave at home then. Then we came back, we were there for a short while, we did retraining again, and then in July about, we went back up to Ovamboland. We went to Ovamboland this time. We went to Oshivelo and we just did an evaluation to see the standard of our training and from there onward we moved to Ondangwa, and from Ondangwa the main…we all moved to Oshigambo, which was in 53 Battalion I think it was. Oshigambo is about 50kms, sort of north east of Ondangwa. On the way between Ondangwa and Eenhana. So Oshigambo, we pulled in there and then one of the platoons, we now had another lieutenant and we were now moved in with…the platoon went to Oshigambo and then one of the platoons had to go to guard the water tower, the Echo tower. There's a series of Echoes…along the main road that goes between Okalongo on the border and Ondangwa. We had a platoon base at the Echo tower.
Interviewer	20 guys.

Richard	30 guys. Well, a full strength would be 36, but that would be with radio, orderly and everything else.
Interviewer	And the company was?
Richard	About 120 guys. Supposedly. But often about 90 guys. So our platoon went out to Echo tower and we just had to stand guard on this tower. We had a Browning machine gun on top of the tower, it was about 30 metres tall maybe, and a tent roof and we had to just check out and report and guard this tower. Which got a bit boring, so we had to make our own food so then we then broke it down to brunch and supper. So brunch was about 10 o'clock. So we did normal,… from about 7 o'clock in the morning, we did normal base maintenance and then 10 o'clock we had brunch, and then we had a few beers after brunch time, and then the guy's just standing guard, so we just hung around really. Which got a bit boring. So we split the platoon into two halves, one 15 guys were then sort of allocated to a platoon sergeant who was Corporal Hanse, and the other 15 went to the new Lieutenant Joubert. And then so I walked patrol with this Corporal Hanse, and we went out for two or three days at a time and did our patrol in the area, then we came back and then the other half of the platoon went. So only half of the platoon went. But at this stage there was a curfew in Ovamboland from 7 o'clock in the evening. Up on the tower you could see after dark there were these light movement, vehicle movement. So we shook them up with a Browning. You open up with a Browning, you could see the tracers going in the general direction. The lights would go out. Next night you'd see lights again and things like that. So you could see it wasn't really taken all that seriously. So we then sent out a patrol to the area where those lights were and just as it got dark, curfew is 7 o'clock, we sort of set an immediate action road block. And a Ford F 150 came along and we stopped the guy, and it was a youngster, about 14 or so, driving this van. Now we couldn't let him go because then he would spill the beans that we were in the area, so we kept him overnight. He was desperate to get home now because his father was going to beat the hell out of him because he had his father's bakkie and he wasn't coming home. So we kept him overnight and the next morning we let him go, and he went off to his father and gave his bakkie back and his father came driving, he found us later, and brought us two bottles of wine and some fresh bread and said, he realised he shouldn't have had his son driving and he realises he shouldn't be driving at night and this is reparation. So we had some fresh bread and some wine. And then that was to the west of the town. And to the east of the town towards Oshigambo side, we often saw green tracers. Which is the AK 47 tracer. So there was some SWAPO activity out there, so we did the same thing. We went out at night with the Buffel, and while the Buffel was actually driving we jumped off the side so there would be no stopping of the vehicle. We hid ourselves in the bush. And as it was dark we heard this truck coming along. So there was a sort of hedge of bushes and a flat pan on either side, and a road was coming along that side,

	and we heard this thing and this corporal said to us, ok, go out there. So we rushed out, I went on the right hand side of the bush, most of the other guys went on the left hand side of the bush, and this truck came along and we shouted for them to stop and it just accelerated. At that stage we had a Bren machine gun. He opened up with a Bren machine gun and the truck never came past that sort of hedge, it crashed into a dry tree stump just before that. And it was just, just dark now, so there was no return fire, so we got close to the truck and we saw there were three people in the front of the bakkie and one person on the back of the bakkie, and as it was just getting dark the driver had been shot through the wrist and through the knees really, and somebody else had been shot through their elbow. And there was a woman in the front, she'd been shot through the *(inaudible*) and she had put her elbow to her chest so the whole front of her was covered in blood. So we thought in the fading light she's gone. But we did what we could. In fact one of the guys, he actually…you wouldn't think he would be a good soldier at all. He had done a medics course and he grabbed the veins and arteries just with his fingers and closed them off. The hand was just hanging by a little string. So we managed to pull them out, the bakkie was burning a little bit so we pulled them out and the person's leg just hung behind and the person on the back of the bakkie, it was loaded with beers, so they were on their way to a party. The driver had like a big cowboy hat on. So we said to them, why didn't you stop when we told you to stop? Why did you accelerate? *As ek die breek wil trap, my been is al af.* When he wanted to hit the brake his leg was already broken. So we called the base and a chopper came in actually after dark, which was unusual, and there was a doctor on board and they took these guys away. And we heard later that the driver had died. But the doctor was very impressed with the sort of overall first aid standard in preparing this guy for the chopper. The chopper must have taken about half an hour to come. And then after…
Interviewer	Basically the driver panicked, he …
Richard	Yes, he said that he didn't know who it was. It could have been SWAPO and he decided to accelerate. So we said to him, didn't you know that there's a curfew? No, he knew there was a curfew. Why did you accelerate? No, when he wanted to brake his leg was already broken. So that was really unfortunate. I suppose something I'm not quite proud of. All their beers on the back of the bakkie we drank them. *laughs* I think there were about three or four dozen beers.
Interviewer	So then you're back to the water tower.
Richard	Yes, we went back to the water tower and we were there for about six weeks or so. And then we went back to…another platoon came to the water tower, and we went back to Oshigambo. Now we were used to walking with these new instructors and things in half platoons and we then were walking our patrol in full platoon things. so you've got different ways that

	you can walk patrol in platoon strength, but generally speaking one of the things is that we use like an arrow formation. So you'd have one section as an arrowhead on the one side, one section was the arrow head on the other side with a third section forming a triangle and as you're walking forward with the platoon headquarters in the middle. So now the area there is quite spread out so you might be…the formation might be like 300 metres from one side to the other side…
	END OF SIDE B TAPE 1 *(counter at 384)*
	TAPE 2 SIDE A
Richard	…which is fine if you're walking in a straight line, but as soon as you start swinging the people on the far side have now got to make massive movement to get that area. We're walking our patrol for the first time with this officer, Lieutenant Joubert, and we had a 60mm mortar as a support weapon, and we'd been told that there was SWAPO in the area and that there had been reports that some of the SWAPO might have had brown uniforms. So we're walking along and the lieutenant for the triangle on his right rear, there was a section OP down that side, and they saw some movement down, so he radioed through to that section that that section needed to go and check that out. So he took three or four guys and they wandered off down there, and they were down there and we were unaware that these three guys had wandered off there, and all of a sudden the lieutenant says, *daar's hulle, skiet hulle*! So we open up with the…we come out into a spread out line, and the mortars go off and they're firing about 30 metres ahead of *(inaudible)* and by this time I was quite a reasonable shot and I saw this one person who seemed to be in browns at a distance of about 300 metres or so, and I took an aimed shot at this thing and I pulled off my …tap, tap, my two shots. There was a sandcastle to the left and a sandcastle to his right jumping up like this and this person just went down like that, and leopard crawled like you've never seen anything. Over one of the kraal, these big thorn bushes which is about 50mm thorns, just leopard crawled straight over them like a snake. And I thought hell that guy is sharp. And we couldn't see them now because they're on the other side of this hedge so we did what we do, application, fire fire, and then after firing a shot, *staak vuur, staak vuur*, we'd been shooting at these three guys that had been gone…wandered off like that. So the section leader had an A55 or A53 radio with a blade antennae that ran next to his head, there were three rounds through that blade antennae, so he nearly got it through the head by somebody. The one guy, tall blond guy, I can't remember his name now, he was shot through the elbow, had to be evacuated, and the guy that I shot at, was this guy (name) and I said to him, he was in my section, and I said, ? did somebody shoot at you (name)? He said, that bastard. I said, hell I'm sorry, it was me. So he said, lucky I'm not a good shot, and I did consider myself a good shot. So that was a bit of a stuff up. And that's working with an officer who came out

	of the blue, we hadn't really trained with, and he was a bit of a…I don't know, I didn't have much respect for him. When he left short service, he was also short service, his ambition was to have…he had a 125 Yamaha DT off road bike, he was going to go down to Knysna and sit in the rain and eat his tin of bully beef. That was his ambition. So you can make what you like out of that. *Laughs*
Interviewer	Now, neither of these incidents…the bakkie incident with the guy carrying the beer and this sort of friendly fire incident…did anybody have to submit reports on these incidents?
Richard	Yes, Corporal Hanse submitted a report on the bakkie incident and I don't think anything happened there. I don't know if this Lieutenant Joubert…he must have had something to do because this guy was shot, and he had to have a steel pin put in his arm. We only saw him two or three months later when we came back from the border back to Walvis Bay, this guy was there. So yes, he must have had to…
Interviewer	But to your knowledge no investigation, nobody came around and said, guys what happened, tell us?
Richard	No. At Echo tower., while we were at Echo tower the one night SWAPO fired a couple of rounds of mortars at us. So the first one must have landed, I don't know, about 50 metres outside the base perimeter, and you never…that's the first time I was under sort of enemy fire, and you never know how you're going to react. So quite amazingly the drill took over. The round landed, and before the second landed I was out of the beds…we were in bed...down the trench and out the perimeter fence with my helmet on, with my webbing on, the rifle ready cocked. So if you do it often enough it just becomes second nature to you.
Interviewer	Now that's interesting, you think about the bakkie incident, the friendly fire incident, then SWAPO drops some mortars on top of you guys, how did you think about these things in the days ahead. Did you think back and say, gee I could have shot one of my mates or hell, we've shot some poor guy who's driving some beer to a party, or in this case, SWAPO is trying to kill us? How did you think about it in the days ahead?
Richard	I think we'd had so much training that you actually wanted to be tested. You wanted to see if…what's the use of going through all this thing and then…come to nought? So you wanted to see if you can…how you would stand up, you wanted to see what would happen like this. I mean…most combat or most actions was sort of at 50 to 70 metres or 100 metres. It was really impersonal really.
Interviewer	But shooting at your own colleagues must have been a bit scary in that respect?
Richard	Yes, I suppose to a certain extent, but remember in the training you'd been shooting pretty close to them in the first place. So if you hadn't hit him it was no big deal.

Interviewer	You didn't buy him a beer afterwards to say sorry?
Richard	Yes, but I mean, we'd gone down, we'd done trench clearing…ok, under training you trench clear like this, you would have a flag up so you could see where the front guys are like this, and as they go down the trench you're shifting your fire. I mean, in trench clearing as well, you go with your mate, you throw a hand grenade around the corner, duck like this, a live hand grenade goes off and you spray the area that you've just come through , so I mean sort of the use of live ammunition wasn't a big thing really. A day to day thing, you know.
Interviewer	So all this starts happening, you're still at the water tower, do you get moved again?
Richard	We had gone back to Oshigambo and we'd done these patrols. We just normally did four day patrols. You're out for four days, then you come in, normally sort of in the late afternoon, you sleep over, you have the next day to wash up and clean up and prepare and you go out the following day again. So sort of one and a half days, I think, like that. When we came back from one patrol, we came over the wall…you stop short of the base and you inform the base, you're outside the base, you intend coming in, you'll be coming in by the east entrance. Ok, wait for us so they don't shoot you as you approach. So we came in about four o'clock. As we come in like this, one of the clerks says to me, *daar's mense vir jou*. I think, *mense* for me, who's coming to see me in Ovamboland? They must be playing, because there was a big thing about people fraternising with the locals and somebody now claiming that I'd slept with one of the locals or something. So who's this now? I don't know. So they said, no*, daars n' person* for you there. Somebody sitting on the wall on the other side. So I go there and I wander across there, and I think, who the hell is this? No, it's my old man! So my old man had also come up the hill, was doing some service…
Interviewer	He was there with…?
Richard	He was West Park Commando. Which had now changed to Sandton Commando. So it changed to Sandton Commando, just a name change, and he had come up there. And he was at…Ombalantu. He had come through from Ombalantu back down to Oshikati and then got…had a Land Rover, and he decided to come visit me in Oshigambo. I don't know how he knew I was in Oshigambo. So he got authorisation from the transport officers in Oshikati and he had driven through there and it was my birthday…20th birthday…1980…so he brought me a card and things and one of those Makalani *(palm tree)* plants. He had got somebody to carve my name on one of those, that hard kernel, and then I was exempt from standing guard that night, wow! And then the next day the guys went out on patrol and I didn't have to go on patrol so I could stay with my old man, so we just wandered around and had a beer together and spoke a bit. And then my dad, two days later he had to go back. He had to

	get back to Oshikati and the road had apparently been swept between Oshigambo and Oshikati or Ondangwa. And he was driving along and a rat run of Kwevoel 50s and Kwevoel 100s came along like this, so they were driving like a bat out of hell and there was dust, so my old man pulled off like this, and this guy went further and my dad drew back on the tracks and that Kwevoel hit a mine. So my old man had somehow driven over the mine or…
Interviewer	Was the driver in the Kwevoel killed?
Richard	I don't know. My dad told me that later on and I wasn't aware of that. Then I saw him when I got home again later. We came back, so we were in Ovamboland sort of July, August, September and maybe a slight bit into October, I can't remember. And then we came back to Walvis Bay. And then it was more or less killing time, doing odds and sorts before we *klaared out* at the end of…we were told we would be back for Christmas and we were. So we left there on about the 15, 16th of December or so. We sort of half had a 40 days party but not an organised thing at all.
Interviewer	So the end of your two years, there you are, you're fighting this war, but you'd been mortared by SWAPO once, you'd shot at your own okes once and shot at some guy delivering beer. Did you wonder about what this war about?
Richard	Not too much…we said it was sort of a general thing that we were fighting Communism. We had seen one of the other platoons had shot a guy, SWAPO. It's made out to be a bogeyman, you know…when a guy's dead it's just another body there. Youngish black Ovambo guy…thinner and more frail than you are normally. So he's not really a bogey guy.
Interviewer	Did you feel sorry for him?
Richard	To a certain extent, yes. But not that much. I wasn't sort of inclined to cut his ear off or remove any parts.
Interviewer	Was it the first dead SWAPO guy you'd seen?
Richard	Yes. And I mean the guy's dusty and dirty. There's caked blood and things, so it doesn't look pretty. I mean, the entry wound is quite big and the exit wound is quite…so there's half a head missing or half a shoulder missing, or whatever it is. So it's not very pretty.
Interviewer	And then you go back to civvy street and what…you go to university, or get a job?
Richard	No, for about 10 months I did nothing. I sort of just messed around and I used to play quite a lot of squash, I was quite fit, I remained fit. In actual fact one of the things I used to…I got faster and faster at running as they stopped stuffing me around. And I used to do quite a few 5 and 10 km runs, and I used to push myself with Stein in the background, thinking Stein I'll show you. So that was my sort of motivation. I was called up then shortly

	afterwards to go to the first camp with Regiment President Kruger. And the first camp we had there was more…they tried to make it as sort of a basic camp, where we got stuffed around and it was a bit odd. But it was only a 14 day camp. A training camp really. And then I did a second camp there as well, a guard camp. And then we ran a two comma four, I was running it in under nine minutes fifteen by now. So I was doing it quite a lot faster.
Interviewer	And these camps were where?
Richard	At Regiment President Kruger headquarters in Randfontein.
Interviewer	So those were essentially call ups but not much happened.
Richard	Yes, I was quite willing to go on these camps because I was unemployed, I didn't have any money, I'd rather go away for a while and do these camps. And then after about 10 months or so I started working for Concor Construction, did civil engineering for a while. I worked on site from about October through to the end of December. And then I went to Wits Tech and I started studying civil engineering construction. I only did that for a while. And then one day I just decided not to go to college at all. I just stopped going. And then I was free and easy again, playing squash and messing around. And then again I went on another camp with RPK, and because I was running quite well and quite fit at that stage they sent me on a section leader's course. So I went to a section leader's course at Doornkop, but doing urban COIN. An urban COIN course there at Doornkop. And then it made me a lance corporal. And then in…
Interviewer	Urban COIN…counter insurgency.
Richard	Urban warfare.
Interviewer	Yes, but what did that involve? What did they…just in rough terms.
Richard	That would be…riot protection, riot…formations that you move.
Interviewer	So this is 1986?
Richard	No, '82, '83.
Interviewer	So it's riot protection, crowd control…
Richard	Yes, house clearing, movement in vehicles, cordoning and search, that kind of stuff. Which at that time I remember thinking, well ok, if this is sort of more like northern Ireland. I wasn't sort of thinking this is like Soweto. We just didn't think that way. And then I volunteered to go to the border again, again because I was unemployed really and I thought that I quite enjoyed myself. And so we went in January 1983. We went up again with Regiment President Kruger. I was a lance corporal then. There wasn't another corporal so I was made like section leader but with a lance corporal rank. And since I was reasonably new to Regiment President Kruger all the other section leaders could choose their men and all the shit stirrers that nobody wanted were left to me.

	So my first section I had all old guys who were on their last camp, that didn't want to do anything, so I had quite a hard time. When we did training at Oshivelo to see how good we were, these guys were very, very slow and took their time and I was in endless crap for these guys. And they used to say, don't worry korpie, don't worry. There's a guy called, Willie Giel. I had to do quite a lot of work for these guys. They sort of controlled me a bit. *Laughs*
Interviewer	They're old dogs and they're not going to get chased around the block.
Richard	Yes. I was 22 going on 23, these guys were 28, 30. It's a big difference.
Interviewer	And then around about this time you got transferred to…?
Richard	No, no, we went to Regiment President Kruger and for some unknown reason they decided to make us the base protection at Oshikati. So we would do base protection. My brother who was in the Permanent Force was up at Oshikati. We arrived at SAS Makalani which is an ex naval base. There was already a…it was a highland regiment, it could have been Pretoria Regiment or Cape Town Highlanders or something…they were in control of the base and we were going to take over, so we had to sleep on the outside of the walls and it started raining quite heavily so we could then climb underneath their extra bivvies that they'd had on the side as shade. With this my brother arrives and he's got this apple crate. I think what the hell is he doing with apples? No, but he's got two dozen beers in the apple box. So the other corporals and myself and my brother we had quite a pleasant evening in that tent with some beers there. And my brother was in the stores in Oshikati at that time under Major Pauls, I think it was. Yes, we took over base protection, so sometimes we had to send out a section as an escort team for the Sappers to sweep the main road between Oshikati and Ondangwa, or halfway, and the other guys would go from Ondangwa half way down. There's about 35 kms sweeping odd. And then the other guys would do some of the towers in the area, but since I was a lance corporal, my duty was to guard the POW cages. So for two hours during the day, four hours at night, every day I was standing at the POW cages. So now again, this is also like sort of a close thing with SWAPO. Now the POW cages they'd broken up into more or less three sections. Latest arrivals that were still pro SWAPO, guys that couldn't care now two hoots if they're SWAPO or not, and the other guys that were free and easy that were allowed out to go to the local township, just as long as they came back. so there were sort of three sections. I was sort of allocated the area to guard the guys that had just been captured. And we were told on no circumstances you talk to them, you don't talk to them at all. I mean, they seemed oblivious to us, I didn't see anybody trying to escape, there was no verbal threats, no swearing at each other, so it was just boring as hell. Just had to watch this guy the whole time. At that stage…this is now February 1983…SWAPO had at

	that stage had tried an infiltration of their Special Forces into the farming areas south of the cut line. Typhoon Forces I think they were called. And they were spending a large amount of guys out, like 200 a time in these areas. I think this is due to East German influence that they should, instead of moving in small groups of four or five or six, they should have large amounts of guys. Which was detrimental to them really because it was easy to find them and quite a few of the guys were shot. And the guys who were shot were brought to the *hokke*, and the SWAPO guys then had to lay them out and the intelligence guys then came and checked through their possessions and bodies and checked…anybody that was captured would be interrogated to see if these guys were the same units and such. And then the MPs were in charge of the POW cages. And then they would interrogate these guys, and then once they'd received everything that they could from the bodies or from the other guys, then those bodies would then be loaded onto a Unimog and then taken for burial. I don't know where they went.
Interviewer	But you were there while they were laying out the dead bodies.
Richard	Yes. At one stage there were about eight guys that were laid out there and a couple of officers that came around and they checked through the things. So I know later that those guys then formed part of the Special Forces group called Typhoon.
Interviewer	When you looked at them, they're just dead bodies…they don't look like…
Richard	Dead bodies, yes, dusty…there's a lot of sand, brought in from the field. So that's the first stage that I saw Casspirs, Koevoet, things like this. Unusual bunch of people because…they looked like scruffy…really scruffy black guys and white NCOs and officers to a certain extent. Beards…a wide variety of different uniforms. I know even when we were at Oshigambo occasionally Koevoet moved into our area, and then if you got instructions that Koevoet were in the area you just had to just like move out of it.
Interviewer	In other words you essentially left them to their own devices.
Richard	Yes, we left them to their own devices. They came, they did more or less…went wherever they wanted to more or less, and they sort of just went in the area, so you pulled out there so to make sure you wouldn't shoot them and they wouldn't shoot you, because a lot of their guys were armed with…preference for an AK. So you might see an AK, all their troopers were black Ovambos. So you find…and a guy in a strange uniform, a police camo type thing, so you could easily shoot a Koevoet guy.
Interviewer	And they took preference on those operations?
Richard	Yes, they fell under the police and they just sort of…I don't know if they had authority to take preference but they just did.
Interviewer	Did you ever speak to the guys in the pub or at the prison cells

	and stuff like that?
Richard	No, I never spoke to SWAPO guys, no.
Interviewer	And the Koevoet guys?
Richard	No, Koevoet guys had a base outside the other side of Oshikati, and no, I never spoke to them.
Interviewer	Because they had quite a reputation.
Richard	Yes, the only time I ever spoke to any policemen was when we were at Echo tower. All our canteen rations came through to Oshigambo and then one third of those then would be eventually sent out, I think, when the post came out, we'd come out to echo tower. So you might get like two dozen cold drinks or something like that, which was finished in a day. So the police used to travel up and down the road from Okavango back to Ondangwa or Oshikati. So the one night they were running late and it got dark so they came into our base and they slept overnight. In Hippos, they had two Hippos, which was unusual, the first time I'd ever seen that vehicle. And which is a mine proof vehicle before the Buffel. It was used by the army and the police. And these guys, we arrange with them to come by a later stage, and we each chipped in R50, which was quite a lot at the time money like that, and so we gave the quite a few hundred rand to buy canteen rations. And they on their way back there they bought us things, they bought like twenty dozen beers and things like that, which we also finished in two days. *Laughs* At that stage after brunch at ten o'clock some of the guys their standard sort of thing was six beers. And then supper like 12 or 18 beers.
Interviewer	Good thing SWAPO didn't attack you those evenings.
Richard	Well I don't know, maybe they were observing us, maybe that's why they mortared us at a later stage, but I don't think so. The other thing was Echo tower is a water reservoir. So we used to climb in the top of the tower and then play water polo in between the concrete pillars between…our water was pumped along the pipe line into town and then obviously pressure, so we used that as a sort of a swimming facilities.
Interviewer	It must have been something of an enviable base to have a water source.
Richard	Yes, I suppose so, although there were no facilities at echo tower really. We had three 16x16 tents and like a little kitchen and a little headquarter section. And we had dug our tents in until the top of the tent poles. So from the outside, from the ground, all you could see was the top of the tent, the apex of the tent. Otherwise we were dug in. So even if they had mortared us and it landed in the base I think it wouldn't have happened, unless it landed right in the tent.
Interviewer	So this is yet just another camp, so you've now done quite a few camps…

Richard	Yes, then the following year, I joined the Museum in…I came back from the border and so that was more or less from mid January…January, March, April…so I came back in about mid April. And my father said to me, so now, you haven't been doing much work recently so what are you going to do now? I said, I don't know. So he said to me, well there's a possible job at the museum. So I came here, and from the 15th of June…I was actually employed from the 16th of June…16th of June now has connotations but 16th of June then in 1983 meant nothing really.
Interviewer	Although you had had '76 just eight years before but it hadn't entered people's minds…
Richard	Yes, at least…in 1983 I didn't know of any riots in Soweto or any of the black townships. It was quiet, it was just another day. Then since the Museum…
Interviewer	And it's this Museum. *(Where the interview was conducted).*
Richard	Yes, the War Museum. At that stage your employer had to allow you to go on military service things and you couldn't be to your detriment. So at the very least, the money that the army didn't pay you, your company had to make up your salary. So but working for a government institution and also a military thing, Colonel Ducksworth? at that stage and I'd be a junior member of staff. They didn't seem to mind. So I went to the border again in January 1984 after been working at the museum for only a short while, for 6 months. I'd been promoted now, was a full corporal and I went up to the border, again I was with Regiment President Kruger…
	END OF SIDE A *(counter at 395)*
	SIDE B *(counter at 19)*
Richard	We went for training again at Oshivelo, and from there we went up to Ombalanto for a while and we did some patrols there. Nothing much. The guys that were in my section were reasonable guys but there were one or two guys that were a bit slackish. I was extremely fit at that stage, so I remember I used to take (*inaudible*) with a kit and walk with a kit. As time went on they got fitter, they could keep up.
Interviewer	How long was this camp for?
Richard	For 3 months. And then after about 2 months at the base we all of a sudden heard that we were going on Ops. So we wondered now what was going on, and there was a change in sections of platoons. Some of the guys had to stay, other guys had to go, some people wanted to volunteer…but anyway, I got a slightly different section. But my section at this stage was now like ultra *paraat*. I had two guys that were fighting to carry the machine gun. As of fisticuffs. Had a guy called Abie, and he came to me and he said, can he get some more ammunition for his MAG? But I said, haven't you got enough? No, no. So I got him another belt

	and he carried an extra belt so instead of having 600 rounds he now had 800 rounds. He just wanted the ammo. He was like gung ho. Just fancied this thing. And then we had another guy that used to just clean the machine gun the whole time. And really *paraat* guys, so it was quite easy to do things. And then we were picked up at Ombalantu and taken back to Ogongo, and from there Ogongo we went back to Ondangwa. And there, there were a whole lot of other vehicles and we thought now we're really going on an Ops. So we left Ondangwa late afternoon and we got up to Okalongo just south of the border. We slept over at night just south of the border, and the following day we went into Angola. And we got on the main roads towards Cuvelai…and Ongiva and Cuvelai…that was the route I think. And there was a company of Three Two Battalion, a company of 6 SAI and a company from Regiment President Kruger. And my platoon commander at that time was a guy called Gavin…an Afrikaans name but English speaking…Gavin Myburgh. And he was an ex Three Two Battalion guy. He was an exceptional officer. No bullshit, he knew exactly what he was doing, had excellent direction keeping and distance finding and map orientation. Excellent. So we went…Three Two Battalion was tasked with sweeping the road most of the time. So we were travelling in the Buffels at about 9kms an hour, about as fast as 32 (Batallion) could sweep. And rocking and riding like this and the vehicle in front of my Buffel was a ten thousand litre Avgas bladder and it sprung a leak. So we had Avgas, a tiny little leak pouring out. So I radio through and said this thing in front of us, the guy said to me, ok, see if you can't plug the leak. What did I have? I only had Sunlight soap with me, so I sort of rubbed Sunlight soap it didn't do much, it wasn't big enough to put a stick in or anything else…so I couldn't stop the thing. So we stopped a few nights on just temporary basis and dug in round about the fence, and we thought ok, we don't know what we're going on. Here we're driving merrily along the main road into Angola. And then we had heard that there was a Major in charge of this convoy that was going and after about 4 days or so of sweeping the road we were told ok, it was about six o'clock in the evening….ok, there's a guy on the side of the road, the left hand side, and he says, ok, this is six o'clock, so you turn in, you come in at six o'clock, you drive towards twelve o'clock, RPK, your area of responsibility is from twelve o'clock to four o'clock. Three Two Battalion is from four o'clock to eight o'clock. 6 SAI is from eight o'clock to twelve o'clock. So we come in there, we drive through to twelve o'clock, we drive the Buffels around towards four o'clock, each of the platoons. So I was at about three o'clock, two o'clock. So the sections get off and we're digging for the night. Normal guard duty and things, so two hours on, four hours off. And the next morning one of the other sections from RPK, one of the guys, he took his spade and wandered about 30 metres into what was a vlei. And he dug a hole there to have a crap and onto an anti tank mine. So a lot of people would think it would explode. You need about 250kgs of thing onto a tank mine. It didn't explode but

	anyway he came running back to us with his trousers around his legs, saying, corporal, corporal there's a mine there, so he was a bit shaken up. So we had a sapper contingent with us and they swept the area and they picked up a mine and they picked up another mine, picked up another mine. Eventually they picked up about a hundred anti tank mines. And that was on the left side of this main road into Cuvelai. So we'd stopped about five or six kms short of Cuvelai and just on the south side of this vlei. So after they'd swept the thing, they said ok, so now we want to extend you where we're going to set up our base, we're going to extend our outside perimeter to the other side of the vlei. So the vlei was about 150-200 metres wide. So now we had to walk through the vlei and set up a perimeter on the other side. I know something about anti personnel mines, some of them are plastic so they're not so easy to pick up, so I made sure I walked last and walked in everybody's footprints to get to the other side. They said the place was clear, so we set up the thing, and this guy that was like heavily involved in machine guns, he was also into motor cars and he had this Car magazine with him, which he read from start to finish, every single advert and things that he'd look at. And he also made himself comfortable. So he had a machete and a panga and he cut down branches and he made himself a nice chair and a bench and then after that he sat back and relaxed. So now he's made his base and his camp, and we were told we're going to be there for at least a week. And then the other vehicles came in and we set up a shower facility and we set up like an office facility, and the first time I'd ever seen army tent groundsheets, and we had lights, and we had a cooler canteen with cold beers and things, and we thought oh well…and we stood there, we waited there for about three or four days, we set up this base in the vlei area, in the hardened part where maybe some trees and we cut those trees down and we made a helicopter landing area. And then some Pumas arrived with some senior officers, and they went into this thing. And then 2 or 3 days later a contingency of the MPLA with coloured officers, I'd say, arrived. They had this conference centre, this joint monitoring commission, where South Africa would monitor that there would only be MPLA forces in the area south of the 16th parallel, and the FAPLA forces would monitor that only this joint monitoring commission forces were in those areas, and no other South African forces. Apparently there was an agreement with the Angolans that SWAPO would be drawn north of the 16th parallel. So we wanted to know what happens if we come across Unita? Well we were told, if you come across Unita, you go down to ground, you don't get involved then at all. The fight is between FAPLA and Unita. So we were told we were going out on patrol, we're going to walk patrol 30 men SADF, 30 men FAPLA force.
Interviewer	Now this is in 1984. And it's February.
Richard	Yes. So we're walking patrol with FAPLA, these guys arrive, they've got…FAPLA forces, they arrive with brand new uniforms, and it's raining quite a lot now, and they've got these ponchos.

	And brand new uniforms and their weapons are brand new, and you think, this is ok. What we'd seen beforehand is it was always pretty old stuff and tattered stuff. So out we go on patrol. And this coloured FAPLA officer he's got a radio operator with him and the radio is quite a massive radio, and we carry an A53 radio. So we go out and we stop for the first time, both our officer, Lieutenant Myburgh, and this officer must make now COMS with the headquarters and…our whole patrol was there to monitor if there was any other forces in the area apart from us. So we stopped for the first time and we radio the SADF headquarter with an A53 by putting up a *skuins draad* just a wire thrown from the radio into a fork of a tree, giving you a long distance thing. So ok we move it around we'll get COMS no problems. And they've got this massive radio, and the guys call in his base, call in his base, try everything and there's no COMS. And we're thinking this is Russian crap for you. And before we'd gone out on patrol the dominee had come to us as well, and give us a couple of bibles in Portuguese. And they said at any opportunity that you see or if you think there's somebody that might be leaning towards Christianity or needs a bible, here, speak to the guy, give him a bible, and help him out. So we had these things and we had rat packs, and they had their food, and eventually we started speaking with these guys where we could, and they felt our R4s and we felt their RPKs and RPD machine guns, and their machine gun, the RPD is quite a light machine gun compared to a MAG. And then they looked at our rat packs and we looked at theirs. And they had rat packs, they had fish. They had salmon from Sweden and from Norway. And some of their stuff was marked with the International Red Cross. And they had these horrible sort of haversacks, just a bag hanging off their shoulders, no frame or anything. And then they saw that we had these cheezies, little rolls of cheese, and chocolate, mint chocolate bars. So I mean for a cheezie and a chocolate bar we could get about five tins of fish. So it was great, so we swopped ours out. And then we walked, and we were walking in quite thick bush, and it was raining, and these guys had these ponchos on, and these ponchos kept hooking on all the trees and things like that. And we just walked in the rain. So eventually these guys thought no, they packed their ponchos in their pack. But they must have been green troops because after two or three days walking these guys had leg problems and blister problems and things like that. They called in helicopters and they evacuated some of these guys. And then when we got back to the base we had a Russian Mil 8 helicopter landing in your base. And here you've got FAPLA forces and things like this talking. And there was a contingency of senior officers and I'd gone through to get up some canteen rations for the section, and the one officer was a Commandant, also one of the first times I'd ever seen a Commandant in short brown trousers with a long like sort of greenish brown socks and veldskoens. And he was obviously one of the sort of negotiators, maybe he could also speak Portuguese because his name was (Laquere?), so to show off he sort of crapped me out in front of

	these other guys, so that's how I remember his name. In Steenkamp's book there's a photograph of him. There's a photograph of the base. The helicopters that they were using there all had these dayglo orange crosses on them, as marking as JMC, Joint Monitoring Commission. 32 Battalion were also going out on patrol in the area, and 6 SAI was also walking out with different groups. So we were walking different areas. We were supposed to be there for a week at Cuvelai and then move back to Evale and then move back to Mupa and Ongiva, that would be more or less a month and then we'd be out. Things went well initially and then after things that there seemed to be disagreement about. If there were spoor in the area or weren't spoor, so we spent pretty much about 5 or 6 weeks at Cuvelai and then we had to go back, our three months was up, so then we were withdrawn and somebody, I don't know who, replaced us. There was a Lieutenant Turner from Three Two Battalion, I think he stepped on a mine and he was injured. Again you're pretty much in your own little area, 50 metres, 100 metres area, you don't know exactly what's going on there. But also one of the places there they had a canteen truck, an engine going with cold beers, and were the beers still 33 cents or something each? But it was strictly controlled, two beers, per man, per day.
Interviewer	But here you are, now you're inside Angola, and you're getting food and beers and all the rest, whereas as a National Serviceman you lost 20kgs because you'd been starved by one of your own guys. It's bizarre.
Richard	Yes, I know. Horrific. One thing that that taught me is I know what it's like to be hungry. At the base at Sodalite we had cooks, not chefs, and then we had a storeroom. And some guys climbed into that storeroom and then stole some food. So then the chefs or the cooks, slept inside the base…that didn't stop them, the guys climbed inside, smacked the chefs and grabbed the food.
Interviewer	So now this camp that you've just done, and ended up patrolling as part of the JMC, that was straight after Operation Askari, because Askari was end of '83.
Richard	Yes. that's right, yes.
Interviewer	So the guys must have just withdrawn from Operation Askari when you…
Richard	On the other side of the vlei, 50 metres ahead of us, there was a whole range of trenches and behind the trenches there was a sort of service road. So the truck would obviously be able to deliver items like that. And to our right, close to where the road was, there was a tank trap, like a T 34. And in the trenches there was a yellow handled screwdriver which I picked up and I've still got at home. So that's my sort of memory of that area. I don't know if it was a Defence Force or FAPLA thing. And then later on towards the end of that thing, we went towards Cuvelai, so it's about six kms, and travelling along the road between *(inaudible)* and Evale, coming to us to Cuvelai, you saw the bark of the trees

	had been stripped off, about a metre and a half, stripped off and rolled up and put into a fork of a tree. So you've got a fork of a tree, so you've got now bark between the thing, as used as like a seat. So for Askari, these guys were up in the thing like this watching this road. So they could see…and the bark being removed was ranging things. So this was 100 metres, 200 metres. So they could call…observers could say, 500 metres down the road, 600 metres. And as you went from where our base was towards the Cuvelai town, on the left hand side there was a mahango (*sorghum*) field and the gun in placements, 122 mm artillery pieces. And then there was an airbase where there were still littered vehicles from Askari. And then north east of that was a medical area. And then we did a parade at the airbase, marched past with FAPLA, and I remember Angolan TV filming the thing. So I maybe at one stage was on Angolan TV, I don't know.
Interviewer	But during all this time, you've got one guy who decided to go to the toilet right on top of an anti-tank mine and they find a whole bunch lying there, you've seen the sort of aftermath of Operation Askari, did you ever think to yourself, well I could die out here?
Richard	No, not really. When things got a little bit…one time again in Kakoveld I was standing guard and we heard rustling in the bushes, and your senses were wide, wide awake. And you thought, no, SWAPO has crossed the river and they're coming close by like that. And then the next morning when you could see something you see that they were a herd of cows that had been messing around in the water. So you…wonder what will happen…just excited and scared to a certain degree, but not like scared out of your pants that you can't do anything. I mean really…I think this belief that we were really well trained. I mean, I still remember all my notes and training, exactly what things were, so I think I was extremely well trained, and I can't believe that a SWAPO or a FAPLA trooper was better trained than I was. When it came down to me and him I would choose me obviously. And I think I could shoot pretty well. I've always been interested in shooting. I'd had a pellet gun and shot things so I thought…but for an unlucky break the other guy would die and not me.
Interviewer	And then your next camp is…you're a serial camper, you certainly got through your camps.
Richard	Yes, in total I did 14 camps.
Interviewer	How many more camps did you do in that Angolan operational area?
Richard	No, that was our last time. And then we came back and I was then, this Lieutenant Myburgh had put in a report that I had a hearing problem. So I had to go to Wits medical and they did a test and they found that I've got tinnitus and that I couldn't hear. Because apparently he had told me while I was leading a platoon, he said, go left, and I didn't hear anything. So he put in a report, so then I was then reclassified from G1K1 to some other

	classification, which pissed me off a bit. And I was then moved out of the sections and made an HQ, and would you believe it, I went then up to…and that was the beginning of ’85…I went to Messina and I was the signaller. *Laughs* Now I can’t hear and I’m the signaller. I can’t remember much about that camp, it was a waste of time. I did radio duties, and there were a lot of black troops in the area and they were reporting in to Messina, their situation reports. And because of the accent and because of me not hearing the thing and the poor radio communications, I was battling to hear what they were saying. So that flew by, I can’t really remember much about that camp at all. And then, they, RPK, decided to move some guys through to Meyerton Commando. They wanted to transfer and my name was on to move to Meyerton Commando. So I thought, what the hell, I’m not going to Meyerton Commando. So I think, yes, I was staying in Meyerton at that time and so I think they thought well he’s living in Meyerton so we can transfer him to Meyerton Commando. So I said, no, I’m not going to Meyerton Commando, I want to transfer. So I got transferred back to RPK, and out of RPK, and I got transferred to Transvaal Scottish.
Interviewer	Ok, that’s when you got your first call up to…
Richard	Then I was there for a short while, the beginning of ’86, and they did an in-house training course, and I was promoted to a sergeant. And then in mid ’86 we went to Springs. So we were based in Springs but different platoons and different companies did different areas. We did Kwathema, Tsakane, and…I was in Kwathema. I had a Lieutenant Cowley, he was younger than I, he was into cricket, he loved his cricket things. He made sure I had an easy time. We had to normally go out early in the mornings and Lieutenant Cowley would get up and…I had three exceptional section leaders now. Justin Brown, I can’t remember the other guy, and Errol du Preez. These guys had also done many camps and been with The Jocks for a long time. They were far above section leader capability, they should have been platoon sergeant but because they wouldn’t come in on Tuesday night and like the people say, drink for their rank, they didn’t make platoon sergeants. So they came and did their duties in camp and things like that, and I mean, they used to wake up the guys, go out like this and then I’d say, why didn’t you wake me up and say go? No, no, no, you were sleeping so nicely. They used to bring me coffee in the morning and they were well organised. So the Loot and the section leaders did most of the jobs. That was the first time we went into the townships. It was different. What was striking really was the amount of people that were there, how dusty the area was, especially mid winter. How smoggy it was with all the fires. So we tried…the Transvaal Scottish where possible we wore our berets, Tam O’shanter, the normal one with the red hackle, and we wore that so that we would stick out to a certain extent. Sort of being of a more liberal persuasion we tried to sort of be more friendly with the local population, but obviously there were some times when we had to

	be a little bit heavy handed. I remember there was a youngster by the name of Archie in the area that seemed to be one of the comrades and running things. He was always skipping school so we kept an eye on him. We were driving around in a Buffel, from every which way you can, came down this road, came up that road, came this way, and we were going past a house and an old man came out and stopped us, he said, stop, stop! We said, what's wrong? He said, no, his grandson stays with him and his grandson smokes dagga and drinks beer and doesn't go to school, and we must come in and sort this guy out. So we went in, he wanted us to give this guy a hell of a lambasting. This Justin Brown took off his wet belt and gave this guy one hell of a smack. Took him on the Buffel and actually did it outside the school yard. And the old man was thankful that we did it. And then we kept an eye on this guy. More or less just following basic things. One guy we had was a panel beater and obviously been a dagga smoker at some stage or other, so he could see exactly when a dagga deal was going down. All of a sudden, stop! Hop out and you catch these guys with this arm of dagga. And then I remember one time we did something I suppose slightly nasty, we grabbed what was this suspected comrade and we put him in the Buffel and we made him drive around with us the whole day waving at his friends with a little bit of coercion from below, if he didn't want to co-operate we'd squeeze his knackers a bit. But otherwise we didn't beat him up or anything, but I think the thing is it would question if he was pro SADF or pro comrades now. So we put doubt in the comrades' mind, at least that was the intention. But otherwise…
	END OF SIDE B TAPE 2 *(counter at 385)*
	TAPE THREE SIDE A
Richard	…wandered around and tried to keep control. The general sort of thinking of the Transvaal Scottish was that we were sort of bringing stability to the area to prevent people that wanted to go to work and people that wanted to go from school, from being prevented. So anybody of a sort of moderate nature we were assisting. And the ones that were pro ANC and things like that well we'd assist the police and things and try identify these guys and catch them where possible.
Interviewer	Did you have police on the Buffel with you, or were they separate in their Casspirs?
Richard	No, no, we did our own things. Occasionally once or twice we had joint operations with the police where we would do the cordon operation and they would go and do the search operations and things like that. But we soon found that what we thought we'd picked up a comrade…we'd gone into a house and found banned literature like this, picked up a guy and delivered him to the cops, two days later we'd see him on the street. So it wasn't really working by handing the stuff over to the cops. We thought we were doing a hell of a big job, the guys being locked

	away. But he'd be released shortly afterwards. So I think we realised that we weren't really…we were only there for a short period of time. We were sort of really acclimatising. We don't speak the lingo, there wasn't really any military activity and we were sort of really dealing with small fry. School boys really and junior guys. Even…it was I think…well at least from my point of view, we were there just to add stability. And some people seemed quite friendly to us. There was one little incident that I remember that…no, that was the following year in Soweto at one of the railway stations. We had to go and ensure that the people…everybody was climbing on the trains and not paying. We had to ensure that everybody had a ticket. We were checking and there was this old guy that all of a sudden became *hardega*t. He wouldn't say if he had a ticket or if he didn't have a ticket. We said, ok, go sit down here, he stood up. Stand up, he sat down. Just sort of completely against everything that we said. And we had a couple of guys with dogs, and the dog bit this guy. It was unnecessary but…
Interviewer	This time, I mean, after your experiences in Namibia, and a little bit of Angola and stuff, did you sort of say, is this what being a soldier is about? Did you question whether this was a police job or a soldier job?
Richard	In the townships we thought no this is a crap thing. First of all you've got the principle of minimum force. So here you've got a Buffel, you've got machine guns, you've got a whole thing, but you can't really use it. You're not really schooled in civil unrest. You're just there as manpower. The cops are not really sort of assisting you. I mean, what you see as a comrade the cops are having a big chat and conversation where they seemed like big buddies, so you think where you're doing. So it was a thing that this is a job we have to do, may as well do it as well as you can, but your heart wasn't really in it. First of all, how do you identify a comrade or ANC? Everybody looks exactly the same. Without short of being sort of living there for a long time, you're scratching the surface really. And a lot of the thinking guys were thinking, ok, the army shouldn't be in this kind of thing. The army should be doing military stuff. Let the police do this. But it was just really as a backup for the police and the manpower really.
Interviewer	But in your mind you were there just to keep peace. You weren't suppressing people's protests, the right to vote or anything else?
Richard	No…we didn't really have any protest. A couple of times we saw stones across the road. I don't think there was any stone thrown at us, there were no Molotov cocktail thrown at us. There were no riotous assemblies. We were never shot at that I know of.
Interviewer	And I mean, you're a sergeant at that stage, would the senior officers have been part, or have attended JMC meetings, Joint Management Committee meetings, with the police? Were you part of those meetings?

Richard	No. Occasionally we would be briefed or so, but it would normally be a company commander than the OC, and an RSM and sometimes a CSM would go to those meetings and be briefed. The odd occasion we'd be told everything. We'd just go out on patrols and things during the day and then swop around, and then we'd just hand in what we know really.
Interviewer	And you weren't armed with shotguns or anything, you had your assault rifles?
Richard	We had R4s. I think some guys…maybe had…what do you call it…shotguns, they had shotguns yes. Had tear gas masks which no-one ever used. I think we had some smoke grenades.
Interviewer	Did you have tear gas? The 37 mm tear gas grenades?
Richard	Yes, I think so. It was like pretty casual. Like a civilian thing. wasn't too serious at all. I mean some of the officers that were there they used to go out every night, have a drink. I remember one time all the sergeants and officers went out in their kilts to Springs, and we went to a restaurant and we had a massive party. There were some girls in there by themselves and they took a particular interest in the Jocks because they wanted to know what we had under the kilt. I mean there was Tommy Hendricks, was a naughty officer there, and there was a Theo van Niekerk. Theo van Niekerk woke up in the morning, there was a parade that we had to be at, and he realised, shit, he looked, and there was a blond head in this little bunk next to him, one of the girls that he'd picked up in the night. Now everybody's on parade and Theo van Niekerk has got to be on parade and this girl's got to get out underneath. So this civilian car came screaming in, in the base, to the tents like this. Somebody hopped in and screamed out. What was that? No, no, no, but we heard that he'd managed to sneak this girl out now.
Interviewer	So he wasn't fighting much of a war, he was having a good time.
Richard	Yes, a good time. I mean, it was Theo van Niekerk, a candidate officer, Tommy Hendricks, he's a good soldier but a hell of a naughty guy, and…
Interviewer	So during this stage with these call ups did you notice at any time that there was a fall off in the numbers of guys showing up for call ups?
Richard	Yes, there was…the Transvaal Scottish had about 2000 guys on strength as such, and we used to go in on Tuesdays and we had a printed list of everybody in your company and in your platoon, and you had to regularly phone these guys to see if they were still at their place or if they'd moved out. I got a printed thing and put it into a file, and when we were on camp I'd find the guys' first names, so you'd know the guy's name was Pierre or Jack or Joe, so then you'd phone and say, *kan ek met Johannes praat?* And then the guy comes to the phone and you say, *hello Johannes dis Sersant Henry hierso*. Oh my fok! But the same guys more or

	less came up. Some guys always had excuses, some guys that were always studying or do something or other. But yes, we did battle to get a certain amount of guys, although we had sufficient guys, but sort of ’86, ’87 were still ok. ’88, ’89 I think it started slacking off with the amount of guys who wanted to come on camp.
Interviewer	Why do you think that was?
Richard	I think the guys got tired of it, they didn’t want to go particularly on the township duties. Or maybe they thought they’d done their duties. Especially, I think, after South Africa withdrew from Namibia, ’89, ’90. ’90 was a major change in the Defence Force, they closed down a whole lot of things like this. And it think they thought the war’s over.
Interviewer	And then after that period, you still had more camps that you did?
Richard	Yes.
Interviewer	When did you finally leave the SADF?
Richard	1996.
Interviewer	Did you see any major changes in the SADF after ’89, ’90?
Richard	Yes, after the townships and things we became mechanized. So now I think they’re looking at operations in Cuito and things like this. They have to have more Mech guys who form part of 72 Motorized Brigade. So the Transvaal Scottish was mechanized so we did a mech course. And I went down to Bloemfontein and I did a company 2IC course in mech, so then I was promoted to staff sergeant. So your officers and your sergeants and your lieutenants all did the same course and then the officers just a slightly different course, the company’s 2IC course. And then we went to Lohatla a couple of times and we did training there.
Interviewer	That’s the Army Battle School.
Richard	The army battle school, yes. But then a staff sergeant’s duty is really a supplier…he supplies. So you hang around with the sergeant major pretty much so, while the lieutenants and the corporals and the sergeants are really doing their duty outside. You make sure that the petrol and the oil and the diesels are full and the water gets done. So I didn’t particularly like it. I prefer the sort of frontline guys where you with the guys. And then the last camp at Lohatla that I remember, was only the leader group that went through. So you only had the OC, Commandant Grant Stevens, and the 2IC Major Page, and the company commanders and the officers. And the officers were doing the training. And the sergeants and the staff sergeants were then back at BS 1 and they had to do re-supply. And they used to have an order group with an RSM every evening and then they would tell us ok, this grid reference, you have to get these Ratels and these trucks and things to grid reference the officers and we’ll meet you over there. We’ve got to re-supply them with fuel and such like that. And

	there was a bit of a feud going between the RSM and the OC. The RSM I think was trying to prove that he couldn't get by without the assistance of the NCOs. So he used to go to the meeting and then we were then told, ok, you must meet the OC and his group at this time, but it gave us only half an hour to get 20 or 30 kms through the bush. Had to pick up all their vehicles. So when we arrived there we were arriving late. And we looked like *poephols* and I said to myself, ok, if you want to play, if I'm a pawn between the things, I did more than 720 days, my requirement for things, and I'd volunteered for the extra few camps and things like this. I said, if you want to play games like that, goodbye, I'm going, bye. So I left the Transvaal Scottish.
Interviewer	How did the integration period go, so after '94 I mean, you would have been there until '96. So that's when the integration of the Defence Force would have started with MK, APLA, and then the old SADF.
Richard	We had no contact…the Transvaal Scottish had no contact with MK, APLA or…
Interviewer	So you weren't around to offer advice or…?
Richard	It was all white guys still, no black officers, no black guys coming through, so I've had no experience with that whatsoever.
Interviewer	And then in '90, '91, 92, as you know in '93 there was lots of activity in the township, and also KwaZulu-Natal, did you camps during that period as well?
Richard	No, no. '91, '92, things like this were at Lohatla.
Interviewer	At Lohatla Army Battle School.
Richard	I remember one year we didn't have to do any camps at all. So we did…at that stage we were quite active. We did a Citizen Force weekend, all the senior sort of guys from Citizens Forces were flown from Joburg here down to Cape Town. We went to SAS unit, we had a sporting weekend. We did that. We had sporting parades at 72 Motorised Brigade. I used to initially assist with the Transvaal Scottish shooting team, so we used to go shooting. And then after that the officer left so then I sort of ran our shooting team. We used to get the rifles and ammunition and things and go shooting. Quite regularly I used to go shooting every like third week. Which is quite a…well officially you've got to do quite a lot of planning getting a range and getting the things, have medical, and ambulances like that. Quite difficult to arrange so it was more or less just guys going out there, putting the targets up and shooting.
Interviewer	I mean, you started as a National Serviceman in '79, so I mean, you saw pretty much, from '79 to '94, that was 15 years before South Africa changed government. Looking back on all that stuff, would you do it again? Did it change your perception of people? How did it affect you?

Richard	Yeah well…the threat was supposedly from Communism. Black African Nationalism wasn't an issue really, it wasn't pushed. We were just really used as a pawn in Namibia. One can look at the thing and say, ok, well, the Soviet Union was up to that stage was still very strong, was still exporting arms and their philosophy to a lot of African countries. The Angolans and things were strongly supporting SWPO. Unita was a hedge between NPLA and drawing off a lot of forces of SWAPO to fight against the things. And…well I didn't know that at the time, drawing off a lot of ANC guys who were in training camps there. ANC were then forced to assist the MPLA because the MPLA had given them facilities. So yes…the whole of Okavango and Caprivi was really free of SWAPO activity because of Unita had been in that area. And I think also the Defence Force sort of put in a wedge between the Kavangas, the Caprivians and Ovambos. Making them different. And then with world politics with Margaret Thatcher coming in, in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in…was it 1980 or something…you had a more conservative western governments from when Jimmy Carter was there. So with Reagan in there at least South Africa seemed to be…constructive engagement was the term I think. the Defence Force on the manufacturing side was making a whole lot of equipment, bringing out new stuff which was apparently the best in the world. It had all been battle tested. A lot of the guys had battle experience and things like that, although it was the same guys that had served as 101 Battalion commanders or 61 Mech Battalion, that became the Colonels and things running the fights. So I think I would have probably done it again, although you now, at my age, now you realise you were a pawn. Some politician decides ok, we've got to go in and have this here for this so that we've got a stronger bargaining point at the conference. And at the conference what do they…sit down, they sit and have a whiskey together or have a cup of coffee together and then some guy gets upset and they pull out. And now another 5000 troops must do service because of the politicians. I mean it could have been done so much easier. I'm of the opinion that South Africa being in Namibia and serving there maybe did break down or add to Russia's ills and ways of ascending things. And then with Glasnost and Perestroika coming in, I think the threat of Communism and Russian backed forces in Namibia, and things came to an end and the Cubans eventually withdraw. And then it was just the Angolans, and the South Africans officially said, we don't have any fight directly with FAPLA or MPLA, and I think they realised at one stage they'd have to have free elections in Namibia. So I think that it came as a bit of a surprise that SWAPO had such a majority. And then I think after PW Botha became sick and FW took over, FW is not a military man at all. I mean, he took Magnus Malan who was a Minister of Defence and made him Minister of Forestry. And Breytenbach became Minister of Defence. And at the time of Codesa, or just afterwards, Rolf Meyer became Minister of Defence. And what military experience did he have? He was in the airforce choir, he was a canary as they called him. So that's

	the high profile that the Defence Force had in the early nineties. Coming back from Namibia, all the equipment was withdrawn, they closed all the units, Three Two Battalion and 61 Mech disbanded eventually. Three Two Battalion going into the townships in KwaZulu-Natal, I think that was a problem. First of all the guys looked black but they speak Portuguese. And apparently there were cases of…they said that they raped a whole lot of women and abuse and things. There's a report there that says no, that they weren't and they were set up. Obviously the ANC would like to get rid of Three Two Battalion any way they can, so I think they sort of waylaid them that way. And again, Three Two Battalion were pretty unrestricted in Namibia. And what they said went. Again they were soldiers who could do what they liked. Here in the townships you're policemen really. So maybe they were a little bit heavy handed.
Interviewer	If you look at that new military monument in Pretoria where the fallen in the struggle to end apartheid are commemorated, they refused to put up the names of the guys who served in the SADF, because the SADF supported apartheid. Did you ever view your services supporting apartheid?
Richard	I suppose you were supporting apartheid but you weren't directly supporting apartheid. The Defence Force was supposed to be apolitical. They're supposed to serve the government of the time. Just like now, you might vote for the DA but if you're serving in the military, you serve the ANC government. So I mean…at that time I was there, my family and myself, we always voted for the UP…
Interviewer	The United Party which then became the New Republic Party and then the Progressive Federal Party*. (this is incorrect – the Progressive Party evolved into the Progressive Federal Party. Mike Cadman)*
Richard	Yes, Progressive Federal Party, but the government was run by the National Party really, so I didn't vote for the National Party but…
Interviewer	What's your view of this government's refusal to put the names of SADF soldiers who fell in action at that memorial?
Richard	Well, initially I thought ok, it's a freedom plaque, so I thought well SADF guys wouldn't be there, SADF guys could be like at Fort Klapperkop. You could have two different memorials. And I thought it was quite conciliatory initially when it was mentioned, these guys were…put SADF guys in Freedom Park, it would be very nice if both sides would actually mean that in a conciliatory manner. Although I suppose, the SADF, if you look at it from a specific point of view, did fight for freedom. The point of view is that if they didn't fight, you would have had maybe outside influences, and you wouldn't have maybe had a peaceful transition. I don't know. But if it's not really a true meaning…if it's, ok, well we've got to have it because it's the opposition well then it's better maybe not to have it then. There's some people

	apparently that don't want their name associated there because they see it as a political move. Ok, these guys names are like this, and they now agree with ANC politics, which maybe they don't. It would be nice if it was real reconciliation between two sides and you could have the names and everybody really sort of could agree that it's one country and one nation. But unless it's like that, then it's possibly better to have two memorials. Fort Klapperkop is there to a certain extent, which is not really much of a memorial.
Interviewer	In your experience, I mean, obviously working with the regiments you have, you probably know an awful lot of guys who did camps…some guys who saw action in Angola and so on and so forth. Have all of the guys coped with what they saw or what they did, or are there guys who are still struggling with some of their experiences from the army?
Richard	Yes…my brother…I don't know of any action that he was in…he seemed to have struggled with the thing…
Interviewer	In what sense?
Richard	I don't know…I think…he's been fighting this imaginary war in my opinion. At one stage he needed some psychological assistance from the army, which he got, and they seem to have sorted him out a bit. But at one stage he was very, very, very aggressive, extremely aggressive. He initially served in stores and then joined 21 Battalion. And he appeared to be very involved in the thing, he became the adjutant there. And then…I don't know, for personal reasons the army for him was changing too much. I think it had become more sociable. People, even though they served in the army, think that you give a guy an instruction he does it. The new army is like more up for debate. Which is…a lot of people can't take. The army is not debatable. The man in charge gives the instructions, you follow it. So I think things were already starting to change and then he left the Defence Force. And then went into the security line, where he met up with other guys in the security line, bad influences and things, and I think he just became even more aggressive. And so I think…he now lives in Ireland and I think he slowly but surely coming to terms with the thing. I think he also…he probably felt let down that the Defence Force buckled to ANC…
Interviewer	That's one last question I was going to ask. A lot of the guys, you spend a long time going off into the army, two years and then camps and so on so forth, are there guys who are sort of resentful saying, hell we spent all that time countering Communism yet in our present cabinet we've got Communists?
Richard	Yes, I think there is, generally speaking people think it was a waste of time, they spent a lot of time, a lot of effort, maybe lost a friend or two, although not all that many guys were killed. But it's an experience, you're young, keeps you fit. I think it made a whole generation of South Africans quite macho and aggressive

	you know…
Interviewer	In a good way or a bad way?
Richard	In a good way and in a certain way you wouldn't take crap. If you needed to go do something you would do it. now…ok, now we're in a sort of a more democratic thing, but I think it's made us more…what's it's name…metrosexual type thing. More like a David Beckham type thing. I don't know. Before it was a male's environment and now it's not a male environment at all. The whole of South Africa is not a male environment. But I think there's a whole generation of guys that have served, that are now sort of battling with that they haven't been recognised. Their service hasn't been recognised and there are a lot of people that would like to tell their stories. In a lot of cases your army service is probably the hardest thing that you've ever done. I mean, you go with your 4x4 into the veld now, you've got all the facilities, it's not anywhere near what you experienced in the Defence Force. The heat that you experience now is now what you think. The cold and the lack of food and the lack of water. I drank my own urine I was so bloody thirsty.
Interviewer	So some guys are a bit resentful, saying, well hell we sacrificed a lot of our youth doing this stuff but we've got no recognition for it.
Richard	Yes, I think recognition. Even…were you on the losing side? Maybe. That's maybe a bit hard to take. Because militarily really the Defence Force wasn't beaten. '94 the Defence Force still had plenty of going. We had plenty of guys still serving and plenty of equipment. But it would have been stupid to carry on sort of fighting an internal war. Everybody's a South African really. Much easier to talk…politicians to talk. Sort that out.
Interviewer	So how do the disappointed guys sort of deal with that disappointment? Do they just sort of sit on it and nurse it, or do they drink too much in the pub or…?
Richard	Yes, I think some guys drink too much. Other guys just keep quiet about it. I think whereas you had masses and masses and masses of guys sort of interested in the military line before, I think they've sort of put it on the side, put it in a little box, put it away, it's happened. At the museum here comparatively, we get a minute amount of people that served in the border war coming to here and showing an interest. There are very, very few people. Generally speaking South Africans know nothing about their military now. They seem to be a few members serving, not National Servicemen, they're Citizen Force which is very, very small. There's short service and Permanent Force, which is also reasonably small. The Defence Force of South Africa has become more like New Zealand Defence Force where the military is this tiny little aspect of civilian life. Whereas before it was a major aspect. The Securocrats were the main things in the government. Everybody had to do military service. You were sort of bound for 720 days, and maybe up to the age of 55. So it was a sort of image forming and major thing in a white man's life at

	least at that stage. Which has now changed completely, which has freed you from that thing and sort of opened your eyes that…I mean, I know now at my age, I probably would never serve in an army. First of all the age and also I'd probably be…you'd just find you're a pawn in some other politician's game. So I might be a resistor now. *Laughs* Or a conscientious objector.
Interviewer	That's very interesting. This is your industry pretty much s I think you have a lot of time to think about it, and I think you're right. I think a lot of the guys do just put it in a box and say…there it was.
	END OF SIDE A *(counter at 399)*
	SIDE B *(counter at 15)*
Richard	But if you speak to guys that enjoyed their military careers, over a beer, you know there's something definitely lacking. The breakdown, or the non-existence now of the Commando systems and the non-existence really of the Citizen Force. I mean the Citizen Force was the main body of men that the Defence Force could call on. You could have five hundred thousand, six hundred thousand guys in the Citizen Force they could call on for manpower. And they weren't territorials or weren't Dad's Army. All those guys had done their two years National Service, all very well trained. The officer that was a captain, that was there…ok, maybe he's slightly less qualified than a Permanent Force, but more qualified in life really. Because I mean, some of the Permanent Force guys, especially the junior guys were pretty restricted in their outlook.
Interviewer	Was there a difference between the attitude of an Afrikaans speaking National Serviceman and an English speaking National Serviceman? Just as a general…
Richard	There was a thing and the Afrikaners liked to play it up that the Afrikaners were far more patriotic. And the English would definitely run at the last…at the thing. And then there's a big thing about the Afrikaners liked to call you Soutpiel, that you had one foot in England, one foot in South Africa. And I think English guys to a certain extent weren't overtly patriotic. But some of the guys there…some English speaking guys joined Special Forces and enjoyed their time, and other guys thought, ok, well, I'm going to give it my all, I'm enjoying it, I'm fit, I'm strong. It was nothing there that was too difficult to do. So you enjoyed it to a certain extent. Other guys enjoyed the military thing. They're people that enjoy the sort of soldiering thing. Some people enjoy the pub activity and the sort of spit and polish things. Other guys enjoy the equipment. I'm one that more enjoys the equipment and the battle and the firearms and things like that, instead of sort of…I don't think anybody…or very few people enjoy the killing aspect of it.
Interviewer	Is there anything you want to add about what the army did to

	people, how it changed your perception of the world, how it's affected you in the long term? Put yourself in the shoes of an historian 20 years down the line, is there anything that they should be aware of? What happened to young white guys in those years?
Richard	From an historian's point of view, there just seems to be very little recorded. And there's a major amount of people out there to tap information, like we're doing now. We've got to get all these stories, we've got to get all the things, every person's got a different swing on the thing. But you've really got to do this…from when National Service became compulsory in '68 right until 1991 when it changed back to a year. It's a major portion of your life. The best of times and the worst of times and the hottest time, all of it came in the army. The drunkest time, when you were the drunkest. When you're the hottest and thirstiest, the hungriest, all the army.
Interviewer	You're right, nobody can get drunk quite like a soldier can.
	END OF INTERVIEW *(counter at 56)*

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