

Henry Combrink                      16/01/08  
 Missing Voices Project            Interviewed by Mike Cadman

	SIDE A
Interviewer	A little bit about your background?
Henry	I was born in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. My dad's very Afrikaans. Long historical lineage going back to Piet Retief, Andries Pretorius, believe it or not. My mother's English. Scottish and German mix. I went to Daniel Pienaar which is a predominantly Afrikaans technical school with a small English contingent. So I was brought up English. From there I went to study computers at Port Elizabeth Technikon. Qualified a bit late there, end of '91. And then was called up, in the very last call up to the army. Did my basic training at 1 South African Infantry Battalion at Bloemfontein, which was very hot during the day and dusty and extremely cold at night. Bitterly cold. Really crapped off initially because I was 25 years old, a hell of a lot older than the other guys in my squad...platoon. But once I was fit, smoking fit unbelievably, I absolutely loved it. The sense of camaraderie, team spirit and all that. It was ok, I enjoyed it. And thereafter because I was professionally qualified the army sent me to Pretoria at Voortrekkerhoogte, the personnel services school. Did some boring admin courses there and then from there they sent me to Pietersburg at Far North Command.
Interviewer	You went and studied so you're a bit older than the other guys, when your call up papers arrived...I presume they first arrived at school and you got deferment so that you could study?
Henry	Correct.
Interviewer	When did you finish school?
Henry	End of '87 and then went and studied.
Interviewer	So at that stage the war in Angola was still raging, Cuito Cuanavale was in '87, but you decided that you wanted to study first. You obviously had no idea of what was going to happen politically in the country. But by the time you'd finished studying, Mandela had been out of jail for almost a year, more by the time you went into the army. What were your feelings about the call up? Did you feel, well is there a point to this all?
Henry	Yes...there was a sense of pointlessness. What the hell is this all about? Am I going to go sit on my ass somewhere for a year or two and do nothing? When I could be working. At the time, my greatest fear was that I was going to be a year or two behind everyone else in my field. My peers were going to rush ahead, because in my field experience is everything, absolutely everything. That was my greatest fear that I was going to be behind professionally. And also on the political side, there was a sense of pointlessness. Like you said, Mandela was free and

	there was going to be a new dispensation soon and I was going to waste my time.
Interviewer	Did you contemplate just not going to the army and saying to them, listen guys, I'm not going, do what you want, I'm going to go and get into business?
Henry	Well there was a sense of ambivalence. I mean, I still felt like a part of me wanted to do his duty and do what everyone else has done. All my school friends had gone to the army and did a full two years and a lot of them had seen action. So I did feel like I had to go.
Interviewer	And what did your family think about it?
Henry	I think they were just glad to see me get a bit disciplined, get a haircut, and... <i>laughs</i> because I had a bush of long curly black hair.
Interviewer	And you'd enjoyed student life for a while.
Henry	I did.
Interviewer	And then you get to 1 SAI, which has got a reputation of being a tough place to do basics and a tough place to learn how to be an infantryman. What was the sort of mindset of the military at that stage? Were they still as much into the sort of Total Onslaught as the guys were in the eighties? I went to the military in the seventies and the Total Onslaught was everything. That was the reason to be there and you were constantly reminded that you were there to combat Communist expansionism. What was the mindset when you got there?
Henry	You know what...it was pretty much...it obviously had changed by then because then it was more a sense of, we have to kind of...almost like put down or suppress the people in townships. It's hard to describe. There was this overwhelming sense of, ok, the war is almost over but don't worry we still have to go and put down or suppress this element in the townships that wants to cause trouble and that kind of nonsense. So it was still very <i>paraat</i> but the focus seemed to have changed.
Interviewer	So your basics would have been similar to the basics of somebody going there ten years prior to you. Can you give me an idea of what your basics were like?
Henry	The basic training wasn't 6 months, it was compressed into I think, 8 weeks or something. So obviously, I have nothing else to compare it to. I don't know what anyone else's was like.
Interviewer	I can tell you, it was a lot of running, a lot of <i>opfok</i> and <i>rondfok</i> and all that stuff.
Henry	Yes, it was day in, day out. It was actually a blur, quite frankly. You fell into bed at ten o'clock at night. Somehow you fucking got up at four o'clock and just cleaned a few things and make the bed and then it was just running and running and running and

	running. When you stopped it was to listen to some instruction on a weapon or something. And then run and run and run and run. I must say the first two weeks, I don't know how I got through. I was very often on the point of, on the verge of vomiting from exhaustion and pain. But like I say, once I was fit <i>laughs</i> I actually kind of enjoyed it. It was almost like a feeling of invincibility, well you can't hurt me anymore. And so I just went along with it. But yes, this over here ( <i>shows a scar on his forehead</i> ) was actually from running.
Interviewer	That scar?
Henry	Running around barracks, and someone opened a window or something and I just smashed into it. It doesn't look like much now but it bled like a bitch.
Interviewer	I can imagine that because of thin skin on your forehead.
Henry	Oh yes, it just spurts. So it was just weeks and weeks of running. The first couple of weeks were hell and thereafter I started to get used to it.
Interviewer	And then you get through that and you say that you had prior education so you were older than the other guys and they then sent you to Services School in Pretoria.
Henry	That's right.
Interviewer	And what did you do there?
Henry	Just carried on running. They seemed to have been told that people who came there, or soldiers who came there, were told there's going to be PT assignment, so they took on the attitude of ok well we're going to grind that attitude into the dust and so we carried on running and running and running. So I really didn't let up there. We did kind of expect things would become a bit more civilised now, and we'd go to classes and we did go to classes but in between everything else we were running.
Interviewer	What were those classes focused on?
Henry	Administration rubbish. The military protocols and how to fill out their stupid forms...oh my god, it was just rubbish. I don't remember any of it! <i>laughs</i>
Interviewer	That means the military hadn't changed much, they were always...
Henry	Stupid codes, slash this, slash that, everything had a meaning. I suppose that's the way they work.
Interviewer	When you got there, did you see black soldiers around?
Henry	Umm, at the beginning of it yes, surprisingly. There was one or two squads at personnel services school, that were almost exclusively black. That was actually the first time I'd seen that. Something else that was interesting was that, that was the first

	time I saw a black corporal, instructor with a white squad. <i>Laughs</i>
Interviewer	That's very interesting because certainly as you know in the seventies and eighties you had some specialist units who were black guys in like 32 Battalion, Koevoet, although those were the police. And then there were some Special Forces operators who were black, but you wouldn't have seen as standard sort of 1 SAI infantry unit with a black corporal in charge of a white squad. So by that stage the army was already changing.
Henry	In fact I think at 1 SAI there was the platoon further down from us, their corporal was a coloured corporal. They gave gas.
Interviewer	I know it wasn't your platoon, but essentially the corporal was a corporal irrespective...
Henry	Exactly. Pretty much. And you were terrified of them all. You did not dare even look askance at them.
Interviewer	Did that surprise you that, you talk about being terrified of corporals and rank, when you went into the army did you know what to expect or was it just a bit of a shock to you when you finally got to...?
Henry	I had no idea what to expect really. It was a real shock. Travelling on the bus, the army obviously they end out buses or use public transport, but the buses I came up on was, it didn't have cushion seats, it had planks. And we're travelling 14/16 hours from Port Elizabeth in this trundling bloody bus to Bloemfontein. I just lay down on the floor to sleep, it was like... <i>laughs</i> But escorting us was this one star lootie, with a weapon and so forth. And he kind of spoke now and again and he was like good luck. We left, he said like, gave a little prayer, god be with you. And I thought oh my shit! <i>Laughs</i> ... If he's giving a prayer!.. And of course you hear these rumours the army can claim ten percent of all trainees that they're allowed to kill off or die, whatever the case may be. So I didn't know what to expect. And from the moment we set foot we just never stopped running.
Interviewer	And then you got through the boredom of Pretoria and then you got sent to Pietersburg to Northern Transvaal Command.
Henry	Yes. Far North Command. Afrikaans Kommandement Ver Noord. Never forget it. I think that's when the boredom really set in. Because once you're trained and if not actively out doing patrols or whatever, the army doesn't know what the hell to do with you. So you sit on your ass and do admin work.
Interviewer	Was that was all that was expected of you was admin work?
Henry	Yes, initially I was assigned to a Colonel who was the aide to the General. I think he was a two star general, Pretorius. Pretorius at the time who became chief of army not long after. There I did some computer work. But then when the aid to the brigadier...I forget the brigadier's name...but Colonel Opperman, who was the aid to the brigadier, and he was involved in the intelligence

	and counter intelligence community of Far North, with the farmers and the northern borders. When he found out about my computer skills and he then drafted me into his department, and that's when I got involved with developing systems for the intelligence community. We had computer systems, data bases and that kind of nonsense. That's when it wasn't so boring, quite frankly. Then at least I could use my skills.
Interviewer	But you wouldn't have been privy to any particular information that they were gathering, you were just putting in systems?
Henry	Predominantly I developed systems so that their outlying units could make acquisitions for their weaponry and their supplies that they needed. Those kind of acquisition systems so that the command could track it and process it. And then develop data base systems to assist the intelligence community basically to gather information. That's all it was.
Interviewer	And so you sat there for what, the rest of your training?
Henry	Yes, basically. In fact that phase of it I enjoyed so much that I actually signed up for another year.
Interviewer	Did you stay on for another year?
Henry	Yes. In fact I think I stayed on for another two years.
Interviewer	So you went into the army in '91, what January?
Henry	Let's say the beginning of '92.
Interviewer	And then you stayed until '94 or '95.
Henry	Until the end of '94. So I was in the army when I voted.
Interviewer	What was the sort of the mindset...you mentioned that Noord Transvaal was fairly sort of paraat and they made big rugby players in that part of the world, big farmers too. What was the mindset...because by '92 you had the Chris Hani assassination, '93, '94 there were right-wing bombings at the airport and stuff, and '94 Mandela becomes President. What was the mindset in the army? Was there concern that the country was changing out of control? Was there sort of discussion about it? Or was it a case of, well we're soldiers and we just serve the state?
Henry	I think it was a mixture. I remember speaking to the colonel about that, because in the offices it's a fairly relaxed environment. I think the prevailing sentiment was, yes, we just do our duty and do as we're told, pretty much. But there was also an undercurrent of, this is going to be a stuff-up.
Interviewer	But at the time there were no sort of briefings or anything with everybody saying, well listen, we're on standby for chaos and revolution?
Henry	No, not really. Not that I recall, although there were more patrols were sent out, as far as I recall.

Interviewer	There was a lot of stuff happening.
Henry	It was a very fluid time, wasn't it. Although we had a couple of training sessions just before the elections about what to do if there was a terrorist attack on the command, and we had some Special Forces coming in to play the role of the baddies and people were assigned certain roles, etc, etc. And that was the extent of it I think.
Interviewer	During that time did you carry a rifle or were you sort of...?
Henry	No. We were given the option to carry hand weapons and quite a few of the young boys did because it was cool to do so. But I couldn't be bothered.
Interviewer	And you were in Pietersburg itself?
Henry	That's right.
Interviewer	Did you sort of have a relatively easy time? Did you have free access to go out on a Friday night with your mates with a sort of pass and stuff like that?
Henry	Pretty much. You first had to justify why you wanted to stay outside the main barracks. But once you were out you were on your own. You went to work during the day and you went home at night.
Interviewer	So for you in the end it was a sort of pretty much a sort of 8-5 job.
Henry	Pretty much, yes.
Interviewer	Were you required to stand guard duty or any of that stuff?
Henry	Oh god, yes. The RSM decided at one point that...I think there were some...I don't know where...but there were some thefts of weaponry somewhere in the country from army bases. People walked in and walked out with the shit. People preparing for the worst I reckon. And you know, the sense I got was that, oh well, the only troopies we can trust are the white ones. So the black guards were pulled off and even had the flipping office workers carrying rifles and shit.
Interviewer	Which you hadn't used in a long time.
Henry	Exactly!
Interviewer	You could have battled to hit a bus that was stationary?.
Henry	<i>Laughs</i> Although, no, no, I was pretty...I loved shooting. I loved it. But yes, it was silly. Here you're doing guard duty from...I forget the hours but it was ridiculous. And then you're expected to go and do office work as well. it was exhausting. But luckily that didn't carry on forever, but it was for a couple of months that we had to do that.
Interviewer	Was that just prior to '94 elections, that would have been April?

Henry	I think it was just before or just after, I'm not sure. It was during that weird period.
Interviewer	And the guards, you say the black guards, were they part of your unit or were they guys from outside from another unit just sent to guard the base?
Henry	No, they were generally people or troops who worked with us at the base.
Interviewer	And were they disarmed? If they were taken off guard duty were they disarmed of their firearms?
Henry	Well look, generally speaking, no-one was really armed anyway.
Interviewer	So when you went on guard duty you had to go and draw a rifle?
Henry	Exactly. So the black soldiers weren't necessarily disarmed.
Interviewer	But they were just taken off guard duty for a couple of months.
Henry	Yes.
Interviewer	Did anybody ever explain why?
Henry	No, no. Just do as you're told.
Interviewer	Well that's typical military. This is what we've decided and you will do it.
Henry	Yes, absolutely.
Interviewer	In your training, when you were still at 1 SAI, and sort of doing the difficult stuff and being taught how to use firearms...you probably knew how to use a firearm, but nevertheless taught how to use military firearms. Was there any talk of what it was like in Angola or like in Namibia, or were there sort of war stories as it was?
Henry	There were lots of stories about guys who'd gone, <i>bos befok</i> was the expression. Shell shocked or whatever the correct term is. And as basic training was drawing to an end there was a lot of fear or talk amongst the guys about who'd been sent where, because. Because you know guys in the unit, you are split up and just flung left right and centre. And a lot of guys went to Lohatla and some guys went to some active units. So yes, they just filled slots wherever they needed them.
Interviewer	And in those days they would have served in the townships then.
Henry	Exactly. In fact when I was in Pretoria, there was one evening where I was scheduled to go out on patrols in some local township. But they then chose those squads for whatever reason.
Interviewer	Was there much talk about what was going on in the townships?
Henry	Not really, no. It was actually pretty quiet.
Interviewer	I think it depends on where you were.

Henry	Exactly.
Interviewer	It's a bit like Namibia. If you were in Tsumeb it would have been pretty quiet except for a brief period in '86. I think that's the nature of the army. There's some guys who are seeing all sorts of things happening...
Henry	And guys who are seeing nothing, like in our case. personnel Services School, nothing.
Interviewer	And then you made a decision to stay on because you enjoyed the work. For you it was about computers. That's what you cared about.
Henry	Yes.
Interviewer	And then what made you decide to leave? Money?
Henry	Money and boredom. Yes. It became clear to me after another year that this really was a dead end street. And I knew that things were going to change in the army. It was inevitable. No-one could expect it to remain the same. And those who did expect it were fools. In terms of it being a white enclave. So yes, boredom and money.
Interviewer	When '94 happened and Mandela became the president and so on, was there any sort of talk about it amongst your colleagues? There must have been talk about it, because you voted and so on and so forth. Was there a surprise, was there just a case of inevitability, saying, well we expected that? What was the response?
Henry	From?
Interviewer	Your colleagues sitting at Northern Transvaal Command?
Henry	Umm...it's hard to recall specifically. I think the general consensus was that it was inevitable, there was nothing you could do about it. The de facto head of the military, which was the president at the time, had made the decision and you just had to go ahead with it.
Interviewer	But there wasn't guys saying, well this is it, I'm out of here. I'm not going to stay around South Africa any longer.
Henry	Maybe not where I was because it was predominantly Afrikaans there and those guys are more patriotic than most I think.
Interviewer	So they simply said, this is our country, we're staying, we're not going anywhere.
Henry	Yes, pretty much, pretty much.
Interviewer	Thinking about it now, you spent a good few years of your sort of mid twenties there. If you were asked...if I took you back now to 1991, would you volunteer to do it again or would you have followed another course?



Henry	No, I'd probably do it again. I'd probably do it again. It's not something that I'd want to repeat but I'm glad that I went through it.
Interviewer	From what point of view?
Henry	Well...did my duty I suppose. I still feel it was my duty even to this day. I had to play my part. And it's sad because whenever I think about it now I'm filled with a sense of sadness and emptiness about it because it seems to have been for nothing in a way. I don't know how to explain that.
Interviewer	Did you see yourself as defending the South Africa of the National Party government, or did you see yourself as defending South Africa as a country?
Henry	Just as a country. Just as a country. I was never a supporter of the National Party. I despise the whole Afrikaner take on the situation. It just didn't gel with me, even when I was a teenager. I mean, I didn't have black friends because it just wasn't done, but there was the world of the black gardeners and stuff, and I befriended them and I just didn't see them as different in a way. maybe because I was brought up English from my mother's side. But my father strangely enough he wasn't overtly racist. Mainly I think because his upbringing was even more strict than a traditional Afrikaans. He was a 7 <sup>th</sup> Day Adventist of all things. which is hectically traditional in their way of thinking and the way they operate. But they were less rabid than some others.
Interviewer	Were you at all religious?
Henry	Not really, no.
Interviewer	So church parade on a Sunday was a case of who had the best tea and koeksisters.
Henry	Laughs yes, pretty much. I count myself lucky because my dad broke away and he ran away to the navy for Four years after he matriculated, because his upbringing was extremely strict and he looked after the cattle and this kind of thing. But his religious instruction was extremely oppressive so he ran away and he never forced anything on us kids.
Interviewer	And when you went in to 1 SAI, you say you did it because you were patriotic and you were proud of South Africa and wanted to defend South Africa. What was your perception of who the enemy was? Because certainly the Cuban, Russian, Angolan thing had gone away. But there was lots of stuff happening internally in South Africa. So who was the enemy?
Henry	I don't know. I actually don't know. I didn't view those that lived in the townships as the enemy. But I suppose like many, I believed the propaganda that was fading at the time, that there was something to defend and there were those that needed defending from. Whatever that was.

Interviewer	So in sort of summary, you feel that certainly as a youngster it taught you a bit of self discipline, it got you fit again after student life and so on. But in the long run it was a positive experience.
Henry	It actually was a positive experience, yes. Made a lot of good friends. Really got to know the sense of camaraderie and team work and so forth. Certain aspects that...I just loved it. Because you had no responsibility, in a sense.
Interviewer	In other words the military, because of the structure of the military and the nature of the military, decisions were taken out of your hands.
Henry	Exactly.
Interviewer	You did what you were told.
Henry	It was wonderful that way. I can't imagine anything better. And compare that to now <i>laughs</i> holy shit!
Interviewer	Are there any other aspects that you think are worth...if you were trying to inform somebody ten years down the road what it was like in the SADF, are there any aspects that you can think of?
Henry	Not really. There were times, out of extreme boredom, I did some stupid things, I took some drugs. Hoping that the time passed by faster.
Interviewer	Was that a common thing at that stage in the army?
Henry	No, not at all. I remember being called up and in the initial interview before basics started, they'd ask you, have you taken drugs? I wasn't drugging or anything. But I had tried dope as a student. And I mentioned that stupidly. No, no, I've tried that. <i>laughs</i> Geez and psychiatrists and...if you have a problem we can help you get through it and yada yada. For god sakes, I just mentioned it in passing.
Interviewer	That's interesting, so they actually had a psychiatrist on hand?
Henry	Yes, female. Pretty one.
Interviewer	Goodness gracious, that's very unusual because I mean, if you go back to the eighties, there were guys who had been in Angola for nine months at a time and there was no counselling of any sort offered.
Henry	A few of my school friends who went to Angola, they got no help. And they certainly needed some.
Interviewer	I'm sure, I'm meeting guys now who still 25 years later, or 20 years later, are struggling. So you admit to that and then you had to convince them that you were actually alright.
Henry	Yes.
Interviewer	The traditional culture in the army was one of alcohol. There were many guys who regaled you with tales of treacherous...

Henry	I'd sit and join in afterwards at Far North Command in the evenings and just drink because there was nothing else to do. lips would go numb then I'd know I've had enough. <i>Laughs</i>
Interviewer	That's a useful benchmark. Was there any time, whether it was the basics or any time, was there any time that you thought no, this is crazy, what am I doing this for?
Henry	Oh, every day. During the first few weeks, every day. Oh my fuck I can't take this any more. I need to get out. Because it's relentless. Absolutely. Towards the end of it, it was the same thing but for different reasons. Then I realised I'm wasting my time now. I need to get out of this. What was weird for me was, when I started working on intelligence side, was having...because I needed clearance. What was weird was having these people from Pretoria going to Uitenhage and interviewing your friends and family and all kinds of things. That was weird I must confess, finding out about it afterwards.
Interviewer	What sort of questions did they ask? Did they just want to know what you did and...?
Henry	Yes, it was pretty...personal questions, they would ask a lot of personal questions about who I was and what I was like? Was I gay? Did I have gambling issues? Did I have drug issues? Did I this, that and the other? I suppose the idea is to find if anyone could get some kind of handle on me, or leverage and that kind of crap.
Interviewer	Did they ask if you were involved in student politics or anything like that?
Henry	I don't know. I would presume they did ask things like that.
Interviewer	That's quite sort of an in depth examination of you.
Henry	Yes, it is. They examine your finances and everything. It was bizarre.
Interviewer	And the guys you were in with, you say you had some sort of fairly hectic times running around and being exhausted and you build friendships that way. Are you friends with some of the guys still?
Henry	Surprisingly not. You just drift apart. I think it's, you're forced together, thrust together for that brief period of time and afterwards well you actually have nothing in common anymore.
Interviewer	But you're still clearly interested in that time because you pointed out that your brother-in-law got you onto that SA soldier website that you felt sufficiently interested to go into and...
Henry	And actually make a comment. I don't know what it is, like I say, it's like a sense of loss or a sense of something that was great in a way and horrible in another way. But I don't know how to explain it.

Interviewer	Have you read that entire website?
Henry	No, no. Just a lot of the comments and some of the stories about drinking and...
Interviewer	And have you gone into any of the other websites because there's a couple with a lot of stories about Angola and stuff like that?
Henry	I haven't had a chance. To be honest I'm so busy.
Henry	... just before the elections...two things come to mind. Several months before the elections, there was this scurry of administrative work to get...because it became obvious to my mind, because of the paper work that they were doing, that there were hordes of black soldiers, permanent soldiers, that were not on the books. Not on the books in the sense of administratively, they were just not in the data base.
Interviewer	Were these guys who had been Umkhonto we Sizwe soldiers...?
Henry	No, no, no, no. I'm talking about South African...
Interviewer	Non MK.
Henry	Exactly. And I don't know to what extent they were not on the books. And luckily I can talk about this because this wasn't classified or anything. It may have had something to do with medical, it may have had something to do with pensions, I don't know. But the point is, several months before the elections, a group of us, with a task team put together, with a lootie, and off we went to Pretoria, the main archives...I don't know where in Pretoria, I forget now. But there were just buildings and buildings and buildings of those drawer cabinets, of files, millions of files. Files on everyone. All the soldiers. And we had to complete, or get things up to date there in a hurry, before the elections.
Interviewer	That's very interesting. So these were black soldiers from the South African Defence Force, like 121 Battalion, and Battalion...
Henry	I don't know what battalions but I know that they were all black.
Interviewer	Would they have been homeland soldiers? From KwaNdebele or Lebowa or...?
Henry	You know what, I can't remember. I don't recall specifics. But it could have been that.
Interviewer	But there was a rush at the time.
Henry	Yes. To get certain paper work done and before the time.
Interviewer	Was there any pressure on you to make sure that your files on Citizen Force guys and things like that were up to date, in case there was a major call up?
Henry	Not that I recall, no. Not really. I would assume those files were all up to date.

Interviewer	They probably were. I was just curious to know if there was any extra pressure bearing in mind what you...
Henry	They were meticulous about their paper work. They were just not that meticulous when it came to the black members. Suddenly there was a need for it. <i>laughs</i> And also several months before the time there was this rush to get white officers trained up quickly. There was suddenly...or you would notice that a white corporal before, or a white sergeant, now suddenly was a one star lootie. There was this thing about getting as many white officers trained up as quickly as possible.
Interviewer	Why do you think that was?
Henry	I don't know. I think maybe because they knew that certain people were going to lose their jobs. There was going to be a lot of culling and if you weren't a certain rank or a certain position, well, you were going to go. In a sense there was a lot of talk, especially amongst the senior officers, because at one stage I worked in the bar and you hear all kinds of talk, because the seniors loved to drink. Bells whiskey in particular. They had to get as many officers as possible because there was going to be a lot of black officers coming in. So that was on the horizon. They knew that then already.
Interviewer	So they were aware of that.
Henry	They were preparing, yes.
Interviewer	That's quite interesting. And did the guys, when they were speaking and they'd had a few Bells, was there any sort of sense of resentment that things were changing, they didn't like it or it was just a case of...?
Henry	No, it was pretty much a sense of inevitability. They pretty much accepted it and just got drunk. <i>Laughs</i> And literally they would drink. God, every night. It's unreal. Those guys would...we would go to the suppliers and just order bottles and crates of Bells. It's unbelievable.
Interviewer	I don't think it was particular to your unit, I think it just happened everywhere.
Henry	Seems like it, yes.
Interviewer	There was a strong...from what I can gather and from what I remember there was a strong culture of alcohol being an important component.
Henry	<i>Laughs</i> Absolutely.
Henry	... suddenly we were all marching off to the mess hall, like every damn night, and somewhere we divert somewhere else and we were told to sit down and beers are handed out. Ok, basics are finished now. I thought there was going to be some kind of something. It was a bit of an anticlimax. Oh well ok, it's done

	now, here's your beer. It sucks.
Interviewer	So one day you're running around then it's Thursday night and the next day it's Friday morning and it's all changed.
Henry	Yes, everything was just changed. Boom, just like that.
Interviewer	But wasn't that typical of the army?
Henry	Yes, absolutely. It was run like hell to get there and then sit down and wait. And when something momentous was done it wasn't hoo hip hurrah, oh well here's a beer, we're done.
Interviewer	Has that time taught you any lessons about life that you sort of follow today?
Henry	Yes, I try and be a bit more disciplined in my work. I try and apply some of those lessons. And also just to keep going. One thing I've learned is that, if you just persevere...in the army's case you persevered because you had no fucking choice, and eventually you saw the light, got fit whatever the case may be. In business in my case, I've applied some of those rules. Just persevere, just keep going, just keep going, and eventually you get through. Experience has taught me that's true.
Interviewer	But you learned it when you had no option because the corporal said you must do it, you did it.
Henry	Very much.
Interviewer	END OF INTERVIEW ( <i>counter at 404</i> )

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