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Please note:

1. When typist is unsure of names, speakers will be identified by title.
2. Transcriptions are typed verbatim, and typist, when unsure of jargon, industry terms or individual's names, will type phonetic spelling followed by (unsure)

**INTERVIEWER:** This is Kevin Fitzgerald on September 8<sup>th</sup> 2005 in Johannesburg...so Kevin can you just start by telling me why you ended up in this unit and what sort of people you found yourself working with ...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Angela we have been chatting now, looking at my clock now, we have been chatting for about two hours already, so we are some way down the track already before we formally started taping what I am saying, but just to recap on issues on Cape Town, we were initially talking about a book written by Jim Hooper by Koevoet observations ... and Jim Hooper made in his book about the character of people that were drawn into units like Koevoet and other military special forces grouping amongst which my 32 Reconnaissance attachment and so on and so forth...and he observed that broadly most people exhibited the following qualities...number one your highly independent thinker. Number two they could think laterally...number three they were generally self started people, they didn't have to wait to be prompted to do things, they used their initiative and got on with it. And I picked this up in my years in the military that these characteristics in fact did describe most of the people that I have got and know people that train and people I operated with, people that still know today that these basic character principles very much still and to date...the only other thing that we talked about was character under pressure...the fine distinction of your true nature and you will see that in all special forces selections, whether Israeli special force fields ...Delta Force...they are all designed to push people to that point where their true character will be displayed and instructors and observers of the various selection courses will be able to observe the true

character of the people under selection, and that's what selections are designed to do, because these groupings do not want your true character to come forward under an operational context ...if your character fails in that context then you have got the groups that are in danger, and the operation is in danger. They want you to ...not to physically touch you, that's not what the selection courses are designed to do...the selection course is designed to see how mentally tough you are. Let me give you in the South African context a distinction...Special Forces selection courses as opposed to Parabats Selection Courses...Parabat selection courses are designed to see how tough you are ...special force courses are tough, physically tough, it was designed to see how mentally tough you are...that was the common divider between the two. And you saw that, I mean the poor guy in Parabat were...had terrible leadership...their leadership touch was poor...the leadership quality of the leaders was poor...these poor buggers didn't perform as well as they could have if they had good leadership...how did leaders like that end up in Parabats...well they land up in Parabats because they run ...I think it was 3.2 in 16 minutes, they could do XYZ push ups in ...XYZ sit ups...climb up a rope, jump an eight foot wall or whatever the hell it was, and wonderful...special forces put you through the same kind of thing ...much more severe and much more tough...but designed to show something else. Not your physically (inaudible) but your mental ability. I found that I am now personally 46 and I can honestly say that my best friend of those people that I saw under tremendous life threatening life situations who kept their cool...those people today are still my friends, because your central character, your core character

remains unchanged throughout life. You may go through different phases...you may obviously have character breakdowns from time to time, but your central core character, I believe, stays with you your entire life and that central core character is the character that the selection processing is designed to bring to the fore as quickly as possible, to see what character you are and that kind of person would then be what they want to have in the [inaudible]

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you tell me a bit about the selection for the 32 Battalion Recce Wing?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Angela as I said to you earlier, from what I understand, that Dep van Zyl, he was the 32RSM at the time...was largely responsible for designing this course and I believe it was based on a course that he did as part of an SAS Secondment that some people from Parrabat may have done to the SAS at some stage and they were put through this course...now it consisted of a lot of walking...that's very clear in my memory....a lot of walking ...I was very fortunate when it came to the river crossing phases that we had in our group because Gavin was a provincial swimmer and he went to school in Pietersburg, Capricorn High in Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal...and Gavin was a strong swimmer and we were very fortunate to have him ...we did a lot of river crossing...so we were tested on our ability to cover long distances accurately ...we had to ride exactly at the RV...and some of these marches were over 70 kilometres long...100 kilometres long...in 18 hours. We had to really walk, we carried exceptionally heavy full SADF standard SADF ammunition, compliment R1 rifle and all that kind of thing...of course you know that's not the way we

operated, we used foreign weapons, but for our selection phase we were kitted out with standard South African stuff...and of course that wasn't exactly the best stuff in town, and didn't exactly treat your feet too kindly and all this type of thing, but that was the first phase of our selection. I think if memory serves me, it was ten days to two weeks long...I can't remember exactly but it was carrying poles over long distances...crossing rivers with full kit on...and very often long slogs in marshes in that area, Buffalo ...where Buffalo is situated is where we did our selection, its very marshy in certain areas...how we got lost over days [inaudible] eventually we found a tree and guess who was sunning himself under the tree...a crocodile...first we had to tie the crocodile before runners were able to get into the tree to take a bearing...seriously ....Eric Rob...was in the same group...and I know Gavin was there, maybe Stef Naude ....myself, Eric and I think there would have been a [inaudible] guy. We were in one group...and Gavin used to swim that river twice to bring myself across, bring Eric across, Stef across...we were extremely fortunate to have Gavin...I always used to say to Gavin afterwards, I have a lot to thank you for, for making that selection, because we wouldn't have been able to cross those rivers as often as we did on my own...it was as wide as the Vaal river and it's flowing strong and we start at point A and you exit at point B 60 – 30 meters downstream, that's how strong those currents are, and Gavin would swim back and do it several times...so we were deprived of food, I mean Oppies who you spoke to earlier on the phone and you saw yesterday...his group killed a snake and the snake was pregnant and the guys scoffed on the sixteen babies in that snake. I am not kidding, Dave

Loubser ...and a lot of days he picked up a runny tummy and he picked up a nickname....Blue Kelly was mainly responsible for running the selection, even though it was designed by people [inaudible] and on one of our stops Daisy went up to Blue...Blue was Australian and he refused to speak Afrikaans, so we always had to address him in English and Daisy being Afrikaans his pronunciation in English wasn't the best...so he went up to Blue and he wanted to say to Blue that he is nauseous and that he needed some tablets for nausea and he went up to Blue and said Staff Sir I am nauseous...and Daisy's second nickname for a while was Nauseous Loubser...but that created a great deal of...he still gets ragged about it today... Nauseous, and that was when they ate the snake...other groups found whatever they could and lived off that and at one of our stops had prepared food for us, but they had spiked the food, they put diesel into the stew and they put mozzi tablets into the bread...and its not my nature to run and push and shove to get to food, so I stood at the back waiting my turn, and of course everything was finished by the time when I got there, but they were all forced to eat what they took, because I had taken nothing. I wasn't forced to eat anything...but they were forced to eat the food that they had taken, or pushed and shoved to get. So that carried on for ten to fourteen days ...from that we went to an escape and evasion course which was absolutely incredible because it was run by Dewald De Beer and he was possibly one...well he was the expert at the time, and the original founder member of One Recce and Dewald was an actual pleasure and what he talks about the bush and how to read the bush, how to live out of the bush, was absolutely fascinating. He had a

guy with him, a few guys with him, the one was ...excellent tracker, a white guy, excellent tracker...I was thinking about him the other day...he was one of the instructors on the course...the guy had actually become very friendly with parts of [inaudible], in fact a school friend of Francois...he was the other course instructor together with Dewalt...that course lasted maybe also a period of ten days...then we went onto snorkelling tactics and that course was held by Didies who has now passed away from cancer just recently and Kloppies ...and Didies already at that time was recipient ... two time recipient of the Honoris Crux already then...I think his second Honoris Crux was actually awarded while he was giving us that course. Kloppies was also a Honoris Crux recipient and both of them were longstanding members of One Recce at the time and they gave us our fourteen [unsure] tactics course and let me tell you that was tough. They took passion in our physics...luckily we suffered during that course...they realised that they had to train us up from novice to adequate level very, very quickly and they only had a short space of time to do it in, so they pushed us very, very hard ...

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you ever feel like dropping out?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** No...

**INTERVIEWER:** No chance of that, but did other people drop out?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Of course they did.

**INTERVIEWER:** Why do you think those people didn't make it?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Actually I think a lot of people built up in their mind a sort of romantic image of what it's all about ...you ask me later on what drove me

to become there and you will see a bit more of my character and how I landed up there, I was the smallest guy on that course and I lasted the longest ... I was a member of the original...out of the original Recce guys I lasted in Recce goods the longest out of all of them, and today people come to me and say I don't know how you do it ... it catches me off guard, I don't think of myself that way, I just did the selection, that's what I did. I was fortunate to have Gavin with the river crossings and things like that, but I carried my own weight and in those days I used to weigh 65 kilograms... My backpack and ammo used to easily weigh anything between 50-65 most of the time it was over 60...I used to carry my own body weight in my rug sack and ammunition and so on and so forth, and I never ever saw myself as being disadvantaged, I just happened to be short, so what ... it just never occurred to me, only now when people come up to me and as I say, 25 years after they are saying how the f... did you ever manage to do that. People are amazed, they used to say to me that all you saw was this huge backpack with two legs and you were walking back ...that was all we used to see, and I went to a reunion some years ago in Johannesburg ... there was a guy there called Koos Krokodil...now he is in these books here ... I can't remember...Koos Delpoort is it? What's his name....between him and Piet Nortje to become RSM of 32 and Piet got the lot...but we were operating north of **Anjica**...we were operating north of **Anjica**...and Koos had joined Tony Nienaber's company. Tony then was a company commander, he used to be a team commander in my company commander, and Koos had got in as his company Sergeant...and he used to work for the weather [inaudible] and they



had spent some time on Marion Island to get down to ... took a trip down to Marion Island and Koos was also one of those people who had been in the Regional Bravo and he called Koos Krokodil because at Buffalo a croc had actually got hold of him, and you could see the scar marks, they were huge and he was actually lucky to have survived ... the croc actually grabbed him around the legs and wasn't able to pull him under and Koos was able to get loose to escape the grip of the croc ... those scars ...we are talking now 1980 and this happened in 1976...those bite marks...I mean it took huge amounts of muscle out of his calf inside the top there, and I never met Koos, he had just joined the unit, he started with a military career and asked to come back to C2 and had been posted to Tony's company which is Alpha company, and we had flown in, we had over-nighted with Attack HQ, Alpha Company was there, Charlie Company I think and ourselves and we were going out to do a whole series of reconnaissance tasks and ambush tasks and this was all during a period leading up to Operation Protea...and it was an exceptionally busy period, that was the longest bush trip I ever did. We were in the bush trip for three months solid...and we landed late afternoon and the companies who had been there for a few days already and we went off to join Tony. Tony was spending time with a number of us and we were going to sleep amongst Tony's crowd and all of a sudden I heard this peal of laughter in the dead quiet bush...coming up to dusk ... it's deadly quiet in the bush at that time and all of a sudden I heard this guy howling with laughter and he had seen me walking, and all he said afterwards was oom Fitz ek het net jou bene gesien, net rugsak en bene....and he couldn't believe it, and

as I said, Angela, years later people come up to me, I am really taken aback I have never ever seen myself in that context ... I mean there were a hell of a lot of other short guys in the military...One Recce I met a couple of guys who were each taller than I am but there they were, I never saw height as a deterrent because I thought my height was a disadvantage ... I had to my entire life ... I only really became aware of it when I was up against a really tall person, then it's physically [inaudible] you become aware of it, otherwise I would never think of myself in those terms. So I never ever went forward into that situation, ever thinking of myself as quitting at any stage. It just wasn't an option, this is what I wanted to do, I had heard about this unit ...I will tell you that in my history in choosing 32, that's where I wanted to belong, they were the unit that was doing the most fighting, and that's what I wanted to do and that was it...so selection was part of going into special grouping within that unit ...the Recce group has been formed for the very first time and we were going to be the original members and Recce work was what I wanted to do. I didn't want to be cannon fire...I didn't want to be part of a big group ... that has missiles shot at it, and people shooting around whenever they felt like it, I wanted to be in control of the situation ... and to be in control of the situation you had to be operating clandestine... If you can't operate clandestine in a large group, so that was my motivation for wanting to go into a small team reconnaissance work and 32 ...I was motivated to go to 32 because they were the most active unit...they were very top secret still at that stage...I heard about them through a guy, who was funny enough also called Kevin ...he died of a heart attack about ten years

ago...was the stepson of our school headmaster...I didn't have the same surname, it was Ackerman's stepson...anyway Kevin was the guy who went on the Seychelles job...in fact his ball bag...his utility bag where they found AK...and that's how they got rumbled at the airport. Its actually Kevin's one, but Kevin had told me about this unit, and I decided that was where I wanted to go...and I just went to Lombard and [inaudible] when people used to drop off I used to get taken by surprise...I thought how can you not want to be part of it...I was really...how could you not want to be part of it...what...

**INTERVIEWER:** You mentioned the psychological pressure of selection, what exactly was that ... at what stage did you feel like ...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** It's your ability to absorb pressure and keep going where other people...as an adult I have lived by this dictum as adult...not at that time of my life, we were youngsters...we had adult responsibilities but we were youngsters, I am talking now as an adult...you have a bit of life experience...what differentiates special people from people who are largely not successful is that successful people are prepared to do what other people are not prepared to do. And I found that to be very true defining, very simplistic but I found it to be very defining...and I think I have always been prepared to do what possibly a lot of other people haven't been prepared to do...I have been prepared to go through tremendous suffering, tremendous emotional pressure and all those kind of things to achieve an end goal...that applies to both my business and to my earlier ...although at that time it was an immature thought and we developed into context that I have now about it...but funny enough I

bumped into a guy the other ...a few weeks ago at Shawn's birthday party, then talking to this chappy he tried [inaudible] ...I taught this chap, guess what he comes from Bloemfontein ... what school did you go to...I said Andrews...really ...then I made a mental calculation and I said I bet this guy was the same time as Shawn was...I said to him do you know Shawn Gowan...he gave me a look and said yes he is a couple of years ahead of me. I said really...well I know Shawn as a pussycat...I mean I don't know him as in context as a husband to you or whatever...but to me Shawn is not a tough guy and that's it, and the guy turned to me with an absolute chill in his voice, and Donny looked at him and Donny got an absolute chill in his voice...he said oh he is a hard guy...I almost burst into laughter but anyway ...I think that's the perception that people have...I mean when people hear, and Michael gets this often because he is in the insurance business and he goes to a lot of conventions and seminars and meets brokers from all over the place, so people mentioned that Mike used to be in 32...people almost take a step back ... expecting this wild animal suddenly to burst upon them and rip them to shreds and slit their throats and God knows what all...and that's possibly the very negative image that people have, what they don't understand is that we are actually very professional soldiers, very dedicated, they put a lot of effort into what we did ... we trained damn hard, there was nothing that we did that we didn't put a lot of training into it...pre-prep training, a lot of intelligence went into what we did...we simply just didn't stat ... RN ammunition and bugged off into the bush and hope you are going to kill as many people as you could, I mean that's a very simplistic viewpoint ... The truth of it is that a lot

of planning, it was very stressful, a lot of planning, a lot of preparation and that brought us our success, it wasn't just luck....and you did things in a measured way, nothing was done as you would see in the movies about, say the French Foreign Legion, about the Green Berets and killing people left, right and centre...that's not how it happens in reality...in reality there is very, very little, it takes a special kind of character to come to terms with that, and that is what we are talking about here. Some people just realise that they could never do this on a sustained basis...that's really what it came down to. And we will talk about my first contact in a while I guess but all of a sudden we had people dropping off and they realised we are going to be killed here... This shrapnel wound that I have, it's a very minor one but its caused me problems ever since the time ... it was from a grenade that spun exactly right above my head...my first contact I could hear and I could feel the bullets flashing by me...that wind draft, I could feel it...and I realised two more inches lower and I would be dead.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was there...do you remember a particular moment when you said to yourself ..people can get killed here?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I will tell you a story just now...there was a guy called Gerry Green...in that very first contact of mine he used to have a similar thing...I could die here...but that's the strength of your character...[inaudible] ran away, you stand your ground.

**INTERVIEWER:** How old were you at this stage?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I reckon, I would have gone into...it was my first contact and the Recce group happened in May of 1979 roughly...now I wrote the

original...I actually penned that original report, even though Zack Garrard [unsure] was our team leader ...I actually penned that report and the reason that I realised that was Michael and I were approached some time in the mid 90's by an English journalist who was writing a book on 32 and [inaudible] and this journalist asked to may even gave me a name, or he tack the name to the association or whatever...but Michael and I met with him at the Holiday Inn in Sunnyside...Michael and I met with this guy in Sunnyside...he had the original...Willem gave it to him...he got our names from Willem...and he hauled out a photocopy of the original ...which ...why he was very keen to talk to me...and I think my God that's my handwriting, and he said yes it is, didn't you know. I said no...I had forgotten and then I had flashbacks and I had actually remember sitting in my and Zack's tent ...at our trestle table...I actually remembered writing that message...how it went about. Now as I realised that those bullets hitting the branches, two inches lower and I would be dead...

**INTERVIEWER:** And they were meant for your head?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Of course they were...it was my job to get the guy to shoot at me first which I did...now that is the kind of character difference that I am trying to show you...I am not just referring to myself ...we are now talking in general terms...the person in that situation must be able to keep their calm and realise I have got danger here, now I must sort it out...the solution is not to run away because I will get shot in the back or whatever, that's not the solution...the solution is I have to do it ...and I am going to do it. And sportsmen, cricketers and such talk about muscle memory...for us playing this wonderful cover drive

...your life is not in danger if you lose, f... the cover drive up...you know it might be fielded at mid off...so you won't get a four, tough ... so you run two, wonderful. If I f...ed up my life or somebody else's life was in danger. You have to be able to handle that pressure ... you had to know that you did you best in whatever you did...you did your preparation, your planning, your execution, whatever it was you did your best...but you knew that the lives of your team members and your life was highly dependent on what you did. I camped with a guy called Chris Roodt...now Chris was an example of someone who didn't grasp that concept. But you did what you did to the best of your ability...because lives were dependent on you, and that life lesson I could have learnt nowhere else. That's what I say, we were so fortunate, Angela, to have been in that position, that we were put into a position at a very young age and we had to be very mature to know what we did. We were children, but our actions had to be that of adults....and that stood as far as I know all of us throughout our entire life, those lessons that we learnt as teenagers, early adults will remain with most of us for the entire duration of our lives to the point where we are now. So you ask me how do we handle these psychological pressures, and that's what I am saying to you, the kind of person that is drawn to that kind of unit exhibits a character with the element that I have given you just now. And you will find that they are able to handle that kind of psychological pressure...deal with the fact that they know that every time they jump out of a plane go on operation, or whatever, their lives are in danger. But you cannot be apprehensive about it...

**INTERVIEWER:** Were there right reasons and wrong reasons why people were

drawn to the unit?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Oh yes, as with everything in life of course....especially in the platoons...the platoons had sometimes very poor people who came through and you know the troops in the platoons used to watch these guys like hawks...and if these guys didn't make the mustard they soon got the message from the troops that they weren't welcome here, they didn't want them. One guy in particular I had to do my basic training in Potch with him ...guy called Blackie Swart...I don't mean any disrespect to these people ...you can use your discretion here if you want to mention names ...I don't mean to belittle them in any way but I am mentioning to illustrate what I am saying. Now Blackie Swart, as I said I did my basic training in Potch and he got during our basic phase before we went down to Oudtshoorn to do NCO officers course, Blackie Swart was the trooper of our basic intake phase, he was the best marcher, the best of this and the best of that....and I then lost contact with him in Oudtshoorn, I was in Alpha company and Mike was in Delta company and he became a mortar specialist...Oppies was in Alpha with me...no Oppies was in Delta...Michael was in Delta, Oppies was the one up from it, Francois Fourie was in Foxtrot, Piet Nortje was in Alpha with me down in Oudtshoorn and I never knew where Blackie was but anyway I had been in 32 for sometime, and guess who rocks up...its Blackie Swart...now he apparently had a region and one of the very first contacts the had was the platoons...raising the platoons somewhere in Angola and they had this contact and they were moving through and they came across people who had been shot and killed and moving past the bodies and Blackie dumps his



ruck sack down...I am being a bit dramatic now I wasn't there...but he whips out his Bible and starts praying over the body...so when he bodies got flown out guess who got flown out with them ... Blackie Swart cheers. You have to have that mental character to be able to handle that, the platoons were the most combat active unit in the history of this country and possible the history of the world, I am not being melodramatic when I say that...they saw so much combat in terms of ...that you can't even comprehend it, you understand that most of these guys came out of FNLA and hadn't seen combat in some form or another since early 1970's and then joined up with Breytenbach during the Angolan phase where we went into training with FNLA and became Bravo Group and then came and banked on the river, the Kunene River bank and assisted that [inaudible] be taken across into South Africa where they wanted to stay with him. That's where they come from so these guys already before we got to know them they had more combat experience than most of the SADF put together. And they carry this combat experience with them ...right through all those various operations Angela I was looking in here at the role of honour...have you seen some of the battles that some of these guys fought, I mean they were huge, huge battles. They would come up to the battles fought around Kuito in 1988/87 those were huge conventional battle...huge, the biggest tank battle that this country has ever been in, including the second world war tank battles. And...

**INTERVIEWER:** Did it occur to you that these guys you were fighting alongside, these FNLA, ex FNLA guys I mean they were Angola's first anti-colonial liberation movement...did you think about that, and did it raise any

questions...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I am very well read, I am a very curious person and more than anyone ...I think you can speak to any of the guys...the guys say yes Fritzy was, Fritzy always knew everything about everything...so I knew the history of FNLA and I knew about this ...I went to school at Potch Boys and we had a small influx of Portuguese refugees from Angola and one of them was a guy called Eddie Dobito...Eddie Dobito has now passed away, I believe, or his brother is dead, but Eddie was a particular bright guy and he arrived at Potch speaking very little English and his father became a Major in the SADF, and as you would have gathered from the memorial service that we had for Danny Rochscher and Robbie Robeiro and their fellow mates, that a lot of these Portuguese guys who came out of Mozambique and actually joined SADF in an intelligence capacity, a lot of them were used to do radio intercepts...a lot of them were used to liaise with UNITA ...to have intelligence on the NPLA...we also fight in covert war in Mozambique which hasn't really made much breath...supporting RUNAMO...apart from my involvement in Angola with UNITA and any kind of thing and Eddie then joined the SADF and became a Major in the SADF so through Eddie I got to learn quite a lot, talking to Eddie about the FNLA and NPLA and the various factions, guys were continuously changing allegiances ...one moment the FNLA will be friends with UNITA and the next moment they will be friends with the FNLA or the NPLA against UNITA ...and so on and so forth, so I went in knowing a little bit more perhaps than the average 18 year old South African would, and that was purely just my curiosity to know things. And I

often make this point with my children's teachers, the biggest gift that you can give to a child is to develop their capacity for curiosity...to want to know things, their capacity for knowledge and you know to the best extent I had it and I am certainly not a defined genius by any means and I don't imply that, but I want to have a layman's knowledge of things....what makes it so, and why is it so...and what drives a political stance on a particular issue and so on and so forth, and so I landed up in 32 with the knowledge that we were essentially joining a group here that had been fighting a 30 year colonial war against the Portuguese but also knowing that they were terribly into commies. That essentially was one of my driving motivation facts to draw in a special forces type of unit, was my absolute desire to prevent having to live under communist rule. I have never, and I say it quite publicly now it can be on record, I have never been a supporter of the National Party or their policies, it's a very sort of in thing now all of a sudden all the white ...even the white guys picking up his head ...I never agreed with apartheid, I never supported apartheid, bullshit, we all lived under the system, we understood that the system oppressed Blacks, don't talk crap. Some of us didn't agree with it, some of us didn't agree so strongly that we actually left the country, I never felt into that category, this was my country ...I may not have agreed with the politics but it was my country and I was f...ed if the Soviet Union was coming to take my country.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you saw this as a pretty real ...did you envision what South Africa under Communism might be like, did you have an idea?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I didn't dwell on it Angela but I certainly did have visions

that life would be f...en unpleasant... when you spent time in Mozambique...let me tell you about Mozambique...that Mozambique under NPLA rule was more autocratic under the Portuguese under FRELIMO rule...it was more autocratic than under the Portuguese [inaudible] and a lot of people in Mozambique today don't know where they got that. They get a bit tense with me when I point it out to them, and I am talking about white people, and Portuguese people who lived in Mozambique under FRELIMO when I point out to them ...you were actually more responsible when your homeland was suppressing Black Mozambicans in your homeland Portugal...and they get quite upset with me...I said no you have no right to be upset with me...Communism is about depression, they need to understand...I am not blaming or rubbing it in, I am just stating a fact...Communism was about depression. If you go and read about how the Communism system works and you see how they applied it here in Africa ..what did they do here in Africa, they suppressed the local population and they raped the country of all its natural resources...they out fished the fishing stock and they took all the timber, diamonds, oil, whatever they could put their hands on they took. Am I talking the truth here Angela, you were there...you can tell me Kevin shut up you are talking crap...

**INTERVIEWER:** No I don't think you are talking crap at all...

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Now that's a layman's point of view...a professor of politics or foreign affairs must tell me, Kevin its not quite so simple but in simplistic terms I did not want to live under a regime that took away personal feelings. As little as whites and Africans actually had them, because we didn't

have many, and the blacks had none...and the white South Africans really had very little feelings. National Party ran a very socialistic state here, they controlled everything...withheld information and all that kind of thing...whatever freedom I had at least I had them, and I certainly wasn't going to live under a system which was going to make me totally devoid and stripped naked of any choice whatsoever.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you think that your colleagues at the time shared these ...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I don't believe so.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about the Angolan soldiers...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** A lot of them were fighting for what they believed....

**INTERVIEWER:** We were just talking about that sort of awareness of the political situation...

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** The awareness level was very low because basically your information was controlled and extreme by the National Party...very extreme so most of my contemporaries had very little ...sort of foreign affairs knowledge...I don't think they realised how much the media was controlled, especially the Afrikaans guys, didn't realise how much the media was controlled and so on and so forth and I think very much believed almost in an almost Israel syndrome that this is Biblically our homeland and we will do anything to protect it. Suppress anyone that we believe needs to be suppressed in order to preserve our way of life because they honestly believed that their way of life was the way things should have been done. And it was quite normal for black people to be suppressed and treated as second class or whatever...and we were all guilty of

this, don't you ever believe that anyone in my generation older or younger ever saying to you ...I never believed that....[inaudible]...there was always an element of how we dealt with people, treated other groups in a condescending fashion. We would have been horrified if we understood how actually neglected Indians were...coloureds were, never mind blacks...they were really the ones with the tight....under the education system and how poor the education system was ...we used to get Indians from the local Indian School in Potch, used to come through to our chemistry there...they didn't have any chemistry equipment...so we availed our facilities to them and they used to come through after school hours and they used to take the lab over from time to time and they were able to conduct their experiments in order for them to make progress with their studies and so on. You know I think a lot of it was extreme naivety...and also just wanting to turn a blind eye, not wanting to recognise that it actually existed, that's the way it was and that's the way it was done. So they never went with the kind of awareness that I perhaps went with.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about your black Angolan colleagues, did you get a sense of their political awareness...where they were in all of this, or did you sort of see them as victims of circumstance?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** No Angela, we had the most respect for them, we got on...I think Blue Kelly devised a system that, thinking it was going to be a huge culture shock to us ...if I had to share facilities with our black counterparts...these people were going to spill their blood the same as we were. I don't think any one of us ever worried about that. There was obviously an

education divide in some instances but as we matured and as we got to know the history of a lot of them...and I don't know how much time you have allocated, but perhaps when we get together as a group I can bring our Parrabat photograph along when we did our Parrabat course, there were guys in there like the **Agrea brothers..Kikki and Mandla Agrea...** now they came from powerful families and there were a lot of others like that. The chappies' photograph I showed you, Victor Gattler [ph] they used to run the Kimbo[unsure] ...the guys in the platoon will tell you his name...these people came from well established socially relevant families, if I can use that term...its not quite...

**INTERVIEWER:** Influential...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Yes influential, but there is another term...established...high up on the social totem pole. You know refined families if I can put it that way...

**INTERVIEWER:** But what do you think drew these people?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** The communism....they hated communism....more than they hated the Portuguese, they knew that they were educated, they knew what communism would do to their country, if the Americans had stuck with the FNLA...Angola today would be successful. For some reason or other the Americans pulled out at the last minute and the South Africans then had to withdraw and what could have been a total wipe out of Soviet forces in Southern Africa eventually led to Soviet occupation in Southern Africa for a very long time. That influence spread across to Zimbabwe, Mozambique...another influence that people are not as aware of as they should be was the Chinese influence in

Africa... the Chinese influence supported the factions, all the fighting in the Rhodesian war and that was ZANDLA ...they did all the fighting, Mugabe's crowd hid away. Mugabe won because of Soviet and a smarter propaganda strategy than the Chinese did and that's how Mugabe got in...and actually Nkomo's crowd that actually did all the fighting. Mugabe's crowd did virtually f... all. So that little fiasco by the Americans actually cost a lot to Africa because the Soviets raped Africa, there is no question about that...the country's arrogance narrowed, but I had an uncle who was a member of the National Party who became an MP and I tell you that was a great divide in my family. My mom's sister was married to a guy called Paul Bodenstein...Paul Bodenstein got a golden handshake because he supported PW Botha against **Peerni** [unsure]...and his thank you for that was Ambassador posting to Holland. When my mom passed away Paul had completed his term as Ambassador and they were returning to South Africa and they met with me in Johannesburg to offer their condolences and Paul asked me about my military career...and he said, Kevin the Angolans are paying 32 dollars a day per Cuban troop ...never mind officer, NCO...that was the basic rate that they pay to the Soviet block for having Soviet advisors, this and that, it wasn't for free. You know what the biggest foreign earner for Russia was in those days...say in a [inaudible] ...the biggest foreign exchange earner for the Soviet Union in the 1980's or late 70's...

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes...

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** You can go and check and see any reference and you will see...Angola has got nothing...they paid for everything.



**INTERVIEWER:** How did you see the presence of these Cubans in Angola?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Just another mother f...er took a shot. It didn't bother me at all.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did you perceive them as soldiers?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Worse than useless truly, they were totally f...in useless, excuse my terminology....but at that time I felt they were totally f...in useless. The NPLA guys hated them, the Cuban's treated them, and of course I only discovered this many years later when I went back to ...up to **Soyo** [unsure] I managed to talk to the old enemy NPLA and they told us how they hated the Soviets...they called them the Soviets, they didn't call them Russians, how they hated the Soviets and Cubans because they got treated in an exceptionally discriminating way. If they were sharing something from a water bottle, they were on patrol and the water bottle was handed over by a black NPLA guy ...a Cuban would make a big fuss about wiping the mouth of the water bottle...wouldn't just gently wipe it off with the hands and mumble and get a cloth out and wipe it down and they really treated...I used the term earlier...very demeaning fashion. They were the Soviet Russians crossed with the Cubans, crossed with East Germans whatever, they look upon them very unfairly.

**INTERVIEWER:** So they were quite uncomfortable bedfellows...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I think so, the Soviets kept them going and they owed their allegiance to the Soviets...and you know today the biggest capitalists come out of Angola and Mozambique.

**INTERVIEWER:** Its kind of surprising isn't it?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** No its not surprising at all....I mean they took that ideology because it was offered to them...Americans didn't offer to them first, the Soviets did. They felt great, they are going to give us weapons to fight the Portuguese, they are going to give us training to fight the Portuguese, and we are with you...so by proxy they became Communists...but they were never ever Communists really. The Communists were the guys who were feeding the so called expertise and manpower and this and that....

**INTERVIEWER:** But the other uncomfortable bedfellows in this picture were the FNLA and UNITA...and 32 Battalion being composed of some FNLA people, having to work alongside UNITA wasn't there some tension there?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Angela not that I was aware of...the FNLA guys looked upon UNITA in the lowest of the low, but they were given their orders. They were fighting as Communists and they were happy with that. The biggest show of lack of discipline used to come if we were in contact with known NPLA ...the guys used to go bananas...they went on the rampage, it was like watching and seeing out of Bayvault [unsure] they went ballistic. If we were in contact with SWAPO discipline was maintained, the contact went forward under control and everything, against the NPLA they went mashuga....mashuga means mad, they went f...mad....they hated them with such an intensity, they had taken their families away from them, they had taken their homes away, they had taken their way of life away from them...even their land NPLA had taken away from them. They hated them with a passion. If they had to team up with the devil to get something back from them, they would team up with the devil. If the devil came

in the form of UNITA fine...they just didn't want UNITA in their ranks, but UNITA was f...useless...that's why if you check the outcomes were able to handle the Angolan thing and bring a resolution to the Angolan war, guess what NPLA was just as useless as UNITA and that's why there is never any progress....exactly the same thing in Afghanistan...Taliban just as f...en useless as Mohammed Masud's troop in the other f...en war...totally f...en useless. South Africa brought its expertise in...

## **SIDE B**

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay so we are talking about UNITA...UNITA as an ally...

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Angela, the facts of Africa are when you are talking about Angola or Sierre Leone or Sudan, the facts of Africa are, that the fighting forces of Africa are ...they are badly trained, they don't know how to use a weapon properly, all they rely on is utter savage....if you have a look at what happened in Liberia, Sierre Leone was just mass killings and vandalism in Nigera...all these kinds of things. These are not people that are professional soldiers, they carry weapons but they are not professional soldiers...they are just vandals and exactly the same applied to the Angolan situation. I must tell you that my respect for UNITA dropped off tremendously when the reports, when UNITA carried out the atrocities against civilians started filtering through...and then banditry started coming to the fore my respect for UNITA started to come to the fore. My respect for UNITA dropped off and when I joined Integrative Outcomes, in 1993 they even said to me that Kevin you are going to have a problem fighting against UNITA and without even skipping [inaudible] I said not

even close...but you used to train them Kevin you should be involved with them....I said yes that's history. The UNITA that we have today is a bunch of bandits...they are not freedom fighters anymore. And that appeal was vindicated in the years that came where Savimbi made statements in the press that the only thing that mattered to him was the well being of the **Ovinbumbu** and Mavimbi tribe...which was his tribe, the Ovinbumbu tribe...and he was going to see that the Ovinbumbu tribe became the predominant tribe in Angola. He wasn't interested in Angola...he was interested in what was personally important to him...his tribe, his personal power, his monetary situation, and all this kind of thing, and he sold Angola out for his own personal good. I had no qualms about him, nothing at all.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you pick up on any sort of commercial activity that was going on ...like the mining for example, the diamond mining and poaching and....

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I was never exposed to that because my involvement with [inaudible] was very short. I went on the very first **Integrative Outcomes** contract.

**INTERVIEWER:** I am thinking of the earlier days with 32 Battalion did you...

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** No you must remember Angela that I can't remember the name of the SADF Department or unit that dealt with UNITA, I have forgotten the name, in fact his brother taught law at Rhodes...I picked up on the surname, they said is your brother the same as the one in the military, and he said yes it is. In fact he was posted ...used to be commanding officer of the infantry unit in Grahamstown. Coincidentally Billy Thorpe started his military career and he

actually met his wife Lorraine...she was a student at Rhodes and Billy was instructor at the infantry unit in Rhodes...I don't know which side unit it was, 65 or whatever the hell it was...they operated out of Grahamstown. But this chap headed up the SADF detachment that liaised with UNITA and we never had much exposure to that. 32 was involved in UNITA battles but was not really, involved in UNITA strategy and whatever else went on, but its quite clear now in retrospect that Savimbi had a lot going on, he didn't play clean hand with the South Africans ...he kept a watch on the South Africans...his involvement with other groupings, other powers...his involvement with the Americans was kept away from the South Africans. All of a sudden he is in missiles, South Africa was caught totally by surprise and to such an extent that the aide that he was getting by the CIA the South Africans were totally not aware of as far as my history tells me. I don't know people who were involved in these things, I had no input into that Angela...we saw people land at **Amoni [unsure]**...I know a lot of South African agents of Portuguese origin who were transported into **Sariemba** at that time...which was under UNITA control. South Africans use the Sariemba Airport to land on because that was a commercially developed airport to take care of, to facilitate the diamond trade that used to exist there. In fact Willem Matla got the contract to upgrade the Sariemba Army base and Airport and all that kind of things. So I never had much exposure to that, I knew a lot of activity was going on and a lot of activity was driven out of South Africa by Portuguese, ex Portuguese people that supported UNITA that had lost a lot commercially when the NPLA took over so they threw their support behind UNITA in the expectation

that Savimbi was going to repay them obviously...they were going to get back what they lost previously...I was aware of it Angela but never had specific knowledge...as I said this is ...my general outlook is curious so I used to read things that many other people did read. I used to read foreign political assessment of what was happening in Africa ..that other people just never ever bothered about. I would pick up on these things and I would follow up on them and the Star also had quite a good African correspondent who used to write quite good articles, so I read everything and anything I could and I was aware long before...we were doing a lot of diamond trade...Blood Diamonds was something possibly that UNITA invented. And they were possible the first exponents of it, using diamonds to fund their war in, and they had a very easy channel through **Mabutu** to sell their diamonds and to channel aide through Zaire as it was called in those days into Northern Angola and from there via Sariemba and aeroplanes down south or to wherever they had need for ...had a conflict going and they would quickly get in logistically...that's why they were able to maintain the status quo with UNITA...it was only **when Fasetta** [unsure] was kicked out of Zaire that the status quo on Angola changed and Savimbi became a true gorilla force because he had to survive on the land and the people and they had previously, historically massacred thousands of rural Angolans, thousands, and that is why it picked up very little rural support in the latter stages, and that is why Angolans are able to track him down and eventually kill him. The guy who did it was an ex UNITA General...who did not agree with Savimbi's decision that Savimbi refused to accept the election results in 1992 or whenever it was in 1992...and he stayed

on with the NPLA...and I cant remember the name of the General but this guy was a genuine UNITA guy who had come up the ranks in UNITA ...had become one of Savimbi's trusted guys and very trusted right hand man and this guy had simply not agreed with Savimbi about his decision not to accept the election results of 1992 and had not gone back to the bush and he had in fact single handedly tracked Savimbi down and was largely responsibly for the final conflict that brought about both Savimbi's death and the death of his number two, I think at the time. But what I saw just confirmed my feeling that UNITA were now no more a bunch of bandits raping Angola's natural resources for their own benefit and not for the benefit of so called Angola who had previously claimed every fight and I went there in the full knowledge that the NPLA was just as corrupt as anybody else...I had no f...en qualms about that at all, and that is the way of Africa. Africa really Angola without being patronising, without being colonial in outlook, Africa today still very much runs on the big stick, he who has the big stick has the power, and they are all fighting to get their hands on the big stick. They wield that big stick in a very blatant manner without any compunction whatsoever...they will suppress and kill whatever they need to do to make sure that they maintain the position of power for as long as possible, and while they are maintaining that power rape the country for their own benefit, and we see that up in their country today that is holding Weinand du Toit and a few others ...**Ginnie Mathauw** ...

**INTERVIEWER:** Nick du Toit... Equatorial Guinea.

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Equatorial Guinea...look what is happening there, the

people in Equatorial Guinea live in extreme poverty but the ruling class live exceptionally well. Exactly the same happened in Angola...through our involvement now South Africa's involvement in Angola and through the involvement of many of my ex military friends in Angola I now have a bit of an inside track of what happens in Angola and I know that Angola, there is a cohort of people that are wealthy beyond imagination of most people, never mind beyond the imagination of African Angolans. They live in an enclave around the Presidential Palace which is about I believe five kilometres south of Luanda in the valley and that enclave is where all the power body of Angola resides, and its said that the least wealthy of that body, of that cohort is at least two hundred million American Dollars stashed away, at least two hundred million American Dollars....where does it come from Angola, it comes from IMF loans, World Bank Loans they have raped, natural resources that they pillaged for their own good...all this kind of stuff. If you hear these guys talk how they have to do business in Angola...to me incredibly depressing, because here is a country which is supposed to be part of the African Renaissance ...they are nothing but a bunch of bandits. I have no illusion about who the NPLA was when we went up on the Executive Outcomes and who UNITA was, they were both a bunch of bandits. They have been fighting one another for territory to enrich themselves not for political gain but for economic territory.

**INTERVIEWER:** But did your thinking about UNITA change over the years from the time when you were in due Defence Force?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Yes, that's what I said, that's why when I went up in the



90's I had no compunction about fighting those UNITA because I had then already become aware of how they were running things in Angola and that wasn't because they had any right to people that were involved with UNITA...this was because it was in the general bloody press...you could pick up any overseas publication from Newsweek, to crime, to fortune, you could read something that was going on in Angola, about the diamond trade, about this and that, about the atrocities that UNITA were performing. It was common knowledge if you looked hard enough you would unearth it, and when I went up there I had actually no compunction about UNITA, and I wasn't in a dream world about the NPLA either...I was happy to go up there to do a job and earn good money for it, and later on even was able to exploit that and turn the whole Angolan situation around, EO had not got involved and EO had not taken over and run operations and actually fought operations for the NPLA...Angola would still be at an impasse today really and the people would still be suffering today and all that kind of stuff. That's just a fact of life.

**INTERVIEWER:** The reason that I was asking about originally about the relationship between the FNLA and UNITA is because one of my Angolan...one of the Angolan's that I interviewed was a FNLA veteran also said he put it like this...he said ...digging diamonds doesn't make you a General...so really it doesn't seem like there was a lot of respect in the FNLA guys for UNITA.

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** I don't blame them, as I said to you, the FNLA that 32 had...had a very high proportion of well educated people there...and these guys knew how to see it and how to call it...and the comment that he makes there is

quite correct...I cant remember the General that Shawn and I were involved with, but Shawn remembers his name, its in the book written by Carl Alberts...he wrote a book on students and [inaudible] what a joke anyway. The book that **Carl Alberts** wrote the General features quite prominently in there... in there he talks about the Johnny Walker bottle that he kept where troops bought their way out, the conscripts bought their way out by giving him diamonds and he was stashing diamonds in the Johnny Walker bottle...now exactly it doesn't make you a general...the fact that you are able to extort people, exploit people doesn't make you great it in fact makes you very poor, and that is the tragedy of Africa. They themselves don't see this distinction, in fact it perpetuated on an ongoing basis and that is the downfall of Africa generally, unfortunately. The fact that Angola was quite happy to give the finger to the IMF and the World Bank, and they demanded that they explain to them the billions of Dollars that just disappeared in loans, what happened to them...the Angolans...the Americans to turn around to them and say we don't care...we don't care whether they are members of the IMF or the World Bank, we don't care. It just showed you the arrogance...they have made hundred of millions of dollars themselves as individuals and they don't give a hoot. Who is going to take it away from them...no Angela that is one of the anomalies that I have here...if you are really committed in storying this story out, why is the IMF and the World Bank not getting...attaching orders against the various, and don't tell me they cant track them, these guys are not making too much effort to hide them away, they are there in the Cayman Islands they are there in Jersey they are there in every tax

shelter that you can think of...you will find them, so you should be able to get your hands on that money.

**INTERVIEWER:** So going back to the beginning...in retrospect, what do you think it was that motivated you to join 32 Battalion?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Angela as I said to you, I read about 32 when I was at school...**Kevin Beck** was ...the guy who told us about Kevin Beck served in One Recce...Kevin Beck told us about this amazing group of guys that he came across who were incredibly performers...and I was always keen to join One Recce and when I heard about 32 I thought that was where I wanted to go to. They are fighting the war...yes One Recce are doing special force operations things in the traditional sense of it and I would very much have loved to have done that, and when I heard about this fighting group that's where I wanted to be, I wanted to fight but at the same time .....I had provisionally planned to join 32 at some stage...and in the course of that what I had to do was joint permanent force, so I got around to going on the Junior Leaders course in Oudtshoorn and from there I joined into permanent force and quite unexpectedly we were called onto the parade ground one day for a recruitment drive ...they wouldn't exactly reveal where but we had to all go down to the parade ground and there was an entire Junior Leaders course from Alpha company all the way through to Foxtrot, all brought onto the parade ground and we were told that there were people there from a unit called 32 Battalion and 32 Battalion that were there to recruit junior leaders and would be interviewing people for these positions that same day, and that any of us that wanted to join please step to that side of the parade ground,

so I stepped up and I saw a lot of mates that I was at school with...one of them was in Foxtrot ...a guy called Tony Buitendach...we are still good friends today and I indicated to Tony to come over...he didn't want to know...another one was Lance Mostert who you saw the email, he eventually landed up at mainly at Five Recce with all sorts of [inaudible] I tried to show him to come over but he wasn't interested either, so I found myself with a small group of guys, most of them I didn't know at all...although I had been in Oudtshoorn for six to eight months I didn't know any of these guys really. And we were ushered to go and do our interviews...we then went off to do our various interviews...I knowing of 32 went to the 32 interview, some people went to 31 but what drove me more was the fact that in... the prior camp presentation had made known to us that they were also looking for recruits for a new Recce Wing within 32, so that just did it for me. Off I went and did my interview ...I don't remember who conducted it, it might have been Gert Nel, I can't remember...

**INTERVIEWER:** I think it may have been, a number of people have told me that they were interviewed by Gert Nel, Oppies was I think....

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Yes he has got quite a clear recollection of things, I don't recall it...I remember, you can actually ask me the interview, I remember talking about Potch quite a lot, while interested in going I explained to them that I had been told by Kevin Beck, I was aware of the unit, they were quite surprised by that...en baie geheime eenheid, I said yes but I [inaudible] that's why I want to join. And we were given a weeks leave I think ...then came back to Oudtshoorn, put on a plane and flown out to Rundu and from Rundu apparently

the plan was that we were driving to a fake ambush just to rattle us up a bit and welcome us to Buffalo, it was like a C2 tradition....but if I remember correctly we arrived in driving rain, it was peeing with rain...by vehicle, by truck ...a big 10 ton truck...we jumped on the back of the 10 ton truck with all our belongings etcetera and driven off to Buffalo...that's. Angela I didn't go to Buffalo often but its at least a few hours trip and we arrived there some time at night and we were bundled into the dining room at 32, had some supper, had a big party on the go if I remember correctly, that's where I met Gert Kruger for the first time and then our training started. The next day we were in the bush and we never stopped, we went through a selection training the DD's and Toppies ...Dewalt de Beer did the surviving training course and then put onto vehicles to **Amoni**...Amoni became our home from then on in, and a mate of mine...that was truly young, he really missed the place, when we were down in South Africa we remember actually being hungry to go back. Angela I am not kidding you, but I think you will find that people like Michael and Oppies and whoever else you talk to, part of the original group will tell you that that place has an incredibly pull on you ...God just did something for us, I don't know what it is...God just took us to that place and gave us the most wonderful experience ...that lives with me today and Amoni ...if I went back to Amoni today ...its going to be an incredibly emotional experience, it truly would because it had such happy memories for us and was incredibly happy for us and we built a swimming pool, we built an underground pub ..we made it home, truly we were in a home that most of us probably never had and Mike Kiley and I had been planning a trip for a long time to go via Okavango

Delta up into the Caprivi strip, I have been to **Katimo** once or twice ...I believe they have got a nice Caravan Park there, and its quite a bustling Tourist destination past through Katimo...detoured down to where C1 was...went to the C1 camp once...I think it was called Omega...go onto Buffalo ...Buffalo I went to a few times, not many times, also got regular [inaudible] did a lot of training there, river ops, blow bridges and this and that and then onto Rundu and then onto Amoni...and then the place that I really always wanted to see but never got to see was the skeleton coast ...the park in Namibia...Etosha Pan...and places like that, places that we never got to see...I got to see maybe from the air on one or two occasions...I mean Michael and I did an ops so far west once that when we got to the top of the mountain we could actually smell the sea, that's how close we were to the sea. But that was the Skeleton Coast...[inaudible] and the more you want to go and visit those places they are true wonders of nature, we always planned this trip and Michael had always said to me before Ivor was born, he always said to me that's a trip that I would love to do with my son...Ivor today is 18...he signed up to join the British Military...I can't believe time has flown like this...its truly amazing. Our memories are so clear Angela that by look you can remember ...I mainly just had this [inaudible] and most of those people are still in contact today ...by no means in one of those pockets and I will see Michael on an ongoing basis ...occasionally we get to see Oppies...and if I happen to be doing business in Mozambique I make an effort to drop by and say hi to all these ...we see Peter Ripman from time to time...but you know Michael and I he is the most but the bond is still very prevalent among us and you can see the guys who

have gone to work in Africa etcetera, they are thick, they work together, they stick together ...pass deals onto one another ...and they don't go outside their grouping and its really, whenever I get to go to a reunion or whatever, or a golf day...I was in Lima but I really didn't realise it was so soon...being the case like that, if I am able to go I make the effort to go...we used to meet at one stage in the 80's I think the first Thursday of every month, a guy called Gawie Spies, Gawie may be one of your interviews, he is an attorney down in **Tubudu** [unsure] he spent a lot of time in Carpenter and other operations after 32 in Caprivi and all these places...Gawie was with me in [inaudible] Gawie was doing his Articles at a company **Dutali** and he had done the deal for this particular group of friends to buy this suite at the Centurion cricket grounds...and Gawie asked him if he could use the place once a month, and he said certainly and we decided on Thursdays and we go along and put money into a kitty and account for the drinks that we have that night and they make a bit of money out of this and we get the use of the Cricket Suite. Those things I never miss...and it was round about the time that the heavy battles around Kuito were going on, all that kind of thing, and we got to meet some of the current 32 people as well, which was very nice to see the youngsters involved and to really understand what these guys were going through some of the most significant battles to every happen in the Southern Hemisphere never mind Southern Africa. Those battles that people don't fully appreciate its those battles that stopped the Soviet take over of this country, irrespective of what's happening politically in the Soviet Union at the time, but the Soviet Union has just withdrawn out of Afghanistan ...the most modern of

weapons were airlifted in Angola in a 24 hour airlift going on for about three months I believe...and they airlifted masses of weaponry into Angola ...they boosted their Cuban ground forces in Angola tremendously and they put a concerted effort into their last effort to overwhelm South Africa and Southern Africa and the small army in South African mainly made up of 32 actually stopped them at war. I don't think people really appreciate how tough and demanding it was, not only in units like 32 ..there were many others, National Service unit was involved, I have just finished reading a book by a guy who tells about his experiences serving in **Vigwannec** {unsure} Vigwannec was one of the major mobile Ratel based units that was involved in our defences...and that was incredibly significant battles that took place but fortunately those battles might be reduced to scrapbooks of history because of apartheid history of the military at the time, and that would be most important if that happens because those were fought by people that were National Service by and large ..who were put in that situation irrespective of what their political affiliation was, they served their country, most of those National Service men honestly believed they were serving their country, not serving political party...but serving their country, the country where they lived, grew up, their homes that were precious to them, their families that were dear to them...they believed they were protecting that, not necessarily protecting political system...protecting what was dear to them, their family, their homes, their way of life and those battles were hugely significant and I met a couple of people that were involved in those battles and you could see the stress in them...these guys truly did not believe that they would live to see another day,



that's how intense those battles were, but they went back and they fought them. They came back on their two weeks leave and they went back and carried out their part, that takes a lot of character...that takes a lot of strength, they knew they were going back to huge battles, not jokes. There was a photograph of Mike Rogers in here, I am not sure if its in Piet's or Breytenbach's third book... but opforte [unsure] for instance Mike Rogers lost 40 kilograms in that op alone...you will read about it in his books, I don't know if you have come across them...but 32 unit was such a unique entity and the Recce group within that was even more unique and was quite incredible, I don't think it can be said that I will definitely not go to my grave for having regretted for what I did. I will go to my grave knowing that period in my life from 18 –23 were the most rewarding profession that I have ever experienced...they required an exceptional amount out of a person...the fact that you were able to deliver that incredibly rewarding...all of these factors, you never knew from one day to the next what was going to happen and that variety you might say well you are fucking going out to kill people ..yes that's war, but there are so many different aspects, some might be reconnaissance missions, others might just be OP...others might be ambushes, others might be small group irritations ...we did some very big vehicle ambushes...much the way the SAS did in the desert war of the second world war, very deep penetration operations that we did, that we hit roads between Cahama and **Njega**....I have forgotten the name of the town...with the big burnt our tank on the river there, I have forgotten the name of the town...but a huge encampment, Cahama was the major Cuban and Soviet set up in Southern

Angola which as the crow flies north is about 200 kilometres into Angola...but we used to do ambushes on that road...true special force kind of operations, hit and run, surviving, clandestine ...you cannot carry the sense of achievement that we felt to somebody that has never experienced it...because its so out of their realm...if something is out of your realm or understanding, how do you begin to develop an understanding of it, how do we know what its like to live in Sudan...we have no idea ...you can see as many pictures as you want...but until you have actually lived like that, on the edge of starvation, let me tell you something you have no idea what its like, and the same thing translated into battle experience, unless you have been in battle, unless your life is truly on the line you will never be able to replicate that experience., you have to actually have it before you can actually carry it forth. You can write as many books as you want, somebody once said to me, a guy called Deon Opperman, he became quite a well known playwright...he was with me at University at Grahamstown, that's where I met George Mazarakis from Carte Blanche as well...and Deon said to me yes I have killed people before...by reading about it in books I have relived that experience. I said Deon you haven't, you approximated that perhaps, but you never lived until you have done it. And so it becomes very difficult, as I was saying to you Nikky switches off when Mike and I start talking war stories or start talking war stories ...and I understand that, she cant relate to them...and I don't have an issue about it, I am not going to force her to accept my experiences, my experiences are my experiences and I don't have to force them on anybody else. You can have an appreciation for what we went through,

understand it, and I am not going to force you into that position....I can sit here talking to you all day, and you can get into your car and drive away and think what a lot of crap I have heard, that's your opinion Angela....I now my experiences have never been negated by that...because they are all truly life changing experiences, and I think by and large that's what most of us went through. Irrespective of our motivations to be there...as I explained to you my motivation was to protect my way of life. More particularly I didn't want to live under a communist system...other people had different motivations...today they may think that well perhaps it wasn't my true motivation, maybe it was something else, but whatever it was we were all in that situation and we had the sort of same approach to it...we had a very simple coping mechanism ...we teased each other relentlessly ...nothing was sacred, from your mother to your grandmother to your father, everything was gay, and unless you could actually go along with it, you would become a nutcase, so we teased one another relentlessly, I mean it really got rough sometimes, but that was our release, we were very active athletically, played a lot of sport, ran a lot, did weights, all this kind of physical activity...which gave is an escape from whatever it was, depression or a particular operation project or whatever...to end off, you asked a question earlier, just to ask about whether there was ever a thought that my life was in danger...and I was telling you about the experience around Savate and I must say to you at no time did I ever think my life was in danger in that op, and **Peter Lipman** came to me that night and he was very sincere, he told other people, because we have a common friend a guy called Mark Norey [unsure]

who was at school, he was two years behind me at school and his brother Peter who is a very well known photographer today...and we were at school together, but Mark and I were both soccer fanatics and Mark later on as an adult played cricket in Pretoria and Peter was one of the guys who played cricket with, and Peter told Mark when they realised that they both knew me, and Mark heard he came from 32 he said do you know Kevin Fitzgerald, of course he knew me. Mark at an Old Boys function one day came to me and said Kevin I met mark Lipman we played cricket together. I said gee Mark really and we got talking and he told me about your experiences in Savate, and I said yes Mark that happened Peter is not talking shit and he came up to me that night, patted me on the shoulder and said Fritz you have to pray to God and thank him you are alive. I looked at Peter with utter ...I knew he didn't realise the intensity of what we had been on, because our lives were definitely in danger...I mean I remember thinking at one stage while I was shooting with M79...who the fuck are you shooting, I never thought our lives were in danger....the guys were soft is they acknowledge that our lives were in danger here, we accepted it, it was just a soft way of saying we could lose our lives here, perhaps and all I was really interested in was making sure that we didn't land in that situation, and so in those situations as intense as it was, in that battle that lasted for two days and the next day it might have been the same day...the first day, when Mike and I were running up and down the corridors packed with NPLA soldiers and ammunition ...there might have been a group of five of us but Mike and I were leading the charge...we literally had our AK's on automatic and we just fired and struck

vehicles as we ran just spraying them. I remember the one vehicle kept on going around in circles, the driver was dead behind the wheel...obviously the wheel had jammed in a clockwise direction and this vehicle was going clockwise...I am not kidding you it was going left, clockwise and this yellow smoke was pouring out the back, what it was ...I was a bullet that had lodged in an RPG projectile and this yellow powder, I suppose the igniter for the RPG was pluming up in the air...eventually we jumped onto the vehicle, chucked the driver's body out and disengaged the vehicle and brought it to a stop and we looted huge tins of Tuna that came out of Japan...25kg tins of Tuna...tons of the stuff, the whole battalion, us the Recce group, Charlie Company, I remember I walked in with Billy Ford, that's how I know Charlie Company was involved and whoever else with Delta company and we f...literally crawled out of that f...Savate...those vehicles that you saw in the photograph those things were laden with tuna and whatever else we could lay our hands on, but we stripped that camp and that camp was massive, absolutely massive. I mean the hero of that op was obviously Willem ...I think that if Willem was anybody else than who he was, I am talking about the Willem Ratte I knew as a soldier not the Willem Ratte who subsequently became involved in politics, I am talking about Willem as a soldier...the ops that Willem got involved in and what he did ...by the very nature of that he should have got an award. Willem was just a typical anti-hero...doesn't feel a need for people to recognise what he did...he did what he did because he was motivated to do it and he had pretty much the same motivations that I did I think, that he didn't want to live under the Communist rule. He wasn't interested in apartheid...Willem, I

don't think, believes in Apartheid but I also don't think he believes that the ANC has got the right to run South Africa so he has got an issue with that...but I am talking about Willem as a professional soldier and I will tell you that Willem has got the utmost respect from all of us, there is no question about it, as a soldier an absolute incredible soldier...he never expected anything of you that he himself was not prepared to do and he did some pretty life endangering things, and he did it himself because he knew his life was in danger and he didn't ask you to do it either and that was something that we all admired, and when he was finished with Savate and I tell you a Savate story later...but the fact that the guy never got rated and commissioned is still a mystery to me today, I think its just because Willem said to Ferreira I don't want a greater recognition...Ferreira honoured that. He didn't push the matter, but **Gerry Green** and myself I later operated under Gerry, Gerry came out of Delta...he and Mike Rogers were in Delta...Gerry came from the Delta Company, and he was the same matriculation group as we did, but he started his military service six months later, because he went to University first and he didn't like it, he knew he had certain intentions [inaudible] the University set up he hated and he signed up to do Recce selection, he finished Recce selection and Pep van Zyl by then had become the RSN of One Recce...and they were standing in a parade in Doppies shortly after the selection talked him over, and he was asked a question. [static noise] and Gerry unfortunately stuck his head in it...and they said what are you, he said ...I think he said agnostic...I am agnostic...jy moet in God glo....you have to believe in God, he said well I don't I am Agnostic...that was him out of One Recce ..well

where do you want to go, I think I will try 32, and he landed up in 32, went into platoons and later on transferred across to Recce Two. Then Gerry and I started operating together and as I was telling you a bit earlier on about when Koos Krokkodil had such a laugh by seeing my ruck sack...that was the start of one of the longest bush trip that I had ever done, that was a three month bush trip...and the precursor to operation Protea, where the South African Military for the first time actually used their brains and realised that the further they push SWAPO back into Angola, the further SWAPO had to engage to get into South West Africa the longer the No mans Land became, the further away from support and all that kind of thing...think South Africa [inaudible] that's all we have to do and the town that I was telling you about now that was on the river ...I cant remember it, but your first town that you come across was **Njiba** ...then **Calorec** might have been before that, I am talking about major towns. Njiba was the first major town, north east out of Njiba was where we landed up, there is actually video with me on it, it was shot by the SABC at a place called **Mahoni**...we came to Mahoni and a couple of places and if you veered west you came across this town ...Tutu...there is Ghama that I told you about...its still got its Portuguese name ...**Villa** Rocadas it was called Villa Rocadas I can't remember the Portuguese name for it, but there was a major NPLA set up, a whole lot of major Cuban set up and there was Njiba, but anyway if you went out this way and some of the other members showed you in Mahoni and these places...because obviously you must understand this was done for ..there you go, Evali, Mahoni, **Lupo, Cuvaole**, that is called now, beyond there was where the airport was. Its

actually SABC footage showing that we are beyond the airport, Glen Neethling and myself, Glen Neethling said you and I we went on leave and he saw the footage on SABC news and he said gee Fritz you and I were on TV...if you ask Glen Neethling he will confirm that...and so we operated extensively in the ...I will just show you on the map, we operated extensively north of Villa Rocadas and Njiba for three months and on one particular day we had been trying to get to a base that we had heard about, and Gerry and Mike had come across the locals and we ...Portuguese panyard got hold of the local, shanghai'd the local to be our guide and

**INTERVIEWER:** You liberated him.

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** The guy was actually incredibly cooperative and he actually lead the Recce to the NPLA, the SWAPO base...sorry I talk about NPLA...the operation was against SWAPO and we heard about this SWAPO base and this guy ...Willem would get incredibly frustrated but the guy was firm, every time we came to a track ...the guy had a good look at the track, we are talking about moonlight with regard to this one, and Willem said ...we have been walking for hours....and we come to the next stop and we get the same confrontation with him...its not this one, but we are walking now for more than another 5 kilometres and you keep on saying its just there, just there, you know African parameter, or African perspective...just there could be miles away, two days walk away and eventually in the early hours of the morning we actually got to where this camp was, moved in and laid an ambush and during the course of the previous day we heard a lot of mortar fire coming out of Njiba and we



wondered what was going on there, are they now doing a shooting plan, you know what a shooting plan is...you identify an area of dead ground...and you zero your mortars into that and if an attack takes place you identify that enemy troops are there, you have already got the coordinates for that...you don't have to range your mortars, they are already pre-ranged...so we thought maybe they are doing that, because Njiba by then was way to our south and in fact it was to our South East, we were North West of Njiba and we were getting further and further away from Njiba, and we were saying it cant be our information is this camp is close to Njiba, the local said no its not I will show you where the camp is, and this carried on, you must understand that we were walking for six [inaudible] and eventually in the early hours of the morning we get to this place, we go into ambush position true as bob, while we are in this position a vehicle rolled into it and we shot his vehicle...you must know if you fire a RPG round at point blank range, enough to take the drivers legs off...and that vehicle then caught alight and we actually used the vehicle as a marker to call the choppers in the next day and the next day we started to move out and we used the burnt out vehicle as a chopper ...by eight o clock the next morning SWAPO really covered that vehicle, camouflaged that vehicle with branches and the choppers couldn't spot it out the air...they struggled to find us but we were like ten kilometres away...and Willem was saying if you find that vehicle we are then about 10 kilometres east of that vehicle. And the choppers couldn't find it, they struggled to find it but what had happened was that the mortar rounds that we heard were actually SWAPO special forces that had been tasked to hunt us down ...we were causing such a

lot of destruction, we were laying mines, doing ambushes, shooting camps up, one of the camps that we had a great success in was right next to NJiba...SWAPO camp right on the perimeter of the NPLA and they were enjoying the NPLA anti-aircraft cover and so on, and we sneaked into that camp, we actually shot people as they were sleeping, where they were sleeping, that's how successful that day was. I remember I put an RPG round towards what was supposed to be the fuel depot...and blew their fuel depot up and created a big fireworks...that's only happened to Hollywood...all the petrol blown up and I shoved about two or three rounds into that big storage tank. And we got a dog, a bull mastiff...and you can ask Tony Nienaber, he took the dog back to [inaudible] you go to the bush with him, with Alpha company and when we were in ambush position the dog used to keep absolutely thoeep still and quiet...the thing wouldn't leave us, we walked out of the camp that night and that thing followed us...just knew these guys were going to look after him, and he just stayed with us. Go in the chopper we load him too.

**INTERVIEWER:** You turned an enemy dog ...?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** You can't believe it, he was the most wonderful thing to have this dog follow us and we called him along eventually and you can only get a chopper uplift they say 12 kilometres out of the danger zone...we got picked up, the dog hopped on the Puma no it was like, hopped on the Puma and off we went, we went to that encampment where I told you Piet Krokkodil laughed at me...they were still based there, the tankers were still based there, between there and had a day or two's rest there, and the dog just took to Tony's crowd,

Alpha Company. Alpha company took that dog to the bush for a long time apparently...each guy used to carry a portion of dog food for it and a water bottle for the dog. And...

**INTERVIEWER:** What was the dog's name?

**KEVIN FITZGERALD:** Tony will give it to you, I don't know what they called the dog, it was pure white when we left...Bull Terrier...I promise you and we shot the shit out of SWAPO in that particular camp on the western outskirts of Njiba...and then back to the usual story now...so we were going down to get the choppers to pick us up we are finishing up now at Njiba...we have now found a place where the choppers could come and uplift us...and they went into a kraal, I don't know what posses Willem to go into the kraal, we don't normally do that, but he went into that kraal, and Willem just gets this way sometimes...and if this is the kraal...north is that way okay, we had an ambush west of here and this is the kraal and this is the outward mielie field and things of the kraal, and there was a big baobab tree midway between the perimeter of the kraal and the thorn bush fence that they used to make around the place, and Gerry and myself plonked ourselves under that tree, Kevin's side was directly opposite us with the southern eastern portion...we were north western, Kevin's side was south eastern and the rest of the guys were in the kraal itself, and we were fighting a group of about 15 or so...and Eric Rabie was one of them, Eric Rabie you can't contact him in [inaudible] and I used to be the RPG carrier...and I put my RPG up, sat down and used to slide out of our back packs because they are so heavy...

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