

Interview with Recce 'G' (Name withheld) Reconnaissance Regiment 8/09/07
 Interviewed by Mike Cadman

	SIDE A
Interviewer	Give me just a bit of your background about how you grew up, what type of life did you have as a youngster and then how come you became interested in the military, and what happened the first few years.
G	<p>For the purpose of the recording can you refer to me as G. I was born in the last year of 1959, in Johannesburg. My parents moved down to Mpumalanga and I grew up on a farm close to Kruger National Park. I was one of only two children in a very staunch Afrikaans environment. And I think it's partly the process, like Pieter-Dirk Uys would say, Adapt or Die. Many years later I only realised that despite the liberal exposure we had to music like the Beatles, going to school and people ask you, who is your favourite choice of music? And you'd say, well I like Hard Day's Night by the Beatles, and they'd look at you and say, huh? And you'd ask them for their reference point and they'd talk about Ge Korsten or Mimi Coetzee. I always found that very difficult to understand because maybe I just looked at the bigger picture more than anybody else. But more so, the environment you growing in was a very closed insular environment, particularly the small communities where people listen in on your party lines and so on. And so I was always conscious of the small mentality, or the small way of thinking. I liked the environment, I grew up on a farm. I'm a farm boy through and through. Learned to speak Seswati, like the local guys there do. Although my mother was Afrikaans speaking her first language was Zulu. So Seswati and Zulu are very close to each other in the environment I was in. So for me I was a true bred and born South African. I had the Seswati name of Beshu, which means loin cloth, because that's how I used to run around. And I learned to live in the bush, where we were we were the last of the banana farms right in that forestry plantations and so on. I could survive in the bush very comfortably, take the dogs and disappear for 3, 4 days at a time with either an air rifle or a two two. So for me that was really the grounding for the military experience that I was going to undergo many years later. I found...and I suppose you don't know anything more than that, but you're only exposed to what you are told and what you are accustomed to and it was still a society where you were told what to do and not to express yourself freely and think freely. And I found this more and more of a problem as I got older and started to think for myself. Going to high school, I went through the first English high school in the Lowveld, Lowveld High. And despite the divorce of my parents and so on, things had been a bit tough but I didn't think it was more difficult than anybody else. I think everybody goes through tough times, it's just your perspective on it, and for me it was an adventure. You make of life what it is, it gives you lemons you make</p>

	<p>lemonade. And life is a journey, it's not the final destination. And I learned that very early. When time came close towards the end of high school, everyone was saying what are you going to do? I still had no idea what I wanted to do. You know parents say, teacher, doctor, lawyer, engineer, type of story. And certainly I had the marks. I wasn't a brilliant scholar, I had to work very hard for that and I only just realised that I think part of the process is that I was taught the incorrect way of how to study. You only realise it many years later. And a lot of it comes from experiences and mistakes. And I still didn't know what I wanted to do and I remember very clearly in the final years of high school people were saying what they were going to do. And I thought I'd do university some stage or another but more important consideration was what was going to happen going to the army type of thing. At that stage the Rhodesian war was at its height, and I'm talking about '74, '75, '76. A lot of the photographs of the Chimurenga or the Bush War, in Rhodesia were coming through and we were exposed to a lot of those things. We had the Fox Street incidents in, I think it was '75.</p>
Interviewer	That was when David Protter took people hostage?
G	<p>That is correct. Unbeknown to me that guys who were involved there were the guys I'd would be working with two, three years later. I just remember, I think it's because in this society and doing the things that we had to do, because we're going through hardships, I didn't do what I wanted to do as a child. I just knew that I had to get good marks and things like that so that I could succeed at school because it would have also made my mother happy. Because she was a single mother at that stage, my father was not contributing towards the upkeep. If I did well at school I knew that my chance of finishing education and so on would be better at school and she would become under less pressure. So I couldn't be the rebellious me that I would like to have been. Also my mother remarried my best friend's father and we worked... during holidays we worked on farms, we worked in various businesses he had but we didn't go in as like the owner's son. We started right at the bottom. We were worse than labourers because we had to prove that we could do things better than anybody else. Which for me was a good lesson in life. You've got to start right at the bottom and I think today it's still like that. It may be a bad...being in many respects you don't often delegate because you do the job...you want to do better than everybody else because you can, if you cannot control or delegate the process. Time came to go to the...to do our National Service. I got called up to go to the army. Everyone said, where do you want to go? And I said, I want to go to the paratroopers. Everyone laughed at me, type of story. I think I was an average sportsman, I played rugby, soccer, I got my swimming colours, cross country colours, and went off...called up to 4 SAI the most dreadful place in the world.</p>
Interviewer	Where was 4 SAI?

G	In Middleburg in the old Eastern Transvaal, it's now Mpumalanga. Hated it. And I think it's part of the process that they start degrading and breaking you down. The guys from parachute battalion came around about two weeks later. I was fit at that stage. And I was immediately selected to go through to do my basics at Tempe in Bloemfontein. That's where it started.
Interviewer	Alright so you go off to parachute battalion, you're a long way from your home turf, you're in Bloemfontein, cold highveld, or maybe hot if it was summer, what then happens? You go through the parachute battalion training...
G	<p>We started doing our basics. I still am very short sighted. I used to wear glasses in those days. Went through the basics and I found that I struggled a bit. I wasn't necessarily one of the big manne, as they would say. But neither here nor there, you fit in with the rest of the guys. I certainly was one of the average Joes that was there. I always had a need or requirement to do things better. It's just an internal drive. So I found that when it came to various field abilities, working with rifles, doing things like that, I was a better marksman than most. I was better at equipment, I was better just doing that, and I loved it. I prided myself on that ability to be able to do that. And also, I spoke Afrikaans as well as I spoke English. And I suppose it goes a long way in many respects. So fell in, did the basics that we were supposed to do. And if anybody doesn't know the process of parachute battalion, you do your normal basics and towards the end of your basics you then go and do your selection for your actual parachute qualification, which was a two week physical training course, which they really try and break you down. And they really weed out the physical people who can do it from those who can't. And then you do your jumping course which is another two weeks after that. We'd been on the course for a week already when they announced at tea time one morning that the guys from the Recces were coming around to look at suitable candidates, was anyone interested? And a few of us put up our hands. It must have been about 20, 25 of us. We were then asked to...they gave us an overview, there was a documentary which they showed us, which was the recruitment movie, which was very gung ho and sort of very apt for that time. You look at it today you'd actually laugh at it. Because it was all based on the romantic aspects of what it was about, not the actual work itself. And it was very clever, in retrospect...a very clever ploy by the defence force and whoever they got to make the documentary about the things that were happening. It was not the harsh reality. And for me I still laugh because it's actually a nice documentary, a recruitment movie. However it was fundamentally flawed. But none of us knew. We were young, we were right in the target audience and target market they were looking for, and they were pressing the triggers, and that's what we wanted. Anyway, the down side of this was that if you fell off their course at that stage you couldn't go back on. So it was a choice we made. We did the various tests that they asked us to do in Bloemfontein and I think</p>

about 80% of the guys then qualified to go through. And we were then selected for the pre selection, and the pre selection was then...we were shipped out to Potchefstroom where a lot of the people who you have already been talking to were. This is in March, April, 1977. And in Potch we did phase two of our counter insurgency stuff, whilst we were being prepared for our big selection course. And at this stage we were really being grilled and trained hard and part of the process is to really get you fit, which I can understand. We were at that stage also then undergoing the various evaluations which is the medical and the psychological. And then as per my previous mention to you, which was off the record, I think that a lot of the psychological evaluation, and that was afterwards, I looked at them and thought, how could they let people like this go through, because people's true colours come out when they let their inhibitions down. And alcohol certainly levels with everybody else or it brings out your true colours. And I think the profiling process was really flawed. And you could pick that up with time, and that's purely my own observation and perspective on that. Then they did a medical, and I was kicked off the medical. I just was told that I had failed the medical and I had no idea why. Of course I was seriously distraught. At this stage when I had my heart set on it. And they said, well sorry for you, but you're now going, as they say, RTU - return to unit. But they don't return you to your own unit where you come from. So I couldn't go back to 4 SAI and I certainly was not going to go back to parachute battalion. And they seconded me to 11 Commando which was in Kimberley. The name RTU is worse than having the label as being HIV or AIDS positive in the military context as you're absolutely treated like dirt, they don't like you, and the reference to the corporal with the IQ of 3 chasing you around the hill, very relevant in this environment because there were guys there who just wanted to chase us. And there were two of us. He had a hearing problem and I was rejected because of my eyesight. As I said I was wearing glasses in those days. And you know what? If you can't beat them, join them. There's a motto. But you know what? If you can't beat them, try again and you will beat them. And you know what, when you do eventually...that was just something that came through. I think it's just that strong resistance to be able to do it. And I'd had my heart set emotionally that this is what I wanted to do. I wanted to join Reconnaissance Regiment and make it a short career or long career, I didn't know at that stage. I think you don't know enough. We had a number of people at this particular regiment, 11 Commando, who tried to break us because they thought we were now...we were ripe to be broken down and maybe be good soldiers, I don't know. They tried to chase us around trees and so on. If they sent us to a tree that was a kilometre away, you know what we'd run to the next tree which was two kilometres away, the next one was three and four and we'd come back with all the branches and say listen, just in case you were going to send us to those we brought you the branches as well. And in fact we cracked all the guys. They gave

us a pack drill on the one day and for 9 hours we were on the parade ground, a pack drill. They had a corporal, a sergeant and a captain. And they eventually all packed up. And we carried on till whatever time in the night. And then the next morning we were still up on parade ground before anyone else could realise they couldn't break us. We just had that resistance. I then re-applied to go back to Reconnaissance Regiment. And the only way that I could do that was go as permanent force member. I couldn't do it as a National Serviceman. And they were (*inaudible*) from a National Service perspective to get us in and then to sign us up. And this route was to go directly. And I was sent through to Pretoria to go on a test, but I didn't say I wanted to go back because I thought if I can't get back there, what's the other option? Maybe I need to be devious. And I thought, uh uh, the (*inaudible*) centre in Potch. The guy I was with, he eventually did go to the (*inaudible*) centre, he was there for many years. We got to a testing as permanent force member in Pretoria. They said, are you sure that this is what you want to do? And I said, no. And I got treated like dirt again because I was accused of stuffing them around. I said, no that's not where I want to go. This is where I want to go. And they said, well you were rejected, etc, etc. I said, yes. But I really do want to go down. They said, ok, well there's only one man who can really make a decision and it's General Loots, who then headed up the Special Forces. And who was based in Defence HQ Pretoria, just below the prison. So I had to sit there for three days outside his office. And I sat there for three days, and there wandered through senior officers, mostly women walking around, and there was this old man who looked a bit like Colonel Harland Sanders from KFC in a black suit walking up and down, and that was it. And the secretary knew why I was there and the third day, this old man who looked like Colonel Harland Saunders said, lyster seun, wil jy nie inkom nie? Don't you want to come in? So that was fine. He said, come, you can go and talk to the general. I walked in, and he walked around and I thought ok, he's going to go and call the general, and he sat down behind the desk. So I said, wie is u? Who are you? He said, 'Ek is Generaal Loots.' I am General Loots. He said, you are serious about what you want to do? I said, yes, I've been here for 3 days, I wouldn't do it if I wasn't serious. So he looked at me and he said, you do know you were declared medically unfit? I said, well I don't know why, is it because I have a heart condition whatever? He says, oh, you've got a problem with your eyes. And they just feel that with glasses if you were in operational circumstances, you lost them, we'd have a problem. So I said, well, surely there must be something else I could do, some support role. He said, no, their support guys are really active and so on. And I was in contact with a lot of the guys so I knew they were busy doing things. He said, fine. So I tested, I went down then as a storeman or something like that. I don't recall. And I got down to 1 Recce then as it was known, or Reconnaissance Commando, it wasn't even 1 Recce, it was called Reconnaissance Commando on the Bluff in Durban. And

	<p>the officer commanding was Major John Moore. And I went to see him the day I arrived and he said, so why are you here? I see you're coming as a storeman and we actually don't need any more storemen, we need other people. I said, well, sir, I've actually come down because I want to do the selection course. I was kicked off because the medical thing and he pulled out my record and he had it there and he said, I tell you what, if you don't tell anybody, I won't tell number one. Number two, you have to pass, you don't have a choice, otherwise your life is going to be a living hell. I said, sir that's my pledge. So the guys who were with me and the person who you spoke to before, who referred you to me, were then ahead of me, they'd then passed the selection course, there was quite a large group of them, I think there were 28 of them. It was the largest group who had passed in one batch. And there were a few of us who then joined. We became part of the support team. We didn't have our burgundy beret in those days, we had the green, so we were treated like real dog turds. But you know what, the whole story of doing better than everybody else, you get out there and you just prove it. And on all the various courses we did from medical to small arms...signals, explosives, and demolitions course and things like that, even fitness, I was always up there. In fitness I struggled because I was never a big boy in those days, I was quite lean. And I just proved you could do it. And that just irked some of the guys, particularly the Afrikaans guys. Hier kom die Engels mannetjie. And that's just one of those things, you learn to deal with it. irrespective of the fact of what your background is, and I was half Afrikaans, half English. Selection course came up, it was another large group. 861 guys started on the course. 45 guys finished the PT course. I had to do the PT course all over again, the one that I'd done the week I was in Bloemfontein already. I had to do the two weeks down there. And the 45 of us we then finished...then went to Bloemfontein, we did our parachute jumping course in Bloemfontein and from there we went on selection. And after that only 10 of us finished. That's how I got into it. But I was seriously determined to get in. And that was on the 16th of December, 1977.</p>
Interviewer	So now you've qualified, you get your maroon beret. Then what happened?
G	<p>Then you think you're the bees knees. But in fact if only one knew. And one knew very little. And you know this whole propaganda machine worked exceptionally well and there were a lot of things were happening, so you did your various courses that you had to do. Some of the guys...in December, just after our selection course, one of the major battles that the Special Forces had been involved in, with a little bit of help from 32 Battalion, was Eheke in south of Zambia. And a lot of the guys were killed. And guys that I had worked with and looked up to and were like my mentors. And I just remember...I call blood and guts, bits of equipment and baggage and clothing and things like this came back from this thing. We still had our big dinner which</p>

	<p>we inaugurated and so on, and it happened just after this. And for us it was such a blow, it came back to this was a real war. It wasn't this thing, this documentary recruitment movie where things looked so great and it was nice and it was all nice and (<i>inaudible</i>). Things started coming home. We then lost two other guys, two operators, in what we were told was in the bush, and it was a big, nearly mystical border, as everybody referred to about the border, but they referred to it as the bush, that was the border. The guys were operational. You know what the operational areas were. You weren't allowed in the ops rooms, so you didn't know what was happening. And the next thing we were put on to a Dakota and we were flown off from Durban. We thought, oh, we're going to Pretoria, and we flew past Pretoria and carried on flying. And this is our exposure with the SAS we became E Squad from the SAS in Rhodesia. And for a period of about 18 months, maybe a bit longer, we were there on and off. We did a number of trips with them. We were officially the E Squad of the SAS. We got kitted out in all their stuff. We worked with them, we lost guys, operational, who worked in the east and the west and the north. So we worked in Vic Falls. We worked from Fort Vic, on the Kariba, and most of my experience was in Mozambique. So we worked from Buffalo Range, Chiredzi, and Mabalwata into Mozambique. And we did a lot of successful operations, we had a lot of bad operations as well. And that's when you learn you become a number in the process. You also see the flaws in the structure but...and in terms of the people, but you are then not equipped, and so years later when you look back and think, what was I doing?</p>
Interviewer	<p>At that stage you're a young man, you're trained in the defence force, you've trained in Potchefstroom, Bloemfontein, Durban, yet you're fighting a war in Rhodesia and you're fighting against ZANLA or ZIPRA guerrilla movements for a neighbouring country, but if this is all a secret, how does this affect you as a soldier? You're fighting a secret war.</p>
G	<p>I found it was very difficult because I remember writing letters home. Now one thing I can say for my mother, she never hugged me and told me that she loved me, not that I'm worried about that now, it might have had deeper psychological impacts, and the way I joke about them, maybe there's some truth in jest. But for every year that I was in Reconnaissance Regiment, on a Monday morning she would write a letter and mail it off to me. And it got to one stage where I just had so many letters I couldn't keep them, but in fact I could have put one on every Monday of the calendar. I wrote back to her as often as I could. Obviously email wasn't even a consideration in anybody's mind in those days. And there's not much you can talk about. I remember once writing about where we were, and the letters were censored. But you know the trees are nice and so are the rivers and there are a lot of ants in the ground and there's some guys who are working with their knives and so and so is funny. And that's about whatever it was. And if you talk about how dry it was...I always</p>

tried to give a bit of sense of where I was by the type of trees. Having grown up in the bushveld near the Kruger Park, similar type of environment, if you know the bush and know the type of trees, you can just say, well you get Mopane trees, you know you've got to be quite far north. Eventually you talk about Baobab trees you're even further north. And then if you talk about certain other things, hopefully...and that was about the closest I ever got. The secrecy issue, I suppose was two things. I suppose there's a...you feel in a way it's an honour initially when you join the guys. And I (*inaudible*) guys because you're one of the guys. And they had a bit of an attitude about themselves and they thought they were cool and when they were back in Durban and so on...guys as sport, it was like moffie bashing, guys used to go out just to go and beat up civilians because they could. And they thought they were better. Comes back retrospectively I think a lot of people had inferiority complexes and other major issues and they had to demonstrate to themselves rather than anything else. They just loved doing it. I've watched guys drive along in their cars and spend money on 3 litre Fords...I thought why spend all this money? And they'd be driving down Umbilo Road or somewhere up near the university and there'd be some guys on the side, where they'd stop and get out and beat the stuffing out of these guys for no reason whatsoever until the guys were lying on the ground bleeding, they'd get in the car and drive off. Why? So there was a little bit of that. Getting back to your question. You know, we have this whole thing about terrorism, and Communism and what it was going to be doing and we had these briefing sessions and they were more like pep talks, and if you look at how Vietnam ran with their little Communist cells and everyone was (*inaudible*) ..the big message. Here it was different. The big message was always coming through but it was reinforced in different ways. And we were told, well you know, working with the SAS in Rhodesia, and we worked with the Selous Scouts, and we worked with the RAR, and we worked with everybody else. I mean some of the guys, what we called the dark faced guys, eventually became 5 Recce. And the guys who worked with the Selous Scouts, we worked with them as well...did a number of ops with them, so for all purposes we were Selous Scouts but we actually were SAS, and the SAS and the Selous Scouts were always training people as well. And how it happened was, when we were doing our various courses in Durban and elsewhere at a later stage, we had these guys come in...the course would start and guys would walk in, in their brand new uniforms and so on, they'd be different and they wouldn't be wearing a beret, they'd be having a cap on, the guys say, this is so and so and by the various names they were certainly not South African, Afrikaner names, and their accents too. We knew who they were. And eventually it was open. But you didn't talk about it outside. So we had the SAS coming down, we had the Selous Scouts coming down. And we had various guys from the British SAS who also came down. And for us it was interesting times. It was (part of it?). And you know they were like comrades in arms and then the

	<p>guy said oh...this is how it came out...the guys said, oh, we'll be seeing you up in Salisbury in the next few weeks. I thought it was a jest until we got in the Dakota, we landed and then the guys we saw, here they were. In their own uniform with their berets and so on, they said, don't worry we're going to kit you out because they did the same as we did to them, kitted them out so they had the same uniform with everything on. It was really nice. But you know what, it was this brotherhood type of thing number one. Number two, it's a whole counter insurgency, fight Communism type of thing. So you know what? That became part of the secret. So when you were out, we wore the beret, when you were in town and so on. And yes, you were proud to do it wherever you went. However, people said, where are you? You'd say no, you're a chef with an Infantry Battalion. And because we only had that little Springbok which the infantry wore, we didn't have the regiment's badge on, we could get away with it. Nobody knew. Only years later when they changed the emblem and we had the compass rose on there, then it was a different story. But you could say, no I was a chef at the Infantry Battalion because everybody would believe it. It was nice, you could get away with it. That was quite nice. It was a little bit being like a chameleon. And that thing has perpetuated, and still today...and I see that in relationship to various things. There's a lot of things that I don't tell and I suppose that's certain things, but sometimes maybe should be more not as circumspect, and more trusting, but you know as you get older you also realise you can't trust everybody. Even if he says, trust me, I'm a doctor, you're reluctant to do that. And I think it has a deep seated impact on people. And I think a lot of people still had to find out...I know I'm still going through the process in many respects. And I just don't talk a lot about those things anymore because A: it's not relevant to the people around me. And B: they wouldn't understand. And only people who I can share certain things with are guys who were with me during that period. And there aren't that many because a lot of them I don't socialise with because it's just...I've moved on. And there might be two or three that I might see periodically. But you know what, we don't even talk...we might refer to something but we don't sit and tell pub stories. And that for me is a big difference. You don't sit and tell pub stories...like you might refer to an incident where it was nice in the bush, we did this or that, we laugh about certain things, but it's not 'oh we remember when'. It doesn't come into the range of talking. What you do talk about today is how you're actually dealing with things, because everybody has a problem in some way or another. You know life is hard enough as it is for average Joe or Sue, in terms of what you're doing and everybody struggles with things with crime, and whereas other things are happening at the moment.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So some deal with these things well, some just don't. I mean here you are, you're a bunch of highly trained young soldiers, but you're shipped off to another country and you're fighting a secret war. You're getting no recognition at home because you're not allowed to tell anybody. No recognition from the general public.</p>

	<p>Yet your perception is that you're fighting this broader misunderstood Communism thing. That must rankle for the rest of your life. You've got these still waters which run so deep, but you're not allowed to reveal them. are you suggesting that this sets in with some people, it's a habit they never ever break?</p>
G	<p>I think for some people it does and unless they choose to actually deal with the issue. I remember years later with...while dealing with 2 Recce...in fact we saw a lot of action and that was in the mid to late eighties...and going to see psychiatrists and psychologists after injury in certain conflicts, and certain battles, and certain things were dealt with but you still suppress it because it's not something you really want to share with people. I'm just reading Jane Fonda's book at the moment where it's talking about a lot of things that were happening in the States at that stage with their war in Vietnam, which was an unpopular war as well, like it was here. There're very strong parallels between the two. And one of the things she talks about, particularly in her environment, because of her father who was quite suppressive in many respects, is that you pretend to be certain things, or like certain things, or behave accordingly to do certain things, you know the more you do it, the more you become it. And it was such a close parallel that I actually was quite shocked that something she was talking about, the things that wouldn't have been in my nature, but because you're with the manne and you're with these guys doing these things and you do it every day, guess what? Later on it's like brushing your teeth. It just becomes part of the process. However, there's certain things which are registered and they stay behind there and they are latent, we call them defects, but they're latent characteristics which you have within yourself. And they might be revealed at a later stage. There could be trigger mechanisms or voluntarily you might choose to do so or it's a conscious decision to do it. I think a lot of people have decided just not to do it.</p>
	<p>END OF SIDE A (<i>counter at 423</i>)</p>
	<p>SIDE B</p>
Interviewer	<p>...were talking about sometimes it becomes almost part of the way you are because you're with the guys, you behave in a certain way. Some time later in life there might even be trigger responses to certain outside influences. So you actually live this world, sometimes it's a very real world, a very dangerous world, but you live it because that's what you're doing. <i>Tape turned off</i> How it becomes part of you, you're with the guys all the time, you do the same work, you're identifying because you've got to do this stuff, but it has its impacts in later life. Some guys handle it, some don't. How have you handled all of that stuff?</p>
G	<p>I think I was fortunate in one way that I did initial three years. I did the latter part of '77 when I joined Reconnaissance Commando in '77, '78, '79, and '80. And then I decided I wanted out of my contract. So I bought my way out, I think it was R150 or</p>

	<p>whatever, and I went off to Wits. I'd been putting money aside. I only did a year at Wits because I eventually had to work to support myself, I didn't realise how much it cost. Because you're so insular, you think what you put aside is enough. And it certainly wasn't enough. I didn't have parents who then could pay for me and put me through.</p>
Interviewer	<p>And what course did you study?</p>
G	<p>I was going to do law, so I started off doing a BA with the intention of doing a BA LLB. And during the vac I'd worked with a law firm in Pietermaritzburg, got some exposure and so on, but the more I was exposed to...and I'm going to call it society...and the unrest that was coming as a result of people objecting against what the government was doing, as that happened it created a lot of turmoil in me. And it changed my whole political belief. Not at that stage, a later stage. But it emotionally, and I would say psychologically, I was in a state of disarray. I didn't know that...because on campus we had Rhodesians on the one side, we had the militant blacks, we had...a lot of the Afrikaans people, and then we had, when I say Afrikaans, the Afrikaans who were very staunch supporters of the government. We had the English supporters who were very supportive of the government, you had a lot of people in between, and then you had those who actually didn't give a stuff. They were just there to have a good time and to learn. And here also you come and you're being exposed to all these things, so that helped me because at the end of that year I wrote three of my five exams - they wouldn't allow me to write the rest of them until I'd paid up my fees because I was staying in res. And I went back to Reconnaissance Regiment then. And we were thrown into the deep end at that stage with the type of work we were doing, which was nice. But that exposure then challenged me in many respects because all of a sudden I'd seen the other side. Not that the grass was greener, but I'd seen the other side. And for all of a sudden now, it's that story that where there are no winners in a battle. It's like negotiations. There's got to be a win-win situation. But here's certainly someone who wanted to win. And it was part of that exposure. And that was what changed me in terms of my own being later on in life. Because if you go back to something that you initially left out of choice and you forgot why you left it, because sometimes the reason was not valid enough, you could have been angry, upset or whatever. You do go back, and then you remember why you left, that scenario, and you can make a choice to either leave again or to deal with it. And when I got back there to Reconnaissance Regiment, the work we were doing, I then...hit me even more as to why I had left, but more so now was armed with things and I had more information and I was learning about myself as much as I was learning about other things and I started challenging everything else. Now, I think a lot of people who were serving with me at that period of time, and I'm not talking only in Reconnaissance Regiment but in other sections of the South African Defence Force. It's like teachers. They lead such an</p>

	<p>insular life and you're not exposed to things that are going on, and you believe everything you've been taught because that's the hand that feeds you. You don't bite that hand. But I'd seen the other side and I started challenging these things. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't have left a few years afterwards like I had done, and I would have not been prepared. A lot of people who were inside don't see that, don't know it, and they continue. They haven't planned their lives and they take what is spelled out to them rather than taking responsibility for yourself. I think that action of taking responsibility because you're faced with tough decisions, is one of the reasons why at a later stage you're able to deal with it. A lot of people still don't, and I wouldn't say I'm by any means adept or skilled at handling it. Only now, and I'm in my late forties, have I learned certain things, and learned to understand certain things and also know that there are some things that I need help in dealing with, which is a process that I've been going through. And not everybody can do that. And a lot of people have chosen not to do it but A: because it's different. Guys are not meant to talk. You know, cowboys don't cry, they're allowed to kiss their horses but not on the screen either, it's one of those things, number one. Our society that we grew up in, particularly in English speaking South African society, is a carry over from the British. And you keep the stiff upper lip. You don't hug your children and tell them you love them. You pat them and say, how do you do? What's the weather like today, type of story. You never talk about those things that are real. And when you are exposed to what you see as the precocious American where they object and they want to do things their way. That was not our way. We were told how to do things. And now as you start becoming more mature, that's the term I'm going to use, you realise a lot of these things you're unskilled and in-adept at handling. A lot of people don't even know that. It's the unconsciously unknown. A lot of people don't know they have a problem, and if they did they don't know what to do with it. It's like they don't know what to do so it gets trodden into the ground. The same thing happens here. When you find a lot of people just don't know that there is a problem, they don't know that they should be dealing with it, and therefore they never dealt with it. So guess what? They plod along and hopefully something is going to...or somebody is going to deal them a better hand of cards. It's not going to happen.</p>
Interviewer	Sometimes it has extreme consequences as well.
G	<p>Oh yes it does. I had someone the other day, he learned about my background, not knowing anything about it, but knowing that I was involved, he said, oh, do you know that there are so many cases of suicide amongst the Special Forces guys. I said, oh? Because I know a lot of the guys still, and I see the guys regularly, although I'm not on a chat line or anything like with the guys, but you hear through the grapevine. He said, yes. And then they go further and they murder all their family members as well. These are the urban myths and the legends and things which</p>

	<p>continue. But that's in the negative context. And here's someone who's pretty well educated, is a life coach, does various things like that as well, and I think well, they should know better. But you know what, they don't know better because they weren't exposed to them and in a way it's like another generation. This person doesn't have any siblings who were involved in the defence force or anything like that at all, and there's a case in point. But in many incidences a lot of people just don't know. They just don't know what's going on. And I look at a lot of the guys who were there and didn't make a conscious decision to make a change before because, when all the animals were on Noah's Ark they were quite comfortable. A lot of people still think they're on the Ark. They've never decided to...that they're going to hit dry land one day and in fact there might even be a drought. They've never thought about that far. But a lot of them are going through a drought at the moment and they're having a very torrid time. And you bump into the guys occasionally, and you can see them. They're living in the past. And they've never been able to catch up. They can't communicate effectively. Even their dress sense and their ability in terms of that just...there's a severe skill inability to be able to adapt and communicate.</p>
Interviewer	<p>In your experience with them, do they resentment towards the previous government for selling them out as it were? Do they feel resentment to the new government because they might have been the very people that they were told they were fighting against? How did they cope with this?</p>
G	<p>I think they pocket certain things or put it into compartments. Compartmentalise the process. Because it helps them to deal with it in some respects and I'm talking from my own perception. Some of them were officers, ranking...captain, major, and I look at some of these guys and I think how are they coping? And you look at them because quite often their route to escape is to avoid, or to go onto booze, which is generally easily acceptable. I don't think anyone else is going on to some of the other harder illicit substances. A lot of them like to live in the past, in this one insular pocket, which they've compartmentalised, that they were loved and respected for the things they did, and it's nice, nice to think about that and it's a nice, warm, fuzzy feeling about yourself. You've achieved certain things. I think there was a large component, certainly of society in the days that we were talking about, going up to 1985, where some parts of the society didn't talk about it because if you don't talk about it, it won't raise its ugly head and it's there. It's one of those things, it's like, we all have BO, but nobody is actually going to talk about it if you do arrive at the dinner table and you're ponging a bit. Some people did try to address it, some people avoided it. But also sometimes you were like the black sheep of the family. In many instances it was supposedly respected and revered that you were there XYZ, but it's not the case. In many instances like behind the back, that they're whispering and so on, or they didn't want to give it much credibility or importance because they didn't know it was real.</p>

	<p>They didn't know is it something you should talk about and so on because it was a changing society we're going through. And people realised that Communism later on wasn't what everybody thought it was going to be. It wasn't going to be the <i>swart gevaar</i> or black danger that consumed everybody and everything. It was really a perception that was created, and remember perception is reality, but reality isn't truth. And it's that thing which to me many years later hit home. That everybody had this perception about what was going to happen and so on, and you know, perception is the most important thing. If people want to drive around in a BMW and look cool, that's what he's going to do. He might live in a shack but he's going to drive around in it. But I think if you...if you're in touch with your values and things around you, you will know that driving a small Honda Jazz or a Colt pick up truck, doesn't make a difference. It's you inside and you've got to pay the bills at the end of the month. You've got to live with yourself. And you know other people will say yes they like you or they don't like you. And you've got to say, well, I can live with it or I can live without it. That's what it is. A lot of people haven't come to terms with that and they swore that they would try and find a pocket or a society where they can still also eke out an existence but live in a way that's going to suit them. They haven't even learned to be able to adapt. And I'm not saying you change your values, you don't. But you've got to be smart and see the writing on the wall.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Taking you back to 1980, you decide that you want to buy yourself out of the Reconnaissance Commando, you pay R150 because you want to become a student, and then it starts not working out for a variety of reasons. But then you're drawn back to the Reconnaissance Commando. What drew you back?</p>
G	<p>I think it was...I initially said it was one or two things. I think there were more. Number one, I owed the university a lot of money and I thought I don't have qualifications, so what am I going to do. If I went to work as a sales person at Stuttafords what am I going to earn. I couldn't see myself at the Post Office or a bank because it was just not something that I could see. And at that stage I didn't have certain life skills, I didn't have any business skills or acumen, and there was nothing that I could really draw on, that was one. Number two. They were clever. I said 'they'. The defence force was clever, but certainly the guys for Reconnaissance Regiment and the guys, what we later referred to as the Kop, the Special Forces HQ at Swartkop. They knew where the guys were. So what they'd do is every now and then you'd get a visit from guys, no they're just in town, they're coming to have a beer and so on with you. And guess what they'd do? They'd just give you enough and so on, because they knew that if they could do it, you're going to go back. because it's one of those things, to get it out of your system is incredibly hard. And I watched a lot of people leave, a lot of people go back. I was one of them. But when I went back, I knew why I'd left the first time and I knew when I leave now, I have to make a final decision to</p>

	<p>move, that was one. So financially, and then going back I knew what I was going to be going into. I then jumped a notch, I went up to sergeant and shortly after that I became staff sergeant. I did want to become an officer and I thought, maybe this is the time to do it. I did what was a team leader's course, which generally was for officers or senior NCOs, and most people once they've done that, they normally ended up going to Oudtshoorn for 6 months to a year, and then qualified as an officer at a later stage. I had serious fallout with the course leader, and I know why, because my political views were different and so on and I was not on my report deemed as suitable material. And officer material.</p>
Interviewer	In other words they felt you were a security risk?
G	Yes, but I just had different views, and also my surname certainly didn't help, and that's what I always felt. And certainly on this course there were guys that I...
Interviewer	It's an English surname.
G	<p>Yes. And years later in conflict situations I came across some of the officers who were there who had been on the same course with me there, who were then...they'd resigned and they went elsewhere. They weren't resigned, they were forced to leave because they were just totally inadequate in terms of what they were doing. And it was clearly visible. You know if a guy cannot...when you're on your demolitions course, especially advanced demolitions where your pass mark is 95 and this guy cannot scrape through on 65, you know that this is a serious problem because you've got to have a certain intelligence quotient and certain ability to do things and if a guy just cannot master that, what is he doing there? It's like playing on the first team or playing for a national team in any sport. If you don't cut it, you don't belong. That was fairly obvious. And I think the third reason was coming to terms with the demons or the devils inside, because...like a lot of other people, I had sustained injury in different conflict situations, and it's like falling off a horse. And I talk about the experience as a child, I fell off a horse many times and I'd end up with broken bones. And the only way to get rid of it, you get back on that horse again and you ride it. It was a similar type scenario, in a way. But you know what, it geared me up so at a later stage when I made that decision to leave, I knew why I was leaving, I was ready to leave to go where I wanted to, and I was equipping myself to do things later on, or so I thought. To a degree I equipped myself not so as adequately. In latter years I've realised what the shortcomings were, but you can't go back and address history. So you know what you've got to do, you've got to take what you have and you...you don't want to walk around with band-aids on you, but you learn to deal with it all the time. And you become more skilled and adept...</p>
Interviewer	So it was as much a personal challenge as anything else when you went back with your year of university experience and the outside world. There was a practical side of it, that you had bills

	<p>to pay. You weren't so convinced that you were fighting the spread of Communism anymore because you'd learned other aspects of life. But it was also a personal test saying listen, I've seen some pretty tough stuff, it's the [getting back on the] horse scenario, I better go out there and see if I can still do this.</p>
G	<p>You know you also...I suppose part of it is also your perspective in life. And you know life is also what you make of it. it can be really serious, boring, dull, and ugly. Or you can go out with a positive perspective and say, gee, today is a great spring day. I might have a bit of hay fever but you know (outside?) it is such a fantastic day, we're living in a great society, the doors of opportunity are open to everybody. That's one. You can also have a sense of humour. Certainly my background in terms of growing up, I loved the old Rhodesian comedian Rex Tarr, although it's not politically correct today. But you can always poke jest and fun at any society and that (<i>inaudible</i>) very much likely a lot of the Jewish people have these records (<i>inaudible</i>) to be Jewish, and they laugh at themselves. And certainly within the British society and I'd say the English speaking sector of the world where the Brits have an influence, we had the Goons. And I grew up on the Goons. I still love them to bits. And I remember going back, and also having a positive outlook, you can see...you can make things a lot more fun and enjoyable. And I always think of that movie that Robin Williams did, about the doctor who was always dressed up and he had a red button nose and things like that. He changed his environment. And I thought well, you can influence that. And I remember hearing guys listening to loud applause and laughing and things like that, so I walked into these...into the guys' area, we were still in the single men's residence, or dormitory in the barracks, and I walked in and I said, you guys eventually you've found something worthwhile, where did you come upon the Goons? And I had these five or six blank faces looking at me and saying, die wat se goed? The what? I said, no the Goons, you're listening to the Goons. I can hear this, it's so funny. And they had no idea what I was talking about. And then I listened carefully and I realised it wasn't the Goons. But to me it sounded like the Goons, and it happened to be a guy called Eugene Terreblanche. And they thought he was the most fantastic thing ever. And I said, yes, he's just like Neddie Seagoon and Bluebottle and the whole crowd of the Goons. Well it didn't go down very well. It was a bit like a lead balloon. And of course I alienated myself even more. One of the things I did determine to do when I left, although my funds were a bit limited being a student, I decided that nobody is going to look after me. That's what I'd seen when you're a student on the bones of your butt and you've got nobody who's going to look after you, and you're working three or four jobs as a waiter, and you're doing this and that, you realise that if nobody's going to look after you and you haven't got a rich mommy or a daddy, you're going to have to do it for yourself. So I decided while...when I went back to continue studying, because I thought at least with some qualification, when I come out it would help</p>

	me. So I changed the direction. I did not do a BA LLB. I did a straight BA but I changed my subjects and I did it with English and Communications as majors. Now people say, but you're English speaking.
Interviewer	What year is this?
G	'81, '82. Even though I came from an English speaking family, growing up in the Eastern Transvaal lowveld or Mpumalanga, the quality of education schooling was so poor. I only realised that when I was in the voice of Wits, which I did when I was at Wits University. If you listen to recordings of yourself, you listen to it again and you say, that's not me. And you listen to it again and say, that's not me. And then you go to someone and say, will you crit me. Either you live up to it or you don't. And I had the most atrocious accent. I spoke with a very heavy Afrikaans accent. And I didn't know that. Nobody had ever come to me and told me. So I decided, if I'm going to do it, I need to learn...so I actually went for private elocution lessons while I was at Wits, done through one of the tutors who was there. So it didn't cost me anything. But what I did do, I did work in return for them. And many years later in fact I still continued with the elocution lessons because I just felt I had to improve and overcome that obstacle. That was one. So I changed the direction, so I did English and Communications majors. I had Afrikaans and Nederlandse and a bit of psychology which was useless or so I thought up until about four or five years ago where all of a sudden I started understanding certain things. The chickens came home to roost.
Interviewer	Just so I've got the time line right. You started in the military in '77. You leave the Reconnaissance Commando in 1980. You spend a year studying. You go back into Reconnaissance Commando and you stayed for how long?
G	I left in...the beginning of '84. End of '83, beginning '84, I don't remember the date correctly now. I know I left Durban...because I left, I was staying in Durban for a few months, two or three, and then I moved up to Johannesburg in '84. I think it must have been around about June...it was certainly not right in the beginning but it certainly wasn't beyond winter, it was up until the period before winter.
Interviewer	I'm interested in this dilemma that you're facing as a young man. You've got some very serious military background, you've spent time in Rhodesia, you've been with the SAS or the Selous Scouts, you've seen a lot of action. You then gain some experience of the outside world. You start thinking about things differently. You go back for the variety of reasons we've discussed. But you say you got dropped in at the deep end. Can you paint a picture, and I understand that you might not want to go into specifics but, what is the deep end in your terms? Because your understanding of the deep end might be very different to mine.

G	<p>I think as an individual, you start going through this turmoil, and I remember we had to do a Republic Day parade in Durban. And we had this, what they called, a show of strength, a show of might, or whatever it was, and they'd had this military parade and it was being done all over the country. I don't remember what year, but it must have been...about '82 I think. And we had all these vehicles...vehicles that were never trotted out in public, which for me was alien, number one. And when it did the drive from the Bluff in Durban through the town, they went right up into KwaMashu. Now here you had the UDF and you had everybody else up there. I mean, I felt like a target sitting on the target range about to be taken a pot shot at. We all did. I mean...we had rifles on us, they were supposed to only be for show, but we were loaded to the hilt. If we had to hit...we were not going to go in there and do something stupid. We were told we weren't allowed to have the stuff, but we were loaded. If the guys decided to come on, well bring on that party, we were ready for it. That was one. I think when you are aware of things changing...I don't think I was the only one, I think the senior officers hopefully were aware of it. I certainly think that people high up in the Defence Force, Minister of Defence and obviously the cabinet ministers, everybody was under a lot of pressure and it was now this thing where they tried to block certain things. So I was already aware that certain things were happening. The war had...we were a lot more active in many arenas at that stage. Reconnaissance Commando had grown, up until when I'd left in the end of '80 had grown into one, which was based in Durban. Two which was the citizen force which was based then out here in Johannesburg, south of Johannesburg on the old Potch road into...</p>
Interviewer	Doornkop?
G	<p>Doornkop. We had three which was supposed to be the school where people were going to come and do their training. Four, which was originally the seaborne division based in Durban, which then moved to Langebaan, and I considered going there but we were going to move to Langebaan I said, no thanks. And I'd had some nasty experiences with sharks and I didn't like that. And five, which was then based at Dukuduku and then they moved up to Phalaborwa. And as it started growing and expanding you realise well, It's not staying simple as it was, it's growing. So why are they growing? You realise that the threat is possibly more or they're trying to block something. It's the old story, once you start doing a lie, it becomes bigger and bigger and bigger. You don't know how to deal with it. and that I think lies in the recesses of your mind. So we were a lot more active. And having dealt with various things, all of a sudden Rhodesia fell. I was in Rhodesia up until the Lancaster talks and so on were on and we were then snuck out through the back door. We had then also helped with bringing down the SAS and the Selous Scouts, with these flights that the air force was doing, SAFAIR were doing, they were flying guys down there. And I in fact bought two land rovers from guys up there which I brought down</p>

	<p>later on in 1981 when I was at Wits. I bought them with the bit of money I had and I brought them down. I made some money to use towards my education, but I bought two Land Rovers like that. But these were things guys had sold and they couldn't do anything with it and they moved down lock stock and barrel, or it was their escape route. And a lot of them used it as their meal ticket out. That's really what it was. I was then studying, I'd registered at UNISA to continue studying as well. And you start seeing the other side of things as well. Then you start challenging that. For me emotionally and from a thinking perspective, that for me I found was very much the deep end in some respects. So when I knew then why I'd left, but I don't think I understood the full complexities when I left to go and study. I initially thought well I'm getting out of here, I've done enough, I want to go and study. In fact it was a lot more to it than that. And I think there are a lot of people who were going through the same things but a lot of them chose not to act upon it. A lot of people had left...and these were operators...had left and they'd decided they were going to go elsewhere. And they came back again. And often it was like a year's stint and I thought oh, I'm just one of them. and for me I...I was hard on myself. I thought, you know you always were scathing about these people who left and come back and here you've done exactly the same. And I just resolved I didn't want to go through that again. I really did not. And it was...also it was a humiliating process. Because when you came back now, you could also see the other thing and now you could think beyond just what you'd initially been exposed to, and you see more. And the humiliating process comes from, you start challenging your officers and your more senior NCOs. And you know what? They didn't know much more, but you know what? You were told to listen and carry on doing the things.</p>
Interviewer	By the military environment so you don't question them?.
G	<p>Yes. And I was identified...after the team leader's course...I was identified as a bit of a trouble maker. Not identified as such, but they just sort of shunned me and so on because I was always challenging, why can't you do this, why can't you do that? And in fact I was looking at some notes that I've still got from that period the other day, and there's some comments in the margins. I actually said, I think so and so is an idiot. I mean, you're not supposed to write this in the military books, but I wrote in there for the simple reason, how could somebody think this way? Or not think that way? But that was part of it.</p>
Interviewer	But while you're there and you're questioning all this, you're still being asked to do some pretty darn dangerous things.
G	<p>Yes, you are. But you're also being asked to do the mundane things. And you know, it's the whole story of hurry up and wait. Irrespective of where you are. You're always trained for the eventuality and do it, but often I just thought some of them were so stupid. Yet despite that we did some amazing operations. We did some stuff and I worked with a young officer. He was a two</p>

	<p>pip lieutenant. We did an operation. Which we did in Angola where we blew up a tunnel and some railway lines and so on that had never been done before. But that goes down in the annals of history on very successful Special Forces operation where things had been achieved which had never been done before. And this is where we used outside interest and technology. We went to construction companies in Durban and we found things in the normal business which we used for the operation. And for me that was a great thing. And despite all of these things that were happening, the changes that were taking place, and Rhodesia now becoming Zimbabwe, and the things like that happening, there were other things that were happening. So there's still amazing operations. We did a lot of work in those days. But always you're dealing with this thing, and I'm still writing exams, getting my things in my assignments and so on in. And for me that was like an anchor. It kept you back, it was like keeping one foot firmly on the ground while you're doing other things. And there were some great things that we did and I just thought the things that we were doing, fantastic, but you know what, this can't last. That was just the thinking behind that. And it might have been stupid and I'm not saying that I want to have my cake and eat it, but I just felt that there's writing on the wall and you've got to make a decision. If you're going to stay here, you become full career officer based on the conditions and with what they're going to give you. Or you've got to determine your future for yourself. That was it.</p>
Interviewer	<p>When you're initially brought down you were with 1 Recce, then you leave and you go back, were you still with 1 Recce or did you...?</p>
G	<p>No, I was still with One. When I left and I was at Wits for the year, the guys from 2 Recce asked me to go and join them. The officer commanding then, who I'm occasionally in contact with, asked me to go and join them. But I was studying and when I didn't have enough funds I realised I had to work and I was holding down three jobs, which maybe that's when reality set in. And I stayed with One all the time through...although the opportunity I did work with Five on various operations but my home base was One. And then obviously when I left the day before, it wasn't too long when the guys from 2 Recce came knocking at my door. (counter at 412)</p>
	<p>END OF SIDE B</p>
	<p>TAPE TWO SIDE A</p>
Interviewer	<p>So that's pretty much the unit history. Now '84 comes along, you decide to leave, this time leaving permanently. Then what happens in your life?</p>
G	<p>Getting out of a military environment, I served as...because you asked about my experience and being trained...I didn't know what I was going to do, and I felt like, if I'm going to leave immediately and go doing what I want to do...I was still studying</p>

	<p>and I still hadn't qualified, and even with a BA you can't do much, you don't walk out of university like with engineering degree and you say well I'm an engineer I can now do it. It actually is a foundation for development to do other things. And I still didn't know what I wanted to do. And I ended up working as the bodyguard for the mayor of Durban for a period of 6 months. It was as short as that. I liked what I did and she said to me one day we were driving in the car, she said, why are you sitting here doing this? I said, this is my stepping stone. She said, you've been on the stone for too long, it's time for you to move. Brilliant woman.</p>
Interviewer	Was that Sybil Hotz?
G	<p>Sybil Hotz. And I said, I'm leaving. She said, I couldn't be happier. She was an amazing woman. And I left to come up here and I thought what I want to do is computer programming, I'd written the various tests, I didn't make the Van Zyl and Pritchard course which you needed 95% to pass. I got 94 and they said, sorry for you. So I joined IBM as a programmer. I signed up the documentations. On the day I arrived here I was sitting in the foyer, everyone was running around like a bunch of idiots. So eventually the guy who employed me came downstairs and said, I'm sorry to tell you but we've got news that IBM has just disinvested from South Africa and your job doesn't exist. Here I'm sitting in Johannesburg with no job or anything like that. I eventually joined one of the large corporates as a sales rep. And I was with them for about four or five years. They were very much in touch and aligned with the government of the day. And for me having come from where I did, because obviously 1 Recce on my resume, they thought it was just the greatest. And no need to do any camps like any of the other guys were doing. (<i>inaudible</i>) that wholeheartedly. And obviously the guys from 2 Recce phoned me and I had to go and see them and they said, we know you think you're out but you're actually not. We need you. And I always remember it's like the posters the Americans have with Uncle Sam, 'the country needs you'. So from '84 to until '90 I was active again. Just on a more senior NCO role within 2 Recce, and was called up on a lot of occasions. We were on standby on a regular basis. In those days we had pagers, obviously no cell phones, but we used to do these preparedness tests and so on. It would take us an hour from the time that we were called to be able to say, ok, I'm leaving the house now with all my kit packed and I'll be seeing you whether it's at the airport or whether it's going to be at Doornkop, and at that stage they were in the process of moving from Doornkop to Voortrekkerhoogte. And that's how quickly we were doing. So we would run these tests and see how we'd do because that was what was expected of us. So often we were on standby for weekends and stuff. We did jobs. We often were called in to go and do jobs. We were flown up to go to wherever we were going to go and do a job. Sometimes it was a week, sometimes less. But we also did our two or three months stint as well. And the company supported it.</p>

	<p>And it was strange. Here you're earning an income, working for a company, but they supported you for it, and they thought it was just the greatest thing. I mean, if I were to run a company today, and you can't do that. Sorry either you work for me or you don't. I mean, it's different if somebody for instance is on maternity leave, that is something to which you adapt. Anything else I can assure you your company is not going to survive.</p>
Interviewer	<p>But effectively the company is buying into the concept of total onslaught. That you sacrifice your contribution to their day to day operations because this was necessary for the cause.</p>
G	<p>Yes, it was.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So even though you're no longer a permanent force soldier or a regular soldier, you're actually still deeply involved. It's an intrinsic part of your life.</p>
G	<p>And I think it's that process of letting go. I think it's very difficult for some people to let go and I think the more you've been doing it, the more difficult it is to let go. And I'll be honest, I don't think anybody can do it. I know some people who actually got up and they walked away, and you couldn't contact them again. There were a few people who've done that. And I can say, maybe five or six people that I know of who did that successfully. Most people could not get it out of their system. Just cannot. I think it becomes so ingrained with you, it was part of your psyche and so on, and I think that is part of the process that they even try and debrief you and so on, but I don't think it's done effectively. You just don't get out of that. For me it's taken a long time and only now to a great degree I said, fine, I know that if you hold on to the past it's not going to allow you to progress...to go forward. you get to a stage and say, ok, I now actually have to let go. So I've been going through that process. I was just sitting with a whole lot of my uniforms, and some of them are British, American, you name them, a whole lot of those things. And even the whole SADF browns, and my step outs. I actually get rid of all and I'll keep my step outs for later, but maybe I should even get rid of that. But you know there's a certain pride in some of the things you've achieved. But it only matters to yourself. It doesn't matter to you anymore.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Two questions here. One's a practical question and one's a deeper question. You had a variety of uniforms because the Recces fought in a variety of uniforms. They seldom fought in standard SADF issued clothes.</p>
G	<p>Correct.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Other one's a deeper one. Here you are, you're now working for a big corporate, you've got a job just like other people. They go home in the evening, sitting down and watching television, feeding the dog, cutting the lawn, whatever they do. You do that sometimes but in 24 hours you could be on an airplane to an operation. Are these external operations or internal or a</p>

	combination?
G	They mostly were external. Sometimes there were some internal, (<i>inaudible</i>) or standby for...also external. Most internal stuff at that stage was then done by the guys like Barnacle, or the CCB...
Interviewer	Barnacle was the forerunner of the CCB?
G	Right. There was some work that the guys from 5 Recce were doing in the various townships and so on like that. We were never really involved...in one operation we were on standby for guys who were doing stuff in the area, but we weren't told why. It was just one of those things. So you were aware but you weren't aware of what was going on. It was only years later that it came up. So most of the stuff was external stuff.
Interviewer	Ok, so now as a young soldier in the eighties you're fighting a secret war in a neighbouring country against an amorphous set of Communism. Now you go back into being a soldier. Now in the mid eighties you're actually trying to make a career for yourself but nevertheless you're now fighting...it's almost a sense of schizophrenia. You're a citizen, you're a civilian doing a job but you fight in the army. How does that affect your personal life? How does it affect your existence?
G	I was married for a short period of time. I did get married for the wrong reasons, I'll be honest, because the company didn't want single people...single guys. So if you were married you were seen to be more stable and so on. That was one...and that's a very antiquated way of thinking. But I think you don't actually grow up and you got to a stage where, unless you actually do things for yourself nothing's going to happen, you need to claim your life. And you've got to plan it like you're going to run a business or anything else because otherwise you're not just going to get there. Life is going to deal what comes along. So you're not going to get what you want. I think in that respect you do become schizophrenic. And I think you actually lose sight of yourself in the whole picture. You just become, when the wind blows this way, you go that way. If it goes that way...in a way you become, not amorphous, but you become a bit like a chameleon. And it's not a very good thing because it does challenge your values, it does challenge a lot of things and certainly I know a lot of people share a similar view. Or I'd like to think they would. People who've come close to having died, and I was in that instance on three occasions...where eventually life is more important than the material things and so on around you. But you know what? It's not that. It actually is, it changes your value system from the perspective that you just see things differently and...sitting watching TV is not an important...at night, and having a great DSTV reception, it's nice maybe to have. When it comes down to the real things that really matter. It's being able to do the things that you really want and should be doing. And sometimes it's not necessarily following all the rats and the mice.

	<p>Because it becomes a rat race and you become like a hamster on the wheel, and you're running and you're running and you're running. Eventually you've got to say, well do I get off or do I want to continue to be a hamster? And I think you can choose to fit in with society, or you choose to be the outsider, always wanting to be different, or really get in touch with yourself. And the latter one is the hardest one of the lot to do. Not everybody is successful in doing that.</p>
Interviewer	<p>But how do you guard against that? Here you are, you're still a young man, you're still on this 24 hour call up to neighbouring countries or wherever it might be, and you're very different from the other guys in the office. A lot of the guys in the office are sitting there talking their career, and yes they might have had military commitments but it's a very different level to what you were doing. So you're trying to challenge yourself, you're trying to find out who you are, but you are still inextricably bound into this web, so how do you break out of it?</p>
G	<p>I don't think you do in many respects. If I look back then, I didn't. I carried on doing what I was doing, and in a way you think you're special, but you're actually not. You're not any different or any more special than the guy next door to you, but that's what you've been taught to believe. And that's part of this whole thing that...and it comes back to the recruitment video or movie that I told you about in the beginning. It creates this romantic aura about certain things, and you create this perception. But eventually you know what, you're no different to anybody else. In fact, if you look at it later on in years, and you measure yourself against people at university or school with you, and you compare yourself, it's not apples and apples anymore, because they've actually advanced themselves in career and family and society. If that's the measuring tool that you're using. And they've got ahead and achieved so much more than you have. And you've just somehow been left behind in this whole melee of things that have happened. And I felt that at one stage I just felt that hey, I've been out on a limb or left behind on the shelf and everyone else has been going on. And I do feel that. I got to a stage in my career many years later, where I had self doubts about myself, and my ability, and it comes back from that whole process that if you've been told you're a stupid child, it comes back to you. And I think it comes back from the fact that we were not recognised for what we did. Not in society but just on our own we were not recognised. Society had a role to play. I think family friends around us who were a lot older, sort of paid lip service to it but it wasn't really that serious. And I think often more importance was given to it in the internal context than rather than on the outside. And there was always this mysticism about it. So you hid it and you just learned to get out of it. In fact I was listening to something on the radio the other day where they were talking about what you should achieve in life. And there was a financial planner. He says, your first 15 years in life you're going to live in debt because you'll be buying your car and buying your house</p>

	<p>and things like that. He says, at the end of 15 years you should be stable then you can start planning for your retirement. And I thought, well, who at 35 or 40 wants to plan for retirement? But in fact yes, you should be doing. But a lot of people, myself included, you don't always get the hands that you're dealt with, or you would like to have got. You didn't get the jokers and the kings and the queens. And a lot of people have bumped their noses along the way and you might have lost your car, your house, your job, or lost everything and you've got to start all over. But it goes back to that measurement of society. Are you the same? And when I started challenging myself and thinking, well what is it I can do? I started looking at careers like working on oil rigs or working as a consultant in far off countries, I thought because my military background and so on helped me. I'd worked as a bodyguard, I'd done all these things. But you know what? You've actually got to come back and face reality. And I think there are a lot of people who didn't. And a lot of people now I know they're sitting in Iraq. People who've worked all around the world. They're working near Afghanistan and so on. Some of them made a choice. Others have said, well, I don't have anything else I can do so, what can I get? And that is a big decision for a lot of people. And you know what you're going to get when they're now sixty plus, and they're not going to get much. And that's the sad part of things. And I think emotionally, and I think certainly from the home perspective, the home front, whether you are married or single, in a relationship or not in a relationship, you don't have that steady, stable home environment, a place you can go home and call your own. A place you can sit down and have a cup of tea or whatever. It doesn't exist. And I'm not saying just physically, I'm saying an emotional and psychological state that, I am at home, I can do what I want to do.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You look back on your circumstances...you look back at going into the military and saying that you feel resentful about that. Do you regret the era that you were born in, that you were drawn into this military mindset?</p>
G	<p>I'm glad you ask that question. At once stage up until, I would say, fairly recently, I would say the last three or four years ago, I would say that I'm glad I went through it and I did what I did, and I wouldn't change it. Because I attached a certain value to what I had done and I felt the impact that it had. Yes, certainly I played a small role in certain things that were done, despite the awards and citations and things that you have got. The various things that you were involved in. And I think now, sitting where I am now, at the age of 48, and I think, or did I achieve much? What would I have done? You know, I think a good military breaking like for anybody doing National Service I think is a good thing. But you know they always said, go to the army son, it will make a man out of you. I think it does teach you certain things, certain disciplines. But I think the baggage that comes with that is, for most people, insurmountable. You've got this book that's recently published The Unpopular Bush War. And just the average Joe</p>

	<p>going through certain things, how it damaged so many people. But then a lot of people are like soft fruit, they bruise easily. Not everybody is made of tempered steel. And that's the sad part of it because we're all different. I look at myself now, I'm a far more creative person and I'm sensitive to the environment and people around me. But that's taken many years of working at that to...and the environment that I've been in has certainly nurtured that and grown it. If I hadn't I wouldn't never have been there. And I think certainly now, if I look back, I would say, no, I wouldn't like to have done what I have done. Am I proud of what I did? In a certain way, yes, but the way society and certainly our government today looks upon it, no. I wouldn't talk about it because to a degree I would be embarrassed by it because it's looked down with strong disregard, and you are seen as being from the unsavoury past, things that happened, we don't want to talk about. It's like a girl who gets pregnant in high school. Even though she moves on later in life and she might have given up the child for adoption, it always stays there. To a degree it's like that. The guys amongst themselves still like to think about, but even many of them don't talk about it. There's some guys who are still very strong supporters and they hopefully will wear the Special Forces League emblem or insignia, I don't want to do that anymore, I've been there, done that and I...the t-shirt's been burnt. Don't want that anymore. You can't change the price but you can certainly build upon that. And you've got to work on the negatives, whatever negatives there were and try and turn them around into positives, and you can, and take the positives out of that and build on it even stronger. But it is hard. And it's not something that just goes away.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You committed a lot of your life to some fairly dangerous activities for a variety of reasons, but part of it was the fight against, as we were told at the time, Communism. But now sitting in the very cabinet that rules the country that we live in and make our livings in, are members of the Communist Party. So our perception of somebody involved in the former military that you were fighting against the Communists per se, has changed quite considerably. Because now we are living side by side with those very people that you were fighting in those days. Which requires quite a quantum shift in your attitude.</p>
G	<p>There's also something different. When you learn that you do it because...or what you're doing you're doing because of the Big Cause, fighting Communism and the threat from everybody that's outside South Africa, and to a degree at one stage even the whole Western world was against us, so it could be anybody else. And the only way to be better than anybody else is by training hard and being better, smarter and so on. And we were crack at what we did. We were really sharp at what you did. And I look at the Umkhonto we Sizwe and I look at the Cubans and I even, we came across Spesnaz in Angola and things like that. And you look at them and often there was this whole build up of how great and strong they were, and they were not that good I'll</p>

	<p>be honest. Some of the (<i>inaudible</i>) some of the Cuban guys came across...yes, they were fairly good but then they were mobile, they had aircraft and helicopters and vehicles and we were on foot. They can be a lot better than you. However, if you look at what China has been able to achieve in terms of world domination, and they couldn't achieve in military, they've done it through economic might, they've done the same. Communism is cell by cell great, it's like cancer, it grows. And guess what? The war is not won on the battlefield, it's won in the boardroom or in parliament and so on, that's because economic impact and being excluded from the rest of the world, certainly does have long term impact. And you're dealing with people. After all you are dealing with people along the line. And eventually, like with our current government, you can't always win on what you did so many years back, you've got to actually deliver now. And society changes and demands more.</p>
Interviewer	You mentioned Spesnaz. Who were Spesnaz?
G	The Russian Special Forces.
Interviewer	Talking about, you mentioned earlier on, here you were fighting this secret war, and you would sit at the dinner table with your family or relatives and they weren't sure how to approach you because it was all partly secret but partly the aura, the myth of the Recce. Does that still happen? Did it happen then - oh, don't speak to G, he's a Recce.
G	<p>No, but often it would happen. And that thing about eating your own dog. You always say, you're given a puppy, you ? then you've got to kill your dog and eat it type of story. And I sort of laugh. And there were a lot of other things that sort of happened. Generally I found for instance that my family talk more about it behind my back and other people were aware of it, but they wouldn't talk about it at table. It was just one of those things that was accepted. I remember me feeling responsible for my mother going very grey and eventually having white hair, because with me being injured the guys would arrive in the military vehicle and go and visit her at home and say listen your son has been injured and XY and Z and so on. And it happened to her on two of the three incidents where it happened, and it wasn't the type of thing that she would like. And I always think about that. I think it was hard on her. So in terms of regrets, I have a lot of regrets that...it made her life a lot more difficult than I realised. And it might have been a selfish act to some degree. Which would never have stopped me. But family certainly would do it. But it got to a stage where I wouldn't talk about it. And often now you still find when you hear of some guy, some youngster who is riding on endorphins, adrenalin and certainly testosterone, and he'll talk about all these things and so on. You know what, let it ride. You don't have to prove a point anymore. It's one of those things. And also you know, once you get over 35, 40, you don't want to go head to head with a young guy who's got a black belt in karate or something, because you know you're going to sustain an injury.</p>

	<p>It's like falling off your bicycle. You don't have anything to prove anymore. And you know, there's no point, you've got your self confidence and you know what you've achieved. You should be positive about yourself in any case to be able to deal with that. And that's a big thing. A lot of people have a...I wouldn't say inferiority, but it's this thing that's never been complete, it's never been wound up, it's never been brought to closure. And I think that is the biggest issue of the lot, that people have never come to draw closure to the whole process. I lost my mother recently and I've been criticised for not having mourned her. I wouldn't say I know how to mourn her and I can't say I don't know how to mourn her death. I miss her. And fortunately my father is still alive at this stage, we've got a close relationship, but it's one of those things where you still...you need to deal with it and come to terms. A lot of people never do and it's an ongoing process of learning about yourself. And I just think with a lot of things you've got to say, well, you've got to move on now, you've got to chuck the stuff out and really remember the good memories and try and keep the ? That's what it's about.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You've been wounded three times, you've said, or several times. Does that come back and haunt you? Do you think about that a lot?</p>
G	<p>Actually no, but it does I think have an impact. Whether deep seated at all or not I'm not sure. But it certainly comes back and you don't feel threat of death. You know some people are scared of dying. I suppose it would happen. It certainly impacts your spiritual belief. Whether you openly embrace it or you change your perception of it. Before I went into the defence force I was quite a strongly committed, very naïve Christian. The years while I was in there created a lot of emotional conflict because the only way you can justify it is that in the old Testament the Israelites were sent out into Jordan and slay the opposition. So that's often used to justify, then you can justify anything then if you want to. And that's why I laughed. In certain instances you're going into this battle and everyone would get down and pray and so on. But you know what, there's more to it, there's politics and everything else involved. But you know, there's guys don't maybe know as much (<i>inaudible</i>) use any tool that you need, maybe play the bongo drums and listen to reggae music it would help them, I'm sure they might have done that as well. But it wasn't sanctioned and there's a whole sort of Afrikaans Christian process, that's one. But as you get on and so on you learn to deal with things and you have to come back. And I then recommitted myself in terms of my Christian faith, after I'd left. But I found it wasn't working for me because I had these internal conflicts, and irrespective of which church I belonged to and where I went, it was always this very puerile, very straight up and down thing. And life is a lot more than that. It's not black and white. And it's a lot more than that. And as a result of the years as I've matured and started understanding things more, my approach is a lot more different. I look at the Eastern philosophies, I look at the</p>

	<p>Moslems, I look at the Jews and I look at the Buddhists. And you know what? Everybody has a strong faith on which they work and it's different, but you're going to get extremists, like you get the Moslem extremists, you're going to get people all over the place. But I think...not I think, my faith has certainly grown in other dimensions. And I look at things...I think what we initially thought is the tip of the iceberg. There's so much more underneath. And it's having confidence in yourself, in your ability, but also realising that the more you know the less you know. And I think that is part of the humility process. And I think in so saying, what you played with...what we all played in our various military roles...if you look at it, you were a cog in the machine. You're not more important than anyone else. And if you go back and you look at...humility is a thing that you need to be able to accept. And I think for me another big thing was a certain man called Nelson Mandela, even though he head up the ANC and I don't necessarily agree with the policy of the ANC today, because I just see them becoming what the previous party or power was. But you look at someone like Nelson Mandela who can forgive, certainly can't forget, but he's been able to forgive in terms of (these/his?) actions, the way that he's been able to (treat the?) people. And I think that takes a big man to be able to become small in that thing, because not everybody can do that.</p>
Interviewer	<p>...Nelson Mandela and his ability to be humbled in the face of great adversity. With your experiences, is there any purpose of war in settling modern disputes, be they political, religious or anything else?</p>
G	<p>No, but you know, people always want to prove that they can do things. And just because you say to someone you can't do it, he's going to say, I will, or I want to, because he's belligerent, you don't know his mental state. And if you look how the First World War started, with the killing of Franz Joseph, that was a stupid incident. And you know there's pride, there's stupid reasons for doing it, alignment, and often it's very much the Eastern philosophy of hiding face or showing face. And it's a lot more to it than that, and if you look at what the Chinese have been able to achieve at the moment in terms of dominating the world through commercial power...they produce from low end poor quality to high end nobody can beat it quality. That's sort of one way or another. But the Americans can't fight a war now because all their microchips on their missiles are actually made by Chinese companies. They just had a program on 702 talking about that. And it was very enlightening. A lot of people wouldn't see that. The purpose of war? Mainly stupid. They're always going to continue and they will try and so on and we've had the nuclear threats and things like that, but people always want to prove they're going to do it, and if they can't do it on the sports field, they'll do it in the bar, and if they can't do it in the bar, they'll do the boardroom, they can't, they'll do it in the politics. Somebody somewhere is still going to do it. And if you look at the Americans at the moment, for oil and for energy, people are going to do it,</p>

	and the war continues.
Interviewer	END OF INTERVIEW (<i>counter at 372</i>)

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