Clem Jones Oral History Project

Interviewee: Tony Dell

Interviewer: Lindsay Marshall

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Recording venue: Clem Jones House 63 Wellington Road, East Brisbane 4169

Duration: 58 mins 30 secs

LM: This is an interview with former test cricketer Tony Dell as part of the Clem Jones Oral History Project. The interviewer is myself, Lindsay Marshall, and we're conducting this interview at the Clem Jones Group offices at 63 Wellington Road, East Brisbane on Wednesday the 12th is it?

TD: No it's the 10th because tomorrow is Remembrance Day.

LM: Oh of course yes, yes, the 10th of November. Silly me. Thanks very much for doing the interview Tony and taking part in this project.

TD: My pleasure.

LM: You're known for a couple of things and we'll try to cover them briefly. One is your career as a 1st Grade cricketer and Test cricketer for Australia. The other is your work with post-traumatic stress disorder and the organisation you've set up. We'll come to those in a little while. But, first of all, if we go back to your early days back in the UK where you were born, your father, you've told me, was more interested in rugby, but you took up cricket and apparently, you've told me, that 1956 was a landmark year for you taking an interest in cricket. Can you explain what happened then?

TD: Yeah, well I was 11 then. I guess I knew a little bit about cricket but it was the 1956 Ashes Tour by Australia into the UK, and I think we had our first television set back then at home. I can just remember watching most of the test matches because they sort of fell in the school holidays in the UK which were normally July/August.

LM: Was cricket a feature of your school as well? Did you play cricket at school at that time?

TD: Soccer. The round ball game stands out more in my mind with my school back then and I really don't remember too much about playing cricket at school. I can remember having, especially during the holidays, having games in the local park and in the street with my friends. I seem to remember that when I first wanted to play, I

was a wicket keeper/batsman. In this particular place in Hemel Hempstead, which is where we lived in ’56, we played up against this enormous brick wall with the stumps chalked onto the wall. So didn’t need a wicket keeper. So I guess that’s where I really started bowling.

LM: Very rudimentary introduction to the game.

TD: Yes

LM: And by the late 50s, your father who was working for the appliance company, Hoover, in the UK, came out to Australia for the company and he flew out ahead of the rest of the family, your mother, your brothers and sister. By the late 50s, you’re in Australia. How did you get involved in cricket here then?

TD: Dad flew out, he was sent here to open up the Queensland offices of Hoover, which didn’t exist back then, if we’re talking Brisbane. He set up in Cordelia Street at South Brisbane. He sent myself and my younger brothers to Church of England Grammar School. That was late in ‘59, so just about the last month or so of the last term before the Christmas holidays. One of my friends, new friends said: “Oh, we have this form competition and we’re sort of about third or fourth favourites. Do you play cricket?” I said: “I play a bit.” I really don’t remember it but he tells me now that we actually won the competition and I sort played a bit of a part in it by taking quite a few wickets.

Then the next year, 1960, I was playing sort of under 15 Cs on concrete in sandshoes and shorts, but I’d been talked into going down to Easts at Langlands Park and I was playing under 17 there with spikes and long pants on turf. There was a dichotomy there between a club thinking I could play and maybe the school saying: “Who’s this young pom? We’ll stick him in the under 15 Cs.”

LM: That was the Eastern Suburbs Cricket Club was it?

TD: Yes.

LM: Church of England Grammar School or Churchie as people in Brisbane refer to it, you mention the level you were playing at, but for the rest of the higher grades, did they give them a lot of encouragement, facilities and that sort of…. did they look after them well?

TD: They were the best facilities in Brisbane at the time. I then graduated in the…. in those days, we played the first half of the school season in the first term and then the second half of the competition in the last term before Christmas. By the last term, I guess I’d gained some sort of a reputation and I was shunted from the under 15 Cs into the under 15 As. And then the next year, 1961, I played sort of firsts and seconds. But the facilities there, especially the main oval and the practice wickets were second to none in Brisbane anywhere. The groundsman there was a fellow

called Jack McAndrew who'd previously made wickets at the Gabba. He just was a master of the art of making wickets.

LM: You've told me previously that any touring teams that came to Brisbane, they tended to practise at Churchie.

TD: The first phone call they made when they got to town was to Churchie: "Can we come out and practice." It probably had happened long before they booked it in advance, but all the touring teams practiced on Jack's wickets.

LM: You did senior at Churchie and then you wanted to go on to study architecture.

TD: Yeah, I did senior in 1962. Didn't do all that well but I suddenly had this penchant for wanting to be an architect. The only way I could get into architecture, especially at QUT was to do art. So I think my dad did a bit of a deal with the headmaster and said "Okay, he can play in the firsts again", because we'd shared the premiership in 1962 and that was the year that we bowled Nudgee [College] out for eight which was quite satisfying. Because there was always this competition between Church of England Grammar School and Nudgee which was the big Catholic college.

LM: Big rivalry.

TD: Very much so. Get a rugby match at Church between Nudgee and Churchie, and you get a crowd of 15,000 at a school match. Back in those days it was sort of unheard of.

LM: Was it gentlemanly? Did the rivalry continue off the field?

TD: Oh yeah. Some of my best mates now are still Nudgee boys that I played against and there's even a couple of them that were in that team that we knocked over for eight. But, yeah, so architecture, I'd been offered a job with Don Spencer Architects, and so I repeated and kept my cricket going and by then in the '62-'63 season, I'd been picked in 1st Grade at Easts. So while I was still at school, I was playing 1st Grade cricket.

LM: Then you later… the job in architecture didn't eventuate.

TD: No. Well, I went to all this trouble and I qualified to do architecture at night at QUT and the whole idea was to do it at night and work in Don Spencer's offices during the day time. But all of a sudden, he said :"We've had a bit of a downturn and I can't fit you in." So I continued with the architecture at night and did odd jobs, and eventually actually ended up as a trainee manager at Coles. So that was what, '64? By then, I was being noticed by the state selectors for cricket and I was playing under 19 rugby at Jeeps [GPS – Greater Public Schools Association].

I was asked to go to a training camp Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Friday night, Saturday, Sunday, down at Currumbin, and I asked for time off. They said no. I took

it anyway. The sad part of that story is that I was photographed running out of the surf with Sandy Morgan and John McLean and hauled up before the powers to be on the Monday morning and fired. So that was the end of my trainee management career. And by then, the architecture was getting far too hard. Not having a job in a firm. But my dad had this relationship with his advertising agency which was Garnsey Green Clemenger and John Garnsey was running these courses at night just teaching young people about architecture, sorry advertising and because of my penchant for drawing and creativity, I went along and eventually he offered me a job.

By then I said "Well it's advertising for me and not architecture", so I stopped doing the course at QUT. By 1965, I was working for Garnsey Green Clemenger. But then National Service had come into being and everyone that turned 20 in 1965 was eligible if their birthday was drawn out of a hat and mine was. So '66 to '68, in the first year I learnt to be a soldier and in the second year, I actually became a soldier in Vietnam.

LM: You've said that the training that you undertook here at Tin Can Bay and Singleton in New South Wales – Tin Can Bay in Queensland, Singleton in New South Wales – and also the Canungra Jungle Warfare Centre at the Gold Coast hinterland, while that was no doubt rigorous and intensive, but it didn't really prepare you for what you actually found on the ground in Vietnam.

TD: No, there's no way in the world that anywhere in Australia…. and I guess Canungra is the closest that you could replicate the topography and the weather, and just the…. I guess the heat, the constant heat. You just couldn't replicate that. I guess it was a shock once you got there and you needed time to acclimatise. Even our camp at Nui Dat, it was dirt roads which during the torrential downpours just turned into mud. We lived in tents, and I mean sometimes they leaked. I always say if I hadn't had my cricket, I just enjoyed that life… I was a young 21-year-old full of testosterone. I refer to it as a boy's own dream that you were a soldier fighting in the jungle. If it hadn't been for cricket, I most likely would have signed on after my two years was up.

LM: There was also an incident before you went to Vietnam that could have got you out of going.

TD: Yes. Again, it's just this appeal to be a soldier. At the Canungra Jungle Training Centre, I took a tumble down a very steep cliff and had a Greenstick fracture of one of my legs and was choofed off to the military hospital at Yeronga. So I missed the second half of Canungra. Just before we were due to go, there was about a dozen of us I think, were called up to battalion headquarters and told that under the *National Service Act*, if you didn't complete Canungra, you didn't have to join the battalion in Vietnam. Eleven out of the 12 said: "Yes, we'll go."

It was just one of those things. You'd done all this training, you wanted to put it into practice and what was the alternative? Peeling spuds and square bashing for another 12 months? That wasn't really appealing.

LM: Was there a sense among your peer group in those National Service days, the Nashos, who went over to Vietnam, was there any sense of foreboding or the long-term effects that the fighting might….

TD: No. ou had no idea. Since I got back, I went through 40 years of undiagnosed PTSD, not knowing anything about it. Not knowing what was happening in my life. I just thought there was a fair amount of bad luck and was I jinxed? You had no idea. It was just okay, let's go and let's do what we have to do for sort of Queen and country.

LM: But the fact that you were undiagnosed for so long suggests that there was either no real knowledge or no real interesting in finding out the effects on the soldiers.

TD: I think that there was a select amount of mental health practitioners and researchers that knew there was a problem. There's this book been written about me and one of the most intriguing things about it, is it goes through war, PTSD, the history of PTSD, the symptoms of PTSD, how it's managed, how it can be overcome, etcetera, etcetera. If you look at the history, it's sort of talked about but not in those terms. The inference there is that it was known about during the Greek wars. Shakespeare talks about it briefly in a couple of his plays. It's talked about a fair amount in the writings from the American Civil War and in World War I, it was known as shellshock. Blokes were actually shot for cowardice when they just had this problem.

I'm just talking to very academic people since then, that they were just getting on top of knowing what it was all about by 1918. But then all that knowledge and research was shoved into the background and lost. So by 1939, they virtually had to start again. By then, it was known at war neurosis. Then 1945, again, it was just shoved on the backburner globally. Then you had Korea, then you had Vietnam. Very, very different wars. Very, very confronting, both of them. It wasn't until 1983, sort of 12 years after Vietnam had finished, that American researchers actually got on top of it and named it post-traumatic stress disorder. But again, there was just this undercurrent.

LM: You've gone through the sequence of conflicts and the types of wars that were being fought, but there's that common thread of what's now known as PTSD coming out of all of them.

TD: Yeah, because basically, PTSD is… and in my layman's terms, it's events or abject fear that happens to you, that the brain wasn't built to withstand. So what tends to happen is those memories go into your brain and just sit there. Because as a soldier, something happens and you've just got to put it behind you and get on with the job that you have to do. So it's sitting there and again, in my layman's terms, it ferments, and then some time later, after you've been discharged and you're back home, it starts to come out as various symptoms of a PTSD. Some severe, some less severe, some different. As far as I'm concerned, it was sleepless nights. It was teeth grinding. It was night sweats. It was bad dreams. It was an aversion to crowds. Even

to the point where…. in Vietnam, I was so used to getting into a helicopter, a Huey as we used to call them. You'd just be sitting on the edge with your legs dangling over the side. And it would bank over, you'd be looking straight down. I guess you were just held then be centripetal force. I just had no fear whatsoever. But now, get me up bloody two rungs on a ladder, and I have an aversion to heights. I stand at the top of an escalator and just get a fright and I've got to get wobbly and hold on for dear life because I know I've got to go down it.

LM: It makes it difficult to negotiate pretty common tasks.

TD: Yeah, yeah. And there's anger and anger outbursts. And not tolerating what you see as weaknesses in what people are doing, especially at work. Very soon after I came home, I would be very, very grumpy with umpires if they gave a not-out decision which I felt was a plum LBW. Or having a go at my own fielders for letting a ball go through their legs, or dropping an easy catch. And apparently I was pretty hard to get on with. But what I now know is with PTSD, you think you're okay and it's the rest of the world that's out of synch.

I told you the story about my wife saying, "Oh, you're just like your father", who was put into the Royal Navy when he was 15. Five years later, he's in the middle of World War II, battleships in the Atlantic. He never ever… To this day, I have no idea where he served, how he served, what he did. He never talked about it. I wasn't diagnosed until after he died and then I thought about… I did so much research on PTSD and I thought about my life and the reasons why things happened. I sort of looked at how my father had lived his life after the war and I thought well, my wife Katie, she was right all the time.

LM: In that book you mentioned, that's been written about you, and the title is '*And bring the darkness home'* by Greg Milam. And also in our previous discussions preparing for this interview, you've mentioned on your return from Vietnam and your working life, you were very driven.

TD: Yeah, just like my father.

LM: That's right, you mentioned that, and you were working 24/7. You were playing sports almost seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year. That was part of the symptoms too that you couldn't recognise?

TD: Yeah, yeah. I became a workaholic because it's the brain's way of coping with the stuff that I mentioned which is fermenting inside it. It's the brain's way of combatting bad thoughts and you sort of falling by the wayside. I became a workaholic and in advertising production in the late '60s, '70s, '80s, long before digital, it was a very hands-on situation, and quite time consuming once the ads were made. So I became very, very good at it. I got fired from two jobs, even though because of my production expertise and the inherent creativity that I had, which is one of the reasons I went into architecture, was I was probably the most prominent revenue earner in both the places that I got fired from. But I was a pain in the

backside obviously and people couldn't get on with me. I had no idea why, what, that there was a problem.

LM: That sort of driven approach to your work and also the sport as well, if we could probably just segue into it, an incident you've related to my previously involving Clem Jones, that was partly the reason that you and he didn't see eye to eye on one of the things that he wanted you to do.

TD: Part of this army training is the fact that you were always taught that the platoon or the section was only as strong as the weakest member, and you have to remember that back in those days, we had full-time jobs. Sheffield Shield cricket was $10.00 a day and do your own laundry.

LM: The Test match wasn't paid much better either.

TD: That was $250, and now they're multi, multi, multi. You hear stories about some of these cricketers having a property portfolio worth tens of millions. I was having time off to play cricket, I was doing the southern tour where you were away for about four weeks. Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, with a match on each weekend. I now know in talking to psychologists that I felt guilty that I was the weakest member at my work. The reason I was feeling guilty was I was nicking off and enjoying myself playing the game I loved, and other people were being left behind to do my job.

So sort of in the middle of my fourth season, I was 12th man in the Test match in Sydney, and I said to the national selector, Sam Loxton: "Mate, I don't want to play anymore." Because I knew there was another Test match coming up, and there was a tour to New Zealand, and I would be away from work for another two months possibly. So I just said: "I don't want to play anymore." And I stopped playing. It was obviously a mental thing. Was I one of the first ever that stopped playing because of mental health issues? I don't know, but that was a fact of life.

LM: But it was a factor when Clem Jones asked you to be on the Cricket Club Board.

TD: Yeah. So after I'd retired, and I think Clem had retired from being Lord Mayor, but he was still the kingpin of Queensland Cricket [Association] and the Queensland Cricketers' Club, and he approached both myself and John McLean and said: "It would be lovely to have two prominent cricketers on the Cricketers' Club Board. Are you okay on that?" I said: "Yes, certainly." But, I said: "I would hope that all the meetings and the work that we have to do is after hours, after business hours" –– because of this thing that was within me. He said : "Yes, not a problem." And I got voted on. Clem immediately stood up and said: "Right, we've got our board. Now the first meeting is at 1 o'clock tomorrow."

I said: "Clem, you promised me… I will now go on record as having the shortest tenure as a board member of the Queensland Cricketers' Club because I can't do it." Garnsey Green Clemenger at that stage, was doing the advertising for the Labor Party and also the Brisbane City Council. So my boss knew Clem very, very well and

he would get phone calls for the next couple of weeks saying: "You've got to change his mind, you've got to change his mind, you've got to change his mind." I kept saying: "No, no, no."

I'd had a pretty good relationship with Clem up until then and I really can't remember having too much to do with him after that because he wasn't Lord Mayor anymore. Therefore he wasn't a client and I was off the First Class cricket scene, so I wasn't going to be going down to the Gabba anymore.

LM: But you've mentioned you were familiar with him and his involvement with cricket, particularly the University of Queensland Cricket Club?

TD: Oh yeah, yeah. Clem was Clem. He loved his cricket. For years and years and years, he was the captain of the University C Grade side. I'm told that on selection nights, on a Monday night after the weekend game, it was a Clem thing that the C Grade team got picked first. Not First Grade, Second Grade, A Grade, B Grade, C Grade and down, and C Grade gets the leftovers of who have not been picked in A, B and so on. But Clem wanted first dibs at everything. So his team was picked first. He normally picked a couple of potential B and Reserve Grade cricketers, just young up-and-comers, that should have been higher up, just so that Clem could win a premiership.

LM: There seems to be two sides to that sort of story. Two sort of interpretations I guess. Some people look at that as saying: "Look, people were really loyal to Clem and they loved staying in C Grade." Others say: "Well he held them back, they should have gone up the ladder a bit."

TD: He didn't hold them back forever, and back in those days Lindsay, let me tell you, that blokes played much longer than they do now. In all teams in club cricket, you had a core of experienced, hard-nosed players, and they were an absolute boon to the young blokes coming through. I know, you just learnt so much from them. It doesn't happen now. When I first played First Grade, still at school, Peter Burge was my captain, and I played against Wally Grout and Ken Mackay at Toombul. Now, I bowled pretty well in both innings I thought. I got a few wickets in the first innings. Then in the second innings, Wally Grout opened up, and he is a known big hitter. I went for… I always remember this because it's ingrained in my memory, that I went for about 40 off five eight-ball overs.

After the match, Wally came up to me and he said: "Well bowled, that's just the way I bat." For a 17 year old kid, that was gold. I could have gone home with my tail between my legs thinking I was an abject failure for getting slogged all over the park by Wally Grout. But he took time to say something to me. It was all part of the learning curve which just doesn't exist anymore.

LM: You've also mentioned to be previously that even when you were watching TV back in 1956, that match that sort of set you on your way more or less. So you ended up being involved with some of those players.

TD: Yeah, yeah. Well in 1956, and '58, '59. I got to know a lot about Ken Mackay and Wally Grout and Peter Burge and Ray Lindwall, as a young pom. In 1962, there I was, playing with an against them. It was monumental. All the Shield players played club cricket so I was bowling to the best of the best, and then even in Shield cricket, which doesn't exist these days, every Test player played the full round of Sheffield Shield. My first game in 1970 against South Australia, I'm bowling to Barry Richards, the best batsman in the world at that time. Ian Chappell and Greg Chappell. What a learning curve that proved to be. I'm pretty sure that bowling to Barry Richards was the reason I ended up getting picked for Australia because he wrote a newspaper article where he said I was the bowler he least liked to face in Australia.

This is the bloke that got bloody 325 runs in a day against [Dennis] Lillee, [Bob] Massie and Graham Mackenzie, and Tony Lock who was over there then as captain coach of Western Australia. So that was very high credentials, and of course, he played half the games at the South Australian Cricket Association and Donald Bradman would have been there all the time, and they would have talked about who he'd faced and what was available. I'm sure that got me the Test match.

LM: The time you spent in Vietnam, that would have delayed or deferred your rise through the ranks then?

TD: I'm sure. I'm sure. In 1964 and '65, I think I was probably the highest wicket taker in First Grade cricket in Brisbane. I know from talking to Tom Veivers, the University all-rounder Australian Test match pro, he just said to me: "You're the bowler in Brisbane that all batsman least like to face." It's just a pity the selectors didn't bloody take note. When I look at my life now, I had no great designs back then to play for Queensland. I must admit that I'd get letters while I was in Vietnam – "Oh, so and so got picked to play for Queensland." I thought shit, I'm better than him. To get picked for Australia was just an absolute surprise. I had no ambitions to play it then. I didn't think I was good enough.

Now, with what I do with Stand Tall, it's just something that I do that my brain is conditioned to complete. I just do what I do.

LM: If we can just backtrack a little bit to Clem Jones again, after he ended his role as Lord Mayor, he spent a lot more time at the Gabba as curator.

TD: Yes.

LM: Now, you've got certain views on his skills as a curator. How do you rate him as a curat-…. you mentioned the curator that Churchie poached from the Gabba.

TD: Yes, he was the absolute best of the best. Greg Chappell will tell you, if you interview him, that the only person in Queensland that couldn't grow grass, is Clem Jones at the Gabba.

LM: The best of the best you refer to as Jack McAndrew?

TD: Oh yes.

LM: The curator who went from the Gabba to Churchie?

TD: Yeah. I can remember playing club cricket at the Gabba in my early days on a beautiful wicket. And Clem's idea of making a wicket was to drown it and then roll it dry. If there was some certain really wet patches, he'd put down a hessian sack to soak up the moisture. I'm reliably told that when they dug up the pitch for the Commonwealth Games, that there was a whole array of bloody hessian bags that they found under the surface. He'd just roll it dry and it just lost its bounce. It was pretty good for spinners at times. I mean again, there's this story which you'll probably get from Greg.

LM: Greg Chappell?

TD: Yes, that in a Test match against the West Indies, with Clem as the groundsman, Australia batted first on one of these mud patches, and by the end of the day with the heat and the wear and tear, it was just a mess of broken-up mud. I think Australia were all out and then the West Indies had to bat the next morning. I think Greg and Ian turned up first and lo and behold, next door to this broken up wicket was a brand new wicket with the stumps in. They were aghast.

LM: That was against the rules obviously.

TD: Oh yeah, you just don't change. You repair and do the best you can. Ian especially was just wondering, well what's [West Indies captain] Clive Lloyd going to say when he gets here. When he arrived, he looked at it and just exclaimed: "Oh great, now I don't have to bat on that mudhead."

LM: That was Clive Lloyd.

TD: Yeah.

LM: So he wasn't fussed about breaking the rules?

TD: No, he didn't have a problem whatsoever. I don't know what happened after that. The year before when I was still playing Shield cricket….

LM: So the one you're referring to, the West Indies Test was November '75.

TD: It was '75-'76.

LM: The English tour was November '74.

TD: It was '74-'75 and I was still playing Shield cricket because although I told Greg I didn't want to play anymore, he just said to me: "No, you've got to play one more

season because we've got Jeffrey Thomson coming up and you've got to open the bowling with him." That was an offer I really couldn't refuse, so I played one more year.

We'd had Shield practice the night before the Test match. I mean the sky was black and you knew it was going to pour. There were no covers on, and as I came out of the dressing room and down the laneway into Vulture Street, there was Clem sort of just relaxing and having a beer. I don't know, he just went home, I've got no idea.

LM: This was in his office under the stand?

TD: Yes, under the… I think it's the…

LM: Sir Leslie Wilson.

TD: Sir Leslie Wilson pavilion which was sort of the headquarters of Queensland Cricket in those days, and Clem was in charge. He forgot to put the covers on and it poured with rain. The next morning apparently, the Channel 9 helicopter was hovering over the wicket madly trying to dry it out, in time for an 11 o'clock start.

LM: Very expensive solution to the problem wasn't it?

TD: [Laughs]

LM: But there's obviously a skill to curating a cricket field and you've mentioned the topography of the Gabba. In those days it was quite unusual.

TD: Yeah, it fell away a fair bit. It drained beautifully. I can remember my very first game against New South Wales at the Gabba, and we had this torrential downpour in the middle of play. Back in those days prior to climate control…

LM: Climate change?

TD: Yeah. We only got storms late at night and it poured for an hour or so, then brightened up. One of those came in the middle of a New South Wales match, and it poured. The next morning, we started on time, the wicket was dry but we had the old dog track, and you could see that the water down at the Stanley Street end had actually banked up and it was, the watermark was at least two feet up the boundary.

LM: Very deep.

TD: Oh crikey yeah. But the drainage was beautiful and we started on time. Because of the topography, the wicket was dry as a bone.

LM: So if you had to describe Clem's skills as a curator, would you say they were unconventional?

TD: They were very unconventional. For a cricket aficionado or tragic, he would probably score about one out of 10 as a curator. That was because he could drive the tractor.

LM: Just coming back to your own personal career there. The establishment of your new organisation, Stand Up for PTS….

TD: Stand Tall.

LM: Stand Tall. Sorry, Stand Tall for PTS . Now that tries to shine a light on post-traumatic stress disorder.

TD: Yeah, well I was finally diagnosed in 2008 and as a result of being introduced to Defence [Department] cricket, they had an International Defence Cricket Challenge every two years in Canberra, and in 2009, after I'd been there in 2007 and I'd never been diagnosed and I'd done a lot of research, they said: "Can you come down for the 2009 IDCC and talk about your cricket career and your military service." By then, I knew a lot of incidents that had happened in my life and how they could be attributed to PTSD. So I gave about a 40-minute speech and got a standing ovation because I dared talk about something that was taboo at that stage. Still, in 2009. Got a standing ovation. Angus Houston was still the Chief of Defence and Patron of Defence Cricket and I had a seat next to him. As I went back, he gave me a hug and said: "Well done."

The next morning, the lady in charge of the New Zealand army team said: "Thank you, thank you, thank you. Half my team have said can we have a chat with you when we get home." It wasn't until about a year ago that I thought back on that in 2009, that I quite possibly had made a difference. But all of that resonated with me. I went back to the Sunshine Coast, had my second knee replaced, and as I lay in hospital in early 2010, I thought about what can I do now? I had the Army pension and the [Department of Veterans' Affairs medical] Gold Card, but I was only allowed to work for tax purposes, only allowed to work eight hours a week, which, for someone who'd been a workaholic their whole working life, was probably a potential death sentence.

I thought about what had happened and I knew that there was probably another 10,000 Vietnam veterans that are still going through what I'd gone through. So I thought if I start this awareness not-for-profit, I can reach out and let a lot more people know what's gone wrong in their life and how they can fix it.

LM: But you're encompassing more than veterans in your Stand Tall for PTS.

TD: Oh yeah, well see, it just grew and grew and grew. It started out as Vietnam veterans and then people in other conflicts said: "Oh, you need to expand it to all veterans." Which I did. Now also serving military are going through similar problems. Then all of a sudden, there was the coppers, the firies and the ambos. I mean they are our frontline troops here at home. What they sometimes encounter every day of the year, can be quite horrific. They were suffering as well. While

military people have [the Department of] Veterans' Affairs to fall back on, first responders have nothing. They come under state legislation, and the state is quite happy to send them out and clean up the streets, and clean up the garbage and fight the fires, and rescue the victims of domestic violence, etcetera, etcetera. But when it becomes too much for them, they sort of give them a year's grace behind a desk and then choof them off, and there's nothing there for them.

LM: The work you've done with Stand Tall for PTS and the knowledge you've gained, do you see any way to more or less inoculate people from PTSD?

TD: There's a lot of research that has gone on within Defence and the people that they get to do research for them. They're now trying to segregate those that are most likely to contract PTSD – because not everyone gets it – and those that don't. So those that are liable to succumb, are sort of given jobs away from deployment, whereas the others, they're in the gunsights to be deployed. So that's happening.

Then we've got to look at transition which is coming out of the armed forces where everything is done for you. You don't have to lift a finger and you're with all your mates, and you drink and bloody carry on, and bloody eat and sleep and train and fight together. But then all of a sudden you decide to go out and you walk out the gate and you're on your own. You've got to find a doctor, a dentist, buy a house, get a job, look after your finances, look after your family. I mean it's even a struggle for me even now, to go shopping in a crowded Coles or Woolies. It just becomes hard yakka.

When I have to get up in front of a crowd at a dinner or an event, I know I have to do it and my head's fine and I can do it, but the rest of my body sort of turns to jelly. I have trouble walking up to the dais. These days, I ask if I can have a stool or a very sturdy lectern to hold on to, with a microphone that I don't have to hold. So, there's just these lasting effects. Veterans' Affairs and RSL, etcetera, etcetera, reckon they're doing a good job but again, in the veteran community, there is incredible suspicion of Defence and the RSL, especially among the younger veterans.

When I came home in '68, I went down to join the Coorparoo RSL. It was run by World War II veterans, and they made it plainly clear to me – "Oh, that wasn't a war. We were in real war, you weren't." There was just this antagonism between the older and the younger. Now, the Vietnam veterans are very much in control of most Australian RSL sub-branches and it's no different. "Oh, that wasn't a real war, we were in a real war." So there's this suspicion and this antagonism amongst the younger veterans that the RSL's being run by bloody old fogeys.

LM: That doesn't help.

TD: To me, it's a death knell potentially for the RSL because they're just going to run out of people to populate all their sub-branches. I've been saying for 10 years that the best thing you could do is to incorporate first responders. There's 360,000 of them serving and there's probably half a million of them out there that are either working

or have worked, and make them members so they've got a place to go. So that they've got a place to meet, and put on events once a month for their families. You've got to incorporate the families as well. DVA are recognising that families are just as important as "the bloke" or the female veteran needs family support, and needs to know their family is included in what you're doing.

LM: Okay, look thanks very much for your time today Tony.

TD: That's okay.

LM: Thanks for your stories and your involvement in the Oral History Project. Best of luck for the future of Stand Tall for PTS.

TD: Thanks.

[end of recording]