## Eric's work experience

TV EXTRA

JOB DESCRIPTION

DUTIES: Standing in the background; doing exactly what you're told or else

EQUIPMENT: Whatever you're given for the scene. Don't break it, 'cos there aren't any more

SKILLS: Pulling the right face at the right time; looking like you know what you're doing with the prop

PAY: Eric: $0. Others: $88.20 for a half-day call (minimum four hours)

PROSPECTS: It is a long, slow road to stardom from extradom. Eric doesn't have the map
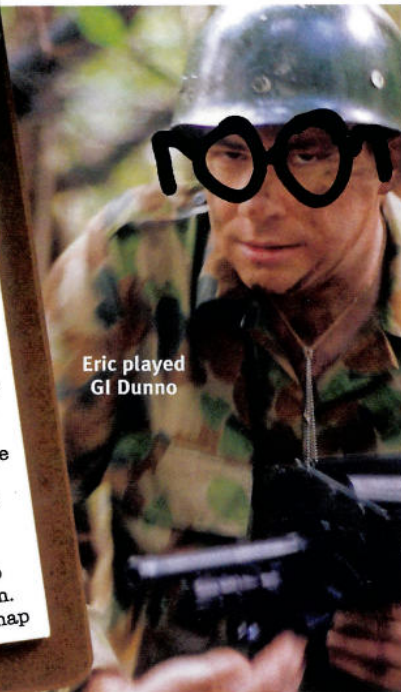
Eric played GI Dunno

8.30AM
STILL sleepy, I arrive "on set" (which is a TV term) of *Pizza*, that funny cooking show on SBS. Actually, the set is just a van parked near the bush. I have been asked to bring black boots, but now I realise I will have to go in the bush in my best shoes. I am given a soldier's uniform and told to put it on.

8.45AM
A NICE lady with a sponge puts mud on my face and hands. I ask her why I have mud before I'm even in the jungle. The sponge lady thinks this is very funny.

8.50AM
PAUL, the man in charge, talks me through "the scene" (a TV term, like something you saw, but spelt wrong). Apparently we have to make-believe something called a "flash" back in Vietnam. I hope it's nothing like what my Uncle Ernie was arrested for in Morreau Reserve at Rooty Hill.

8.55AM
A MAN called Angry Anderson arrives in a big car. He is to play the leader of the flash. One of the other soldiers says he was in a band before I was born, but can't remember any of his songs. Today, Mr Anderson is Mr Angry About Traffic.

9AM
I MEET a nice man called Greg Evans. He is not in Vietnam, but he is in a scene with Annalise Braakensiek, that lady who makes me feel funny. Later, someone tells me Mr Evans was on a TV show called *Perfect Match* when I was young. I bet his match collection is even better than mine.

9.05AM
THE soldiers and Mr Anderson and a fat man in big shorts with a camera go into the bush. I have been given some dog tags to put around my neck in case I get lost. All the soldiers are given big guns. Mine is held together with sticky tape and the trigger has fallen off, so I hope Vietnam isn't too dangerous. I am also worried about my best shoes.

9.10AM
ALL the soldiers (including me) have to walk three paces forward and stop. Then we have to do it again. And again. And again. Mr Anderson keeps making jokes I don't understand, but I don't want to ask what they mean in case he gets upset.

9.20AM
NOW Paul wants us to crouch down and look scared. Up and down. Up and down. Once, a branch goes up my nose. Mr Angry has something to say. He says it over and over again, exactly the same. I wonder what I will get to say.
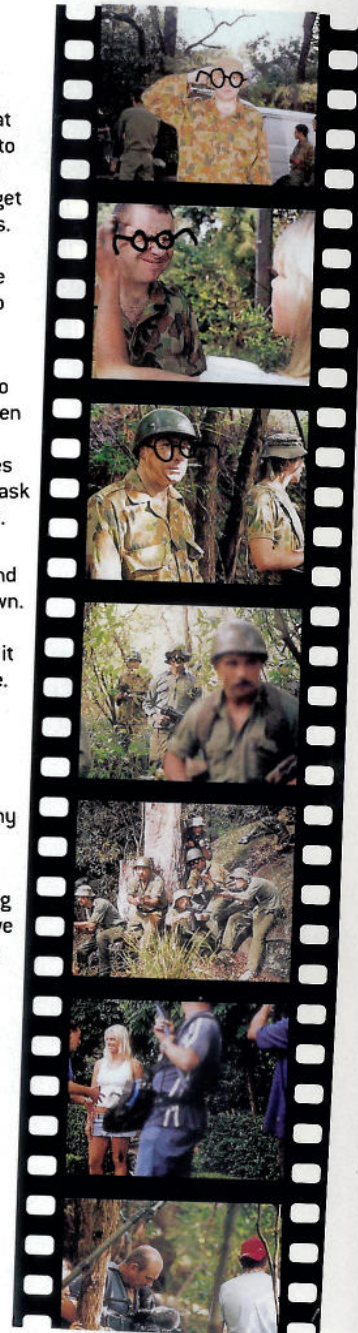
9.40AM
MY KNEES are hurting, but finally we can stop crouching. I tell one of my fellow soldiers about my knees and my shoes. He says, "War is hell."

10.20AM
AFTER lots more crouching and looking scared or angry or happy, Paul says we are finished. Mr Anderson asks where the car park is. I realise I will not get to say anything after all. The fat man with the camera says he's been eaten alive by ants and uses a rude word.

10.30AM
AS I am getting out of my uniform, Annalise Braakensiek arrives for her scene. Luckily I pull my pants up before she can see my Pink Panther underpants. I ask the producer how much I will get paid and she laughs hard. I laugh with her. It's good to have such friends in the TV industry.

Top idea

IT'S A LEGEND

The totalisator was an Aussie success — what are the odds?

RACETRACK gambling would take forever if the automatic totalisator hadn't been invented.

It was designed by English-born railway engineer George Julius as a mechanical vote-counting machine, but was rejected by the unimaginative WA government.

Undeterred, Julius adapted it to become the world's first racecourse totalisator. It did everything: printed the betting tickets, sent data to the various pools, made deductions for taxes and operating costs, and instantaneously adjusted the odds shown on public indicators.

It first went into service in 1913, at Ellerslie in NZ, and made its Australian debut at Gloucester Park in WA three years later.

The original machines were mechanical and filled a 10m x 10m room. They were soon upgraded to electric operation, then made smaller and simpler, and finally computerised in 1966. By 1970 they were found at every major racing centre around the world.

The last electro-mechanical totalisator went out of service in 1987 in London, but today's computer totes still use Julius's mathematical principles.

New systems can also turn men into dog-food eaters

Early machines could also turn horses into dog food