

Transcription

Tape 01

01:00:33:00

Jack if we could start with your early years and where you were born?

Oh, born in Melbourne and ? lived there most of the time in Melbourne until well, I

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went to the local school, I lived at Essendon and went to the local school which was Northern Grammar for a few years when I was a boy. And later went to school at Geelong College as a boarder.

Did that become Geelong Grammar?

No.

It's a different school?

It's a better school, yes.

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What did you do after graduating?

I finished with the school leaving certificate and was having difficulty getting a job and then I learnt to fly in 1936. I left school at the end of '35, you see. And

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started flying ? oh I've forgotten when it was, probably about March, April, thereabouts in 1936. The end of '36 I achieved a commercial license and I worked with Holyman Airways as a grease monkey and ? but I couldn't get a job there, they had a

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full house of pilots in Holyman Airways which became Australian National Airways and I couldn't get a job there in- what do you call it? New Guinea or South Australia, I tried but as I said, a moment ago, it was all full house. Anyway

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in 1938, I joined the air force and as a cadet was at Point Cook and then did the first navigation reconnaissance course at Point Cook which was in 1939.

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What happened then? Well then I was ? at the end of that, which was about four months I think, the nav course, I posted to 25 Squadron ? or near ? and was flying Ansons there on coastal reconnaissance and following

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year which was 1940. I was posted to 6 Squadron Richmond, just out of Sydney. Now I was there for, oh gosh, I don't know how long. They brought Hudsons in there, so I was one of the early guys on Lockheed Hudsons and

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we did coastal reconnaissance based from Richmond, flew down to, oh gosh, think of it in a moment, down on the south east corner of Australia. And we operated from there. Began from Laverton

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and out of Bass Strait, out of Port Lincoln, out of ? the Great Australian Bight wasn't patrolled as a rule, it was a bit difficult to operate there actually. And anyway the shipping was left Sydney mainly Sydney and Melbourne and

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down the coast along the south coast, westward to Perth and then out to sea. We swept, that was the word used, the ocean, the coast or the Ansons and we went out 60 nautical miles, a stepped aside 30 and

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for parallel track back to the coast again. We had a second pilot who didn't ? who took over the pilot seat in the Anson after we ? after take off and we'd climb to 1000 or 1500 feet or thereabouts. And then he flew it out to seaward whilst we, the captain of the aircraft

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navigated and took trip sites mainly. And this 60 miles outwards, we were pretty accurate, we could get within a mile of where we wanted to go. Wasn't bad. Then with the Lockheed Hudson, same

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applied, the captain would take off, climb to 1000 or so feet and hand over to the second pilot who flew the aircraft out to sea whilst Muggins navigated again. We went out 100 miles I think it was, in the

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Lockheed Hudson to see and stepped aside 30 miles and parallel tracked back to the coast again.

How long were you on coastal patrol for 6 Squadron?

Two years I think it was. Then I was posted to

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Victoria Barracks in Melbourne, St Kilda Road Melbourne, as the navigation officer there. Didn't do a great deal of flying out of there. We didn't have an aeroplane so we had to borrow from the flying unit or something or a squadron. Anyway,

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then I was posted back to ? oh there were three of us who were ? what's the word? We really hated the job of ? ferrying Hudsons, new ones, to various places, from Laverton or Sydney, they came by sea, you see and they were assembled

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at Laverton or at Richmond and then they were test flown and flown to wherever the ? whichever squadron they were offered to as they were assembled. So we did that ? flew out this aircraft to ? Adelaide

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Perth, Darwin, Brisbane I think that was all. It was enough though, it kept us, three of us that did the job. And there was Squadron Leader Sam Barber, who was senior to me and Jel Cumming, he was one

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of three of us and we flew these aircraft to shall we say, to wherever, Sydney, Perth or whatnot and then we caught the train back again. So it wasn't much fun catching the train back again, but still, we did. And ?

Interesting they didn't give you an extra plane to fly back in.

Yes, we sometimes did, but rather rarely.

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And anyway,

After the ferrying, where were you posted?

We belonged to a squadron in the course of the ferry but if there was an aircraft to be ferried we left from ? well I left from Richmond, 6 Squadron Richmond, where I flew there as required or down

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to wherever a ferry was to take place. And from Laverton or from Richmond we were already there. But coming back wasn't much fun, I must admit it was, you know, especially places like Perth, fly over there but there's nothing to bring back you see. Or rarely was there anything to bring back.

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Well, then I was posted to I think it was 2 Squadron from Richmond and 2 Squadron was then based at Daly Waters, south of Darwin and we operated, we flew up to Darwin as a rule before an operation, were briefed there in the ops room

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and then we flew from there ? well one of the targets was the island of Timor and we used to go down, approximately 100 miles I think it was to south from Darwin, south-west from Darwin on the coast. To the,

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oh m'gosh, I've forgotten the name of the place, there was a mission station there, of New Norcian monks and they ? their headquarters were near Pearce in Western Australia. And about 30, 40 miles north of Perth. And that's their base and there's this mission station up there of the

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whatnot river. Which was nearer to Darwin of course and they had senior monk there was Father Thomas and his brother Joseph, I've forgotten the other chappy's name, there were only three there and three or four old nuns who were

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dressed in black habits and got hot up there, it must have been terrible. Anyway they ran the mission station, one of their projects was to refuel our aircraft at the aerodrome there which was a simple grassed aerodrome, it wasn't a proper runway or anything. And

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they got ? they refuelled the aircraft from drums of petrol which they ? which were brought up from Perth by sea in a ship, thrown overboard and then they'd float and the monks'd pick them up with a boat and ? a launch

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and bring them to shore, roll them up the beach and park them on the aerodrome so it was pretty simple. The way they refuelled aeroplanes they did it by hand, pump, comes out. Anyway, what else happened? We operated across to Timor from that aerodrome there

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we used to fly down from Darwin, where we would be briefed, we'd refuel, to full tanks and then fly across to Timor, well the distance there, we saved 100 miles, it was 400 from Darwin and 300 from this mission station. Anyway

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I went over there, not ? early in 1942, just trying to remember what it was. Singapore fell, if I remember rightly on the 18th of February, 1942, and Macalister fell in 19th of the following month.

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in Timor, they shot me down there. The day before, a chap called Ozzie Diamond, flew over Oepoko in Timor at 17 or 18,000 feet or thereabouts and anyway some ? he was chased by Japanese bi-planes, they were old things called Betsies [Betsy bomber],

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and they were biplanes and they were biplanes and they couldn't quite get up to him so he was ? he's told me about this, I went over the following day on a reconnaissance flight over in the meantime they'd brought in ? what do you call them, Zeros and the Zeros of course were pretty hot fighting aircraft and

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as I flew over the top of the aerodrome there which the Japanese had taken over, I saw three Zeros go that way, three Zeros go that way, that way and that way. North, south, east, west. So they climbed, so no matter which way I went, they ? I would have three Zeros after me. Anyway I

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they also had a barrage going of anti-aircraft guns firing at me and there were quite a lot of explosions round they sky, here, there and whatnot, and by the grace of the good Lord they didn't get us. But as the Zeros got up towards my height, I dived out of maximum speed

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I didn't want to let them get underneath. Because you have no protection, we had no protection and anyway, we got out to ? I got down to ground level and there were no clouds in the sky, usually there were a goodly stack of clouds, but

there was nothing to hide in. Such as that

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so I ? anyway, we got down and ? down to treetop height and then they scored a direct hit on a starboard engine and that caught fire so we had no option but to ditch it. The crew, there

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were three of them I think, there was a second pilot, an air gunner and a turret at the rear and a wireless operator and myself, a total of four. They hopped out but their parachutes opened as they touched mother earth, that was the end of that and I was lucky, I went into a shallow sort of a

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valley, while flying over it and I ? my parachute opened just before I arrived at a tree. So I arrived at a tree and got out of that pretty quickly, the tree I mean. And out the side of the valley, it was just as well I did because the Japanese were turned round were shooting the parachute

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if I'd stayed there, in the tree I'd have probably been finished. Anyway I got up the side of the valley then I trotted round, through some thin sort of jungle, there were a few paths here and there but they were easily a big spider web across the thing there, with the spiders, was just in the middle of it. Big

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long legs, so I didn't know what to do with this, I picked up a stick anyway and I tickled the web and he shot off to Talcoa. And he - I struck a few of these cobwebs and the thing and I came upon a native what was it, Javanese I suppose and he

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guided me into the local raja hut. He was the local chieftain I suppose and anyway, whilst I was there, he ? I was having a great deal of difficulties, he was ? they don't speak English and I don't speak ? I didn't speak Dutch or Javanese or anything like that so we

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came to an understanding that I was going that way. Now we had a rendezvous point where if anyone was stranded there in Timor, they'd move to this spot on the north coast of Timor, which was a place called Kapsali. And I was heading for that, I had about 60 miles I suppose to go

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direct line. Anyway, I was heading that way and I ran into then on the track a Japanese soldier. And he put his rifle up and made it quite clear that I was to go with him. So we went a mile or so further down to a place called

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I might remember that in a moment. And where there was an Australia AIF [Australian Imperial Forces] army store, they had quite a lot of goodies there, foodstuffs and equipment and uniforms and boots and so on.

Was it a place called Tjamplong?

Yeah Tjamplong.

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A month I think it was. And they were in a camp on the shore of Koepang Bay. And, I've forgotten exactly how many ? there were about 4 or 5 hundred and they were in this thing there in

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a series of tents and the tents were rotten, they were absolutely had it, they didn't last very long in the hot tropics. And anyway I decided there at Tjamplong that they'd send me down to the aerodrome at Penfui, which is at Koepang,

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for questioning. Well we got, I popped in a utility with a Japanese driver and away we went. Down the road, it was about 30 miles down to where ? from Tjamplong to Penfui and we got down there we tried to cross a creek so anyway the ? it was fairly shallow water but

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just the same the driver was a bit of a dud driver and he stopped in the middle of it so anyway, he couldn't get out so I said, I offered to take it over and so we changed places and I backed the car out, the utility and

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then took it right out of the water and got through it and at the other side we changed back again. And I couldn't go anywhere so it was hopeless me buzzing off because, you know, you're out there, it's the only road, only track, a terrible one and as I said, nowhere to go. So we went down to Penfui and there I was interviewed by four or five Japanese chaps

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and they were probably lieutenant colonel or full colonel, but I wasn't too good at the badges of rank. And I didn't know what precisely they were but they were quite clearly weren't privates. They answered ? asked me a lot of questions about where did I go to school, what was my name and age and oh,

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then they'd pop an awkward question saying, ?And how many troops did you have up in the Darwin area?? And I said, didn't know. So this went on for about, oh I suppose ? I couldn't answer a lot of their questions, I didn't know.

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They, as I said, they asked a lot of military style questions but I couldn't answer them. Then they gave up and sent me back. One of them was a naval? I think he was a commander, but he ? the rest were army and they ? the navy bloke there, he spoke better English than the English, he was very hoity-toity and anyway they

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sent me out of the room into another room. I got into the other room there and there was a big, over six feet, a Jap, I think he was a lieutenant colonel, or equivalent, came in there and he was a nasty looking brute and he ordered me to come with him and I went with him into yet another room and then he started asking me questions there

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and he was starting to get ? he was about to get pretty rough and give me a pasting. But anyway, at this stage the chaps I'd been with, were questioned by ? turned up, one or two of them turned up and took me away. And brushed him

away. So with that I was sent back to

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Tjamplong and I was kept in the guard tent there for a month. And they put an iron bedstead in it for me. And they had their table and three chairs for the sentries and I was in that, for as I said, for a month. There were some Australian ? a couple of Australians, Aussies out in the store

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which was about 50 yards away I suppose. I wasn't allowed to go there and I wasn't allowed to go out of the tent really. And I ? they came over and then they weren't allowed to talk to me and vice versa. So they had a ? quite a number of books. They

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used to bring me a book to read and I'd scribble a note on it, on a piece of paper and put it in the book. As I was apparently reading it and when they came back for the book, I'd say, ?Page 89,? as I held the book, and ?No more.? So they went away so we

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got the note in the book, by that means. And anyway after I'd been there for a month I was sent down to the camp for a bit of a walk on the shores of Koepang Bay which were under the control internally only of a Lieutenant Colonel Leggett. And

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he was the CO [commanding officer] of the 2/40th Battalion which we chaps came from. And anyway he ? I got on well with Uncle Bill, as I called him, not to his face though. And I was allotted

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a post in a tent with a couple of Englishmen and there was a small English unit sent over to Timor to ? by the way before it failed, before it surrendered, and I was with those two chaps, a few tents away from Uncle Bill Leggett. And strangely enough, Bill Leggett had been at the same school as me

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but he'd been there a bit earlier because he'd been in the First World War. Anyway ? what happened then, there ? I was there for about probably six months and went into the camp one day and over the top, we were only about three or four miles away from the aerodrome I suppose,

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Penfui in this camp ? a DC-3 [Douglas aircraft] Flew over the top, that shocked me a bit. But I was interested in it, and so three of us went out one day, you could crawl out through the wire and ? if you were careful you could dodge a way through light jungle or gravel

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roads to ? we went to Penfui aerodrome, we got to the barbed wire fence there and we looked and watched the ? after the DC-3 had been flying, a Japanese plane was there by the way, and that was the reason for the DC-3. And anyway, we ? what I wanted to know was, did they refuel it after it had been flying or did ? or what?

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Anyway we watched through the wire fence, there was another chap called, Piggot, who was the 2/40th Battalion I think. And Donny Armstrong was a pilot and he was a logger from central Tasmania, he's a solid logs across from ear to ear, too by the way. But he was a big strong bloke and he

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was great value. Anyway we saw what we wanted to see and we went back to the camp. And at the camp we had planes then and I think something like eight or nine of us went off a night or two later or about nine o'clock at night I think it was. We

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broke out of camp and sneaked out and went across to Penfui aerodrome and we had a sentry in a sentry box beside the aircraft and we could see him smoking in the dark. So we deputed a couple of chaps to look after him. So they

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took off their boots and they sneaked round the sentry box and they had a waddy each and they were going to crack him over the ? other chap over the head and they hit the sides of the box and they went - the sentry had gone. They don't know where he went to this day. And anyway we go down to the aircraft and it had canvass covers over the propellers and engines and

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so forth and chocks round the flight controls rudder, elevator and ailerons, so I removed those, the chocks there to make sure that the controls were free and the other chaps took the canvass covers off the propellers and in the meantime,

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the thing was locked up so I got up on the wing and broke a window and opened the emergency exit, got in from there and I went down inside the thing there and opened the door from the inside. But I didn't allow anyone in, because we didn't know what was happening, so I went back to the cockpit and I

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hadn't flown a DC-3 but I'd seen ? helped in their maintenance and whatnot so I had an idea of what it was all about, I tried switching on the battery, no, nothing, no joy at all. And what we found when we got outside the aircraft again, was they'd removed the battery. Came down onto the nose of the aircraft, the battery came down on a

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thing there and so you could take it out, or when you put it in, you put it on this cage and put it up there and locked the thing in and there it was. So there was no power, I was the only one who knew anything about aeroplanes at all. And so there was no hope of doing anything more about it. You can

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you could operate it, you could start it but you'd have to swing the props, with people not so appropriately in front and we didn't ? we couldn't swing the props. So where'd we go to then? So Uncle Bill Leggett who was with us, said, ?Righto men, back to camp.? So we got back to camp, oh about, just before daylight I suppose

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about five-thirty, six o'clock and anyway we had a roll call at about ten o'clock in the morning which was unusual they had a roll call where we were concerned every afternoon at about four o'clock. Might have been three. But the one in the afternoon was it. And the men used to line up

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on the signal and if anyone was out up the island somewhere, or down in the camp, then after they'd counted ? oh the Japanese came along and counted, ?ichi ni san shi go roku ? And when they'd counted that lot, move off to the next one, so if there was someone missing for another platoon

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of about I've forgotten about 12, about 15 thereabouts men, they'd sneak out, having been counted, sneak in to the next group. And having been counted again in that one, you see the Japs don't learn? They were very simple in many regards. So anyway the count was all okay,

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and so then and after we'd been there about I've forgotten exactly, six, seven months I suppose, and after this attempt at pinching the aircraft too by the way, we were told that certain ones ? twelve I think officers and I was one of them, I was the only air force

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one, were to go to Raja Island to the west so we buckled up one day and got aboard a tramp steamer in Koepang and off to Java. Well we got to Seal Bay [Kali Mas - Surabaya, East Java], we got off there and we had a couple of parsons with us and

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one was Bindi, I won't tell you his proper name, but he was ? he had two or three trunks with goodies that he had brought down from Tjamplong ? oh to the camp by the Koepang Bay

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and he handed out some goodies to his favourites, anyway when he got to ? when we got to Surabaya, it was all men off the ship and he went down the plank, off to the right and then to the left and two or three men were carrying his trunk, they went to the left, he went to the right and he hasn't seen it since.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 02

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You're in Java.

Yes, we're in Java, we're in ? as I said ? Surabaya and we're then sent to ? what's the name of the place? Batavia [Jakarta]. It's now called, what's the

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name of the capital there? It's in the newspaper, days ago. Oh, aren't I terrible.

Not Jakarta now?

It was Batavia, it's now Jakarta is it? I think it is Jakarta. So anyway -changed its name that's the old name, Batavia, is gone. Anyway went there

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to ? in a camp with some other Australian, I've forgotten exactly, I think there was some English, yes, there was some English, but rather few, English ? there were several camps round Batavia but this was one of them and we were in there and don't think anything very interesting's happened, we were only

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there for about two or three weeks, and then we were sent off to Singapore. And Singapore, we were in a ship which was a - haven't the foggiest idea what the name was, but it was a

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sizeable ship, there were quite a lot of troops or so going to Singapore and they were put in the decks and we were put in the hold. We had the hold to ourselves but they were crammed up ? very most uncomfortably in the ? other parts of the ship. Went to, as I said, to Singapore, at Singapore we were sent out to Changi.

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And at Changi, I was allotted a ? to a course ? some courses, there in Gordon Highlanders, it was the Gordon Highlander barracks area by the way. In Changi. Changi is a shire, at the oh gosh,

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Seletar, Seletar I think was the name of the camp and it was Gordon Highlander's barracks and the mess. And officer's quarters are separate villas covering quite a few acres, I've forgotten how many, probably 20, 25, acres I suppose. There was sealed road winding round

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through them. So anyway we were sent there and then allotted our quarters and with the other Australians of the 8th Division, we ? oh then I ? there I got to know, a Major John Wyatt and he was G3 [general staff officer 3rd class] in the

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8th Division headquarters. They had G1, 2, 3, 4, [general staff officer classes 1-4] I think. The senior officers covering subjects in the division. Anyway, he apparently had heard about my- our episode at Timor, trying to pinch an aircraft and he was very interested in pinching one up there. So I agreed

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provided it was a British aircraft or an American one, but I didn't want anything to do with a Japanese one, because I couldn't march into that and be confident I knew my way round. So we used to go out at night out of the camp at Seletar and to

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a local Singapore native's hut. It was a hut in the light jungle in light rather nasty country. And send a note to a chappie called Gyan Singh. Who was an Indian businessman who lived in Singapore

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and had a business there selling goods and things like Myers I suppose but on a very small scale, it was a two storey building but anyway, Gyan Singh was a pro British and he didn't think much of the Japanese at all. So we used to send a note down to him with

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a runner and this chappie who was the runner, he was a Chinese but not a very attractive fella, usually Chinese, if they're bad looking, they are bad, if they're not, they're okay, trust them. Bald headed ? anyway our runner

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took the message down to Gyan Singh but he dropped into the Japanese kempei tai [Japanese military police] on the way, the secret police would make a copy of the note and then send it on to with the runner, to Gyan Singh, who would try and get information we wanted about aircraft being refuelled and so forth at a couple of aerodromes there, Seletar was one of them.

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And I'm sorry I gave the name Seletar before but that was the camp, wasn't it, but Seletar aerodrome is correct. Anyway, he'd get the information, come back, the runner would take it back to the Japanese kempei tai, they'd copy it and send him on his merry way

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out to the hut near Changi, or in Changi, Changi shire. And so after they'd copy this for several ? a month or two, I think it was a month or two, they came along and they arrested two others, Wyatt, Major Wyatt and another

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Australian chap who was with the Red Cross but he'd been in the Australian Army up there in the 8th Division and with the fall of surrender, I should say, he had gone from ? sorry,

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anyway, he ? I won't give you his name, deliberately because he was a bad egg, he'd gone to the Red Cross but he ? the Red Cross wouldn't know of him, thoroughly ashamed of him. And he had only been a private or a corporal or something rather with the army before he'd been there. He'd been in stores, I think.

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Anyway, he ? after they had Wyatt and this chap, for two or three days, they came out for me. So I didn't tell you his name because that's how they found out. Anyway, they took me into the ? into a place, station I suppose - a police station in old home a

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very nice place, in Singapore and we were quartered in the stables they were two storeyed stables and we were in the upper floor. And oh, it was a bit unpleasant I must add. I think there were about a dozen of us in this relatively ? oh about ?

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half as big again as this room we're in. That was the cell we were in there. Two or three women and the rest was men. And I don't know what, I don't know what they were all in there for, but they were up to no good. Amongst them they had Gyan Singh, though and he -

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they belted the daylight out of him, and of course trying to questioning him and trying to get information and then they got yours truly and tried to get the story from me. And I didn't know much, I knew my number, name and rank and last three numbers of my rifle and nothing else, anyway they gave me a bit of a pouncing

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and then finally got a bit nasty when I took several days of this questioning and with no success. They wanted - they gave me a water treatment. They tied me down on a form ? a long form about that high, and held the garden hose and put it in me mouth, ?cause you, you can

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not breathe and not swallow, for a while, but eventually you get to the stage where you can. And you do. So anyway, I passed out with that. The water treatment as we knew it. And anyway they untied me and took me back to the ? carried me back to the cell and that's where they made a mistake, I suppose I shouldn't tell them that

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they ? when you're coming to, is the time to question you, you see, because you'd tell them anything then. Because you're suffering a bit and anyway, they didn't do that, so I ? after that I was court martialled with the others and the court martial there in the British court of appeal I might add, which was a fine beautiful

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building. We were put in Outram Road jail, which was a bit like Pentridge built in the 1800s and had a ? put in the cell there and we were rather short rations and they had a hole in the

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door of the cell which was a big thick door about ? wooden door about two and a half inches thick I suppose and they had a hole in it. So you'd pass a dish through that, that was how you got your tucker. But we usually you didn't get much more than rice stew which, there was nothing in it, so it was tasteless as rice is.

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And sometimes you'd get a genuine fish stew where mixed up with the rice, well that was good. But you didn't get much of it. Anyway after we'd been in there for two or three weeks we ? in a cell each and a Japanese patrolling the doors whatnot and he'd come up and look through

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hole in the door, see what you were up to and you were supposed to be standing up all the time. Anyway I ? I did a fair bit of sitting there and I was probably the only one who knew Morse code. And if you looked out through your ? through the hole in the door you could see a cell there and a cell there.

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And the deaf and dumb language I also happened to know. So that was A, hold your hand up to the door, A, E, I, O, U and so on. And the chaps opposite there I managed to teach them there that, you know, that was A and you know, profile the letter A or B or so whatever.

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And they got to know it so we could ? by that means- managed to talk to each other, you could see, if there was a Japanese sentry coming past, you'd spot him and you'd just pull back from the hole in the wall ? door and he would see the same sort of thing ? the other side, he'd disappear back into his cell. And then you could talk to the bloke next door, to you by ? in Morse code by

02:16:00:00

knocking on the thing. So, one knock was dot, and two was a dash. So it was a clumsy way, it was better than nothing and so we used to talk there ? anyway, was taken out of that, I've forgotten how long now, probably a month. We ? the three of us were taken out

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tied together, with thick rope and put in a utility and driven up to a ? a couple of blocks away from the British Court of Appeal, where we were to be tried. From there we were put out of the truck onto the road and we were marched up with bare feet, bare legs and up the street for the local

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population to see us. Then we marched into the court and had a ?oh concerning this business of attempting to get information but they had, big pile of sheets of paper which were the messages that had come from Changi down to Gyan Singh.

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And anyway, the court consisted of a I think it was a colonel and ? in charge and another four officers I think. And an interpreter. And the interpreter was shocking, he spoke shocking English ? we had great difficulty understanding what he was saying.

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So when we were sentenced to be executed, I took a pace forward and nodded to the senior beak and said, ?We couldn't understand a word your interpreter was saying.? So he closed down the court and we went back to Outram Road jail

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by utility and I think it was about three weeks later we were summoned again to the court, this time we were driven straight to the court without having to pad bare footed up the road. And the officer in charge of the court opened it again and repeated the charge and the guilty

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thing was we were to be executed and they had another interpreter this time and he spoke excellent American, so we could understand him and back to the jail we went and after about ? again I don't remember how long it was, probably two or three months, might have been a month, the Japanese emperor had a birthday so he sent along ? I think it was three

02:19:30:00

little cakes each to us which were handed through the hole in the door and our sentences were commuted to 20 years. So instead of having me head chopped off, I had to do 20 years. And I haven't done many of the 20 years by the way. I've got a lot to do if they get back in

02:20:00:00

power. I've forgotten how long I did, about six months I think. Anyway I was taken and put in the Outram Road jail cell again and it was ? tucker was pretty poor and I got thinner and thinner and I got to the stage where, if I was helped onto my feet, and I leant propped against the wall, I was alright. But

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I couldn't walk. But they decided there'd been too many who'd died in Outram Road jail so they sent about half a dozen of us out to Changi. There I was helped onto a truck and got in, we had an Australian hospital there and I was looked after by our own doctors. Who ? Bruce Henderson, Dr Bruce Henderson

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Dr Glenn White was the senior one. Charles Osborne was another. He used to lecture at a Melbourne University I think it was and ? as a doctor. Anyway they ? we had quite a gang there so I was in hospital there for

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quite a long time. About I forgot, five months. And then the beginning of 1945 which was the last year of the war, they ordered us back and a number of us anyway, back to Changi, so we were

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Outram Road I should say, Outram Road jail but in the jail at ? in the quarters rather, the people in ? oh we moved across to Changi jail you've seen that in the paper. There which was a prison built in the early 1900s I think and it wasn't a terrible place, mark you it wasn't home from home but just the same,

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we were popped in there and we ? the second visit there, for the last five months, I think it was, of 1945, the last five months? A bit more. August was the month we packed it in. So it was until all the ? they dropped an atom bomb

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and Japan was ? the second one, and I'm in favour by the way of atom bombs. They ?we were better fed, not well fed, but better fed and we lasted the distance. And at the end of the war, there we were taken back to the camp and in the

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Changi jail we ? the Japanese were posted outside, looking inwards and standing with the rifle there looking at the prison from about three or four corners, I suppose, four corners and then after the surrender to - of the Japanese they about turned them so they were protecting us.

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They were looking after us. Anyway after a few days, an RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] aircraft or two arrived up there from Australia and one which was flown by a chap I knew quite well, Rob Cornfoot and he took it ? what have you, he and his crew took

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a flat in Singapore and took me with them and this day they arrived there, and allowed me one glass of beer, no more. And anyway I flew back to Laverton, there in a DC-3. And there I met quite a few other people I knew, senior officers amongst them and

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was sent back to Australia in a Catalina. So we were in the ? in a what do you call it, sort of landing barge thing which was driven around and popped in that, told we were going back to Australia, this was about, I've forgotten now, I think we were about 20 of us, might

02:25:30:00

have been 15. 15 to 20 prisoners of war, who came back this way in that particular aircraft and we got to the beach and drove her straight down the beach into the water, I had my heart in my mouth, I thought we were going to sink, but the thing just turned, floated out to the like a launch out the aircraft. We got on board the aircraft and came back here.

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I think it took the best part of a week to get back. And stopped at various places for fuel and overnights. Denpasar near Bali was one. And anyway we got back to Australia and to Darwin and Darwin to think it was Cooktown and

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when we got to Cooktown or Cairns whichever it was, Cooktown I think, they wanted the chaps to be ? to go to a hospital which had been built and was used for Australian troops inland, I've forgotten the name of the place a the moment, but it was inland and I pleaded with them to

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carry on the Catalina. So got back to Sydney and at Sydney I stayed a night with some friends there and another air force chap called, Tinkler, and he was a signals fellow and he was pretty good at the game too, so we came down the following day

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to mount ? with the RAAF in a Dakota and it ? we got aboard the Dakota at the aerodrome in Sydney and flew down ? down South Westerly direction and I looked out the window and I saw that he was circling around a big mountain, so I went up to the cockpit and I said,

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?What's the trouble?? And he said, ?We're not too sure where we are.? They were lost. I said, ?Well that's Mount Kosciusko, you go that way.? So they went that way, we got to Laverton. I think that's the end.

We're going to start from the beginning again now,

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I guess it was quite something getting back to Australia?

Yes, it was good to get back, I got back to

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not to Laverton, to Essendon, and there I was picked up by a ? some friends of ours including my mother who was ? had been driven by them and carpoled into the MCG. Melbourne Cricket Ground and there I was told ? oh you know, had my name and address and what not

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and I was told that I was to go to a certain hospital I think it was and I can't remember now, and I said, ?I don't ? I want to go home.? Turned on my heel and walked out. The chap behind the counter ? the desk was a flight lieutenant and I was a flight lieutenant, he was horrified, anyway it didn't do any good, I went. Back to ? back home.

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It's interesting that you landed back in the very place where you'd started your flying career.

Yes, yes I did.

How much did you weigh when you got back to Australia?

Oh I don't know exactly, I was about six ? I'm guessing a bit, I'm not very far out, about 6 and a half stone.

Do you recall what you were when you joined up?

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I was about ten or eleven. Yeah.

Nearly half the size of you.

Yes, but anyway I ? a day or two after I arrived home, I went into Victoria Barracks to ? I don't remember what rank he was, Air Commodore? Air Vice-Marshal, perhaps, Bladen,

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Dan [Ken] Bladen was ? he'd been the commanding officer of the cadet wing of Point Cook while I was a cadet and he was a squadron leader then and we had a bit of a chat about this and that and then I found out that I was to be discharged and I said, ?But I don't want to be discharged. I thought I was here for you know,

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forever, if you like.? Anyway, Dan [Ken], said, ?No,? he said, ?When the war started the numbers were not very accurate but we were about six or seven thousand strong, at the end of the war, we were 80,000.? Which horrifying. He said, ?We have a problem getting ? discharging people when they come back to Australia.

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Those in Australia we discharge too.? So there was nothing much I could do about it really, I was a bit horrified, so I went out and I went up to the Oaklands hunt club not long after the meeting, within a week. I used to be a member of Oaklands hunt club, that's when I was a little boy, my mother being horsey woman

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put me on a pony on the age of four. So then when I was ? before I went to Geelong, to school, I was riding, I my own pony and I rode with the Oakland Towns and the drag sometimes, we actually had a drag and one of the residents of the Oaklands hunt club, he used to go up

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just to have a look, was Captain Len Taylor and Taylor was the flight superintendent of ANA [Australian National Airways]. So he knew me and I'd known him slightly before the war. And anyway, he said, ?What about joining ANA?? He said, ?I need half a dozen officers,? I've forgotten the number now, it was about

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half a dozen captains in the next three months. Well I hadn't flown for three years, three and a half years. But anyway I said, ?Thanks very much.? And I went and saw him in his office and he signed me on I then had to renew my commercial license you see. Which was a requirement.

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This would be the third time that you'd learnt to fly.

So I ? some friends of mine that were in the air force still, arranged for me to go down to Sale, or rather, East Sale it was called, to do the necessary three hours, half a dozen landings I think, for renewal of my license. So I went down there and I flew in a

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Lockheed Hudson, three and a half years, and then did the necessary and back to Melbourne again and I was ? the license renewed and I was with ANA. So I stayed with ANA till I ? till they became Ansett ANA, when Ansett bought it, they took three years to buy it, by the way. If you ?

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they had to pay three million for it. And I was with Ansett ANA for a while and then I joined the department of civil aviation. I was senior examiner of them ? that was in the airline field, till 1982. When

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I became unemployable.

Let's talk briefly about your early life. Whereabouts were you living in Melbourne?

Essendon. Yes indeed, yes and that's where we had a ? I lived with me Mum and my father had been killed in America by the way, in an aircraft in 1930 and ?

That would have made you about 12 years

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old.

Oh I would have been yes.

So flying and planes are a huge part of not only your life but your family's life by the sounds of it.

I'm not sure what your question was.

Well your dad was a pilot, you grew up at Essendon, I'm wondering whether the airport had some influence on your choice.

Oh, probably did, I don't know. But

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I'd made up my mind I ? well I wanted to fly and I went to university there, as I told you in 1936 and I learnt to fly there with a chap called Eric Casling and he had the Victorian flying school.

The incident surrounding your father's

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death, you could tell us about that, was that an aeroplane accident or..?

Yes, he flew, if I remember rightly it was a four engine aircraft called Curtis, something, I don't and he flew it down in a fly past over, one of the main, two main aerodromes

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of New York and I can't remember the name at the moment ?

JFK?

And he flew it down there at high speed over the aerodrome and it just fell to bits. And I have no idea, I don't think anyone knows at what speed.

What was his role at the time, why was he flying US planes?

Oh, I don't know why he was flying that particular aircraft

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he was mixed up ? he flew in a ? in the last little bit of the war and that's how he learnt to fly, if I remember rightly and, Hell's Angels, was the picture. He flew, he did the flying in that and that was in the 1930s I think,

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must have been. Oh no, he was killed in 1930 so he must have flown Hells Angel a little bit before that but he was in Hollywood.

So he was a stunt flier for Hollywood films?

Yeah.

Is it unusual for an Australian to be doing that sort of work?

Look I haven't really, I can't answer that I don't think

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I don't know. But he ? he flew in the United States, he went there in 19- oh I'm guessing again, 1918 ? 1919, 1920 mark, he went to the United States and lived there and he did a bit of flying over there and

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then in this picture and as I told you he flew the Curtis thing and I've no idea why it broke up, but it did, maybe he flew it beyond its maximum speed. I don't think they had maximum speeds in those days, we do now. For aircraft.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 03

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I was wondering what sort of an impact it was to lose your father at that age.

Oh, I was a young ? he lived in America and I lived with my mother in Essendon and so I didn't really know much about him. My grandmother came out to see us one day,

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at Essendon, this was 1930, I suppose and told us that Rupert, my father, had died in an air prang, crash in New York City aerodrome there. And that's all we had to know about it, all I had to know about it really.

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How did your mother manage, as a single mother during the depression?

She had a small income, it was pretty miserable, and as I said, we lived at Essendon and my grandmother ? there was an arrangement between my father and my

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grandmother, Macalister, that she would pay the school bills until I think I was 18. So that's how I finished up at Geelong College.

What was the college like? Were you an astute young student or a bit of a run around?

Oh, I don't know about, ?astute.? Well, I think they gave a deep sigh of relief when I left finally

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but ?

You weren't a trouble maker were you?

Like the rest of us, we were all pretty naughty, and a fair bit of undetected crime. But no, I got on very well, the masters were really very good there. And as I said, we got on well with the masters and that was all that mattered I suppose.

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I haven't got anything much to say, but I liked Geelong College very much and I go down there now and then, to the

races, although I missed the boat races. I was in, I'd stayed there another year, I'd have been in the firsts and they had their first win -

Is that the skulls you mean?

No, eight. First eight, oarsmen.

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But I left as I think I told you in 1935, but if I'd gone back in 1936, I'd have been in the first eight. I was in the second eight.

Well you kind of compensated for it in other adventures in your life. I think. I wanted to ask briefly, in those years, did you have any knowledge or awareness of the build-up of Hitler's regime in Europe?

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Oh, no more than you had in the press, media. I don't remember there was anything much, you know, to report about that. We were as influenced by the press as anyone else would be I suppose in those days. But not as far as the air force was concerned. They weren't

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getting worked up about it.

Well tell me a little bit about Essendon, it's a bit of a forgotten memory these days, but it was quite an active aerodrome.

Which one?

Essendon.

Yes. Well I told you I used to hunt with Oaklands and we had ? mother and I had a ? I had a pony she had a

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horse and it went to ?we used to ride up past Essendon Aerodrome to Oaklands Junction which is up there where ? near Tullamarine is today. Anyway we ? I don't know there's anything much to report about that.

Well I wondered how or why aeroplanes took your fancy.

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Well in 1936 I tried to get a job at The Age office and I failed there. I'd been at The Age, I should say, David Syme who was ? had The Age once upon a time is my great grandfather. See and my grandmother was Lucy Isabel

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Syme.

Is this your mother's side?

No father's side. And she was a Syme until she became a Macalister by marriage and anyway I said I ? they had a ? I got the message from my uncle at The Age office, Uncle Geoffrey,

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that - they had enough members of the family around the place anyway and didn't want any more.

Were you hoping to be a journalist or something else there?

Probably a photographer at the start, you know, at one stage, I don't know, but it sounded attractive and I can't tell you any ? give you any good reason for that. But that's ? but I didn't get it anyway.

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So next thing was I went out to Essendon aerodrome ? oh I know, Holyman Airways advertised for ? I suppose you'd

call it, apprentice engineers or the equivalent anyway. And that attracted me. So I wrote to the chief engineer

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who was John Stubbs, and he was in Launceston, he was coming over the Melbourne to have a chat about this and that and anyway he met me at Menzies Hotel and we had a chat and I joined him. His men.

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I don't remember exactly but I got about 15 bob a week. So it was a bit of a struggle.

In those months between leaving school and trying to get a job, that could have been a fairly despondent time, given the Depression.

Yes, as I recall it, getting a job wasn't easy in any form. So

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I suppose getting a job with an airways was really rather wonderful. I don't know, but I was lucky enough to get one I thought. I got to know quite a few people, engineers there. Who were well and truly qualified. And ?

What was the state of civil aviation at the time?

Oh, they

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only had ? well Qantas was the international one, wasn't it? It was going but it was based in Sydney. We had Holyman Airways and they had some De Havilland aircraft, four engine aircraft and they lost one off

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Wilson ? not Wilson Promontory, but nearby. Near Wonthaggi, south of Wonthaggi in the bay. And as I recall, he lost an engine, failed coming back from Launceston and when he applied rudder to stop the thing from swinging, because the engine had failed, the rudder

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broke off. The aircraft then plunged into Bass Strait. And anyway from there on, I don't know what happened, they eventually found the trouble was the rudder breaking off there because another one gave trouble and coming out

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from England I think. And it broke a rudder, in flight. Somehow or other I think they got it down or ? and either in the sea somewhere, roughly near Italy. But way up there somewhere.

So was working as an engineer or an apprentice there, any sort of guarantee that you'd become a pilot at some stage?

No. No, I ?

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Mother had to ? she leant ? or she paid for me to learn to fly and then she provided the necessary for me to get enough flying to eventually get the commercial license. I did a bit of what do you call it? Joyriding. I wasn't supposed to but

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we did at Essendon which was about 10 bob a circuit round the nearest lamp post or something like that.

Wasn't cheap really was it?

Not then, no. But it helped, it paid for the aircraft you see, the ? I forgotten what I paid there, it was three pounds an

hour. Probably, it was nothing much and then

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ultimately it went up and up. And when I was learning later on when I was still learning to fly and getting my hours up for my commercial license, I think it was 25 pounds an hour. And I got five pounds an hour deduction if I remember rightly because I worked for

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Holyman Airways and they owned the flying school then.

Well it's very interesting because it's not common for a young fellow to be able to get his commercial license I guess, given the..

Not unless you had a bit of money.

No and without being impertinent, your father was long left the scene, so it was interesting that your mother was able to manage that.

Yes, I think she must have taken out a mortgage on the house

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she owned the house, but housing wasn't so expensive in those days anyway, just quietly and she had a mortgage if I remember rightly was about ? I'm guessing, 600 pounds. And I ? that was used in learning to fly.

Well she didn't waste her money by the looks of things.

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You got a career out of it.

No she got it back in the end.

I was curious that when you applied for a job as a pilot, they had too many, and you mentioned that they had them based in New Guinea.

Oh yes, there were a couple of units up there, I've forgotten what they were, but I thought I might fluke a position up there, but I didn't.

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In 1936, the air force was pretty minimal I guess, in terms of men.

Oh, yes, there wasn't ? no I hadn't done anything about the air force in '36, it was '38 that I joined it.

I was just trying to get a picture from you as to what the prospects were for flying then as a career for example.

Oh, it

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was one of those things, there were really rather few of us, who were interested in aviation, I think it was a no-no with lots of people, lots of people who weren't mixed up in any way whatsoever with aviation. And travelling to Sydney in the old four engined De Havilland, I think one way

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was 50 dollars, 50 pounds rather, 50 pounds. That was a lot of hay in those days. But there weren't very many who were interested in flying, so they managed to scrape along and but there weren't too many of us there ? there were

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a few at the aero club who flew there but they didn't so much as fly to learn to fly as much as for pleasure.

Was there a kind of a personality that was attracted to flying at that point, it was a fairly pioneering time for aircraft in Australia.

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I don't ? some of the chaps who were actually flying and perhaps had even flown in the Great War like Eric Chastely had, and did I tell you by the way that Eric Chastely was a ? used to smoke Egyptian cigarettes you know, those awful smelling things, but he used to smoke in the aeroplane. In the cockpit.

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And clouds of smoke'd be coming back from the front cockpit past me it'd ? and he had a deep growling voice but he was ? well known and well liked, very much liked chappie. So he was really a ? the same hangar

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or was it the next door one, can't remember now, was Skipper Matthews, now he was an English pilot who'd flown the Cutty Sark, remember Cutty Sark, and things like that. And anyway he was a greatly respected chap at the aerodrome anyway,

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aviation circles.

What was it like learning to fly. You did tell me what plane you started learning in. But you would have been sitting in the back learning to fly I take it.

Yes, in a gypsy moth, yes. Don't know that I can say anything intelligent about that.

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It got mixed up with the ? getting hours was the main problem with those days and the ? getting the experience in other words, of just flying. But I went to ? or whilst I was learning to fly, I think I had about

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40 hours up total in those days. Just... in 1936, it would be. I went to ? I went up to Bodalla and took a chap I'd been to school with, as a passenger and we had trouble getting fuel up at Bodalla because the ? the local

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Mobil, what do you call it, garage man anyway had lost the keys of the pump or something like that. And so we were delayed an hour or two at Bodalla and anyway we got the petrol and came back and as we came back the sun was setting and because the sun was setting slowly

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there was lots of light up there, we didn't realise till we got almost to Melbourne, it was fog down there. And if I remember, I don't recall how ? I must have had a bit of fuel left anyway, I couldn't do ? we got to Melbourne, because the lights of the city were there well

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they were down there and we were up there and you could see them but you couldn't see if you got down lowish, you couldn't see ahead very far to find out where you ? to find your way to Essendon. So we got to the city, we flew round there at about 1500, 1000 feet, and it wasn't a difficult matter staying right side up because the lights were down there.

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And anyway I was trying to read the number or name whichever on trams. That were going to various suburbs and I'd think, I've forgotten what that number was to Essendon, but it was five I think. Anyway, whatever the tram number was, we were trying to read the name and when we got out ? the lights underneath disappeared and suddenly

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realised then we were over the bay. So I did a slow turn then back to the lights and tried to read the names on ? got to a what have you, a town hall which was well and truly lit up, we thought it was the Melbourne Hotel, Melbourne Town Hall and anyway then

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realised it was the Hawthorn one and so we then took a guess and flew back to Malvern, Malvern Town Hall, there was an oval beside that and I knew that was right, so I was making a pass at the oval and the other ? the far side was coming up like this and I thought, I'll have to have another try so I opened up the power and

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flew out past the thing and I knocked a couple of slates off St George's church there. The vicar hasn't forgiven me yet. But it didn't do much damage because it was a bluestone church beside the town hall. Anyway knocking the thing was enough to wreck the aeroplane so we went into that lane between the

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town hall and the church and there's a police station there. And anyway Neil Sloane got out of the aircraft and went down there and he was staggering a bit, and he ? he said, ?There.? Which was me. To a couple of policemen who came running out in the lane. And they pushed him aside and came over and pulled me out. And I was soaked in petrol at this stage.

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But I haven't done it since. I'll show you a picture of that.

Back in '38 when you joined the air force, did you have any idea then of the situation that was coming towards Australia in the form of a war?

Not really, I suppose we were in the air force, you know in a military atmosphere and we

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took it for granted. But we were ? it was then in those days, I suppose, employment was difficult, it was a job. So we didn't know anything of the point about it, we did it whatever ? we liked being in the air force, I liked it I enjoyed it very much. And so that was ? but I don't think there was any whatever you call it.

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Did it assist you that you already knew how to fly?

No, I had to keep quiet about it.

Why?

Well, I went there to learn to fly, not to be ? not to teach them.

Wouldn't it have been an advantage to the air force?

I don't think I'd have been too popular if I'd skited about that actually I had a commercial license at that time. And I kept it going too, just by doing a medical

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you do a medical once a year, I think for a commercial, twice a year for an airline pilot licence, every six months you do one. And so I'd kept it going by that means ? oh you have to do a minimum of three hours, four landings or something like that in that period of time, you can do as many more

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there was a maximum. You're not allowed to do more than 100 hours a year.

Wasn't it obvious to them that you could fly, when they were teaching you?

Look I can't ? I don't know. But you know, I deliberately made a few mistakes I suppose and looked a bit silly. But I ? they realised eventually that you know,

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I had learnt to fly, and I had a commercial licence or something or other. But it didn't do me any good as far as the air force was concerned ?

What about the other chaps that you were

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training with, they must have cottoned onto the fact that you had well up your sleeve.

Oh probably, some of them knew I'm sure, but when you go to ? in those days, Point Cook, you've got a pretty rough time for the senior course, they were six months apart and you're taken for a run round the oval or down to the ? through the

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parade ground, our cadets parade ground there's a track running round the aerodrome to the hangars on the coast. Just beside the beach. Well, I remember one occasion there in the first fortnight I suppose, being ? trotting round there at the double by a senior cadet, without any clothes on

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they did, but we didn't, at night. It was cold too.

Was that a sort of a hazing [bastardisation] arrangement to undermine you and..?

Oh, what did they call it? You got a rough time, you've heard of the same sort of thing happening in schools, haven't you ?

Bastardry or whatever, I think that's what they call it.

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Yes, and you get a bad time for the first week or two or three and then it drops off, but you have to do certain things such as clean the shoes, boots whatever's appropriate of a particular senior cadet. And then the next year, when we'd done our first

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six months and up to that stage there we got a new set of cadets they came down on this hard work business and handing the junior cadets two jobs, they weren't allowed to and they supervised it so closely we didn't get the chance to get our own back.

How long was your cadet training?

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A year, 12 months.

Well you must have got a hell of a shock when a war was declared and you were in military service.

No, it was immediately after I think, we'd graduated wasn't it? We graduated the middle of 1939 and the war broke out if I remember in December, '39. Didn't it?

September as a matter of fact. So you were just fresh and out of..?

Oh well I was, that was toward

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the end of the what have you and naval reconnaissance course.

And I'm interested that you weren't sent over to England given that they put the call out very quickly.

Oh I tried to go to England, I hoped to go, but when war broke out they cancelled all that and kept everyone, or nearly everyone, except special cases in this country so there were quite a lot

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of chaps who went to UK. We have a lunch every month at the Sandringham Hotel, and the chaps that go there, the Early Birds and an Early Bird is one who flew, he didn't,

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he could be learning but he was in aviation prior to the outbreak of war. What do you call him? An engineer or a ? even a refueller could be ? but within aviation, could be an Early Bird, doesn't have to be a pilot in other words.

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What was the purpose of sending you to Pearce?

Oh they sent the 25 Squadron, and that had two fighter type ? Hawker Demons they were, do you remember Hawker Demons, were twin engine ? they had two flights the

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A and B flights and they had 12 I think it was aircraft in each. And sea flight was the ? was an Anson flight with 12 what have you, Avro Ansons and anyway we did coastal reconnaissance over there, that was the answer to that one.

And what were your instructions

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with regard to that, given that at the time there was no Japanese threat?

There were troops going to the Middle East, do you remember? And my ? there was a- don't know whether it was the 1st Division or the 2nd, 3rd Division, they went

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to the Middle East mainly and what not and they went by sea. And the ships were the ? [SS] Mariposa, [HMS] Queen Mary, I'm not sure about the [HMS] Queen Elizabeth what she ? may have come later I think. And one or two other fleets, I've got some photos, I'll show you those.

So you were out basically in support of a convoy of the Queen Mary and the [SS] Mauritania and? ?

Yes, what we did was,

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they were, the convoy was how we say to leave - Melbourne, Port Phillip Bay for example we would leave Laverton and fly out something like sticks or rate aircraft which would fly out on a particular heading, from a particular point on the coast, 60 miles

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step aside 30 and parallel track back. And I think I told you I took off, I used to take off and the second pilot would fly over and ? change over I should say, and he'd fly it out to sea and I'd get down on the nose there on the top and take drift readings and do the navigation.

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Anyway before the convoy left Port Phillip Bay, we'd go, it was headed round the coast there, west, they'd go round to Perth, but it had to sail, these half a dozen or so ships, big ships there, and then sail through this area, we had, went and had a look at first.

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And at that point I was in 6 Squadron in Sydney there was a scare at ? one night after midnight, but there was a ship or something or other out to sea and we were roused down to the hangars and I got off at about five o'clock I think

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it was so it was still well before dawn at Richmond. We went out to sea on this thing and blow me down there, what did I see? There, the what looked like the bottom of an upturned ship. So I sneaked round because he was ? you get up sun, they can't see you too well, because you're looking towards the sun, well it

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was just rising. So I got up there and I ? and of course, there's radio silence but I managed to get a couple of messages out, which were very short and sharp, that I'd sighted something or other and I flew round there for about, I think it was about an hour and then it disappeared. It was a submarine. And I didn't have any bombs and of course when we'd been

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out to sea we going on a coastal reconnaissance we'd come back ? we'd take our bombs off the aircraft until next time, when they were put back on again. But because they were pretty heavy, I suppose that was the main reason for it, they were ? they weren't less than 1200 pounds and I think we had a few in the later years of 1940 ?

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yeah, '42, of 1000 pounders. But we couldn't carry anything much bigger than that because the aircraft wasn't capable. **Well it's fascinating because you're basically pioneering coastal reconnaissance and coast guarding and it's never happened before in Australia from the air force point of view. When you're on radio silence like that and you're in a ?**

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and you do quick messages, what do you do and how do you do those?

Well we had code books and there were numbers, like 6-9-2 and which meant of course from the code book, it meant something or other like, ship in sight. Might be 6-9-2 and the,

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another number would be something or other, latitude 31, 22. And would be perhaps another number. And you'd pick

up whether it was ? think from the code book what was what and the wireless operator would quickly and then shut up. He wouldn't keep going, he'd ? if he had his, whenever

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he had his key down, he used directional finding and find him, you see. He couldn't be found that way. But you've got to make a signal so we on these flights, used to go to, out to sea, as I said in the Anson at 60 miles nautical. And when we'd got to the point there, we'd send

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a number, cue code something or other, which was very brief and which meant that particular aircraft had reached that particular point.

When you saw this sub, this is virtually a first at the time for yourself and for a lot of other pilots. Did you have a chance to talk about it amongst the crew?

Oh amongst the crew we did,

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yes, they knew quite well what it was but you could only send the message, a very brief message to the effect that you were what's the word? Anyway, watching a submarine, anyway

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as I said, the cue code was there so they knew at the other end, what we were up to and where we were.

It must have been an interesting chat in the mess hall afterwards when you got back.

Well there weren't too ? the CO was not too popular ? he was a really nice chap too, Dennis Scott. And Scottie, was being the CO he was most unpopular because we didn't have any

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bombs. And he was defrocked, or he wasn't ? he didn't lose any rank but he was posted to Ambon, and at Ambon, he was one of I've forgotten how many, round about six roughly, six chaps, their head chopped off by the Japanese when they arrived there, they were at the aerodrome and he was

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running the operation for him and they got this chappie, who oh, what did he do? Oh they chopped his head, off, was another one too, a chap who I knew very well from the same squadron, the 6 Squadron at Richmond, was Jack Anderson and he was there in the ops room [operations room],

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he wasn't flying but he was one of those who went ? was posted up there he had his head chopped off by the Japanese. So don't know whether there's anything more I can tell you about that one.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 04

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The damage in training to aircraft must have been phenomenal.

No, not ? I think when I was at Point Cook, I doubt if there was any damage there. But that doesn't say there wasn't at other times for a moment. Four of us got to this place ? this aerodrome where that happened. There was ? no the other three of us came onto

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Adelaide and got ? where we had to refuel, one of them was ? got there, we refuelled, and carried on to Point Cook. When we got to Point Cook, it was ? they weren't expecting us at Point Cook, I don't know why not, usually you tell them a day or two before that you're coming and when. Anyway we got to Point Cook and one chap who was

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senior to us was flying a thing, a thing, a Maxi, he flew ? approached to land and they were building a drain and they had some big planks sticking up in the air and he flew straight into these things. The aeroplane was a wreck, it was on the aerodrome about the only thing about it, so by the time they got round, John Hanbury came in and landed and

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he ran out of fuel as he landed and the ? both engines stopped, I had to fly round and round and around until they towed him off and I came in and landed and went to bed, nothing to it. So that was a bad time.

With the sea reconnaissance, first of all

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I wonder if you could explain about flying out and then stepping 30 miles to the left, or the expression you used.

Oh, yes, I haven't got a map I don't think, but anyway we had charts that are used for shipping, by shipping, they're about that big, that big, and I think they run about 60 miles

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top to bottom, a bit more sideways, and anyway, if you go from one to the other, to the other to the other, and with these charts, by drawing a straight line on them and measuring the angle of distance and so forth, so when we got to these things, we clear an area before the convoy gets there, might be half a day, for example,

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before it gets there and we fly out this, at a particular direction and there's a ? supposing there are six or eight aircraft well there was six or eight lines out there, all parallel, all the same direction and then you step aside 30 miles, you come back. So the arrow, the distance between the one out there, the one out there, is so arranged that it's that 30 miles

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- 60 miles ? twice 30, before the next track out. So they're run in parallel and you clear an area, fly over an area, you can miss a submarine if he's down, he's submerged, it's fair enough, but there weren't many subs out here. But in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean there certainly were a quite a few of them there.

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I don't know there's anything more I can say about that. It was pretty obvious. Oh yes, ?step aside,? ? so it's arranged to the directions you fly, both to and from and what not that your ? well 30 miles is such that you can see 15 and you can turn around, step aside 30 and back, you can see the other 15

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back that way.

So you're sweeping the whole area. How would they operate that in terms of duty, was it a 24 hour process, conducted with men on and off duty?

Sorry, I'm not with you there.

Did the air force have a system by which they would maintain that coastguard, that sea reconnaissance?

No, the ? when the ships were going out, it would be

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arranged by the navy, I suppose, with the air force, that they required an area to be cleaned up, or checked on a particular date. So they controlled when we went, that's the point.

Would you signal them from the air, or would you wait to come back and make a report?

What ?

If you were up and there was ?

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everything was all clear for the convoy, would you signal them from the plane, or would you wait till you'd landed and do it then?

No, when we got back to the coast ? no when we got the end of a 60 miles or 100s in the case of the Hudsons, point there would send a cue code message that we'd got to that point and all was clear. And then

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when you turned round and came back, when you got to the coast, you'd send another similar message that you'd finished that landing and you didn't have anything to report. But if you did have something to report you ? you probably would have reported it by now. But ? because you broke radio silence if you had something worthwhile to report.

Apart from that Jap sub, did you ever have anything to report?

Oh,

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don't think so. Can't ? nothing of consequence anyway. See there wasn't much in the way of enemy shipping in this country ? in our waters, Australia. But so no, I don't ? I can't remember anything of consequence.

What were your thoughts when Japan entered the war?

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Where was I?

Looking at your dates, you must have been in Richmond.

They came in, in 1942, wasn't it?

Well they bombed Pearl Harbour at the end of '41.

December the 8th, wasn't it, yeah. Yes, I don't think we knew very much about the Japanese so we didn't ? we weren't

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very well briefed. We ? you know the rotten little cowards they were, we didn't think much of them, we didn't have a high opinion of them and I haven't now, as you could guess after being court martialled by them and put in jail and all the rest of it. You know, we had a pretty rough time from them.

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There wasn't - it wasn't much fun.

Did it occur to you, as an airman, that they would become such a major part of your life, when you heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbour and the entry into Malaya?

I doubt it, I don't recall really that we were very much fazed about it or whether we didn't enjoy the things later on when we were

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coming down to the Coral Sea but I was in the bag by that time of course. When the Battle of the Coral Sea and I was other cases. So I didn't really know much about them except that they were an enemy to be respected as we found out later.

I wanted to ask how you came about

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with this position at Victoria Barracks as a navigation officer?

We had ? the air force had a thing, called a central war room. And central war room for the whole of Australia if I remember rightly, is manned by people from the navy, army and air force. And I was sent down to

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Victoria Barracks there to Southern, we called ourselves, Southern area headquarters and that looked after all the aircraft ? or RAAF movements and things in Victoria. And there's a central area, I think it was, or is it New South Wales, but similarly so at

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central war room at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, I was sent to Southern area headquarters where we had an operations room which was adjacent to central war room. So if central war room decided that an operation was to take place, they'd pass a piece of paper through a thing on the wall and we'd get it in the other room, in the ops room and we'd hear that an operation

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was required for a convoy that was leaving Port Phillip Bay, shall we say, at 10 hundred hours, ten o'clock in the morning of the you know, the day after tomorrow. So we'd advise the stations we would then advise the station at 2 Squadron at Laverton, or

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whatever other squadron were involved, under our control there that they were required to search an area or I think we'd define the area, we would eventually before the boats went out, to the say to Mount Gambier, to the west 120 miles, that's

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along the coast and they'd have to clear an area out there. So then we'd define the area to be cleared. And that would go by signal to the station at Laverton or wherever it might be and ?

How were the signals operated was it..? Did you use telephones to send those messages or did you have another means?

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Oh radio, as a rule. So we had radio operators at Victoria Barracks and again at Laverton, of course there was a sizeable radio stations down there at Laverton. and they got some pretty good equipment. And although, I think that probably makes it clear that we've got, you

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know, we can message, send a message.

Were you ever allowed access into the central war room?

No. I was ? I've been in there, but I couldn't walk in and out at will. I had to get permission to go there and if it was convenient I'd be escorted in.

Could you give me a

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visual picture of what it looked like? A word picture.

Well, there was a ? not a green base there, but it was probably ? trying to remember what it was. I think there was probably about

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half a dozen tables in there which were had some chappies seated at it and he had a particular job and he was either navy, army or air force as the case may be and he might be a sergeant, corporal, I don't think they had any privates that were allowed in there, they had to be ? I know sergeant

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or above. But whoever was (UNCLEAR) or used as a courier, in central war room, was of a particular branch of the navy, army, air force and he could come and go but he was sworn to secrecy as to ? he was not to talk about it outside.

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That's about all they could do I suppose.

What were the security arrangements then, you said you were escorted in and out?

I think there was just a yellow lock on the door, you couldn't ? get in without it. And it was unlocked from the inside and after they determined who wanted to come in, was coming in, if I remember rightly there was some chappie, who

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a gatekeeper, in essence, he's a door keeper and he'd look after us and he'd have a look at you through a peephole or something and if you were okay, he'd let you in.

What about maps or three dimensional relief maps?

Oh with these ? yes, with these tables I mentioned that were there, the maps were probably on it

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as required and they had a ? if I remember rightly there was a counter which you'd put the maps on top of and you could stick them in underneath and that ? if you wanted a map of a particular area, you'd go up to this counter on one side and the clerk at the other side would move each down and he'd

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get you the map required and put it on the table and you'd return it as a rule, after you'd used it. If it was used for plotting, we used most of our plotting was done within the ? our operations room next door, you see. On big tables. And I don't think I've got any photographs

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at all of the ops room or ?

Were there any female soldiers involved in the central war room?

Might have been the end of the war but they weren't at my time. No.

I wonder if the tea lady was allowed in.

How did they get that? I think what they did was they used to have a trolley

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and with all the cups of tea and a scone, nothing else I don't think, not poured and teapots and things, and you'd push that round there and then they'd be allowed in but they were kept to one side away from the charts, but they couldn't ? it' be unlikely to understand anything. But

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oh yes.

What about the Southern area headquarters, next door? What did that look like from the inside?

It ? do you know Victoria Barracks at all, are you ? it's got a bluestone wall down St Kilda Road and down that side street was ? I should know,

Grant Street?

Might be too, but anyway there's a red brick building there,

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that was the Southern area headquarters. And it was about four or five floors, I might be quite wrong, but I think it was about that. And we ? well that was about all there was to it I suppose and they had chaps there, from engineers to aerodrome specialists.

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Could you explain to me how you planned the ops in the Southern area headquarters?

Well, we were ? I mentioned, we were told by central war room, what was required, that a convoy was expected to leave Port Phillip Bay, the day after tomorrow at 10 hundred hours and consisted of

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six ships, you know, there was the Queen Mary, the Queen Elizabeth, and the whatever, [HMS] Ramilles, whatever else. And bingo they'd ? we'd take out all the appropriate charts from Port Phillip Bay outlet down the coast here for say, I'm guessing a bit, Mount Gambier. And we'd

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say, ?That's the area to be thinged.? So we'd plot, plot and mark it and divide you know, with the aid of a ruler and so forth, rule the lines on it and we'd take the lat and long from that point out to see and that point out to see and we'd then advise Laverton ops from ? that they were required send

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X aircraft like, seven aircraft or eight aircraft out to cover this area. And we'd define the area by giving the lat and long, lat and long, lat and long. I can't remember anything much else about it, it's a good long time ago now.

What sort of security measures were incorporated with regard to giving the

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position at all? Did you have to do or say anything or pass any sort of test to become somebody in this position or was it more rudimentary than I'm imagining?

I ? no, when you join the air force, I suppose it's the same in the army there, you take an oath of allegiance to honour and obey. And

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what not so that in essence covers you as far as the ops room work was concerned. You don't discuss it though, I mean you don't discuss it at all. You might say, 'There's an operation tomorrow,' yes, but you won't pass any detail of where and when.

What was the atmosphere like in Victoria Barracks then?

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I don't know what to say. It was 'we all had jobs to do in Victoria Barracks, I mean there were the engineers there were the 'oh of course there was the army, navy and air force were all there but you weren't in the same room except the ops room or central war room, ops room, no. And anyway we

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we got 'where did we get there. Yes, as I said we had 'and there was a mess in the Victoria Barracks there was a 'where you'd go and have breakfast, lunch and dinner at night I think if you're on duty, you know, if you were there.

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I imagine it would be a place that was 24 hours and didn't shut down for the night.

Well I have no doubt there were some places that were 24 hours, you know, every day of the year and engineering, for example, was unlikely to go for more than the usual office hours.

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Whatever they did there, they controlled by passing away the musts and must nots, from the headquarters to the what have you, to the stations concerned. And I don't think I can be.

Was it a humourless place, or was it rather congenial?

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Oh I suppose it was 'it was a stern discipline, you know, you didn't go running and shouting and singing around the place there, you moved 'and if you moved around, you were required to move at proper pace, not just stroll round the place there as if there's lots of time up your sleeve.

At the double?

No, but you moved

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brisk 'proper walk, but you didn't stroll.

And I would imagine that Vic Barracks would have been a target for the enemy and that as a consequence there must have been that sense about the place.

No I don't think we had any armaments at the barracks there that were look after the barracks as a whole. But

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there was a guard on the front gate and the back gate and so forth. I think I used to, if I drove a car in there, I would go in and have to have a pass to get in the back and the gate was at the back of the place the thing. But there were relatively few, I mean majority

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of people arrived there by public transport.

Did you see, from time to time, any of the senior ranking officers or any of the general leading politicians of the day?

Yes, you'd see, from time to time, a senior officer, I can't remember what our 'I think we had

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a senior air force officer at Southern area headquarters, I don't think we did. I mean, we did have one. And his job was I suppose to supervise generally that all was ticking smoothly.

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Oh, look, I've forgotten now, just what we had down there. I haven't got any literature either of what the strength was. **Singapore had fallen in the early months of '42, and looking at your dates, you were probably still at Victoria Barracks, but I wondered if you could explain a little more about how it was that you went to Darwin. Was it part of the**

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ferrying work that you were doing?

I went to Darwin as a member of 2 Squadron you know. Or I also delivered the odd aircraft to Darwin, 13 Squadron or what was the other, 8, I think. 13 was one and that was pretty good.

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But I was in 2 Squadron there, there was another chappie and I, Daly Waters and we were camped there, it was pretty crude you know. The camping was, and we decided we'd go down to oh, I've forgotten the name of the place, Marrakin or something which was about 15, 20 miles down

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south along the railway there and when we got there, who should we find, we dragged a tent down there, in between us, and what's--his-name, who should we find there but Clive Fenton, who's the ? Clive Fenton, who was the flying doctor and he ? he was there, he had landed on the road beside the property, taxied his aircraft up there and

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he was in there having dinner at the pub ? or his plan was to have dinner at the pub. And anyway I had a yarn or a couple of beers with Clive Fenton and there was an old drover down there, and he - when he learnt we were going to have dinner down there, or have to have something rather than before we were turned back to Daly Waters,

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he went out to a tree there in the hollow branch he pulled out the little thing there, some white objects then he dotted them on the side of the tree, little white things fell off, they was the best chops I'd ever had in my life.

Where did they accommodate you while you were in Darwin?

There was an officer's mess up at Darwin where we stayed and

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I don't know, I can't say anything sensible about that either except that we had a ? if I ? with the crew, it was only probably one, and a wireless operator if I was delivering an aircraft, or if I was overnighting at Darwin in the mess there, there was the officer's mess and there was the sergeant's mess and there was the airman's mess and the

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chaps according to their rank would go to the appropriate places for the night.

The bombing of Darwin had that occurred before you arrived there?

Did it what?

The bombing, did it happen before you were there?

Oh I think I delivered an aircraft to Darwin and came out with Getty airways from the old aerodrome at Darwin

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at about ? I'm guessing, seven o'clock in the morning, it was pretty early and when we got to Daly Waters, or it may have been ? somewhere down the line there a bit, they bombed Darwin. So we just got out in time. I was a bit lucky wasn't I. Went back there again some little time later and there was an awful mess, awful mess the place was.

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Can you describe what you saw when you went back?

There was a lot of damage to buildings and if I remember too, there was a hangar which had been bombed and it was sort of leaning over or partly damaged and the aircraft which were inside it, under the damaged bit were damaged and the other bits were okay, but they

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I'm not really competent to give you a good description of that except that it was damaged and you've seen all sorts of photos of places in UK that were bombed during the war and it was like that.

You must have known some of the airmen who had

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either hit or killed by that strike?

Yes, I did, I knew a lot of chaps up there and if I ? you know I'd been in the air force then I suppose in a useful sort of a way for a couple of years hadn't I. From latish '39, I'd been out in squadrons until

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this ? you know, Darwin was bombed, whatever the date was, I've probably got it somewhere.

Things are pretty serious by this stage, in terms of what you're doing as well.

Yes, it was back here I didn't stay at Darwin and suffer being bombed, for any period of time I suppose I

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was only there, I was lucky in that regard I wasn't you know, skulking under a recollection of hiding in a slip trench. Well I had to because you didn't know if a bomb went off there, the shrapnel was flying round the place if you're standing up, might cop it.

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Did you get a chance to meet any of the local civilians in the area?

I don't recall, I might have, probably did but people were ? civilians living in Darwin in those days and before the war were relatively few, you know, there weren't too many but in the more recent, I believe nowadays that

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Darwin's a place where you know, there are lots of locals, lots of civilians and not just army and air force people there.

Could you talk a bit more about this mission where you went and refuelled, it's quite

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a cinematic image to think about?

Wish I had a map.

Well what order of monks were they? What denomination?

New Norcia. And

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I went swimming with them there, it was the day after ? did I tell you this before, I might have? The day I was shot down in Timor, I went down to this aerodrome to refuel and we had lunch there, we had roast goat, was beautiful too and I went for a swim with Father Thomas in the lagoon.

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And when I was ? pretty good swimming, anyway we got to what have you into the lagoon, over the far side there and I heard a yapping sound, like an Alsatian barking or something like that, I said to him, ?Father Thomas, what's that? What's that?? He said, ?It's a crocodile.? Well as I said,

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I can swim pretty well. I took off to the other side there, I don't think I touched the water till I got to the other side where we'd come from. When we first got in. Anyway it was not a salt water croc, it was a freshwater one but they - I asked him about that, ?Do they bite?? He said, ?Oh, not as a rule,? he said, ?If they do it's not worse than an Alsatian dog.? I thought I could do without that.

That Alsatian dog isn't likely to roll you around under water and shove you in the

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crevice of a rock though. You said there was Father Thomas and Brother Joseph, were there any other bods living there?

There was another one, there might have been two, but I can't remember their names. Haven't got the foggiest.

Any nuns?

Three, approximately three old nuns, and they had those black habits and the hot sun and they cooked bread

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in an outside, open rock oven and their job was to ? they had a few, I'm not too sure how many about half a dozen probably ? things like bathing boxes, there job was to marry off the Aborigines if they could and

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anyway the Abos were brought in and they were christened and they were married and they had the use of the bathing box affair there which was used for not as bathing, but for living in. Anyway after two or three days of that, they'd get sick of it there, they'd wander off down the track

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there and they'd park their clothing on the bushes and walk off into the ? to the far distance. Never to be heard of again. Abos.[Aborigines]. But they were easy to get along with and that, Aborigines in those circumstances, they weren't difficult, they weren't warlike or anything. But that was the trouble I suppose, they - nothing.

Did you have any need for

04:39:00:00

fraternising, interacting with them at all?

No I don't think so. No. Because the mission station was there for a purpose and that was for the natives, Aborigines, not for us. And yes they ? as I told you, they refuelled our aircraft for us,

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and that was pretty crude.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 05

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Just a few more questions about this mission. What was their monastery like?

Oh, I can't recall a church there to tell you the truth. I don't think ? I think there were only living quarters for the priests and the nuns and the

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they had their ? I don't think it was a monastery or church, we mean, don't we by that. But down at New Norcia, down near Pearce, it's, I think approximately 40 miles north of Perth they've got a pretty big, large number of buildings

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there but I don't really know anything about it, I've seen it but that's about all.

Did they exchange with you, their thoughts about the war, or the presence of the Japanese north of the shores?

I can't recall ever talking to them about that. No I don't think so. Can't recall it.

Well it's an interesting arrangement

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that they would go down and pull the barrels of fuel off the beach and so on, it makes me curious as to who approached them to see if they would do that. It sounds like a lot of work.

I imagine the air force stores people or engineering people, one or the other, must have arranged this, but I don't know, I had nothing to do with that part of it. And

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they must have been paid something for it, because they wouldn't have been paid much I suppose.

Let's talk about this day, after the crocodiles, when you saw those Zeros take off from Timor. Why were you in that part of the world?

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Why was I in Timor? Flying over it? We were doing a reconnaissance flight to see if there was, what was happening at Penfui, which was the aerodrome at Koepang and any shipping that might be round there might be sighted too. And so we went over ? I went over there, only one aircraft at a time and

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as I said, Ozzie Diamond went over at 17 or 18,000 and the Betsies couldn't catch him. And I went over the following day and I was caught by the Zeros.

Were you familiar at the time with what had happened in both Ambon and Timor?

Had it happened then? I think I knew, I knew Scottie had been bumped off, I knew Jack Anderson had been bumped off

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and there were one or two more. Pal of mine who was on course with me at Point Cook, John Hanbury, he was at Buru, which was to the west, the island to the west of Ambon and there's a remote landing ground there at Buru, maybe that's why they were there if I remember rightly. And there were about - something like

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half a dozen of them. And when the place was ? Ambon was taken and Japanese run the Japanese were coming to have a look at Buru too, and Hanbury and whatnot, so they ? another one of course, Titch MacFarlane, he was another pilot we knew very well, Titch and he

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was a squadron leader at that time if I remember rightly and Hanbury was a flying officer or flight lieutenant one or the other and they decided that they best get out of it. So they took off as a group of something like half a dozen, up over the mountains, which were 10,000 feet high and the centre of Buru and down the other side to a rendezvous point. And

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anyway they got a ? they managed to make it, they got over there and a Catalina came in and at the appointed time and date and picked them up and brought them back to Darwin. And they came down to Sydney and I was at Richmond, so we loaned a Hudson and went down to Mascot aerodrome at Sydney and picked up Hanbury and I suppose it was Titch, Titch MacFarlane I think

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there were two of them. Brought them out to Richmond for lunch and then took them back again. So they had a ? you know, a somewhat exciting time anyway.

What did you know about the Japanese planes?

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Nothing very much really, except you know, the Zero we all knew about and that was a fighter aircraft and apparently it was a ? pretty good aeroplane, pretty good fighter, I don't know that it's match up too well today but it was very good in its day. But I really you know, I've seen them

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not very ? haven't walked round one for example, I've seen them but that's about all. And there've been too close to me in the Hudson days.

When you took off that day over Timor was there anything said between you and the crew that indicated this could be a bad day for you?

Not till we got there.

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And we weren't expecting anything like a Zero at all. Because the day before it had been a Betsy day and they were ? but in the meantime, Zeros had arrived in ? and I don't know exactly when they came, but they weren't there when Ozzie Diamond flew over and?

Yes it's fairly swift, because if there was reconnaissance flights, both Timor and Ambon were

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by that stage busy with Japanese craft and so on.

Oh they'd only been there ? I doubt if they'd been there more than a week.

Well that's what I mean, you were very unlucky, it was a critical time. So when you saw these Zeros take off, is that about the first time you'd had a really good look at them?

Oh that's the first time I saw them yes.

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I think I've only seen photographs of them since that particular day. When they chased me.

Do you have the presence of mind to make a plan when you see these craft taking off underneath you?

Oh, no, well what I would have done, had I had the opportunity, was to have flown to the north

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or flown toward the island and gone into a cloud. Or ? but it was a beautiful day, I doubt there was a cloud in the sky. Which you know, as a rule, you're faced with quite a lot of cloud up there, and one of the problems

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is to dodge them you know, not fly through them. Because they're rough, terribly rough.

So they must have seen you before you saw them, guess, if they were ready to take off after you?

Oh probably. Of course they may have had a coast watcher or two, or the equivalent, down on the Australia side of the island you see. So they'd

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get warning there was an aircraft coming. And I suspect that that was the start of it, but they were ready for me when I started to fly over, they had the aerial show, guns, busy and firing all over the ? shots all over the ocean and the sky, you know, round about. As I was

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going over and when the Zeros took off and came they stopped the bombardment, you see, because they might get one of their own aeroplanes. And so that was alright but I had no means of getting away, because even level flight they'd be faster than me.

Did any of your crew try and give you any encouragement or let you know

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that they trusted you?

I don't know. I think they did, I don't think for a moment we were at loggerheads. The rear gunner chappie was in the turret, I think he was bowled out, because there was blood all over the place and all over the floor and outside the ? in the cabin area and

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I'm certain he was ? they tried to get him out, one of them went there to where he is, but couldn't make it. Anyway the other two ?

So you'd been flying and you knew that they were after you, and they'd already started machine gunning you by this stage? You say that the rear gunner was bowled out?

Oh yes, I think the

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Zeros got cover, two possibly three Zeros got pretty close to us I imagine and I knew they were there, but I couldn't watch them, I had to watch where I was going and they must have had a shot at the aircraft and got the rear gunner anyway and then eventually they got the starboard engine

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and it blew a line, a fuel line I suppose and it caught fire and you know, I couldn't do much about it then, if I tried to fly at one, which I probably could have done, but the whole point was, you'd be slow and you'd be a pretty good target so ?

When you realised that you were going to have to bail out, do you have

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training or the skill to know the best way to fly the plane for that?

Oh, as far as ? you keep your speed down, if you get your speed down it's one of the important things, if you can. And get the thing well, slow, as slow as possible and over the ? in the cockpit area

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there's a, what do you call it? A skylight in essence, which you can dump. You can turn the handle and give it a push and it flies off. And then you climb out through that ? that's one way or you can get out a side window if you can get out. But you wouldn't get out into the burning

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the engine on fire side, you'd get out on that side, you see. And yes, I don't know there's anything more I can say about that really.

How do you keep the presence of mind in those circumstances, to not panic?

No, well you're not allowed to panic. No you daren't. I suppose that must have happened in a number of occasions

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and particularly over Europe where chaps got into a bit of a tizzy, but the whole ? the important thing is to keep your wits about you and fortunately I suppose, I managed to keep my wits about me.

The image of seeing blood spill down,

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how do you keep flying when you know your mate's been knocked off in the back there?

Oh, I don't ? know what to say to that, except perhaps to say that one should say, ?Thank God it's not me.? But just the same, you haven't got much protection, you haven't got any protection really in those ?

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some of the later Hudsons had a steel armour plate behind the seat, and I think they had it down here, behind your legs, but in such a way that if shots came in from underneath you wouldn't get your legs damaged,

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because you'd be in a bit of a pickle if you did, of course you need to use your rudder and sometimes there's a pretty heavy force, particularly with an engine failure.

When the engine catches fire, does the temperature in the cockpit increase?

No. No, no, the fire and the heat from it, streams rearwards from the engine and not

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into the cabin, at any stage.

Is there any point in a situation like that to signal back to base, that you're in trouble?

Oh if you've got the time and ability to do so, you could send out an SOS [distress message] or the equivalent and ? but you've got to have a

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you're wireless operator could take the authority to do it perhaps.

And when you know that it's parachute or nothing, was there any words passed between you and your crew?

Did you get to say goodbye?

They'd already gone you see, left the aircraft. With the exception I suppose of the - should say ? of the rear gunner who was still in his turret but I think

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he'd been shot. The other two, Don Horsborough, I can't remember the other bloke's name at the moment, they'd taken to the silk [parachute] and hopped out, that's what you'd ? was common. Taking to the silk. But that's all I can

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say I suppose.

You're the last one left in the plane, are there any last minute things you have to do before launching out yourself?

No, make sure you've got your ? a) that you undo your seat harness, meaning that you're tied to the seat, ?cause you can't get out of it unless that's undone. And also the parachute is properly buckled and you

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?cause you know, if you jump out and it's not properly buckled, the parachute's up there and you're down here and you can't ? not much you can do about it.

Is it hard to breathe at that altitude?

No we were at only 1000 ? it wouldn't have been 1000 feet but it'd be very low.

And does one say a little prayer, when you're launching into the air?

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I don't know. I don't think I did. I doubt it very much. When I was at school, we used to have three services on Sundays and one at ? one every morning at ? from Monday to Friday at school.

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We had an eleven o'clock service at where was it, St Johns, St George's I think in Geelong, it was about three or four blocks, it was quite a distance and down there, we used to carve our names on the seats and so much so that just about

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I think it was the last year I was there, the school wanted to do something about replacing the front pews where we sat, I suppose there was four or five, six rows there. The parson, God bless him, he said, ?No, you can't throw those out, look at all those names, carved underneath.? It was that and then Ivy Parter'd give us a

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soprano song which was ghastly and she stood up in the choir every morning, Sunday eleven o'clock service and gave us a thing. Then we had to go down there for the seven o'clock one and the middle of after lunch at the school, the head who ? Reverend Frank Roland and he'd give us a bible lesson.

So are you suggesting that by the

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time you jumped out of that plane, the God you knew had perhaps been rubbed out?

I don't know about that but I was not saying any prayers I can assure you. I'm the greatest heathen of all time.

Can you recall, as you fell into that tree what you could see around you?

Oh, no,

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I can't remember much about that except that I was in the tree, there was one or two Zeros were around and I thought, 'I'll get out of this,' so I unbuckled the chute and I got down the tree and up the side and up the side there and I ? I wasn't very far away but fortunately, I wasn't in the line of fire, you, see, I was

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there and he was coming this way. And if I'd stayed in the tree I ? and collected my scattered bits, I'd have been you know, done for. Probably.

It sounds like it happened really, really quickly, the whole business.

Oh it did, yes, you don't have time to think about it really, except

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?Let's get out of here.?

Did you get injured in that fall?

No. I was lucky wasn't I? No.

Well a tree could cut you to bits.

I didn't ? no, I landed in the tree unscathed and I got down the tree, unscathed, well I might have, probably had a scratch or two but nothing of consequence.

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Don't suppose you remember what kind of tree it was.

No. No, I couldn't identify it if I tried. If I went there. I doubt it.

Now you mentioned there was this rendezvous point of Kapsali, did you have any information about Timor before that flight?

Well, I knew about Kapsali.

Yes, how, for example?

Ops

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room I suppose. It'd be their job to give us anything, any information which should be told and the rendezvous point was one. And where was it? Was it Timor? They..

Well the independents in Timor had this thing called ?Winnie the War Winner [radio device]', but I'm not sure that they had it by that time, I think by the

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time you were shot down in Timor they hadn't set that up yet.

Had which what?

Well they had this radio device called, ?Winnie the War Winner.?

Oh, I can't ? I have a vague recollection but I can't put it into words, I don't think, too well about someone had a radio and was outside the camp,

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I think it was at Timor and ? oh wherever, anyway they ? I don't remember the detail.

And you'd be fairly disoriented at this point, falling out of a plane into the middle of an island? How did you know

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what was north? What did you have with you in terms of equipment?

Oh the sun I suppose. I didn't have any, I didn't have a compass or anything useful like that, but the point was, I think I suppose it was the sun, but I knew I had to go that way as it were, because Kapsali was in that direction and I had about

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as I said about 60 miles to go and negotiate the ? a track or two. If I'd been a bit more cunning I might have made it, I don't know. It's not easy wandering around, oh yes, my shoes packed up too, they fell to bits. They'd been ? we were wrongly clad but we ? and I had it in mind after that experience you know,

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to complain bitterly about the attire. Shorts and shirt are not the ? suitable for wandering through a jungle, you need long trousers that will withstand a bit of wear and tear and you need boots. And I had my air force shoes, I had black shoes, but the point was

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I ? the ground underneath was a bit on the damp side and they ? the soles just fell off. Or came half unstuck anyway.
And what about water?

Water was not a problem in that there were streams and such like. Where one could scoop up some water, but I don't suppose it was very I don't remember precisely how long it was

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but I suppose two or three hours would have been it. Wandering from the tree, I landed in to the local raja's hut. So you know, I wouldn't have been in a bad way, hungry sort of ready for tucker.

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What did you know would be in Kapsali when you got there?

I didn't know anything except where it was. It was probably a small village of about half a dozen maybe, I don't know, cabins or huts. Grass thatched. But I didn't know ? I hadn't even, we didn't even have any photographs of it at all, but just where it was and I think you'd see it on a map of

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Timor if I had one handy, I don't think I have though.

What time of day was it, when you touched the earth, took off?

I'm guessing, but I think it was about three o'clock in the afternoon.

The reason I'm asking

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is because sunset happens fairly early in the tropics and all the creepy crawlies come out.

Yes, I was taken down to Penfui, it was still daylight, I can't remember if I ? no when I got back there really, did I go..

I wanted to ask about the Dutch East Indies natives.

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The Dutch Timorese that you bumped into. Can you tell me a little about coming across those fellas?

I had very, very little to do with them. But they weren't our cup of tea, putting it mildly. They were pro-Jap if anything, they didn't understand, but they did later, I think they would today. And the northern

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- Eastern Timorese were, Roman Catholicism was being brought in by the Portuguese and they were pro, us, they were good, if I'd had my brains, any brains, I'd have got up there to the North, the East I should say, but it wouldn't have been easy to do it.

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You'd have to you know, walk and stumble and you might be mistaken and you might be what's the word? Taken prisoner again, by the local natives, you see, they couldn't be trusted.

How did you communicate with these fellas when they took you to the raja's hut?

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Oh, I don't think I got very far with them, because I didn't speak any Timorese or Javanese and they didn't speak English, so anyway, whilst I was there I ? he apparently sent a message that I was unaware of ? to the Japanese

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that they'd better come and collect me. He got a reward of a packet of cigarettes or something like that. That was useless.

Did they offer you any hospitality at all?

The natives? No.

Nothing to drink?

No, I don't think so, no. I didn't ? what I was

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anxious to do was to get away from them, the natives included and not to have anything at all to do with the Japanese and get to Kapsali. Well, I couldn't tell them about Kapsali for obvious reasons. And..

Did they restrain you in any way?

No, I don't think so. Except the

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when the Japanese sentry bloke, soldier bloke with his rifle, he had his rifle pointed at me, which made it quite clear I was his booty and I was not to trot away.

How long after you turning up at the raja's hut did this Japanese soldier appear?

I think it might have been 20 minutes at the

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outside. It was a short time, I don't really remember. And as I mentioned too, clothing such as it was, was torn and ruined and me shoes had ? I don't know whether I was with bare feet at that stage or not but I managed to get a pair of boots, army boots from the, when I got down to

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the POW [prisoner of war] camp, bindi, the parson who was there, who had the truckload of things there, but he had boots, he let me have a pair of boots, which was quite good.

So in one day, you could have been nabbed by a croc, shot out of the sky, killed by the Japanese,

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knocked out when you hit the ground, killed by the Dutch East Indies and then a Jap turns up with a gun.

I ? yes well I, I thought discretion was the better part of valour, of course with the Japanese there with his gun, I thought he was winning hands down. But anyway he escorted me to Tjamplong

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where they sent me off down to Penfui.

I appreciate there wasn't anywhere to go, but was there any thought in your head, when the Japanese took you off, that you might have to overpower him and dispatch him to get away?

Which one was that, the one with the trolley, utility?

The one that the Dutch East Indies shipped you to.

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I'm sorry I'm not quite with you, there.

The Dutch natives took you to the raja's hut and then a Japanese soldier turned up with a gun. Was there any opportunity at all to escape?

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No, you see, there was nowhere to go, that was the point. If I did scamper off, I had nowhere to go and he'd follow me no doubt, or he'd shoot me and secondly my boots, shoes had failed and I was on mother earth down there. As I said, I don't

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remember what they were like except that they were the ? I think the soles had ? of one or both had come unstuck and whether I had the insole in it, I can't recall but I couldn't move very quickly.

I'm wondering if this Japanese sentry was the first Japanese soldier you'd clapped eyes on?

Yes, he was. He

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I don't quite know what the story was, because he ? well, yes, he ? I think he would have shot me if I'd tried to scamper off, that's the point I think. But as I said, discretion was the better part and

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I didn't know anything about the place, I was pretty much lost, I knew vaguely which direction Kapsali was but I couldn't go there or say anything about it without giving the show away, could I?

How was your morale at that point?

I suppose I was determined to go ? I was keen to survive

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and as a ? I think has always been the case. I don't give in easily and I think I'm going to survive so I keep going. Any

way I can.

How did the Japanese sentry communicate with you?

His gun. Pointing, 'Go that way.'

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We couldn't speak to each other so that was that. That was the beginning and end of it, so ? but there was no point in me doing anything else but going for the obvious reason, he had a gun and I didn't.

Did you see any sort of exchange between the sentry and the leader of the village that shopped you?

Can't remember any. Don't remember.

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No.

Because you said that he basically turned you in for a packet of cigarettes.

Oh well I learnt that later, that was their ? there was no indication of that but that's what I learnt from our own chaps, that's what happened, they

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you ? they got a reward for these things, but it was a hopeless, it was, you know there was no money in it at all.

It's interesting, at that point, your life is worth 20 cork tipped cigarettes.

Yes, true. I don't think ? the point was nothing more or less, if he

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was instrumental in handing me over to the Japs, he'd get a reward and that was his reward, so I was told later, by our own chaps. That's what they did.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 06

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I was wondering on a technical level, when you were being attacked and it was obvious that the two crew members, who were still able to jump out, was that at their discretion or at your command?

No I told them to hop out as quick as they could

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and that's all there was to it I suppose, we were in a bad way, you know fire and machine guns from another aircraft.

And could you see how they went when they jumped out?

Oh no, not very well.

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I had a look back but the point is you can't look downwards or backwards, there's too much air frame in the way, wings and so forth, but anyway that was it, they hit mother earth.

Also just to get an idea of where the Zero's were when you would come down low and you were preparing to bail out?

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I'm not to sure they were, if I remember rightly they were behind me or either side, but you can't watch them and look where you are going at that height, getting down there to a valley or two, unfortunately as I said before, there was nowhere else to go, there was nowhere to go!

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Its completely chaotic and I didn't expect you to know exactly where the Zeros were but were you under fire fairly consistently?

Yes there was quite a lot of fire, the problems with the Zero was,

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beside you or over the top, I kept moving slowly like that, if I had been steady I'd have made a better target, I kept moving, but not obviously if you follow me, I just...slowly, well I kept that up.

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Is that part of training or is that something you devised yourself?

No I devised it myself, me...there wasn't a great deal of training given to us, it may have happened later but certainly didn't in my day so what we were to do and what action we had to take

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you're left to your own devices

You said you jumped out, fortunately into a valley, did you have the presence of mind to realise that that was the thing to do at the time?

All I knew was that I had to get out, I couldn't be fussy as the where I got out, from the point of view of what was underneath.

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But when the other chaps went I undid the lid, the emergency escape above me and it flew off and I followed it out you see, went over the top of the aircraft, over the elevator and pulled the rip cord when I was clear of the aircraft, I didn't have long to wait

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virtually, I didn't fall very far in a controlled fall, the parachute? I don't know what it was you can't tell at this time, anyway when I was clear of the aircraft I pulled the rip cord and the parachute streamed out, then after a very short time

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I couldn't tell you now, it might have been about 5 seconds it might have been, I don't know what it was, and I was in the tree.

So you went out over the top of a plane, were you able to grab onto things, I mean as soon as you got up?

Virtually blown backwards.

Is there any danger of hitting the tail in that situation?

Well there are twin fins on that, you lie there between the two.

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What goes through your mind when you are free falling before your parachute deploys?

I don't know...no I don't know, I'd have to do it again to work it out, all I can say is

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as soon as I was clear of the aircraft I pulled the rip cord and the next thing the parachute streamed and I was free fall, was arrested and then I was in the tree, but how long? I repeat, I don't really know, wasn't long.

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Have you ever wondered where your plane ended up?

I knew it was going into the tree further along there but I didn't see it, because I don't remember watching if I could, but I had to get out of that darned tree you see, they were after me then.

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Did you have any thoughts at that time of hooking up with your crew, did you think they may have survived?

No, well I didn't have the opportunity there and then because I was being fired at from the air, and continuously they kept sweeping over looking for me, well it was so called jungle, it wasn't terribly thick but it was jungle

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and you know, you can't find them you've got to rely on a meeting with them, if not a meeting with them you are called out and you eventually find each other, you can't do it in? whatever you like? tree lined country.

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So I'm blown if I know what the score was.

I was just wondering if at that time you knew their fate or if you thought they had survived?

You can only keep your fingers crossed and hope that they ??but I learnt from the natives I think, not for a week or two

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that they didn't know what had happened, I didn't want to tell them too much because the Japs after me and I wanted to, if lucky enough get to, well, I now don't remember whether they knew in turn about Kapsali or me, it may have been only yours truly, because that sort of information is not

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common, it's not known to everyone only to those involved and likely to make use of.

That's the first I've heard of having a pre arranged rendezvous, what were you told to expect there if you were to make it?

The thing was to get there and wait by

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the beach, not on the beach but near it, beside it and keep an eye out for Catalina, they didn't say, I don't remember now if they had a particular date to go, I think they did

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but the idea was to get there and keep a watch, because what would happen at a point of day and time they would arrive there and stay off shore and see if anyone came out, and there were some chaps who were picked up that way, at another point in Timor further to the west of Kapsali,

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they were picked up via Sunderland and that was a bit awkward because the Catalinas had, Catalina singular, had landed there stayed off shore and then one or two bloke rowed a shore in a dinghy from the flying boat and there was a

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rough sea, rowers on the beach to get past them and onto the beach in one piece and get out again was not easy, but

they made it

How much hope did you have at that stage that they would make it?

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I had the intentions of making my way to the camp slowly until I met the Japanese sentry bloke who made it quite clear with his rifle that I wasn't going anywhere, I didn't tell him of course where I was heading, I didn't mention Kapsali to anyone, I told you that some chaps

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about 4 or 5 made a rendezvous point on Buru Island, and they were picked up by a Catalina there, they were lucky, that was the one I said John Hanbury and Titch McFarlane who came down as far as Sydney

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I went down and picked them up in a Hudson and brought them out to Richmond into the mess for lunch

So knew it was possible then, you knew these rendezvous could happen, so you had some degree of hope?

Yes, it would make an interesting story if one knew all about the rendezvous, how many there were

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how many were rescued, I suppose there were a lot of chaps who were rescued, I don't mean hundreds but quite a few

Lets talk about your first experience of being a POW, when you were taken captive what did you see what was your first experience of encampment?

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If you recall I mentioned that I was taken with a utility down to Penfui and there I was kept in the guard tent for a month

And was that Penfui the last time you were interrogated, how long after you arrived in Penfui did they question you?

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20 minutes, half an hour something like that, a short time, I was driven to the office buildings at Penfui on a truck, a utility, then I was summoned to where their chaps were, there were four or five of them I told you

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they tried to question me but they didn't succeed, but truthfully I didn't know much about it, the numbers of troops and all that sort of thing at Darwin area or any other area, that I probably could tell that 2 squadron were in dirty waters, but that would be useless, I think

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We know quite a lot about the Japanese treatment of their POW's before you went into interrogation, before you went into Penfui, what did you expect of their behaviour towards you?

I didn't know, I didn't have the foggiest really, I was not very, a bit concerned about what might happen, but I had to wait and see

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and those chaps were all right the initial thing, but the other evil looking Japanese paratrooper, I think I would have got a good hiding there if I had stayed long enough, but I didn't .

What were your instructions about your behaviour, or anything really, in terms of being a POW?

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I don't recall, I don't know that there were any, there might have been but I don't recall any instructions, we were all pretty ignorant you know, we knew what was happening today because we've re-examined it but we didn't know what was going to happen tomorrow.

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What did you know of the Geneva convention?

Not a great deal more than we knew that it existed I suppose.

Did you know the Japanese weren't signatories to it?

I think we knew that bit, I think we did, no they didn't acknowledge the Geneva convention and what should happen in the case of prisoners of war

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Because we knew we were getting treatment, this was in Changi days, we knew we were getting treatment there that was not in accordance at all. One of the things was, we were supposed to be fed on the same rations, or equivalent rations that they fed their own people on.

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I don't think we did.

Intrigued about this interrogation, your first questioning you had, it must have been terrifying, you mentioned that there were 4 or 5 decent fellows, were you terrified?

Well I didn't know what was coming next you see, I was being careful and cagey

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but there was one thing I knew is that you don't give them any more secrets or information at all, you are only obliged by the Geneva convention, if I remember rightly, is give your name number and rank and the last three numbers of your rifle number.

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We didn't have rifles but all the same if you were a soldier you would, but that's all, you don't give them any more information at all.

And you mentioned they asked you some benign questions like where you went to school and so on, were they trying the good cop bad cop technique, were they trying to cage you in a bit?

Well you said that you were born on that date and

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you went to this school and that school, how many troops did you say were in Darwin? Of course you hadn't said so, say well I don't know, we didn't know how many for that matter how many, but we had??

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And how was their English, those 4 or 5?

They had an interpreter I think, he was and ordinary soldier, or he wasn't of any high rank, lets put it that way, and someone would ask a question and,

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and he would repeat it in English, which as I told you was the case at the court, court martial.

I suppose in terms of interrogating someone it must be harder to be intimidating through an interpreter, did they try heavy-handed tactics at all?

Well the person who was asking the questions through the interpreter could be

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threatening and fierce and so forth, but not the interpreter necessarily, when I complained about the interpreter's English was almost impossible to understand, he was cross that he'd been made an example of in front of the court

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the person in charge of the court martial, I think they understood our English pretty well, but they didn't use English in reply, that's about all I can see, the second interpreter spoke excellent American.

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In terms of that first interrogation, did they mention things about Australia and Australian movements that they knew you were surprised about?

No I don't remember, I don't think they showed any knowledge of Australia if they knew, of course they might know a certain amount

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but didn't admit to it, I can't really answer, I think that's all.

After you close call with the 6 foot paratrooper you were taken to the sentry hut, was that the place you stayed a month at?

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Yes, I was taken over 30 miles on the back of a utility back to Tjamplong and then I was put in the sentry tent.

It sounds like a peculiar set up, so you were actually living with the sentries?

Yes in their, they had if I remember three or four centuries in the tent at a table in front of the tent there would be a better explanation, and I had a bed an iron bed

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in the back of the tent behind them, and they were responsible for my 'not getting out'.

How did you get along with those guys?

I didn't really take much notice of them nor did I discuss anything with them that I recall, no I don't think there was anything more, they used to bring

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a ration, I think it was twice a day, maybe three times, anyway whatever it was I just had to accept.

How would you describe your treatment at that stage?

Well they weren't difficult in any other way than

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they weren't nice to me but they weren't nasty either, they weren't rough, they weren't and tumble but if I'd given them an excuse to they would have, there was no doubt about that, I would have been for it, they'd have bashed me I suppose is the word.

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They didn't worry about questioning me you know, where I came from or anything at all, they were centuries, the only meeting such as that at Penfui, or later on in Singapore when I was in the hands of the kempei tai, their procedure as far as I could work out

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they would ask you questions until as such time as you admitted something was incorrect or you had done something that was incorrect, they'd ask you a question and you didn't know well that was more or less the end of it, sometimes they got a bit of rough and tumble and they would thrash you with

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something like the equivalent of a pick handle, without the pick on it and bash you with that, it wasn't gentle, the other thing was they tried the other business, sometimes you got a good bashing, the idea was to collapse

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and wait to be carried back to your prison, and that was a time I told them that I should have asked the questions, would have answered them in fine detail.

In that time in Singapore, what type of psychological treatments did they attempt in their questioning process?

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I don't remember any to tell you the truth apart from whack! I don't think they understood anything else, they weren't very intelligent people at camp Seletar but they knew how to make you talk if they beat you, you mightn't talk was the thing if you could avoid it.

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Now is it Tjamplong isn't it, the sentry tent for the month, was it there that the other Australians, is it there that you met the other Australians?

Oh the Australians in the store depot there, it was a shed

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that was about, I can't really accurately remember but I think it was a couple of hundred feet long, corrugated iron roof with probably about 15 or 29 feet wide and compartmentalised into several room, I can't remember how many rooms but I wasn't, I was only in it once, and I shouldn't have been

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but that's all they had, but they had stores, AIF stores there clothing and, I don't think they had any guns or ammunition, I'm sure they didn't, well if they did they would have lost them pretty quickly, and there was some food, I told you about after the Japanese surrender

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after the atom bomb, Ron Cornford flew in in a Dakota and the, ?cause for him to stay in Singapore he had a, he came from family I've forgotten, perhaps the company name was Cornford and company, but anyway they had sent a lot of food stores up to Singapore before the war

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and I can't remember properly. Flour was amongst them, things like that, and he went and had a look at the, go down the pavilion up there and there were, I might be wrong but I think there was

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400 tons of flour still in this (Godown UNCLEAR) they'd shipped up there before the war, and had available for sale or something, but it was still there and hadn't been touched, so they could have given it to us, but they didn't.

Those Australians that you met in Tjamplong, how many were there?

Oh there was only two Aussies there

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Just two?

They were the two, I wasn't able to have a yarn with them because it was verboten, but they brought me books and I sometimes scribbled a note and put it in the book on the quiet, when I wasn't being watched and?

You don't happen to remember what books they were do you?

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No I don't, haven't got the foggiest now, you know library style books that's all what they were, as for names I haven't got the foggiest idea.

And what sort of notes were you sending them?

Oh Lord knows, but if I wanted to talk to them I wasn't allowed to you see, nor were they allowed to talk to me,

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so they probably wanted to know who I was, and I think that might have been one of the things I scribbled onto a piece of paper, stuck it in the book, handed the book back ?page 89? and said know more, so when he got back to the shed store, he'd look up page 89.

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Where had you got a pencil from?

I have no idea now, I probably had some in a pocket, I don't know, I certainly didn't have very much.

Did they do the same trick in reverse, did they pass notes to you?

Can't remember any, they sometimes passed information to me.

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Two of them would come over and talk to each other but it was for my benefit, but not much, very little, but anyway they had some Aussie store there and for some reason they left were there to look after the stores but I can't explain that

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to this day, I haven't got the foggiest idea.

You mentioned that you got to look inside once, is that when you snuck out?

Yes, I got to the door, knocked on the door and stood outside hoping I wasn't being watched and the door opened and they saw me they said, ?Get out, get out, shut the door.? I had no option but to sneak back again.

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What were you hoping to achieve when you went over there?

I would have enjoyed getting out and going bush, I hadn't the foggiest notion which way the tracks were or which way or roadways, they were pretty meagre roadways, they were tracks, but even so

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there might have been 1 or 2 that I didn't know about which weren't very obvious, but they living there would know about, anyway I didn't say anything about Kapsali. I was a bit conscious that if any information had got out about Kapsali that would have been it.

Did you trust those two men?

Oh yes, yes but you know,

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they had to think of their own necks to, they would have been in the can if they had offended the Japs, that's was the point.

At that stage how confident were you about your own survival skills, your bush skills?

I was just I suppose taking advantage of the scene

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from time to time as time went by, I haven't got a clue otherwise

Just wondering if, like you say if you would have been able to go bush how confident you would have been about surviving out there?

I wasn't a bit confident about it, as I said, I had roughly 60 miles

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to (relung UNCLEAR) but I didn't know the country and I didn't have any tucker, so I couldn't take any tucker with me, a bottle of water or two, or anything like that so it was pointless going if you just escaped from the sentry post on the road.

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They put a sentry post on this road, I don't think there was a gate or anything, but they had our thing, they put there sentry post there, in a hut close by there was a small contingent of Japanese, there were only about 20 of them I suppose, in total.

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They varied the guard from day to day, 2 or 3 times a day.

From that contingent?

So they were up there in essence making a sort of a road block, I don't think it was necessary, I don't think they could have done anything.

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How much traffic was there through that sentry point?

It was a big event if there was any traffic I suppose, I don't think it was anything much and I don't think it was anything more than them, but of course I didn't know really beforehand what the natives did, whether they used to go up and down the road, or track

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in any numbers and if so they certainly didn't go up and down when I was there, they could bypass (tredle UNCLEAR) but I suppose they could?

In terms of your story a month isn't very long but still a month not really doing anything but just wondering what's going to happen, its quite a long time isn't it?

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I don't know to this day precisely why they kept me segregated but possible they said well just in case he's got some use to the boys in the POW's camp down at the bay, we'll keep him isolated, and there we are.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 07

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So how did you get word that you were going to be moved from there?

I was told to get aboard the utility and I didn't know where I was going, they said I was going down towards Penfui or whatever.

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Anyway I got aboard and was taken to the camp and had a officer there who was the captain of the AIF and he was waiting at the gate and there was a Japanese sentry there and

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I got out of the utility and went towards the gate there, the Japanese bloke was there, what was his name, he saluted me and I saluted him, which was out of order but it didn't matter and he escorted me into the camp and along to Bill Leggett who was the CO.

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And we had a short chat and I was allotted accommodation and in the tent there was a couple of Englishmen, and they had a small battery, anti aircraft battery, I can't remember the name of their thing but I was in the tent

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with them and we got on well.

So the Englishmen had been anti aircraft attached to an Australian air force?

Yes they were attached to the 2/40th Battalion at Timor and so we had 2/40th Battalion, the Englishmen and their anti aircraft

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regiment, which was only a small one, it was something like, I'm guessing now but about 100 men, small, and there was another thing there of engineers, Australians, a company of engineers, so I got to know all those chaps pretty well.

Could you give us a physical description of the place, I mean how

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many tents and how big was it?

We had tents, quite conventional tents, they were rotting badly and they hadn't been up for long, I don't know where they had been before they got there but they were certainly rotting badly.

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But that kept the worst of the rain off, they were on the small peninsula of Koepang Bay, and they had sea water on one side and the Peninsula came up one side and back a short distance only, we had our various

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cook house and things, the troops had, and I'm guessing now but I think about 400 Australian troops, and a few more

Dutchmen there, they occupied a few tents and kept to themselves and spoke Dutch,

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I suppose they were better at English than we were at Dutch because we were hopeless at Dutch.

Does that mean they were responsible of themselves, were they running their own facility themselves?

The Aussies ran their own kitchen and those who used it amongst the troops and other, there was an officers'

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thing and a hospital tent, a big one there and there was a couple of doctors, one was Roy Stevens.

Do you get a medical when you go into a camp?

They didn't give you a medical but if I had a problem I could go to them.

So when you first go in you don't get anything like that?

No, you only meet them that's all.

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Roy Stevens and a couple of others, I got to know the doctors pretty well, we spoke the same language and...

And did the Dutch have their own cookhouses?

They had their own doctor or two, a doctor Hacking, and he

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understood a lot of tropical medicine which our bunch didn't and one of the things I got pretty quickly was tropical ulcers on my foot and down my shin and Doctor Hacking said, 'The best thing for that is to put something on it, a leaf.'

I might think of it later.

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And the otherwise he said you can put iodine on and all of those things but it won't do much good at all, our doctors said, 'Have nothing to do with that Hacking fellow or any of his medical associates.' They had nothing to do with him, well I didn't take any notice of them after a while, I wasn't getting anywhere with my tropical ulcers, you know.

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You get a scratch and within the day it starts to get nasty, and then the second or third day it's like a big boil, it's running and particularly nasty and you can't do a damn thing with it, Doc Hacking said, 'The best thing you can do is...'

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I think I remember what he used, sheep's feet, a yellow stone, a rock.

And what did he recommend you do with it?

The best thing you could do with it was, I'll show you....he demonstrates how he would lick the stone and rub it on the infected area...and it got better in no time.

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Is it soapstone?

Not what it was called, it was a hard soluble rock like substance.

And what did the Australian doctors say after it had healed?

They didn't say anything, they didn't help.

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So you could go and see the Dutch doctors if you wanted to?

Oh yes, I got to know Doug and the other Dutchmen roundabout, a gaggle of them about 4 Dutchmen, I can't remember precisely but we were going to hopefully get a native proud and sail back to the Australian mainland if we could get away.

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And the thing was, to get away you had to be lucky, it was 300 miles, 300 nautical too, but turned back to where I came from that aerodrome that I mentioned.

Is it your professional or military duty to organise escape plans or is it a personal thing?

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Any member of the Australian forces or British forces for that matter is obliged to get out and come home if he gets the opportunity so you know, you can't be dealt with by your own people for attempting to escape

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under those POW circumstances so it didn't matter what you did, or what...you could offend the enemy but you couldn't offend your own people, we were thinking of taking a native proud, and food stops and things like that for and sailing for Australia.

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We knew it was risky but it was better than staying there I suppose, so we planted a number of rations, 4 gallon petrol tins with the big lid on top and had those and planted them in the native hut which was just outside the

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POW camp and if they haven't eaten them by now they'd be bad, they'd be finished.

When you form an escape plan like this, do you let anyone in, how do you recruit for the plan?

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I had 2 or 3 Dutchmen as well as 2 or 3 of our own blokes, we didn't want a big number because you wouldn't fit on the boat but anyway the Japs said well were think of, all men go to big islands on the West which was Java and I rushed around there and said, ?Well

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lets see if we can get out tonight,? to the Dutchmen, threw in their sponges and said that they weren't interested any longer.

Did you need them?

Only because they spoke the language, and could speak to the natives but once we left Timor they were of no use as you can imagine.

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I was trying to remember the Dutchmen's names as well, a couple of curious names that, not to them, Valmir Dittier [sp?] was an easy one but there was a couple of awkward ones.

When you were sourcing those extra rations would you have to let people in on why you were getting them and why you were hiding them?

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I don't remember how we got them precisely but it was got from our own cooks or something and any they could spare and we could keep, or could be kept in the tins, we stacked into the tin

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whether it was adequate or sufficiently varied I can't really remember now, I don't think you would enjoy it anyway, being faced with it.

Now you mentioned that you kept the rations outside the camp, could you get out?

Easily, there was some barbed wire round the camp

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and at one end where the gate was there was a Japanese sentry post and a few Japs in a hut nearby, but they didn't man the fence on one side and of course the other side was the bay so they didn't need to man that, but to get the thing out to the native hut, which was at the other end of the bay and beyond it.

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I went out one night with a tin or maybe two tins and waded along the beach up to the waist in the sea water until we got opposite the what not, the native hut, and, Seany was his name, I don't know how you spell it

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but he was there and I think he was on our side, he wasn't on the Japs and that was the main thing, I told him I wanted to leave the camp hut there and we would get to it one day soon, anyway he checked the equipment was OK.

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We left it there, we had 2 possibly 3 tins of rations parked there so that if got out we could take it, but as for getting out of the camp we just went out the wire fence which was loose, you mustn't be caught doing it but you could get out in daylight

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let alone night light.

Did anyone get caught?

No not that I remember, Doughie Armstrong, he was caught nearby I think, he used to go out of the camp for a wonder quite regularly, he would be gone for about 2 or 3 days and would come back, he went of to the

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other side of Koepang Bay and it was over I think the Jap party nearly caught him, I think they got the chap that was with him but the W was solid ivory up here,

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but he was a big strong boy I promise you.

Was he the Tasmanian?

Yeah, he was a logger and he was a good bloke, I knew him well, we got on well, and anyway he got outside the camp and I've got an idea that we went and where taken off by sea to Java he was out of the camp

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and didn't come with us or any other party, and I have an idea he was shot somehow or another up there and to my knowledge he did not survive.

Were there any other escape plans afoot?

Its pretty hopeless you know, you were 300 miles

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of the nearest point of Australia so there's nothing much you can do and there was nothing much you could do on the island, except that there were some chaps up on the east part of Timor called Portuguese East Timor, just Portuguese Timor maybe.

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They had a Portuguese in there for some years, but the Portuguese hadn't done anything, except converting them to Roman Catholicism that's all, our troops if they got up there, got on well with the locals,

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East Timorese natives and they helped them, put them in shelter, so they got away pretty easy up there, and then an Australian warship, destroyer

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I think and came to East Timor on the side nearest Australia and I think they got tangled with a submerged rock, they saved the ship from that, nevertheless they got a few blokes

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off who had been shot down, there was one of our blokes shot down, I've forgotten his name now but he was shot down and he was kept by the local natives, sheltered for a month or so, and he tried to get on board this

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not a destroyer something smaller, anyway on a barge or a rope or something and swung hard into the ship and I think he broke a leg or something, he got back to Australia that way with a broken leg, lucky it happened on the ship, anywhere else and he was in trouble.

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What were your observations in that camp, about the control of the officers and the maintenance of the hierarchy?

The POW camp at Timor?

Yeah?

The discipline was very good, the CO was Lieutenant Leggett

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who if I remember rightly was an MC [Military Cross] or MC and bar maybe from the Great War, he became a speaker in the houses of parliament here in Victoria.

In that camp how did you fit in as an air force men in the rank scheme?

Oh they were very good, we got on very well together, mainly the Aussies

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and me and we?well as I said we got along, there was very few Englishmen there and we got on well with those chaps

to, I suppose the thought was that we spoke the same language and we weren't at loggerheads with the English.

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And what was your rank at that stage?

Flight lieutenant, I went in as a Flight lieutenant and came out as a flight lieutenant, you don't get promotion in the bag you see.

So how did you fit into the camp in terms of rank?

Well flight lieutenant was equivalent to Captain and we got on very well.

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We didn't argue and I don't know we just got on well and that's about all I can say.

How did the conditions differ between the officers and the non-commissioned men?

They were not commissioned or soldiers and they performed in the camp the same as if they were in Timor.

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If you went passed them in the camp and were wearing a cap you would get a salute but you didn't have to keep saluting all day, once was enough, it was the same in Changi by the way, once was enough.

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Did they have different living conditions and rations?

Yes, they had there kitchen and we had ours yes, they got a decent meal and where properly fed, we didn't have rations at their expense, we shared them as best we could.

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I imagine moral is extremely important in camp, how did Leggett increase or maintain that?

Well I think most people were anti Jap you know, nasty little smell pot, we don't want to have anything much to do with you but you're the boss at the moment and that was the attitude of the men to the Japs.

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And us to the Japs, you know you didn't go out of your way to argue with the Japanese but didn't do anything else either.

What sort of things would Leggett do to maintain the spirits of the men or raise them?

You couldn't really do much

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not at Timor, I don't think we did very much, we where possible we chatted with the troops but that's as far as it went but in Changi it was a bit better we had a concert party going there,

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2 or 3 blokes that were very good at acting, there were one or two, not many, that were professional actors, it went very well as far as that was concerned

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had a concert party and we had a band or tow and some of the blokes there could play some really magnificent music, classics or otherwise so they had these parties, the other thing we had in Changi was some Indian Army blokes

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not many, about 4 half colonels I think and there was one there called Swan, he was an interesting bloke and when he went to India some years ago before the war he was one of those chosen to go to China and learn the language.

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He went to learn a particular dialect of Chinese, or language I should say because there are 7 languages spoken in China and hundreds of dialects, so if you could speak Cantonese or what's the one...

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anyway Swany was one of those sent before the war and when he was sent he was sent to Peking, and in Peking he was allotted to a Chinese teacher of the language, the particular language.

07:29:00:00

He arrived there, the Chinese was one of those mandarin blokes with the big square flat hats you see and brown down here with three or four whiskers from each side drooped down at the front, sandals or something on his feet and he couldn't speak a word of English, so Swany was there and had to learn to ask for his tucker

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right from the word go, anyway he was there I don't know for how long.

I'd like to know about how the conditions were on the ship on the way to Batavia, how were you transported ?

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I can't recall, I'm guessing about 35 ? 45 thousand tonnes, it was a smallest cargo steamer and for a party of about, again I'm not too sure, Leggett was one of them and I was another nominated by the Japanese,

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we were all officers and we told to go, you get half an hours notice to go, you're not told the day before and we got on a truck and went down to Oepoko and onto this ship and from that we went out to the west to Surabaya, and Surabaya

07:31:00:00

I told you about the Bindi, the parson who had passed, officers to the right troops to the left and the trunks went to the left and he lost the lot.

did the whole camp get shifted?

No not in one no, we were only about 14 or 15 strong in our group.

07:31:30:00

The ones that were nominated, but the rest were sent on a later ship, not much later but about a month, something like that and they went to Java and we went to Surabaya and then by train to Batavia, we popped into a camp there which I can't remember,

07:32:00:00

like a lot of other places, I should know but it was a Dutch barracks and they were rather old too, at least 100 years old, and we went around the back and their were few air force chaps who I knew from a different squadron to mine, who had been up there in Singapore fighting

07:32:30:00

and so forth as much as possible after the Japanese invasion.

Had they been shot down as well?

Not sure if they were shot down but I would say they got as far as Java and couldn't get back to Australia from there and that was that, they missed out.

07:33:00:00

A few ships got away from ports on the south coast of Java, rather few from Batavia.

Your movements around Batavia and around there, are you staying with the same people, it sounds like people were coming and going and you were meeting up with other people?

No our group was maintained until

07:33:30:00

we got to Singapore and the docks there to Changi.

What were your first impressions of Singapore?

Frankly I supposed I was a bit disappointed that we had lost it, but there was a lot of Japanese there so you had to be a bit wary and do as you were told and go where you were sent

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and as I said, we got to the docks in a ship, a cargo thing and out to Gordon Islanders barracks.

What sort of set up was that, how big was it?

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They were big barrack blocks, I couldn't tell you how many they were expecting to take, they were concrete blocks with three stories, and there were 5 and a head quarters block, was six and then there was the officers' mess,

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which was in a slightly different area another big concrete stone building and a lot of little villas, the whole area was about 25 ? 30 acres and roads weaving through and the officers quarters dotted here and there and what not

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and I was put in one of those with other Aussies, and that's about it.

In your time between arriving in Singapore and getting to those barracks did you much of the damage of Singapore or the effects of what had happened there?

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No I don't think we did, we saw some areas that had been bombed and devastated but they were a bit isolated, from memory I don't think Singapore got a bad time as far as that, but the fighting for Malaya started up in the north there at

07:36:30:00

at Kota Bharu and that's where they first landed and there was an aerodrome of sorts there, I think it was all over the field, I don't think they had any runways, I didn't see it because I didn't go there, but our chaps were there and they, 13th squadron I fancy, no that was Darwin,

07:37:00:00

8th Squadron was in Malaya I think but a couple of Hudson squadrons and a Wirraway squadron, they were sent up north and worked there way south to Sumatra and then across to Java, and they lost a few on the way, they didn't get on too well.

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When you go into a new camp, what do you do to orientate yourself with?

First day I was there I went and had a drink, or a cup of tea would be more accurate

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with the CO was Blackjack Gallagher a lieutenant colonel. Oh the Japs sent everyone above the rank of lieutenant colonel away to Mongolia early in the peace, shortly after the surrender so I think the highest rank in Changi, British or ours, was lieutenant colonel

07:38:30:00

they were up there to, what was the name of the place...Manchuria? I said Mongolia I think but they're next door to one another....oh Mukden! Mukden, you've heard of Mukden, they were there for the entire war, I had a cousin who was a doctor

07:39:00:00

Colonel Pigdon who was in the army, and he died about 3 months before the end of the war of? If he had got it here in Australia he could have been cured in a fortnight.

Did he get sent up there to Manchuria?

He was sent to Mukden, as I said he fell ill, oh with

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something that was quite common about 3 months before the end, but they didn't have any medical supplies there, we were always short of medical supplies.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 08

08:00:34:00

Could you run me through the first days in camp in Changi, you said you were introduced to a lieutenant colonel?

Ah yes, Lieutenant Colonel Blackjack Gallagher

Now what would the procedure there, what would he have to say to you?

Oh he was a rude old blighter he really was, he used to swear lot and he was in the

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WW1, towards the end of it only, so he was no chicken and he was the senior officer of the, I think he was the CO of the 2/30th Battalion, he was a senior officer in Changi because I told you remember that everyone above that rank went to Mukden

08:01:30:00

early in the peace after they had surrendered to the Japanese.

What would he tell you about the running of affairs Changi

Nothing, we were invited on the first night there, a party had arrived, perhaps a dozen

08:02:00:00

officers and as usual I was the only air force fella and anyway I was introduced to Blackjack Gallagher and he said ?(UNCLEAR) bloody air force, up and down the Peninsula and then you get up there and there are Japs up the far end and they turn around and come back down here again.?

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And I said, ?Don't you understand they will run out of petrol if they keep going up there?? Bloody old fool and he...other officers around the place were patting me on the shoulders and so, ?Shut up, shut up,? so he turned on his heels and walked away then.

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As I said we were having tea at 7 o'clock at night in his villa, his quarters there, and he said to some other bloke, ?Best bloody argument I ever had,? pardon my French, but that's what he did and that was Blackjack Gallagher initial meeting and I think he realised then that the blokes weren't cowards or

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scared or what not, and when they turned round they reached the end of their patrol and by sheer coincidence there was Japanese flight up the other end of them.

To what was he referring, was it Australian coastal patrols?

No we were in Malaya, there were patrols over the land in Malaya before they surrendered

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to the Japs, and they were armed with Lockheed Hudson's in a couple of squadron and another squadron of Hawker Demons I think which became Wirraways, now the Wirraway was a trainer not a fighter and that was one of the problems with our chaps up there, they couldn't do much.

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But anyway they got on well in due course and I saw him in Sydney after the war and we had a bit of a chat about things but he really was not a gentlemen's gentlemen, he wasn't a gentlemen that's what I am saying, of any size.

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When you are new to a camp like that, does someone show you around, do you get a tour or a verbal explanation?

As I recall we were allotted quarters somewhere and we taken to these corners you see and I was in a villa with several other

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Australians, there might have been a couple of Englishmen, Murray Griffin who was the Australian war artist up there, in his house I mean and I got a bed on a balcony

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in this villa and I don't think there are any photographs of a typical villa in that lot but there might be.

How did the conditions compare to the other camps you had been in?

As usual the difficulty was food, we just didn't get

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a decent quantity of tucker there so we thinned out a bit but we had enough to keep alive, that's about all you could say, when they surrendered to the Japanese there was quite a few blokes in the

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general hospital in Singapore, anyway quite a few of our troops were in it and so forth, Glen White was the senior medico for our troops and he was told he had 3 ambulances and to take the wounded out to Changi

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and to hospital there, he got the ambulances and filled them up with medical stores, as many as he could and they rushed to and fro to Changi there until the Japs knew what was happening and the Japanese officer came into the hospital, the general hospital at the time

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where Glen White was and told him that he knew he wasn't taking the right number of sick prisoners out to Changi, and if you don't smarten up I will chop your head off! And Glen White stands up and bent forward and said, 'Ok there you go, right across there.'

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This Japanese officer got his sword out and waved it all around, put it back and wondered off, Glen White was a cracking bloke he really was.

Did you introduce yourself to the doctors in Changi like you did in the other camp?

I suppose so, I'd met them early in the peace in the first few days, I met some anyway

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I was put in that place I told you about after the court marshal and I got out of jail there, then I was out into hospital and it was there that I got to know various Australian doctors quite well.

In Changi how long did it take to before you made acquaintance with the Chinese Gyan Singh?

I never made acquaintances

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with Gyan Singh but John Wyatt, Major Wyatt who was G3 was the HQ [headquarters] he was in Changi and lived in a villa with Blackjack Gallagher and then as I said, I got to know him a bit and we sent

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messages into Gyan Singh.

So what was your involvement in that message passing?

Another person had heard about my doings at Timor

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decided we would pinch a DC3 and the wondered if perhaps I would pinch one from Singapore and we could fly out of Singapore we could go to

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this side of the Maldives, anyway as far as I could work out and I used an atlas to work it out, I think due south was the

thing,

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and we reached 600 miles, it's a long way I suppose, further than you could swim, but just the same if we had full tanks, we were trying to find out if they had refuelled British or American aircraft at Seletar or Timor or anywhere around there.

And what were you able to find out from Singh?

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Not much of any use to us really, but as I said this morning, the what have you from?

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Japanese kempei tai had a pile of copies of our notes to GNC [General Northern Command] and the reply coming back, so they had a mountain of evidence.

And had you personally written some of those notes?

No but what's his name did,

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the, John Wyatt probably did it and I think he did most of that sort of thing, he was trying to get information and he'd write notes to GNC and?

And how would you get the notes to the runner?

In a hut outside Changi, Selarang barracks, which was about 2 miles I suppose, outside the gates,

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it was pretty easy to get out, you didn't have to be an expert, you weren't allowed to be caught.

Who was liaising with the runner then, who was getting out?

Who was the runner?

Well you had the runner, but you had to get to the runner to give the notes?

We went out to this hut which was 2 to 2 and a half, 3 miles outside the barracks

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So you yourself would go out?

Yes I went out on one occasion but I didn't go on everyone and the notes were handed to the Chinese runner who took the note, and then to the. from the to the GNC and back the same route, so they had a stack of evidence.

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In this little organization you had what was the involvement of the Red Cross fellow, what was he doing?

Oh he had been in the Australian Army, I think in stores I'm not sure, he was no chicken, he was a good deal older than me and he and Wyatt were arrested on New Years Eve 1942/43.

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And 3 days later they came back for me, then I put 2 and 2 together and realised who had told the Japanese who had me, so I was arrested and the 3 of us were court martialled.

And why had the Red Cross man been necessary in your plan?

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He though he could be of great use by taking the names of large numbers of fellows back to Australia, I can't remember any other reasons he was in it, but he was in it courtesy of John Wyatt not me, not me, but...

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Was it a surprise to you that you got caught, had you trusted everyone that was involved?

Oh yes it was in a way, I didn't think that they knew I was involved in any way whatsoever, the Chinese runner who as I say was an evil looking bloke, and it's a good indication to be wary

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of them if you have reason to trust them, don't! He was brought to the kempei tai station where I was imprisoned and he said 'him' pointed to me, so that was?

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But he wasn't the one, the Red Cross chap, who dobbed me in to the Japs otherwise I would have got away with it.
So you were arrested and taken to a cell, did they charge you formally, were you told?

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Well no, they just said they wanted you to get in there the body of the truck or van or whatever it was, and then taken down to the kempei tai station, which as I said, was a fine old home, and they operated as far as we were concerned, in the stables, which were pretty big.

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And we are on the first floor, we built wooden cells with big heavy timber so we couldn't walk down the stairs and walk into the night.

What sort of interaction did you have with your other inmates there?

It was a bit of everything if I remember, there was a Chinese or much

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again, Singh was there too, I can't remember I didn't have much speech if any, with him, but just to say that he was a prisoner, there was a couple of women.

Any idea what they were there for?

Not really no, I've forgotten completely, if I knew, there was a small room

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and I think there was 16 of us in it.

So maybe about 10 metres by 5. So what nationality where those women?

I think they were Malay, they weren't British or American or anything like that, not 'whities' no I can't remember.

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Were there many 'whities' in the cells, you mentioned a few Malays and Chinese, besides yourselves?

They took care to separate Wyatt, the Red Cross bloke and me, we were in 3 different cells but mixed up with other people, I can't remember, there might have been 2 or 3

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but no more I'm sure, white people in the cell with us, hard wooden floor.

How long before they questioned you?

A day or so I suppose, I can't be sure but as I say a day or two

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and they questioned me quite a lot and asked me some stupid questions and slipped in one about, of a military nature, which I didn't know anything about and I would get a good clout or two for that.

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So I got the water treatment there, where they tie you face up onto a form and put the garden hose in your mouth, well its alright until you stop swallowing, you try to stop but you get to the stage where you start to have the sensation of

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drowning, and then you flake out, well I flaked out anyway, that's when they should have questioned me further, when I was coming to.

That's absolutely horrific, did you think it was curtains for you then?

Did I what?

Well did you expect them to deal with you there or did you expect to survive that experience?

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Well the Japanese kempei tai in Java used to find out what your story was, and confirm it if possible, guilty of course, and if you refused to answer questions of a military nature for example, they continue with you and keep on asking.

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But when they eventually get an admission of guilt, their faces change and they're all smiles and nice and your charged, so really you are tried in a cell not in the court, they take you to court and say here is the evidence

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and you are guilt straight away.

Had you even heard of water torture or water treatment?

I don't think I had before the war, maybe I had heard of it but I certainly hadn't experienced it, and it wasn't very nice.

Did they threaten worse, were they able to communicate with you what they were able to do?

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Up to a point, they wee more interested in getting one to admit that he had committed a nonsense, in their view of course, and once you admit it that's all they want.

Did they know the most of it anyway?

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They had the messages that were sent from outside Changi to GNC and the replies but I wasn't privy to writing the messages and I don't really remember reading them, I suppose I did, one or two

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but we didn't get very far, we hadn't done anything, we hadn't broken out of camp, they knew we had this runner, we hadn't left camp to go to, is it Cocos Islands? Yes.

Did they say things like, ?GNC has told us everything? or ?Wyatt's told us everything,? did they try that at all?

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I don't remember that I think they just asked the questions, 'Why are you sending messages to GNC?? Or something like that, of course one was dumb and you couldn't help but talk.

So what was the official charge?

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Mad thoughts about the emperor was one, and I don't know where they got that from but it was one of the charges, anyway they tried to get information

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from certain aerodromes and what not, so it was a bit disjointed but the whole point was they had this to lead us to and fro and that was the evidence so we convicted on that to be executed.

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Before the court-martial, what hope did you think you had, what were you expecting?

Oh we weren't hopeful at all, we didn't enjoy it a bit and your in the jail and the cell, this was before we went to Outram road of course, and you don't quite no what's coming next, and they try forcing you to admit.

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So basically they like to make you sweat for a bit?

Yes you were continually, daily checked and you were

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questioned and you admit to your number name and rank but nothing of any consequence, but I don't think we knew anything of consequence, accept that we were involved, I don't recall really whether they knew we were trying to pinch and aeroplane or not, I suppose they did, anyway it didn't matter much.

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It was pretty easy to be sentenced or bumped off, sentenced to be bumped off, or out of the field out in Changi way if you argued with a nip there in the wrong way you got a beating or at the worse?'Bang!' That's that.

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So before the court-martial they were haranguing you everyday?

I think so, I can't remember how long I was in Outram Road station, it was probably about 10 days at a guess, I'm not sure but it was more than 2 or 3, anyway their job is to, the kempei tai

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is to force an admission from you if possible and then you were charged and that's the end of the kempei tai and it's the court after that.

You must have been black and blue by the end of that, anything broken?

I suppose I was but I took a bit of a bashing.

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Perhaps nothing would happen at all, you might have a pleasant meeting with the Kempei tai policemen who was questioning you, I wouldn't wish it to happen again, I really wouldn't.

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When did you first meet up with Wyatt and the Red Cross fellow again?

Within a day or two of arriving in the camp there, see he was in a villa opposite it was very easy for him.

And after you were caught and interrogated when did you see them again?

I suppose in the jail, I saw him through

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the window but it wasn't allowed to speak to him, and I see him now, I haven't seen him much over the years but he lives down in Hobart and he's down there, he sometimes comes through Melbourne and I meet him if I can, and he went to Sydney late last year

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and he fell and broke a leg or something, he was a bit of a mess, he's 91 years of age and he's a chemist by trade and he became Cadbury chocolate man.

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I can't remember what sort of, what his post was in Cadbury's chocolate in Hobart of but it was quite an important one, and he used to travel all over the world at the drop of a hat, no trouble, till he retired or was forced to retire.

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Now you were court-martialled together, how much did you see of each other before you went in to be court-martialled?

Well after we were arrested I didn't see much of the other two, of course I saw them but wasn't allowed to speak with them so that we could compare notes or something like that.

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You mentioned before that you were shackled together and walked through the streets before the court-martial, for the locals, what did you see of the locals and how were they reacting to you coming through?

I think it was the wrong things for the Japs to have done because the local people were on our side, not on the Japs side at all, walking up the street it was to demonstrate

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a bit of power or whatever that they had.

What sort of figure do you think you cut the 3 of you walking through?

They were undoubtedly sympathetic towards us in that we were chained together or

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or roped I can't remember which but we were secured, and they made us march bare footed up the street, they made us walk for 2 or 3 blocks to the court and I don't think that went down very well with the locals at all, I am sure it didn't, so the Japs got the wrong answer to that.

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Did you know at that point that the Red Cross fellow had incriminated you?

I think I did yes, but I didn't discuss the matter with him I just ignored him, to me he was a bit of a fiend

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and not a nice chap at all, and I ignored me and if he spoke to me I didn't answer him.

I'd like to know the nitty gritty of a court-martial, basically how it ran, was it a very official affair or was it a bit slapdash?

As I said it was in the British court of appeal

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but it was a court house and a properly appointed one, there was upholstery and chairs and seats and things, and there was a Japanese in control of the court and he probably might have been a full colonel

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but it's a bit hazy about there rank, and there was another couple of colonels and a captain and the interpreter, I think there was five officers comprising the court plus the interpreter.

And were those five officers sentencing or were they prosecuting and???

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No they could prosecute us if they wished to, but there was a jury I suppose, they and the officer in charge was in charge of them and they wee all anti us, there was no doubt about that, because we weren't Japanese no doubt, if we....

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yes, we weren't Japanese, if we had been British or New Zealanders or what, it would have been dislike from them.

What did you offer in the way of defence, if there were accusations made were you able to defend or refute them?

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No I don't think we were, the thing was that all the information against us had been achieved by the kempei tai and they had put it on paper who inturn passed it onto the court, and the court in turn had this information and we were the mugs, we were guilty before we,

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as the kempei tai said we were and that's the whole truth of the matter.

Were you court-martialled individually or collectively?

No, three of us together.

Because in your case you were incriminated initially by a witness not physical evidence or anything like that, there was no distinction made between yours and the other two's situations?

No not by the other two but we

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stood there in the dock bare footed and thin shorts, thin shirt and nothing else, and they read out the charge whatever it was, and the news for them was good that we were guilty.

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This was passed through the interpreter to us and he spoke very poor English but we knew what was going on and I took a pace forward and we didn't understand a word your interpreter was saying, and they closed the court with that

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and we went back to Outram Road and 2 or 3 weeks later we were summoned to the court again, this time we were taken to the court in the utility, we didn't have to march up the street, they had this interpreter chap who spoke excellent American.

Did the procedures differ at all from the last court-martial?

It was only because

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it didn't go through the whole lot again, I think it was just the finding, and that was that we were to be executed, and back to the jail we went.

Can you begin to describe how you received that sentence?

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No, I don't suppose I can, I don't suppose I was very surprised in a way, I think we were expecting to found guilty alright, but I don't think we expected to be executed but that was the time we had committed, 20 years.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 09

09:00:10:00

??under what law they court-martialled an Australian officer?

No I don't think I can tell you that, but they did, there was no doubt about it?as far as I can recall just about everyone that was court-martialled and I don't think there was many, they were shot on the field up Malaya somewhere.

09:00:37:00

We were just saying that it's quite inconsistent of a Japanese court to convict you, now we know what they did in other places?

Yes I can't explain why but they court-martialled us.

09:01:00:00

I suppose once you are arrested, and I'm guessing here, they can't take you out and the paddock and shoot you, but out in the field when you are apprehended they can shoot you, but I think once you are arrested perhaps you have to be taken to court.

09:01:30:00

I'm guessing that's the answer to it.

What did you know of their code of honour and that sort of thing among the Japanese?

I don't think there code of honour went further than, if you like they were loyal to Japan and the Emperor and that was it, I don't think it went any further than that I really don't.

09:02:00:00

I hope they have learnt something since the war, that there behaviour was unacceptable, I hope they get that message, it really was though, it really was.

In movies I've seen people are sentenced to death and they go weak at the knees and they start to lose it, what was your reaction at hearing that news?

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Again I don't think I remember to well what my reaction was or what I felt at the time, but I wasn't very hopeful, I imagined I must have hoped I would get a prison sentence rather than an execution, I don't

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know that I was really expecting execution, I don't really know, its hard to know what you felt at the time, if I had any feelings then I don't know.

What sort of indication of when the sentence would be carried out?

None, we had no

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knowledge when we went back to Outram Road other than the fact that we were to be executed but when no idea, and I think at the end of the war when the Japanese officer in charge of the prison at Outram Road,

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he was arrested by our people, I don't think they messed around more than a day or so, they took him out to some place just outside the city of Singapore and he was shot, in a formal army manner.

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I can't tell you the ins and outs and the legal points of that, you would need a legal wallah.

Well that's what surprises me about your story because once you were sentenced and you had the right to do it in their law, I would have thought they would have taken you out the back and done it there and then?

Look I haven't got the faintest idea but I dare say that perhaps they had an inkling

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that our sentences were to be commuted, I don't really know.

Did you expect to be pretty quickly dealt with?

No I had no idea, we didn't expect it to be very long, then

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I think it took a couple of months, it may have even been three in Outram Road Jail for the Emperor to have his birthday, it would probably be more accurate than that, if I knew his birthday but I don't know what the date was, he said, ?How many we commuted??

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I have no idea, they could be in southern China and all over the place, things I didn't know about, anyway as far as that one was concerned I was there.

Driving back to the jail, how did the other two men react?

Probably much the same, I think they thought...

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I have no idea what they though I suppose, to be truthful.

It couldn't of all been stiff upper lip could it?

Yes, well John Wyatt was probably upset but he didn't misbehave as it were as far as that one was concerned.

09:07:00:00

That's about all I can say about it I suppose, no idea really because we weren't allowed to talk to each other, we weren't given the opportunity, I mean sometimes you could get a whisper or a comment in but you couldn't have a conversation and we wee in separate cells, and as I recall it we weren't next to each other

09:07:30:00

so that we could tap on the wall.

Is it at this stage that you developed your means of communication or was that before the court-martial?

Must have been after the court-martial I think because we wouldn't have been, no we weren't in Outram road jail long enough before the court-martial to develop

09:08:00:00

any means of communication through the wall, that's all, I don't know what their thoughts were.

Had you can't have given up hope entirely, after your death sentence you were building up a system of communication, that says to me that you hadn't given up hope ?

09:08:30:00

I don't know if the thought that our sentences would be commuted, I don't really think so we just hoped that the allies would come and save us, I don't really know, I don't think we had any silly hopes of getting out of it.

09:09:00:00

But we did, we were very lucky.

That must have been a long 2 months with the waiting?

I suppose it was, I must see if I have any information about when the emperor has a birthday, that's the way to do it I should think, if I knew what his birthday

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was I could add a week to it and say that's about when.

In that period were you waking up thinking, today might be the day?

I didn't have any respect for the Japanese so I suppose that's why I didn't wake up and think about it and have bad

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moments, you weren't very comfortable as far as the bed was concerned, there were 3 planks on the concrete floor and a block of wood that was about so high was a pillow and a couple of raggy cotton blankets, but it didn't matter fortunately because we were in the tropics.

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The cells were not too bad, from a temperature point of view, there was an electric light up in the corner, the door was here and another corner up there with a barred window that was open to the elements and you couldn't close it, there was no glass.

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There were bars such that if you did get up there you couldn't get out and there was a single electric light in the ceiling just forward of that and it burned 24 hours a day.

What did you have in the way of a latrine and ablutions?

Bucket, nothing else.

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And if you were lucky you had a lid to the bucket, if you went lucky you didn't have a lid to the bucket, it was a conventional bucket that we had in the stores, and about 10 o'clock every morning we were taken out and you emptied

your bucket into a concrete well

09:12:00:00

and used another bucket to wash it, sloosh it and then tip it into the well and then you took it back to your cell, oh you had to have your daily bath from the fresh water well beside the tree tank, it was a big circular gadget and this latrine they called it, and

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as I said you had fresh water in the other one so you took fresh water out of that and poured it all over yourself from a clean bucket.

How fresh was the fresh water?

From memory it was alright, you didn't drink it, I don't think we got anything other than watery rice

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in the mornings and in the evenings we got another lot of watery stew in a little enamel bowl and that's all the tucker.

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After you had had your watery rice or stew or whatever it was you put the thing there and you got a cup of tea out of it which was out of the watering can or something but it was watery tea, and that was about all the fluid we got out of them.

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Two Aussies had the job of taking the tucker round every morning and evening.

It wasn't the guards doing that?

The guards wouldn't do it, it was a couple of our chaps.

Did you ever take them around or was it the same two?

The same two, one was a doctor and the other chappy was...mmm er er...

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?those two were as fat as butter

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so they must have been pinching the rations I would think.

Could you talk to them as they came round?

You might be able to get a word but you couldn't have a yarn or conversation.

What kept you going?

Dislike of the Japanese I should think.

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You wouldn't easily give in to the rotten little cowards, I suppose we were all of the same though they weren't respectable people of our standards, put it that way.

Was that enough to keep you alive, the dislike of the Japanese?

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Yes I think so, if you've got a disregard or dislike of someone I am sure you can, it'll keep you going I think, but I dare say that was the common

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thought of everyone, that's about all I can say because the chaps were loyal to the British Empire, if you like, or to Australia but that were anti Japs, I haven't got it naturally I haven't got any regard for the Japanese, but I believe that the Japanese civilian

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in Japan is not such a bad person, but I'm not going up there to find out, I've been to a lot of places in the world but not Japan, and thank the Lord I wasn't sent to Japan because I would have been in trouble up there, in your cell you'd be pretty cold wouldn't you?

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When you were in prison after your sentence would you think much about home?

Well apart from wishing you could go home no, and if we got any war news from the Japanese in the jail

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we would just reverse it and get the truth, you got nearer to the truth anyway.

Do you remember what sort of miss information they were passing down?

You remember during the war, were you alive during the war,

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there was a Japanese submarine in Sydney Harbour and got in, or ten little ones got in didn't they and one Japanese said to me and this is not in the jail by the way, ?Japanese submarine Boom Boom Boom, Sydney Harbour go BOOM.?

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So I pulled a matchbox out of my pocket with a photograph of Sydney Harbour on it and I showed him, he couldn't believe it still going, I don't know what his thoughts were but you could see they were very warped. Generally speaking I don't really remember the

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detail now I think we heard about the Coral Sea and they said they had a big win there and we would reverse it would have to be the truth.

Is as simple as that, did you not lose hope at times?

I have a feeling in a ay that we thought we would make it, but I can't tell you what I thought in jail.

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I didn't, I suppose allow myself to think to deeply about some of these things such as getting home as much as anything, but anyway we got through the war, I was in Changi jail I was

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in the jail from Outram Road jail, when the war finished we were bundled out of our cells and put 2 and 3 together, particularly as I was given back, now I had a trunk that I gave to one of the army blokes there, before I went to jail that is, when I went to jail I put my possessions in this trunk

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and went to jail it, went into a store there together with whatever clothes I had and we were taken out of our cells and

put 2 and 3 together and thought the war had been finished particularly as I got my trunk back and the other boys got there clothing back, we left the cotton shirt and shorts behind and

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boarded the utility which would take us up to Changi, well I could have walked it, not very well but I could walk, as soon as we got to Changi we heard it had all finished, and the Japanese soldiers that had been guarding us, guarding us as prisoners, turned around and guarded us as winners,

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which was rather amusing.

What was there in the way of celebrations?

We couldn't celebrate very much, we had to be careful as we didn't have much in the way of food or drink, it wasn't available

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and we, there was one Dutch man renowned for this, if I could put it that way, if there had been short rations for a time there, they would gorge and eat and eat and eat, and we were told about over eating, we were all told and the Dutchmen amongst those, and 2 or 3 or 4

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killed themselves by gorging, this is in the last few days of the war after the Japanese surrender and we were in Changi.

There wasn't the food or drink to celebrate, did people sing?

I can't remember

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at Changi jail, I don't think there is a photo of Changi jail, anyway three of four Dutchmen over ate, gorged and died, we had a half colonel in the hospital in Changi in hospital barracks, and then later in the

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Singapore prison but we were incarcerated there, we overflowed outside, I didn't at any stage because I was masquerading as an ill person. Anyway we had a colonel Lee Starley, and Starley

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was in hospital for three and a half years believe it or not, he was an older man, had been in the great war, and after the war he was in London and he got onto those things that you ladies put in your hair called bobbie pins. And he was a sergeant if I remember rightly then, he brought a packet of bobbie pins over from the UK

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and he got into making them and made a fortune, he was a wealthy man there's no two ways about it. Anyway his son Ian Starley, and he was a doctor and after the Japanese surrender he came over with a few others at the camp near the prison

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and there was an oval or two there, we were together with others, and he jumped out of an aeroplane in parachutes and came down and landed on the oval, which I thought was really wonderful, I saw the young one and I think he's retired now, anyway I see him occasionally now at the

09:26:00:00

Novel military club, and he used to play a lot of squash there. Anyway that was about all I could tell you about that one, but I thought it was interesting that Ian Starley came down in a parachute with others, a few orderlies to see what they could do.

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Anyway, the old man was brought home by ship, we were having a bet to see if he would walk off the ship or if he would be carried off the ship.

Where was your money?

I thought he would walk off the ship, anyway he probably did the right thing,

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he staggered off the ship, and I don't think he was as ill as all that.

We have skipped a little bit, your five months in hospital, was that basic rehabilitation or was there something else wrong with you?

I suppose it was basic 'get better',

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as far as the Japs were concerned, they used to come and inspect us from time to time. The Japanese doctor, he was irregular and you wouldn't see him for a couple of months sometimes and then you would see him a fortnight apart and at the beginning of 1945 he did the rounds there and I was sent

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back to Outram Road jail.

And so prior to that you would have to prove to him that you weren't well enough to go back hospital?

Oh yes, I was lying on a bed and had been for some, best part of 2 years in hospital you see, partly in the barracks, the Gordon Highlanders barracks went there,

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then we were all over to the jail, I think they thought that the worst had happened, the British were coming the Australians were coming and they weren't doing to well they could bundle us all in the jail and lock the gate, so we were taken care of that way, anyway it didn't happen and

09:29:00:00

that's when I finished my jail sentence there, 20 years, I don't know how much I did of it but I had a lot to go, I hope they don't get into power again.

How would you describe the set up in hospital, how well equipped were they?

We weren't well equipped really, we had some good doctors, excellent doctors

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and the Brits had some good ones too, and I think I told you they had 3 ambulances at the surrender of Singapore in 1942, and instead of shaking a second wound out to Gordon Highlanders barracks

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into the hospital we were, they filled it up with medical supplies as much as they could, these 3 ambulances raced too

and fro, two and fro loaded with things and these were put in shell cases and they

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bored sufficient holes for this, and they would put the shell case on and cover it up and they were the medical supplies which were broached over time, I don't know what happened at the bitter end when they moved over to the Changi, I think they dug up the cases

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of medical supplies that were left over.

So what sort of treatment did you receive?

In the hospital?

Yes, for your rehabilitation?

Very good indeed, when I came out of Outram Road jail in 1944

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I can't remember exactly but I think it was late 43', I couldn't walk and I think my weight was about 6 stone and a bit and I was one big scabie, I had scabies, I was

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itching all over, I was covered in them, so they put me in hospital and put me in a sulphur bath, daily for a couple of weeks I suppose to cure the scabies, so I would lie in the bath for probably a couple of hours

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and then go to bed, but I was pretty thin, I could walk with help but not on my own, I gradually got better and better and better and got a bit of tucker in, not enough but all the same I got

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enough to improve me, and we had some good, excellent doctors there, they looked after us very well, they couldn't do much at times because they didn't have the goodies to look after us.

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It must have been good to have a conversation after all that time as well?

Yes, I suppose that was welcome, we were in a ward of about ten or twelve, and I think we more or less knew each other and a few Englishmen,

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and a couple of locals who had come out of the jail, so I had a bed next to John Wyatt and we used to chatter away.

Really, what was he in there for, the same thing?

He was court-martialled with me.

No, but in the hospital ward?

Oh he packed up

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he was pretty good at feigning illness, and he wasn't a fit man admittedly but just the same he was pretty good at feigning and making it worse, I can't remember when he came out but he was brought out of there before me.

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And he remained in Changi the whole time, until the bitter end, and he still stumbles a bit. I think he's getting towards the end of his time.

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So you were back in jail when the war was declared over and taken back into Changi?

We had better tucker in that time, not much better but better, so when I came out I could walk but I wasn't very good, but a couple of days on reasonable tucker we were not quite so bad after all.

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And I went down to Singapore and spent the night in a flat, it was Ron Cornford who had flown in from Australia.

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In that sort of situation when you had been out of the loop for o long, did you grill him about Australia and everything that he knew?

We talked about it a bit but didn't go on and bore them stiff, it's what happened, and as I told you they gave me one glass of beer, I wanted more.

09:37:00:00

How did that taste?

Very good, they brought it with them you see, they didn't have, much but the point was that I was only allowed one. **After the war what kind of changes in Changi had you seen in way of change in power?**

09:37:30:00

I don't think we saw anything of great interest, I think I left Changi roughly a week after the end of the war to come back to this country to Labuan, where there were quite a number of Australian troops there and we got aboard a Catalina and flew the rest of the way back.

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You must have been one of the first to come back then?

I was pretty early, if I remember rightly the air force sent a plea out to send me back, I can't remember why at the moment.

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There seemed to be the deliberately policy to delay a lot of the POW's until they were healthier?

Oh yes well some of them were pretty sick, they weren't strong enough to endure something like 3 weeks journey back to Australia by ship, or any other means for that matter.

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They were rather restricted flying capacity so they had to wait until they were well enough to travel.

I wondered if they wanted to shelter the Australian public from what had happened?

Don't know, our parents and family I think were advised

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not to encourage us to talk about our experiences during the war, I didn't say much I didn't really want to and didn't

discuss the matter at all, accept many relatives and so on knew that I had been in the bag but left it at that.

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Did your mother know you were alive?

Not until I think it was the last month of the war, we went allowed to write letters from there or receive them for that matter, Red Cross parcels were only received on one or two occasions, anyway we weren't allowed on one occasion to write a card.

Interviewee: Jack Macalister Archive ID 0954 Tape 10

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How did you come to write this card from Changi?

We were all allowed to write a card home, towards the end of the war I can't remember how close it was to the end but at a guess I think it was about 3 or 4 months 6 at the most.

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My mother didn't know if I still existed or not, anyway I wrote this card and popped it in with rest, I wasn't supposed to because of my position.

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It must have been before I went to hospital, anyway I sent this card and it was the first time my mother had received it, there was another couple of blokes like John Wyatt and Arthur Tinkler and some one else with me.

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How does one approach a letter to your mum who you know thinks you are dead?

If you hadn't written a for a couple of years or so, a letter, you don't have much trouble writing a proper card which was calibrated if you like.

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You put your postal address for my mother on one side and on the other you put a little letter, and you were only allowed, I can't remember, 24 words or something like that, it was limited, and I said something to the effect that I was there, and well with Arthur Tinkler and John Wyatt of Cadbury's.

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She didn't know who they would be, but Cadbury's was a clue, and she knew who Tinkler would be, he was a signals chap with us, anyway she got this and let them know she'd heard from me, anyway.

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I was interested that you said about Australian families were encouraged not to ask about Changi detainees?

I don't know quite where it came from, army HQ I suppose but it might have come from Canberra, but anyway that was it, they said those that had been POWs should not be queried or questioned,

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so keep off the subject as far as possible but not obviously off the subject, some people didn't talk at all, I saw in the newspaper the other day someone had been a prisoner in a war for some time and he hadn't talked about his experiences

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as a POW, whether it was with the Germans or Japanese I can't now remember, but anyway.

In what kind of emotional shape were you in when you got back?

I'm not highly emotional, I don't think I am, I just took things, I slipped back

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into the life I left in a way, see I joined Australian National Airways, I can't remember exactly but it was probably 2 or 3 weeks after I got back, I managed to pass a medical and went down to Sale to the necessary flying, airborne orders are such that you must do

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3 hours and 4 circuits and landings or something like that in the last 6 months, so I went down there and did that and bumped into Len Taylor who gave me a job with Australian National Airways.

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I had to get my licence going and anyway, he was very good about it and I got into the flying stuff there, after another couple of months or so I was the skipper of a DC3 again, and I'd done about 12,000 hours in the air force so I wasn't out on a limb

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exactly, that's not very many, but I got my license again and managed to fly with them again and did very well with Australian National Airways until they sold out in the late 50's I think.

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How did you manage the transfer the transfer from being incarcerated for so long to being a free man, and out of the air force?

Well I can only guess that I'm not very emotional and I was just glad to get out and that's about it.

Your mum must have had some interesting things to say when you got back?

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Yes I got back to Essendon and picked up by family friends and taken to the MCG and I told you there that when I had reported in and they got the name down and what squadron I had been in and so forth and the

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chappie behind the table said you are going to the something or other, Concord Hospital, no that's in Sydney, I've forgotten now?and I said 'I'm going home and thanks very much' and walked off.

So your mum had this card from you, the only bit of notification that you were still on the planet, and then you get back on a plane at Laverton, was she there to greet you?

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I think she was, we landed in Sydney on the Catalina spent the night with friends there and onto Melbourne, Essendon by Dakota, I think she was at Essendon

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because I had sent a message, or telephoned I can't remember, from Sydney and took me into the MCG and there they wanted to go to hospital and the chappie who was a non flying old bird, he was a flight lieutenant, so was I, he said, 'I'm?? So he said 'I'm going home, goodnight.?'

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And walked off.

How had your mum coped all those years without you?

I think she was a secretary to someone or other in Melbourne and she

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did a bit of typing there for some time, maybe a couple of years and then gave it away when I came back.

It must have been very surreal, your away for so long and she thought that you were probably dead and then you are there at Essendon airport and there in your lounge room again, I mean

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what do you say over a cup of tea after that long an absence?

I don't know except that, it wouldn't have been, or shouldn't have been very strange because I was at boarding school five years down in Geelong and that meant I wasn't home, then I was in the air force, no beg your pardon.

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I was flying for ANA, wasn't I, after that so I was away from home all over Australia, Perth, Brisbane, Darwin sometimes, flying there on DC3's DC 4's and DC6's and lastly DC9.

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Must have been good to get behind something that powerful?

Yes, I did quite a bit of time?the DC4's are pretty noisy, that's why I'm a bit hard of hearing now.

Look just to wrap the interview up I'm wondering who there was that made a difference for your service in the air force?

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I don't know that any one particular person, you know I moved around a bot in the 39, 40, 41 and early 42 in the air force so I got to know a lot of people, even in Perth.

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After we arrived in the first place I was made an honorary member of the Wells Club, and that was a pretty toffy club in Perth and so we used to go there sometime for a meal or spend the night or something or other, because Pearce was 30 miles out of Perth.

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So if you were out at Pearce it was a great idea if you get away on a Saturday and Saturday nights you see and spend them in Perth and paint the town red.

And what would you say were the things that kept you alive in all of that time?

You mean as a POW or do you mean after?

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No I mean probably through your whole air force career?

A good deal of it was in the bag, see I graduated at Point Cook with a four year commission, short service commission they called it, and at the end of that time you could go but I was

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on Singapore Island when that four years expired, so when I got back I was told I had to go because they had to many people they wanted to get rid of, anyway emotionally it didn't worry me much, I bumped into Squiz Taylor and he took me on at Australian National Airways and I was back in the groove again,

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where I was enjoying it.

So would you say it was just luck that kept you alive or do you think you had some particular skills that helped?

I think it must have been a fair bit of luck don't you, with all that, I think it was luck somehow.

I guess but to a point when you are given a court-martial and sentenced to death you still

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don't go mad or lose hope or despair, something else was keeping you going?

I wasn't thrilled to the back teeth getting sentenced to death, but you don't go and weep in the corner about it, you only hope, keep your fingers crossed, that it's going to prove

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you will get out of it and I got out by the skin of my teeth I suppose in that the emperor had his birthday, but I didn't let it worry me too much, I didn't enjoy it but I didn't let it worry me.

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You are a master of understatement! Looking back on your service in the air force, do you think that Australia has acquitted itself well as a country, or do you think it got into a bit of a mess there fighting a war?

It's a hard one to answer isn't it, I think we should be grateful

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to the Americans for being on our side or vice versa for the war and with the battle of the Coral Sea going that saved Australia without a doubt, the Japanese would have come down and cleaned us up if they had managed to set a foot on Australia

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and so forth, and stay here for a few days, closest they got was New Guinea, and they were stopped, we were very fortunate. When the, Australia is mixed up in Iraq with the Americans,

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I personally think John Howard did the right thing, because Saddam Hussein, who was a bad egg there is no doubt about that, he was a particularly bad egg from what I have read about him, a cruel man and I only hope that he is caught, Lord knows where he is but I hope he is caught.

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But I am grateful to the Yanks for being faithful or whatever the word is, the doctor asked me a couple of months ago and I said that I thought he had been a very good man and the Yanks have been good people to have on our side, that's what I think.

INTERVIEW ENDS