Australians at War Film Archive

Edward Clark (Eddie) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **As I said before, we will do a quick version of your story but start with where were you born?**

I was born in Roslyn Park, Western Australia, on the 15th of April in1923 on the product of the Depression and that made a big impression on my life too, and probably everybody else's that was in the Depression.

01:00 **How did your father go finding work?**

He was out of work for a long time and it resulted in the oldest children in the family. I was the fourth child in the family of seven and my older sister and two brothers all left school at 14 to get work because my father was on the dole. In those days they had to go up the country and you would get about five shillings a week and things were very

01:30 stretched but it must have been a huge stressful period for my parents. But we always had food on the table and we had a very happy childhood and we still. I have still got three sisters alive in Perth, a brother alive in Melbourne and we are always in regular contact so we

02:00 formed very strong family ties as a result of that. I myself left at 14 and got employment in the state government. My parents were very keen that we should all be in a government job or in a trade and that is what happened to all of us. And I worked in the Workers Home Board

02:30 which is the equivalent of the Housing Commission now in WA [Western Australia] until I joined the air force. In fact, when I was aged 16 the war had broken out. I will put it the other way round the war had broken out and I was 16 at that time and the navy were recruiting when you were 16 and I, my brother happened to

03:00 be at Flinders naval base doing a gunnery course. He was in the naval reserve and he was immediately inducted into navy and posted to Hong Kong to become a gunner in the royal navy. And he served there until he was

03:30 suffering badly, we were all fair completion and he suffered badly from skin cancers and sun burn and he was medically U/S [unserviceable] and was told that he had to be below decks. So, they posted him back to Australia and he hadn't quite finished his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner so they let him go

04:00 back for six months to his apprenticeship. And then he was returned to the navy as an engine room artificer and he worked as ,a mainly on armed merchant cruises but you wouldn't remember them but there was a line called the bay line, Jervis Bay to Moreton Bay. And they flew between Australia and Melbourne, oh England in

04:30 wartime or in pre war too and he finished up being in England on the in the Atlantic when the submarine war was going on. And he was there for three years and he survived the war but he was very, very lucky to do it because, you know to be in the engine room,

05:00 in one of those ships. And you get torpedoed was just about guaranteed death, death, death what is the word I am looking for?

Death trap, death wish.

Death wish, a death certificate really.

His story sounds very extraordinary as well.

Very.

For your story, where did they send you for training? Where were you trained?

05:30 I trained in WA [Western Australia]. I joined the air force on October the 12th in 1941. I applied when I was 18 and then I went on to the air force reserve. And I was on that for six months and then we were inducted on October the 12th 1941 and

06:00 I was in the initial training school at Pearce which is an airfield, an air force base just about 30 miles out of Perth. And I was there for three months and then went to Cunderdin. I was categorised as a pilot and went to Cunderdin with about probably 60 of us and the navigators then went

06:30 off. They went off to do their naval training and the wireless air gunners went off to gunnery school. Each category followed a different path after the first 10 weeks of training. I was at Cunderdin for about two months and we did our initial training.

07:00 It was an initial training school on, that was on Tiger Moths, and that was a big jump for me. I had never flown a, I could never drive a motor car, a motor bike or anything other than a push bike and it was, you know it was right from, it was all new. And it was strange to finish up getting, finally passing that course and you weren't capable of driving

07:30 anything else. But that was pretty tough because we started at six in the morning, the flying started at six in the morning, the lectures started at eight. So, half the course would do flying in the morning and the other half would do practice in the morning and then they would change over at midday. The flying group would then do lectures in the afternoon and the other group would go up and

08:00 do the flying and it was in February when we started that course. And it was in the middle of summer and it was very unpleasant flying conditions. I suffered badly from air sickness during that period but ultimately I learned to put my mouth in a certain position on the side so that it all went overboard. And my instructor never knew

08:30 the many times that I was sick because he was sitting in the front seat and I was sitting in the back seat and his only view was if he looked up in the mirror because he had a mirror that was focussed onto the student. But if they had of known that I was being as sick as often as I was I don't think they would have persevered, but anyway. Coming back to the training, the

09:00 group the next day, the afternoon training group would do lectures in the morning and the group that had flown in the afternoon would reverse the position so it was very tough because you know everything was new. You had lectures, you had to learn the master and theory of flight and all that type of thing and they went into some detail of that so you understood what was going on

09:30 in the aeroplane, and that was all done in a Tiger Moth. We did 56 hours total. You were supposed to do 60 hours. I got 56 I think and that. It was quite a good training and we had a few dropped out there. That is when they found out that people lacked

10:00 co-ordination or if they did lack co-ordination they wouldn't persevere with them. But I think about 60 of us went up there and 50 finished up going onto the next stage which was at Geraldton.

And what was that stage? What was it for? What happened then?

The next stage?

What was Geraldton about?

Geraldton was the service flying training school, there was about

10:30 six or seven of them around Australia but we, we went and did all of our training in Western Australia and I am sure the Victorians would have done all of theirs in Victoria. But that was split up into two parts the elementary flying training and the service flying training. They had two airfields. Now the airfields that they used were really

11:00 farms that they had commandeered and compensated the owners no doubt. But what they would do was just put markers around the boundary and a wind sock somewhere in the corner and that became the aerodrome. And the first part of the, the elementary part we did at on Ansons, in fact the whole lot was done on

11:30 Ansons but we did that at a place called Georgina. And it would, it consisted of learning to fly the aircraft and about half of that was done with an instructor and it followed the same pattern as at Cunderdin. You do lectures in the morning or flying in the morning and in the reverse in the afternoon and that is how

12:00 they got full utilisation out of the aircraft and not overworking the pupils too much. But you have got to realise that we were just taken off the street and the discipline was very strict and at all the training schools because they wanted people to understand that they had to take orders and obey them explicitly. And it

12:30 meant that you were fully employed because I think the idea was to keep you busy.

We will definitely talk about training in more detail later on. Where did you crew up?

Before I went to the ATU [Advanced Training Unit] that is where we crewed up. I did what was called a general reconnaissance. I went to general reconnaissance school

13:00 which was at Cressy. That is where pilots learned the finer details of navigation and we did a little bit of astro and also we did ship recognition. And actually did flew planes down to the, we were flown down to the Melbourne docks and you would just do one fly pass and you had to describe all the

13:30 ships in the dock, the type of boat, how many tonnes and counter sterns or cruiser sterns or whatever, number of funnels and so on. This was all to improve your ability to understand what the navigator's job was, because once you formed up into a crew. The pilot was always the captain of the aircraft regardless of rank.

14:00 And I had a flying officer in my crew and I was a sergeant at that time. And the other two were sergeant's too but there was never any doubt about who made the decisions that affected the aircraft. Naturally, you got advice from your navigator about navigation but you knew what was going on because of the background we had at this GR [General Reconnaissance] school at Cressy. Now, I was there for, that took about eight

14:30 weeks and from there we were posted to the ATU. Now that was No. 1 ATU at Bairnsdale and I got down there on the 5th of January in 1943 and that was the start of probably the most dramatic year of my life. We, when we arrived there I had come from

15:00 Perth on a troop train and so did the other Western Australians. We had been five days on the troop train and I had a very sore mouth and we got there down at Bairnsdale. We arrived at about 1.30 and we immediately went, were given our quarters and had to report on a parade down at 2.30. And then we had an address

15:30 by the commanding officer and it was the most horrific address, you know most of us were keen to win the war off our own boot, but this bloke said, I might point out that Bairnsdale had a very bad reputation because they had had a series of crashes down there and on one day 19 people were killed in crashes and he said, "I know you think you are coming to the valley of the shadow of death,

16:00 but I can assure you if any of you fail this course the army will be waiting outside the gates to induct you as soon as you are discharged from the air force." And you know, in that day it was terrible. Because it was, I don't think, well I didn't really know what we had struck because as I said we were all as keen as mustard and we had all got that far, there was never any intention of

16:30 doing anything else but trying to get to the war. So, anyway, we had to go back on parade, oh we were told what form the course took and what each mustering did was the pilots would be taught how to fly the aircraft, always with an instructor of course. The crew, the navigator would be would go into

17:00 the finer points of navigation and what was available in the machine and so on. And the air gunners would be given what was relevant to them in armaments and loading the machine guns and that sort of thing and correcting stoppages. And that went on for the best part of three to four weeks and at the end of that time we started to fly together as a crew and get onto the operational side of

17:30 it and doing exercises, dive bombing and high level bombing and navigational exercises over Bass Strait and where was I. We were about to form up. Yes, we went on parade, and as I said, I had this problem in my mouth and I vomited on parade and

18:00 I was told to drop out and report to the medical officer. And then the crews, the rest of the fellas just mixed up and formed into crews and when I got back, when I went to the hospital, the doctor said, "Where have you been?" and he looked at my mouth and he said, "Jesus, where have you been?" I said, "I have just come from the troop train from Perth." And he said, "Oh,

18:30 that accounts for it." We used to stop, we had a full kitchen on the train and when the meal was due to be served they would stop the train and we would all line up and get the food and they just had one bowl to wash the dishes in. You each had your own paddy can and so on and he says, "That is probably where you would pick it up." So, I suppose a lot of other people had Vincent's disease too on that train but anyway

19:00 I had. He painted it and it eased the problem straight away but by the time I got back there was just one navigator and two air gunners left so there was no doubt who we would be crewing up with so I said to them, "Look. I wouldn't be too impressed with what had happened on parade," but I told them what happened at the medical centre and I said, "Look, there is no reason why

19:30 we can't form ourselves up into an efficient crew as long as we learn all we can on our specific part of the course." And you know we were together for the whole of that year in 1943 and we never had a problem and quite a few crews, you know after a short time, somebody wouldn't fly with somebody else, you know you would never hear much about that,

20:00 the friction that went on. But some people were just incompatible I suppose. Anyway, we had a very good relationship and we retained that until one of the air gunners died in 1995 and the other one is still alive in Seymour and the navigator died too in May.

20:30 Of course, I was the youngest in the crew and that was a further complication I looked very the young too. I will show you some pictures too, they are irrelevant, they were taken the day we arrived at Bairnsdale.

How old were you back then? 18?

No, I think I was 19 then I turned, no I turned 20, in 19 in

21:00 Geraldton and I was well on the way of going through there because that was about the time we got to Geraldton.

Now where were you sent first as a crew?

Oh well, we continued training after the ATU, incidentally while we were at the ATU we lost two complete crews, one of the West Australian crews, one of the West Australian pilots, Bertie Greenwood and another fella called

21:30 Dave Connell. And they both went out on the same exercise but on different nights. Bert had a runaway prop, this was the enquiry's decision and also probably confirmed by some extent by the noises reported by citizens who seen sparks.

22:00 He had a runaway prop which he couldn't control. The aircraft was fitted with Kerr Selective props. And they were very unreliable and subsequently we converted to Hamilton standard props, which were hydraulically operated and it was a much more serviceable and efficient propeller than the Kerr Selective, but anyway.

22:30 Bert had this runaway prop and he wasn't able to control it and it was at night at 1 o'clock in the morning and I don't know what he had done that day but it was towards the end of the course. It was about the beginning of the last week of the course and because, you know you hear of the amount of serviceability down there and because you know, you have got a position where

23:00 the instructors are new. And my instructor was a Hudson pilot who had one hour on the Beaufort but that would never be permitted now but in wartime they were desperate. See, the Japanese had come into the war and they were coming down, they were down in New Guinea by this time and some of the instructors were being used, taken off

23:30 the Hudson pilots particularly to go up there and fire at the Japanese. Now my instructor had one hour flying and on the Beaufort and he was instructing me and I could tell he was inexperienced and he was learning as he went along, it is probably a good way to learn but usually an instructor has a better knowledge

24:00 than that. And also because of the unserviceability we used to get behind and weather would also cause you to lose time. The two factors combined meant that we would lose a lot of flying and that meant you had to catch up and this is what happened to Greenwood. He got behind and I, it didn't ever come up in the enquiry what he had done the previous

24:30 day. But it is just about odds that he'd flown pretty well early in that day as well. And fatigue was a big thing everyone complained about, all you wanted to do was go to bed when you were off. You see it was wartime and everyone was very serious for the country and I think they bent the rules a lot then and the other factor was we were very inexperienced to be going onto such a sophisticated

25:00 aircraft with that amount of flying. I had 156 total and that was typical of all of the people that I came off course with and also some of the other fellas were on 21 course in the states that we met up with there, anyway.

Did you get the sense that you were being rushed through?

Well, you were definitely under pressure but as I said, you appreciated

25:30 why it was being done because they wanted aircrew. At that time they were building the Beaufort at a faster rate than they could train aircrew. And it didn't help to have losses in the training either because every time you went down there you lost, well we lost two and…

Out of how many, there was a crew of four?

There were a crew of four, yes.

26:00 They lost, everybody was killed in both accidents.

And how many of you were they training?

There were 12 crew.

That is quite a proportion isn't it?

Well, we went up to Nowra then and Parker, Geoff Parker, who was also West Australian, I might tell you. I will just finish with the ATU first. Another factor down there, there was not only the inexperience of the instructors

26:30 and the pilots there was the inexperience of the ground staff. But everyone was in the same boat. You had a few senior ex air force people overseeing a large number of recruits and if they hadn't been in the air force and been trained. They hadn't been out on the line long and everyone was in on a learning curve and

27:00 it, you know, they were all contributing factors to the high fatality rate that they were experiencing in with the training.

Well, if we could…

The next course, the torpedo course was the next one, sorry I will just carry on, this is important too because we lost another crew up here. We went to Nowra, which was then called the base torpedo

27:30 unit and subsequently became 6ATU and that is where they trained both the pilots to or both the crews to drop torpedoes. When we went there, incidentally only eight of the original, sorry nine of the original 12 went there because one of the crew, one of the

28:00 captains, one of the pilots, was walking on the wing and he fell off and broke his arm so he couldn't continue. But he did subsequently catch up with it so he wasn't really a fatality. It meant that only nine of us went up to the base torpedo unit. When we got there we were told that we had to learn to fly not above 20 feet above the

28:30 sea and that requires intense concentration. And we did all of our training over at Jervis Bay except when we went out to the open sea and did an attack on a merchant ship which was sailing past, a simulated attack of course, on a navy destroyer or a

29:00 Dutch destroyer. And this way you would get used to judging the proper height to drop the torpedo, which was 1200 yards on the bow at 150 feet straight and level. And you had to sit up there above these ships and if they were war ships they would throw everything at you. It had a very high it had a very high fatality

29:30 rate in actual service. We went through all that training there and in the process only two of us went through without an incident of some sort. And in one case Parker he, I think he stalled the aircraft by the sound of it. Something happened anyway. And he crashed into the sea and three of them were killed, a pilot, one air gunner and a navigator and then

30:00 the, another fella hit trees on the edge of Jervis Bay when he was flying low and he finished up in Jervis Bay and one of the air gunners was killed in that. They quickly replaced him but the ultimate result was that we lost fleet there too so we were down two from the original

30:30 12 we were down to nine. So, we lost 25 per cent of the crew in training and I think we had about the worst record of anybody during the war.

I just have to for the benefit of the life arc get you to move along, I wonder if you could tell me basically the places you were sent overseas?

After the ATU we were posted to

31:00 100 Squadron, the remaining at that time there were eight remaining, because the fella that fell off the wing, he wasn't there and we were all posted to 100 Squadron at Milne Bay. Now, Milne Bay is on the south eastern end of Papua New Guinea. And the airport

31:30 through the bay there is two peninsulas that go out either side that form Milne Bay and they go out for about 30 mile and Milne Bay is at the head of it. The worst place for an aerodrome you could ever have picked because it rained pretty well every day, every afternoon almost, it would rain about two inches, everything was wet all the time.

32:00 The humidity was high, it was up around the nineties all the time, it wouldn't matter if you were just lying on your bed you would be perspiring, it was a diabolical place, but anyway.

How long did you have to stay there for?

Well, we were there for about four months then we moved across to Goodenough Island but still 100 Squadron. Incidentally, while we were moving from Jervis Bay, ah from Nowra up to Milne Bay the squadron was changed from

32:30 General Reconnaissance Bomber Torpedo to General Reconnaissance Bomber. They had formed up a new squadron which was H Squadron and they were to concentrate on torpedo work. So, even though we had done the torpedo training and lost crew in the process, we never did use that skill in operations because the squadron had changed its motive operation or the

33:00 motive operation was changed. Then we stopped at Goodenough. I finished the tour, consisted of 50 sautés, now a sauté consists of any operation could be a bombing or any or any mission which will bring you in contact with the enemy and we were down to nine crew

33:30 in that squadron. The squadron strength is 27 crews and we were down to nine. And it meant that we were flying two out of every three days and I actually was not permitted to fly in, once we, until I did my last bombing attack on ___ in November, when I say I, I mean we as a crew did that.

34:00 And I wasn't permitted to do any more operations but it was either 50 sautés, 300 hours or nine months and I completed the sauté's. And I wasn't the only one, several of us did, completed the requirement of the 50 sauté's in five months. So,

34:30 I was in, at the end of November, the whole crew was not permitted to do operations but we used to fly between Goodenough and Milne Bay while they were transporting the squadron material across and we would ferry stuff across and both we had without a turret. You were utilised but then I was posted south at the end of the six months.

Back to Australia?

Yes, back home.

Did you get a leave period?

Yes, about six weeks I think

35:00 I had.

What were you employed with after that?

I then went back to No. 1 ATU at East Sale, it had moved from West to East Sale and I was an instructor there for about 14 months and after that I went to. When we had finished that period of instruction we went to we could select any type of

35:30 aircraft we would like to fly to be posted to and we were always posted to it. I went in to see the chief instructor and he said, "You are due for a posting," and he said, "Where would you like to go?" and I said, "I would like to fly a Mosquito." So he said, "Okay." He said, "I would recommend that you go onto transports," and I said, "Why is that?" And he said, "Because the war is going to finish fairly soon." It was very good advice, I should have

36:00 probably have taken that advice. But I said, "No." I was still fairly young and I thought I want to fight that Mosquito because it was a very hot machine in those days. So, I went up and did the conversion at Williamtown and I was at Williamtown when the war finished but they had lost two crews. One up at squadron

36:30 which was a Mosquito squadron based on Labuan and they wanted to keep that squadron intact. So two of us were posted there and I was up there at Labuan for three months and it was like, you know in peace time. It was a lovely island and it was like a holiday resort really compared to Milne Bay.

What did they have you doing?

Well,

37:00 not very much. There wasn't too much to do, we used to play a lot of volley ball, but as I said, it was a real recuperation period but what, there was a fighter wing up there, 78 Wing, which became the wing they sent to Japan and the Mosquitos were to escort the fighters up to Japan. Now, at one stage they were going to send it straight up from

37:30 Labuan but I don't think the Americans wanted them up there before the end, the next year anyway. So, we were subsequently about three months after we got there I think it was about December we came back to we were posted back to Richmond to Mosquito ferry flight. Now a lot of people were getting

38:00 out of the air force at this time and so the squadron, the personnel changed a bit. But there were quite a few of us from one squadron decided to stop on and do the escort to Japan which you know was coming up at any time. The other thing that we were doing was ferrying aircraft that had been built under a contact which

38:30 that Haviland had with the air force to build 60 Mosquitos. They were building the Australian Mosquito there and they had to, they exercised the right to complete the contract so they kept producing these Mosquitos and we took the liberty of them and then ferried them to storage in Lowood, in Kingaroy, Archerfield, Evans Head wherever they had their storage

39:00 space. Now, subsequently all of those machines were sold to dispose them and the normal, the going price was 50 pounds for a Mosquito or with the engines or 35 without the engines. So, there was one bought by an

39:30 orchardist at Ballarat, an English Mosquito, Mark 16 with a more powerful engine than the Australian one. And he bought it and he was going to set it up in the middle of his orchard on a turntable so that when there was the risk of a frost he would light the tar pots behind it and start the Mosquito up and rotate it around and spread the warmth to minimise the effect of the frost.

He bought a fan basically?

Well, that is what it was but.

I better stop you there because I think the tape is about to run out.

Tape 2

00:32 **You were just saying that after that period of delivering surplus you went into a new squadron?**

Yes, we went up to, we went to 86 Squadron which was a Photographic Reconnaissance Unit based at Canberra but we used to have to send attachments all over Australia but

01:00 mainly in the north of Australia to do photography for the bureau of mineral resources who would then analyse them. They were mysterious photographs, you had to have two so they could get relief. I was there until 1948, fairly uneventful. And

01:30 I got married in 1947 to my wife who is still with me, which is unusual these days.

Where had you met her?

I met her down at Lorne in 1944 I think when I was instructing down at Bairnsdale. One of the fellas came from Geelong and it was summer time about November or December and

02:00 he said, “We ought to go down to Lorne.” So, the three of us went down too, another West Australian and myself and Tag Picket, and she was stopping at the same guest house and we got friendly and she asked me back. When we were leaving she gave me her phone number, so next time I was in, and she said, “Next time you are in Melbourne ring me.” So, I was stopping at a house in Northcote,

02:30 I had a relative there and which isn’t very far away as you probably know, it developed and we got married in 1947. And I was still in the air force until April ’48, but she became pregnant for some reason and I decided that it was, the air force, I knew I was going to be posted

03:00 down to East Sale which by that time was the central flying school to do an Advanced Instructors Course and I didn’t want to go back down there because I had spent so much time during the war there. So, I went down to see the assistant general manager of TAA [Trans Australia Airlines] who was a former CO [Commanding Officer] of mine, John Riland, and I said,

03:30 “Any chance of a job?” And he said, “Oh gee, I wish you had of come earlier. We have got a course starting on Monday.” So he said, “Go back to Canberra and I will get in touch with you as soon as there is a vacancy.” So, I went back to Canberra and I got a telegram on the Wednesday to start on the following Monday because somebody had dropped off the course for some reason. So, that put me into civil and I flew with TAA for the

04:00 rest of my, until I was 60 and I had, you know quite a good career then.

Fantastic, so the war really directed your career didn’t it?

Well, my employer wanted, after the war the Workers Home Board kept writing to me saying that they wanted me to return and I stalled them for a while. But finally they said if you are not back by a certain date you will have to resign. So, I wrote a letter of

04:30 resignation because by that time I was going but I really didn’t want to go back to that office job. I had actually started, I was well advanced in accountancy course so I probably would have finished up an accountant but…

When did you begin that course?

Before the war, before I joined the air force. It was

05:00 not long before I got the job actually and I was doing night school too. So, you know, I was always a fairly good student and I was keen to learn and I would have definitely finished up as an accountant I think because that was the way I was heading. But you know, things happen and I did all right as a pilot so I might switch to airline flying and that was probably the

05:30 probably the right decision.

Do you still like flying?

I still like it. You know you lose your co-ordination and your reflexes have slowed up and my son-in-law actually had a light aircraft after I retired, he had a Mooney. Are you familiar with aircraft at all? It is a little four seater plane and he said, “I am going over to Perth how about coming with me.”

06:00 He was working with McDonalds on site selection at that time, he subsequently had a stall with them and he said, so we went over in this Mooney and when we got there he said, “Look, you might as well

just get checked out on it." So, I went down to Karrakatta and I was doing circuits down there in a Mooney that they had to get endorsed and it was the second day and it was rough as anything.

06:30 And you know, I am working like a one armed fiddler because I had come off the air bus which was you know you had a flight engineer and a co pilot and if you were flying. The co pilot would operate the radio and vice versa and I said to the instructor when we were flying down I said, "I will finish this period but I am not going to do any more."

07:00 I said, "I would sooner be down there playing golf than doing this." So I said, "I did all this when I was 18 so I am not going to persevere with it." And he said, "Oh look, you only have to do forced landings and then we are finished." I said "Oh, bad luck." So, I paid him out and I never bothered. I used to fly them with my son-in-law a bit but I never worried about getting endorsed on it. I think when you have been flying those jets they have such a power and such a,

07:30 you know they are so reliable the jet engine, those jet engines, that is the big transformation that has taken place in aviation. Those jet engines, you know they only go round where as the reciprocating engine you have bits going like this and that is where the problems, one of the problems. That is about, and I stopped with TAA for the rest of my life, for the rest of my working life.

08:00 I retired in 60, it was the retiring age of 60 and I have been busy ever since.

Excellent, well lets go right back to the beginning again. I was wondering what role or participation your family had in the First World War?

None at all. I had an uncle who was in the army but my father wasn't.

08:30 Strangely enough he joined; he was in the army in World War II. He was in the army, he was working in the salvage core and he had an engineering background. And they were deciding what they could salvage from any army any material or any service material that came to them that had been damaged or in an accident and

09:00 he did that for most of the war. My oldest brother, I told you was in, he was in the navy. And he served right through the war except for that period where he had to complete his apprenticeship to qualify for the engineering job. My other brother joined the air force and he was in New Guinea also flying as an air gunner on a Liberator [bomber].

09:30 He only, the only operational flying he did was during his training when he was working with a heavy bomber operational unit which was an American unit based at Nadzab in New Guinea. And he was up there for about three months and he was an air gunner.

So he was also older than you?

Yes, yes, the other two brothers, my sister was

10:00 the oldest in the family. I think he was born in 1915, my oldest brother was born in 1917. Incidentally, my father at that time was doing engineering up in the goldfields and subsequently they moved to Perth but my, he died when he was

10:30 70, 78, my oldest brother. My second brother was born in 1919 and I was born in 1923. He lives over at Mount Waverly and he is currently still alive which I am pleased, I see him every week. I go over, his wife died about a year ago and he is living on his own and he wont move out of the house and I mean he

11:00 won't shift.

So, I was wondering what sort of climate it was when you were growing up, if someone's parents or fathers or uncles hadn't been involved in the First World War did you experience any sort of discrimination or recrimination for that?

Not at all no. It was never a factor as far as I know, and because my mother was English.

Okay, where is she from?

Bomlekempt [?]. I went over there to find the house.

11:30 I got her birth certificate and found out where she was born, but it was a modern house, and apparently that part of London, it is just on the outskirts of London really. And it had been flattened during the Blitz, they said and the whole area had been redeveloped.

When did she come to Australia?

I think about 1913 or something like that and she I don't know. I don't know how she met my father but obviously

12:00 they were up at Werona or somewhere, some godforsaken place, we wouldn't have said it to her. We were, talking about that she was very, very, we were pro empire because she was English and you know Australia at that time was very much almost a colony of Britain. And you know it was

12:30 always referred to as the mother country and there was no suggestion. When I tried to join the air force,

the navy when I was 16, I had hardly got back home before someone had told her that I had been there and she wouldn't sign until I was 18. So I said, "Okay," because they told me to go away until I grew up. So,

13:00 I thought that is the end of the navy. They have had their opportunity so you know the air force were advertising for recruits, so I joined the air force. When you join the air force's aircrew that is what you are you don't join as any particular mustering they categorise you as a result of the training that you do. Your assessment of what you do in the ITS [Initial Training School] and Pearce

13:30 and that is when it is after about 10 weeks. After that that the wireless air gunners were posted out of that unit and the pilots and the navigators finished the rest of the course, but it wasn't much more a bit more technical in navigation and armament and that sort of thing. But that is basically, see the

14:00 Depression dominated our lives to some extent, if you were born at that period. Even when I, you know I had done year 9 when I was 14 and there was no suggestion of me going beyond year 9 because I had done a commercial course but I had to get a job with the government. I tried with

14:30 the PMG [Post Master General's Department] and the Western Australian State Government and I finished up in the state government. But I was fortuitous, I think in hindsight but I finished up in the air force. That was a very important decision that I made.

What were your ambitions as a child?

Oh sport, I was very sport minded, you wouldn't think so from my physic but I used to try.

15:00 **What sport?**

Well, I couldn't get a kick at Australian rules at the school. I went to Fremantle Boys' School, that was the high school and they were pretty tough down there and we used to play kick to kick. And I couldn't take a mark against them so I used to, being at the front if the ball came short. I would get a kick but the trouble was they would come forward too and quite often I would get flattened. So, after a while

15:30 I thought there was no percentage in that, but I was very keen on cricket too. So, I took up soccer. I played soccer with Caledonians.

Was there much of a soccer league or presence at that time?

Well, there was in our suburb because the Caledonians were there they were Scots as the name applies and I actually played during the war. I played in the fist division but I only got that game because the better players had gone to the war, most

16:00 of the players had gone to the war but they still had kept sport going and of course I was keen on cricket too.

So, did you imagine a life or a future in sport?

No, I didn't. No, I knew I wasn't that good. I couldn't run fast enough.

I mean these days it is such a professional affair but back then, what sort of, how much of a career was that going into sport?

Oh well, Bradman was around then, you know we were all

16:30 very conscious of the Australian test team. But of course, nobody made much money out of it then and the same with the football. You know the footballers, they would play for two or three pounds a week. I remember Richmond Jack Dyer saying it ,and he was still playing after the war but no, I have been very keen on sport but I was I was intelligent enough to recognise that

17:00 you have to get qualifications. You know, I wasn't specifically encouraged at home to do the accountancy but I was doing that by correspondence and I was doing night school as well learning typing and that was all of my own volition. So, it wasn't as if I was in an academically in an academic background.

17:30 We used to play bridge and that sort of thing so I mean they were decent people anyway and I was still very happy to be in the family but it is interesting that you when you look back, I don't think there was very many decisions that I made which were wrong. I was lucky to get through the war there was no doubt about that. I mean I never

18:00 at any stage had a problem during a tour, and you know you are lucky when there No. 1, serviceability No. 1, but then we did an attack on two Japanese cruises at night and I did a dive bombing attack. I often wondered if I hadn't have had the crew with me I wouldn't have kept on with the attack as long as I did because they throw a lot of

18:30 stuff up. You know it is all whipping past you and they reckon there is only about one in every five is a tracer so in between them there is four others which weren't tracers and armour piercing that sort of thing. But not that you think about that at the time but you go back and think, "Jesus that was some sort of an experience," but oh no, the bombing attack on Rabaul.

19:00 They had aircraft fighters but we used to do them at high level and we got caught and searched light there one night but then that causes you to show a bit of haste to get out of the place because as soon as we dropped the bombs. And I was just turning away from the target they just come on and grabbed us and they didn't hold us for long but that was because I was able to manoeuvre.

19:30 But if you were in the bombing run of course you have got to keep on with the bombing run. That is another straight and level exercise you have got to have for about a minute and that is very. It took them a fair bit of time to line up on you if they got you in the lights. But it was nothing like Europe. I never rated the risk bombing that we did anything like Australia, it wasn't Europe.

20:00 They lost 25 per cent of their bomber force in one night.

Even so, getting lit must have been a test of nerves?

Oh yes, you sort of got to keep your head down and don't you have got to keep watching the incidents. See that McConnell coming back to that secondary aircraft that we lost at the ATU. He was in search lights after he had completed the navigation exercise out in Bass Strait where we used to

20:30 drop a bomb or two on an island. Then he would go down to Hobart and then come back and it is usually about a three and a half hour flight, but he did it. He got back very early about four in the morning, but once again I don't know how tired he was but I would have been exhausted if I had of done that at the end of the day. Anyway, he got in search lights and the instruction was, concentrate on your incidents

21:00 don't look out. And the chances are he probably took evasive actions and lot his, you have got to keep watching the incidents and remember what you had done the previous time. See if you banked left you have got to come back to the right and if you misread the incidents or panicked he could have easily lost control and that is apparently what he did because they held the lights on him for a while and he

21:30 finished up crashing. But all of those things make a pretty big impact on you. In Nowra we had a number of funerals. The only benefit of the funeral was that you got the rest of the day off, so we used to go to the pub. It was fairly, there was a great camaraderie

22:00 between pursuits to. Everybody in the crews seemed to get on well together and I would like to comment on that in the squadron too because it was a wonderful support you got in the squadron. I never ever felt more comfortable than when I was coming back to Milne Bay that because you knew somebody would be there waiting for you, it was very emotional. It could

22:30 be, you know I didn't let it get to me too much it is probably getting to me more now than I was then. You know, but that sort of thing makes a big impact on you the support you got we always went to the officers mess for bacon and eggs and the sergeants had a mess too but we would be eating baked beans and tin bacon so it was…

That camaraderie, where does it come from?

23:00 Oh, it is just you are looking for neutral, neutral support I think in return for the support you are getting so it is just a, it is just a wonderful atmosphere. Because it is still, the war hasn't been won and, as I said, that speech that we were given by the

23:30 commanding officer at Bairnsdale really was terrible because of the attitude everyone had towards getting trained. And how keen they were to get into the action for no other reason than they knew it was the only way to stop the Japs.

I would just like to go back again if we could, what are your recollections of the lead up to war?

24:00 Oh really, you know, what was I, I was about 15 or 16 yes. I used to read the papers and we saw Churchill and waving the piece of paper to say that there is peace in our time. I must say I didn't, there was a feeling that there

24:30 wouldn't be a war to some extent and I think when it finally happened it was a bit of surprise to most people. But once it did you know there was a huge nationalistic feeling that you don't get in Australia. There isn't a great deal of nationalism in this country when you compare it to Europe for instance and the Americans too, nearly every second house

25:00 has the stars and stripes flying and…

From your perspective, were you worried about England before the war started?

I'd say the concern was more in our family anyway because, as I said, our mother was English. We were more concerned with what was going on in Europe, you know no one suspected that the Japanese would attack us and that only occurred

25:30 when you know fairly suddenly even when it occurred. It wasn't suspected by the Americans and certainly that is when I was at Pearce and we became suddenly aware that we were vulnerable. And we were digging fox holes, you know a hole about five feet which would hold a man and

26:00 then you would have a couple of sand bags around it so that you could build it for height for whoever was in it. Because five feet was just about, and another sand bag was all I needed but some blokes needed a few more but that is the same at Geraldton. We were on guard duty at night in addition to doing the lectures and the flying we were out at Georgina. We camped

26:30 there overnight and we were required to do, there was six of us in a tent and we were required to do two hours guard duty each night so you might get the midnight till two or two to four or four to six even though you might be flying the next morning. You know there was a lot of pressure, as I said, they were desperately short of aircrew and it was

27:00 all about getting people through and sometimes I think the standard suffered in the process.

When war broke out in Europe I think you were 16, what were your thoughts about being involved?

Oh you see my brother had already gone and he was he had already, and you know I intended to join

27:30 up, no question on it. I never had any suggestion that I would do anything else and my other brother was the same but he was in a reserved occupation and he couldn't get out until 1944.

What was he doing?

He was doing moulding with the West Australian railways which made him essential service and there was no way those people could join up. He tried several times but they wouldn't,

28:00 you know, they were listed and but anyway, finally when he finished his time, he eventually got off and he got out in 1944. And he went through fairly quickly and got onto Liberators.

When the war broke out did you think it would last long enough for you to get involved?

Well, I worried that it wouldn't but yes I did think it would last. Because the

28:30 British fleet controlled the ocean, I didn't realise that they were all going to be sunk you know in the big battle ships were being lost at a huge rate, particularly when they came over here into the Pacific. No, things were very serious I would say until mid 1943 that is when things started to turn around. And you know, we thought we were

29:00 doing a fair job whether we were bombing Rabaul but in hindsight when I take it into account the people we lost were real good people. I sometimes wonder if we couldn't just isolated the Japanese that were in New Guinea. The Americans by this time had gone up and done island hopping. There was no legitimate reason whey we should be wasting good people.

29:30 Just bombing the damn Japanese that were isolated in Rabaul and those little pockets, there is another one Walback, they are on the main end of New Guinea.

Is that something that occurred to you at the time, reflection?

No, no, it is every year I meet up with another pilot who was up there in H Squadron and he was also instructing down at the ATU.

30:00 And we meet at Merimbula for a golf match actually but we often reflected on the people that they lost in their squadron. And we lost in ours who really were sacrificed to some extent because they you know we didn't really it was just a mopping up operation.

30:30 Anyway, it happened so and somebody thought it was worthwhile, that is what you had to do you just did as you were told.

In those early days of the war before you joined up, what did you, how did it affect your community?

Oh I would say that there was a very patriotic feeling. I was never,

31:00 you see, in the department I worked in at the Workers Home Board it also handled the War Service Home Commission houses which was the equivalent of veteran affairs. And there were lot of return men there and there was no doubt that everyone was very conscious of the need for the young men to go. That had no influence on me.

31:30 I wanted to go anyway mainly, as I said, my mother was a big influence on me. But everybody sort of, I was never was conscious of any lack of patriotism there were very few conscious objectors many more for Vietnam. In fact one of my sons-in-law was telling me that he wasn't keen

32:00 to go and he actually didn't get drafted. And oh no, I think that is fair enough if you don't agree with it and that navigator that was in the crew shot down by the Americans. We lost one of our aircrew shot down by the Americans and that is why that publication has been produced to trace his what happened to him to try

32:30 and follow up on it. But no, there was never any suggestion of lack of, I mean, as I said that I know of,

there was probably people that dodged getting into it, not that there was any drafting in World War II. But you know, there were all sorts of ways for you to avoid it, get into a reserved occupation.

From

33:00 **your position in the work force, what did you notice about the depletion of available men for the work force?**

Well, there was quite a few of the young blokes, the younger men, older than me, they were just moved out, you know. I got a bit of a promotion out of that and I was doing a job that I wouldn't normally have done because of that. So, you

33:30 notice that part of it but you would have to ask women, I think more because they would be the one that would feel it. But I never sort of felt that there was any, I wasn't really conscious of any particular attitude, you know you are set in your own little world to some extent aren't you, you don't I was, I didn't turn 18 until

34:00 1941. And all I was waiting to do was what service I was going to join. I never thought of anything else. I mean there was no other suggestion of doing anything else.

What role had planes played in your…?

None at all. I had never seen I had seen an aircraft take off or land. I had seen the mail plane fly overhead that used to come in once a day from Perth or night and you would see it fly around I

34:30 think to show people that it had arrived, it was an old DC2. I had never ever seen an aircraft take off or land.

Did people sort of come out and gawk at it and point?

Oh no, it was never that uncommon, it was coming over every day. It was a daily service, it took a fair while it took all day to get from Melbourne to Perth and then I suppose it would go back at night. Well, I was

35:00 doing that sort of flying on BC4s when I was with TA

I know you wouldn't know anything else at that stage of your life but when did you notice about the isolation of Western Australia?

You were very conscious of it and there was almost an attitude of when you heard of anyone was going to the eastern states you would wonder if they were going to come back. You are very isolated and still are. I was not so conscious of it then

35:30 as I am now. I get over there and think oh god you are a long way from anywhere. Mind you, it is a very prosperous state now and they have got a lot of industry that has started up there. It is probably, well I know it is entirely different. I go over there regularly to see my sisters and they are always talking about what is going on,

36:00 the city itself is going somewhere but I still feel isolated when I am over there.

What sort of influence does that have on a community to be so isolated?

Well, I think they are very, they seem to get an inferiority complex I think.

Was that true when you were growing up?

I would say so yes, very suspicious of the eastern states. I remember when the brothels were closed after the war

36:30 they had illegal brothels in West Perth and there was an article in the West Australian which said that the brothels in Rowe Street, West Perth, had been closed and it was assumed that the women would go back to the eastern states from whence they came. Because all the nasties were over at the eastern states.

37:00 I am sure that there was healthy West Australian girls that were trying to trade too but I think they moved up to Kalgoorlie. But no, you are very conscious of that. I think there was a, there still is. I have got a friend over there, he wont' travel out of WA. He reckons it is God's own country, he has got a boat and fishes and does all those sort of things. I grew up with him.

37:30 **Well, I grew up in Hobart and there was always a sense of trying to prove yourself, do you think, I mean was that a case in the war, to give a chance to really present on a world stage?**

You mean on my part?

On your part, and just as a community I suppose as a West Australian?

Well, I am not too sure about the community because I never went back there. I went there on leave but I would have to say that my attitude was to survive. I was interested in

38:00 learning all the detail about flying because I knew the more I knew about it the better chance of survival was and that is the attitude. I was keen to do well because I was needed by the country. But you know I know they were short of pilots, we knew, as I said, they were building more planes than crew. I never realised how short they

38:30 they were until they went to the squadron because the fellas we had relieved they were posted straight out. They had been there since towards the end, well not towards the end but fairly early in 1942, the second half of the year '42. I think the squadron went up there in about August and we were relieving some of those people. So, they, and they looked like they had been

39:00 there for a while too. Most people lost a lot of weight. I weighed eight stone when I came back and my sister burst into tears when she saw me, and I was yellow with Atebrin we used to take Atebrin to combat malaria. She was horrified to think what had happened to me. But anyway.

What did your mum say?

She died while I was up

39:30 there. She died in November, she was in an operation, she had cancer of the bowel I think. A signal came up to say she died on November the 5th or something and this was November the 10th. I was told I am sure that is when the signal arrived and the CO [Commanding Officer] came down and spoke to me

40:00 and he said, "You can go back if you like to," I said "Oh well, there is not much point the funeral will be over." And I said, "It will break up the crew," so I stopped on. That was unfortunate, my father he went to about 80, 79 actually. My brother who is alive is 84, I said I just want you to go in turn that is all I expect. I don't expect you to bury me, but they were, we joke about it. He likes very much to talk about our time in Perth as a family. He is very sport, very keen on sport too.

Tape 3

00:33 **So, before you joined up, okay, perhaps we could talk about when the Japanese entered the war, how did you hear about this?**

At that time that was December 1941. We were at Pearce, yes that is when I was tell you we started to dig

01:00 fox holes as part of our physical training I suppose. But they were designed around the perimeter of the air force base and the idea was that you would get a .303 rifle and a supply of food and stop in the fox hole I suppose, that is what they prepared. The only problem was it was a clay based

01:30 area and if it rained the fox hole would get half full of water. So, you had to stand in the water too and you had to, you really had to, when we had practice drill that is what you had to do, jump in. And they were about half full of water because it never went away because it acted as a basin.

What were your thoughts at that time about the security of Australia?

I don't know if I had

02:00 any thoughts, you mean in 1941. I think we were pretty poorly defended but because they had the Brisbane line up at that time.

How aware were you of that?

Oh very much aware because there was a big debate about sacrificing and all those towns, not too many cities but a lot of towns north of Brisbane. And

02:30 there was a lot of debate about it and it was a very unpopular move but the country is just as indefensible now I think it is even more so. We are not, we can't defend ourselves and it is understandable that the Prime Minister wants to be tied to America because I mean if we don't get some support from somewhere I reckon Indonesia

03:00 in a few years will come down here without any trouble. But you know the Japanese were such a surprise, nobody was prepared for them to enter the war but once they got to New Guinea everybody was concerned about the threat to Australia. And there is no doubt that they would have come down here because they wanted the war materials that we had.

What were the people saying about the Japanese coming from the west over to Western Australia?

Well…

03:30 **Was it ever a consideration?**

Not really, I can't no I can't think about that too much, I know that they bombed Broome and they

bombed Darwin of course but you know they were a long way away, it can't happen down here but they came in 1941.

04:00 I think it was 1941, yes December the 7th 1941. Yes, no see that hadn't got down that far at that time, it was only when we were at Geraldton that they started to bomb Darwin and those places. No, because I was in the air force and the Ansons were being used bombing them up. And they were a pretty antiquated aeroplane but that is all they had. See, as I said,

04:30 if the Japs had of got here they would have just walked over the place, so you felt, it kept everybody on the straight and narrow, you know there was no suggestion that you weren't being prepared to do anything else but fight a war. Because I was a keen student, because I thought that that was my best hope of survival. I mean I know some fellas, the way they finished up being shot down by

05:00 the Americans for instance or being shot down on a bombing raid. It is unfortunate but it is what you are being trained to do and it is the risk you take and your eyes are open and you just go ahead with it. It is very hard to, you know you go to the briefing room you are called to the briefing room at 7 o'clock and you are briefed on what is going to

05:30 happen. And sometimes you will do the briefing in daylight but then it won't happen until say midnight so you might even fly to a transient place. But you have already been briefed on what you are doing and that never changes or never did with us. So, oh yes, I think there is no question it was a very serious, Australia was in serious

06:00 danger. I really, as I said I didn't go back to Perth except when I had a long leave after the tour but they were just as patriotic as anywhere else I thought.

I neglected to talk about your time in the air force reserve as well, how much of your life did this occupy?

I joined, I applied to join in, just after

06:30 my 18th birthday, that was in April. I was accepted into the air force reserve at the end of April and I was in the air force reserve until I joined in October, so that is about six months. During that time you did this set of lessons by correspondence on basic navigation and you know I found them

07:00 very easy. I used to polish them off and then get onto my accountancy. I was still doing my accountancy. I started to drop off. I realised that I wouldn't finish it, I couldn't finish it in the time so I started to drop off that and I concentrated on getting physically fit. I used to run a lot at night and generally build myself up into this strong person that I never got to but I could always fly the

07:30 aeroplanes so that helped.

So, you were working full time, you had two courses and you had a fitness regime as well?

Oh yeah, for sure.

What was driving you?

Oh I just wanted to be, I knew that you had to be fit to be in the service because you did a lot of physical training and a lot of the time we spent at the ITS was drilling and you know making you understand the importance of obeying orders. And everybody had to do the same thing and that is what drilling is all about.

08:00 We finished up a very good drill squad, about 100 of us or maybe a few more.

Your time in the reserve besides the correspondence did you have any sort of contact?

No, none at all. I never did see a aeroplane take off or land you had to go out to Maylands, that was the airport in Perth at that time but I never went out there. I really

08:30 went in with an open mind and I would have been happy to be a navigator or an air gunner, but fortunately I know I did my aptitude test was very good. A part of it was a test of co-ordination and they used to hold a note up on the wall with their finger and you could have your finger wherever you liked but you had to

09:00 catch the note before it hit the ground. Because if you catch it close to the point of release it would start floating around and you wouldn't have a hope. I used to do that with any problems so it indicated that my reflexes were all right and there used to be a few other tests they did too.

Like?

Well, you had to I think you had to hold a of column of mercury up, the whole thing took, I was there for

09:30 the whole day. I didn't get out of there until 8 o'clock but a lot of things that, they are going back. I have got the medical report of it here but I can't think of the details of what it was but I am sure a lot of those tests were. They were testing your reflexes and your co-ordination

10:00 and I know I did all right in them because they were all, but some people would have a lot of difficulty with those things. That wouldn't disqualify them from the aircrew necessarily but it might disqualify them from piloting. See, to fly you really need a fair degree of co-ordination, a fairly high degree of co-ordination to be successful at it. I mean a lot of people do that aren't too well

10:30 co-ordinated but the majority of good pilots are very well co-ordinated. And that I think was one of the things that helped me and that is were my physical fitness would be a factor in that too.

All those sports you trained in?

Sure, that is when I played soccer with the senior team,

11:00 so I had every reason to feel fairly confident about my physical condition. My handicap that I had all my life was my lack of height and because with that goes a lack of weight, it is a bit of a handicap because a good big man will always beat a good little man but it doesn't matter in an aeroplane. So no,

11:30 a lot of what I did was really directed towards getting into the service.

Did you really have no preference about your role in the air force; didn't everyone want to be a pilot?

I did, I wanted to be a pilot and I had a pretty idea that I would be one because the CO the night you were interviewed by the commanding officer of a recruiting centre and he said, "You will enjoy the air force

12:00 you could make a good pilot," now that is all he said. But the fact that he made that comment heartened me a bit but it still didn't encourage me to the point that I would go out to Maylands and watch planes take off and land. It is amazing I thought afterwards fancy being a pilot when you have never seen one take off and land before but now can go out to Essendon and or

12:30 Tullamarine and see them, they encourage you to go and have a look and spend your money.

Was there a height cut off for being a pilot?

It was an embarrassment, no there wasn't but when I flew the Tiger Moth it had no seat adjustment.It had a bucket seat and we always used to carry a parachute, wear a parachute in the Tiger Moth,

13:00 it was fabric wings and it was a very old aeroplane. About 1932 I think it was designed but you would get issued with a parachute and you would walk out with it slung over your shoulder then you would sit in the seat and you the parachute itself would fill the bucket up. Can you imagine this is about

13:30 four or five inches deep the seat, and the parachute fitted exactly in it. There is a rubber cushion on top of that which is what you sat on but that was part of the parachute too. My instructor, I was having trouble seeing out and I had to keep stretching and he said I had got up to ten hours and I hadn't reached the stage some fellas were going solo at ten hours and I hadn't

14:00 but he said, "I think you are having trouble seeing the ground properly." So he said, "Tomorrow bring a cushion." And I don't know where I got it but I rolled up with a parachute and a cushion and a pillow. Actually, it was, I must have looked a bit of a dill but I got a bit of a roasting but from that day on I never looked back. Although, I still got air sick I could see out and

14:30 he finished up a TAA pilot my instructor, he is dead now too.

Was that a problem for the other aircraft you flew?

No, because most of them had a seat adjustment, subsequent they must have developed that for the heavier machines. But you know, in the squadron we were allocated an aircraft and nobody else flew it but I did for a while and it would always be set up for me.

15:00 The gun size was another thing that you need to have the correct height for. They were based on your eyes, everybody's eyes being at a certain position. So, the tall blokes would have to let the seat down and the short ones would have to bring it up. No, no it is, of course the American cockpits, we were British, the British were very poorly designed cockpits in a lot of respects by modern day standards

15:30 and even by the standards in those compared to the Americans. They had curves everywhere and the Brits had corners and bark your knuckle on some control if your hand slipped off it. But oh no, that was the only time the Tiger Moth. I was telling you about

16:00 a collision I had up at Geraldton, which was the service flying training school base, a satellite airport. And we were doing night flying this night and I landed with my instructor on the T, what they would do would set a T, three flares at the top and then a row of flares which would be

16:30 into wind and you would land on that. And when you landed you would taxi off, turn off to the right and taxi back to the take off point but parallel, because it was all grass, it was parallel to the T. Anyway, we had landed and turned off at the end of the T and I turned around to face the opposite direction to start

17:00 taxiing back to the take off point and we were hit by another aircraft which had lined up on our. You have a white light on the nose and he lined up on it and he hit us and he was just airborne and fortunately for us his wings overlapped his port wing overlapped our

17:30 starboard wing. But there was a deafening noise and all of a sudden silence and then somebody was calling for help. And the whole nose of their aircraft and broken away and fuel, you could hear fuel running down but it didn't catch fire but there was no way we could get them out. They were trapped by the, the dual aircraft had dual

18:00 controls and they were both trapped in by the control column and they were too high for us to get but luckily it never caught fire. But I never saw that bloke, Keith Brown his name was. I never saw him again, I don't know what happened to him, he broke his leg I know that but it was towards the end of the course and we moved out and I don't know what happened to him but that was a fairly lucky escape.

What effect did that have on your confidence?

18:30 None at all, I think it had a big effect on my instructor though. I haven't seen him again either. They took me to hospital and there was nothing wrong with me I said, "There is nothing wrong with me I will stop out here," but no you have to go and be medically examined it didn't even get on medical record that I spent the night in hospital. No, it is interesting and I never heard the result, it was towards the end of our course and we were posted a few weeks

19:00 later.

So, was it in Pearce that you first took off in a plane?

No it was in Cunderdin, Pearce, there was an operational squadron at Pearce. I did a passenger flight in a Hudson. We went down to the south, it was just down the back. I had to clean the aircraft up because I got airsick, but it didn't look too promising for me

19:30 but they did a lot unusual manoeuvres and it was the first time up. I think it was a risk that they had brought me because that vomit makes a dreadful odour in a confined space it was down at Cunderdin it was in a Hudson.

At that point were there alarm bells for your instructors if someone is sick?

Oh no, it wouldn't be unusual, a lot

20:00 blokes got airsick, I could smell it when sometimes I took over an aeroplane. A lot of fellas got airsick, the funny thing I never got airsick after I went off Tiger Moth. There was always a smell of dope in the Tiger Moth because if they had to patch a wing they always used this dope, it is an alcoholic adhesive I think. It has got alcohol in it

20:30 and very pungent smell, and what was the other thing, and also once you got out of that, the fuel tank, the fuel tank was over the, just above your head and quite often if they refuelled and spilt the fuel you had the smell of fuel fumes as well.

21:00 And that in itself, the two combined it was very unpleasant smell but it wasn't that it was the aerobatics that made me sick. I always wanted to go onto a bomber but I wouldn't have selected the Beaufort if I had a choice but there was no other. You just went where you were posted and nobody asked you what you wanted to fly. But I went, having, once I went and did that

21:30 GR course. That was meant for bomber pilots or flying Beaufort pilots somebody that was involved in a lot of longer range flying the fighters operated on much shorter range and consequently did most of their flying visually. Not all of it but they got into trouble when quite often if they got into bad weather

22:00 and we actually did an instrument let down if the facilities were on the ground at the airport which they weren't up in New Guinea much, very few aids to navigation up there.

What was the general preferred route or type of flying was it fighter or bomber?

I would say fighter was probably the most preferred, as I said, you didn't

22:30 normally, nobody asked you what you wanted to fly. See, the categorisation based on what they needed. If they wanted. See there were about 120 people on our course, 60 of us finished as pilots because they needed pilots, about 20 of them finished as navigators and the other 40 went to the gunnery school and

23:00 as I said, that could result on some very good people if it was…\if the intake was a good intake, good people finished up as air gunners whereas if they had been on the course earlier or later they might finish up being a navigator or a pilot. They were both rated slightly more highly than the gunnery position but they were all essential anyway

23:30 but as I said, there was absolutely no choice. Nobody asked you what you wanted to be which ever mustering, it wasn't an option. As far as I knew, anyway.

Once you had been allocated into the pilot stream was their much mixing with the other men?

Oh yes, I mean if you were, fortunately the both people either side of me were pilots. So,

24:00 the beauty of that is you got common ground. If you are in doubt about of something that you have learnt during the day you can discuss it and get it clarified.

How do you mean either side of you?

Well, when we first went up there everything was done alphabetical so A will sleep in that bed and all as will sleep in next beds and then I am a C so

24:30 I have got a Cargee on one side and a Dallywater on the other side. So, that is how, the same when you went anywhere when you were training, you would just be marched into it and just drop off your gear where ever you were told to sleep. We used to sleep on palliasses, you know straw bags with, and there is a special way to fold everything and all of this you had to go through very,

25:00 you get very brainwashed the first week. You were in the air force or the first week that you are in any service I think. By that time you learn that you have got to do it. And no it could have been anything, anybody next to me, but the categories didn't were not made until after 10 weeks of that course

25:30 when the instructional staff. I imagine reckon they had a pretty good idea of the mental capacity of each individual was and there was no doubt that would affect the grading of them but as I said if they wanted 100 pilots from that course. They would have got 100 pilots so that would mean and this happened more with the navigators I think

26:00 because you needed to be a bit better educated to be able to. You had to do trigonometry and understand the navigation tables using astro. It required a fair degree of skill and knowledge of mathematics to understand that, that is what we did at the GR course the elementary part of it and identify the stars and that type of thing but

26:30 we had on our course a potato farmer and he had two left feet, you would. I don't know what happened to him, you wouldn't think you could train him to be a pilot. He couldn't get a he didn't know, you had to march, you had to start marching with your left, always start off with his left and he used to start off with his right all the time. And you know it is very embarrassing to see the poor fella

27:00 but I don't know what happened to him, he disappeared sometime. He was in the other, see they had two flights when we became, started pilot training, A flight and B flight always split in half and you would see very little of the blokes in the other flight except if they happened to be sleeping near you but quite often that was done alphabetically too.

27:30 So, you would find all of the fellas in your hut and there would probably be about 20 in there and they would all be in the same alphabetical range as you so they would all be, if the blokes name began with T or W you would never see him much because you wouldn't coincide with him except maybe at the meal time.

It is a pretty arbitrary sort of experience isn't it?

28:00 I didn't know a sole on that course when I started and I am pretty sure most of the fellas were the same. But you soon developed friendships but those two that were either side of me Dick Cargee and Sam Dallywater, he stopped in the Burma air force and finished up near commodore and he died earlier this year. He and I were friends all for the rest of our lives

28:30 and so was Dick Cargee and he died a couple of years ago. But he was a bit older, he was about 26 I think, he was good to have, an older bloke like that around because it was fairly sort of, I think they are a stabilising influence on you when you are a bit young.

He would have been a man of the world for you wouldn't he?

Well, he was a real estate agent; his father had a real estate

29:00 agent in Perth and he finally took over but he was, he knew his way around, and a fairly smart bloke and as I said I think it was always, it is good from my point of view to have a, to be able to have his counsel. Dallywater was about 10 months older than I was, he was a good bloke too, as I said, we

29:30 have had a friendship that lasted that long, for the rest of our lives really. And this fella Reg Eddie that I meet at Merimbula, he is the same too. We met up down at the ATU when we were instructors and he lived in Melbourne for a while and then he moved up to Gosford and we maintained contact ever since. Spasmodic when your family is young, but since we retired, both retired we see each other on

30:00 a fairly regular, oh certainly annually more often than not sometimes.

That is fantastic.

Yes it is good, friendships, you know those old friendships are very valuable in your old age, not that I am old yet but some people think you are when you are 80.

I was wondering how you found out you were selected to be a pilot?

You were just told,

30:30 I think we all assembled and they read out the names. I don't think you, you never got a letter or anything, it might have gone up in the notice board too. As soon as that happened the air gunners were they, left the unit and went to various training schools and the navigators and the pilots then stopped for another two weeks I think it was,

31:00 might have been a little bit longer and finished and did a bit more intense training on specific areas that were relevant to those two musterings, but you know everybody is dying to get to the aeroplane and that followed for us at Cunderdin. I don't know where the navigator, there was not a navigation school in West Australia so they would have to go over

31:30 to the eastern states somewhere so did the air gunners. They would have both moved over to the eastern states before us because we went onto Cunderdin, and Pearce, and Geraldton.

I don't think I envy the role of your training officers trying to keep the excitement levels down and everyone wanting to get into planes. How did you find the way they dealt with you?

Well, I don't think

32:00 you could have any influence. There was never any suggestion of trying to influence them or anything like that. You know I think a lot of that was done at the academic level. If you were coping all right with the academic level and the drill and all those sorts of things you would probably be rated in the top 50 per cent aisle so you would then you know

32:30 there would just be a cut off point. As I said, it wouldn't necessarily depend on your ability or anything, I don't think there was any skullduggery that went on at all well I don't suspect there was because all these people were fine to most of us. I don't know of anybody who knew, the instructors tended to be older although one bloke on our

33:00 course and a couple of them were 32, that was the cut off age, one finished a navigator and one finished a pilot. But no, I you were relieved when you were selected to be a pilot but I don't think there was too much of any way of influencing that, not that I know anyway. I think as I said I just tried to learn all I could

33:30 that is what I liked to do, if you are doing something you like to get on top of it.

What do you remember about your first solo flight?

It was out in the, as I told you, I was having a bit of trouble at going off solo up to 14 and ¾ hours and the cut off was 15 so it was fairly critical that I did this, did a good

34:00 test. And the squadron leader that I did it with he gave me a couple of circuits and they were both okay, then they could wind their control column in the front. They always took that out when there wasn't anybody in the seat and I saw him come out with the control column first and I thought, "Well, I have made it," and he just,

34:30 he said, "Come back and pick me up after you have done the circuit." So, I just went around and did the circuit and came back and that constituted it. And then we went back to the main base and then you went off and did a few more on your own. But some fellas went up there and took about 10 circuits before they got down again so you know,

35:00 I didn't look back from that point. I learned, as I said, to put my mouth in the right place so they never knew when I was being sick and I always did that, even when I was flying solo and did aerobatics. I hadn't got used to it and, as I said the smells were bad in the aeroplane but I was never airsick again

35:30 after that training had come to end in. And we flew in rough weather with the Anson but we never did aerobatics so I think I was made to be a bomber pilot.

At that point were you given any indication as to where you might be sent?

No, we didn't know, I don't know what happened to the, I know of about four other pilots

36:00 from our course went to the GR school at Cressy before us. And we had to wait a month and we all had a month, there were four of us who went on the course that I went on. One was that Greenwood that we lost at Bairnsdale

36:30 and the other one was Parker who we lost at Nowra or Jervis Bay. Those four all went on, no one of them went onto flying Beauforts, Dick Cargee, the one I was telling you about he went onto squadron in England, I don't know he must have been a yachtsman or something. I don't know how he finished up he probably was a very mature

37:00 fellow, Dallywater and Jim Magooch and one other they finished up on 8 course a Beaufort course which actually went through a 6 course at Bairnsdale, 8 squadron. They finished up on 6 course so they were a month ahead of us all the way through after that. But we got into operation before them. But the other four of us we went and did the GR course now I don't know what happened, oh some of them went to

37:30 transport another fella I know went to transport, two of them at least went to transport. But I don't know where the others, some of them would have gone to staff pilot jobs and some of them if they were very good they might have been made them instructors on Tiger Moth or they go to staff. They had to have staff pilots at the navigation schools and the air gunners schools so they could finish up in those jobs, but you never knew

38:00 and we went on leave and we had to report back to the vacation depot on a certain date and you were told what we were doing, not a lot of communication until it was set in concrete. There was no, you just did as you, as I said they trained you to do as you were told. I think it has got to be

38:30 that way in a military situation because people were told to do some pretty unpleasant things at times and you know it is not pleasant for the person who tells them, giving the order to tell them that, you didn't have much choice.

With your English affiliation were you keener to be serving in Europe or in the Pacific?

No, as I said, the situation in Australia had become quite

39:00 grim and it looked just as important in fact they were bringing troops back from the Middle East and they hadn't started bringing back aircrew see that empire training scheme applied all over the empire Canada, South Africa. And I know some of them finished up in Iraq and at that time we were controlled by the Brits but

39:30 a lot of them pretty well everywhere, a lot of them, some of them might have gone over I don't know, some of them from our course but I had never heard of them. See, you become so absorbed in what you had been trained at when you get onto the conversion at the ATU you are trapped to the boards.

40:00 There was a completion date for that course and hail, rain or shine you had to make it. And if you got behind in the flying it had to be made up and even if you had to fly four or five times a day and that happened.

Might just have to stop you there, the end of another tape.

Tape 4

00:32 **I have got a few questions from your early life that I wanted to clarify. I wondered what it was like when your brother was leaving to join the services and you were still too young, I wondered whether there was a sort of sense of awe about what he was doing or envy that you couldn't join him?**

Well, I think that prompted me o try and join the navy when I was 16.

01:00 Why I would do that I don't know in hindsight because I used to get seasick every time we went outside Fremantle heads. But you just, as I said earlier, that my mother was English and we felt very, almost British and she had family over there a number of sisters so there was a very strong bond.

01:30 But I think that may have been a factor in my trying to join the navy when I was 16 but fortunately they told me to go away until I grew up.

Well, I also wondered about your dad you said that because of the Depression he had been fairly pretty much out of work, was he on something called the susso [sustenance workers/dole]?

Yes, I think I said it was five shillings a week but they had to work for it

02:00 and he had to go into the country and building roads or something like that up there. But he would be away for a month at a time and then come back just for a weekend and go up again and of course our mother, she was running the show on her own during that time. Things were very tough it is almost impossible to comprehend it and if you

02:30 lived through it and it makes an indelible impression on your mind. And it has affected my ability to spend money because I never want to be short of money again and I never will be, you know it does have a big impact on you. In relation to the war though, the fact of

03:00 going into the navy just would have stimulated my enthusiasm to get into the services.

I wonder if it had some effect on your father's sort of attitude to things as well because he had done, because it had been so difficult for him during the Depression I wonder if he wished he could join up as well?

Well, it is possible, he did that after I had left, see he hadn't, he was still working in a civilian

03:30 capacity but he joined the army sometime in 1943 I think. But he had an engineering background and I think they could utilise him in the army in determining what they could salvage and what they couldn't and that is what he was doing.

It would have been very interesting. Now, I don't suppose you were around when the 6th division

04:00 **came into port on their way to the Middle East?**

Oh, when was that?

It would have been sometime in 1940 you would have still been…?

I would have been working. In fact the New Zealanders were in town too, were they on the same boat do you know? Because they, a lot of troops depended on, they were probably, I wouldn't be surprised if they were on the same boat because a group of them

04:30 lifted a little Austin onto the back of a truck in Hay Street and left it there. And it was considered a very funny act but also there was a bit of fighting between the New Zealanders and the Australians going on in the town. So, I was just working there because I didn't see much of that.

I just wondered though because Fremantle must have become rapidly a very different place after the war started in terms of who was docking there?

05:00 I went to school at Fremantle, Fremantle Boys' School and I, and it is still a lovely town, a very interesting place and I liked it when I was a boy and sometimes I used to wag it from school and go fishing under the wharf at Fremantle. And we used to eat mussels off the piers there, and you could eat them raw but in wartime once again, I never saw too

05:30 much of it because I was working in Perth. And I don't know, we played soccer down at Fremantle but it never seemed to change much.

I was also wondering whether being a Western Australian, whether the sinking of [HMAS] Sydney had a slightly different residents giving how it wasn't that far away?

Well, I had a cousin that was on a ship. The Sydney, was that the

06:00 one that we lost with all lives? No, he wasn't on that he was on one that was sunk in the Sunda Straits in Indonesia. And I think it was a bit of a mystery what happened to Sydney and probably they didn't know what had happened to it and I don't know when they found out. Do you know? The German I think it was the German

06:30 merchantman which had a disguise or it was disguised as a merchantman and it was a merchantman cruiser.

Well, I was just wondering whether there were many residents around Perth and Fremantle and whether you know it was something that was discussed?

I really don't know.

Okay, that is fine. The other question I had was a little bit more info about this Bay line, was that similar to say the Brisbane line?

07:00 **Lets cut to Cunderdin again I had a question about when you got your wings and also what happened to the boys that were scrubbed?**

We didn't get our wings at Cunderdin, we get them at Geraldton you have got to do the next stage of the training which was the service flying training. I don't know they probably, I can't answer

07:30 the question. They just disappeared as they were scrubbed, they packed their bags and left on the train the same day, there was no farewell or anything like that. That always applies in the service, it applied in the squadron when somebody didn't want to fly with an air gunner because they, he nearly got hit with shrapnel the day before so they sent him straight south.

08:00 And they put him on the first plane south, they just come and go and pack their things and oh it was pretty, if there was any suggestion of cowardice they delegated, you know, declared to be low moral fibre to get them out of the system because they could affect other people, I think. In the case of the scrubos,

08:30 the scrubbed pilots, I don't know, I don't know where they went.

Was that thought uppermost in a lot of people's minds that they could be considered LMF [Lack of Moral Fibre] at any stage?

Not at that stage, there was no question that was just lack of aptitude for flying I would say. I don't think there was any disgrace in that.

Well, no there couldn't be could there?

No no, but I am talking on the operational side

09:00 and that is what the CO was referring to at the ATU when he gave us that lecture. He was trying to anticipate a question of low moral fibre because that station, that unit had a very, very bad reputation. They killed 19 people in a day down there in four different accidents.

Is it possible that

09:30 **some of the LMF generated from lack of confidence in the commanding officers there in training?**

You mean at the ATU? Once again, I don't think so. It almost made you more determined I suppose; maybe that was the motivation for it. But it really was a very harsh way to treat people who where very keen to do

10:00 their bit for the war effort. I personally resented it very much and I know other blokes did too.

When you got to Geraldton and the airsickness passed, you were off the Tiger Moths. I am wondering whether there was a lack of resurgence in your ability and confidence you made it, but if you feel sick it really saps more than your physical ability?

10:30 Well, as I said I became so proficient at expelling it that I made pretty good progress from the time I went solo. And I really think that was due to the fact that I had the seat, the cushion, I was using the cushion. I used the cushion from then on. It always got a few laughs when you were going out there with your cushion

11:00 but it made the world of difference because I could see. Because previously I was craning and in fact there is an entry in my log book that says, "Did much better today with the aid of a cushion." And that was the turning point in my conversion. But on the Anson you would feel as though you were progressing all the time. I felt it and I personally felt it and I knew I was flying,

11:30 you know, so if you have got good conditions and reasonable landing now and again you know you are going all right because everything is judged by your landing because that is where the co-ordination comes in. But generally, and I was flying with Sam Dallywater or Dick Cargee and because as I said when you are alphabetically placed together you seem to do everything together.

A funny consequence of the war isn't it, similar

12:00 **ending names all became good friends?**

Well, similar starting names.

Australians are fantastically cruel with their sense of humour, their ribbing that you got for using a cushion could you give me an example of what they said?

Actually, the blokes themselves it was the mechanics who said, "Have you forgotten your mattress have you?" But no no, it was good humour I realise that.

12:30 No no, as I said, I thought the support that we got as students, student pilots and student aircrew was very good everywhere, but there was so much pressure on you to progress. Because they were under pressure themselves and Flight Lieutenant Gibbs talking

13:00 about the ATU said that he felt, in fact they knew, that the pilots were coming to them with insufficient experience to and make the step to the Beaufort. And he said, it was wartime and we needed them and we were doing things that we would not normally have done. And I think that would apply to all the ATUs around the world earlier than the war but later on

13:30 you finished up with better instructors and or more competent instructors. Because when I went back there I had to do an instructors course and that lasted a week. Now, I am already a competent pilot by this time, but you had to satisfy them that you could give the patter that goes with the teaching and also that you could do it, demonstrate

14:00 consistently that you could fly the aeroplane well.

Now going from a Tiger Moth to an Anson is a bit like going from a go cart to a Mercedes Benz, I would imagine?

Oh, not quite as big. It was like a big power glider, it was a twin engine plane with two 350 horse power engines very old machine I think it was about 1936 and it was a metal wing plane

14:30 but it was a very, very, it wouldn't last five minutes in aerial combat at that time.

Well, do you think then that both the Tiger Moths and the Ansons were appropriate training aircraft?

No, I don't but they didn't have anything else and you have got to realise that the Brits. We were sort of tied to the British, the Brits had done very little preparation for the until the last 12 months

15:00 before it started and then it was all catch up. And the equipment that we had out here was all British and no American equipment at all.

At this stage of your training then, did you assume that you were going over to England?

No, I didn't know where I was going and I never gave it too much thought either but I wasn't unhappy about staying in Australia either because by the time

15:30 we had got to Geraldton they had bombed Darwin and Broome. And actually some of the aircraft the Ansons were used to go out and do sea patrols. None of the students were used only the instructors.

Now, I believe there was now that infamous flight done by the Wirraways where they were basically cut to shreds?

Well, that was up at Rabaul.

Do you have access to that sort of information?

It was published because

16:00 the signal that the commanding officer sent, "We that are about to die salute you." And for that reason I think it was meant to be a moral booster the fact that they did. Because you know as you said they had no hope at all. In fact, in flying a Beaufort my best chance of survival in

16:30 the event of a fighter attack was to get down as close to the ground as I could. Because the tail, we would protect the tail and we had three machine guns in the front but from underneath you had, and head on, and I knew I could fly as low as any, as Jap, any other pilot would be game to go. Of course, you could feel them into areas too. They would dive on you

17:00 and forget to pull out if they get involved in shooting. But no, I don't think that message could be interpreted as being, having any detrimental effect on you we thought it was very courageous of them to go up. I mean it happened quite a few other times in war too.

It is a funny sort of a chalice to be offered for a young man.

17:30 **You know this is sort of a wonderful opportunity to fly planes, but the ultimate sacrifice could be the price you pay for it?**

Well, it happened to a lot of people. Did you see the dam busters the other night?

I haven't but I have seen the film and I have seen the national archive footage that they used and it staggers me still.

They lost about half of them on that attack.

And a couple of Australians I believe?

Sure and a couple of Australians survived too.

18:00 So you know, it is more of averages, you really, you know, I was in Gaza Island. I was attacked in Gaza Island several times and I was in the first attack. Well, we only lost one but the next day I wasn't in it and we lost three now I, how do you sort of access your chances of doing that. I knew I was lucky. As I said, I told my sister that I didn't expect to survive at one stage.

18:30 I didn't think I would make 21.

When did that start to sort of affect you, this idea that you might not make it?

When we had all the losses in training. So, I reckon if it is going to be worse than that in the war there is not much chance.

Before those happened, you've not got your wings but you know you are going to be a pilot, you would start to assume that you were going to be promoted would you not?

Well, I was promoted from sergeant to flight sergeant.

What

19:00 **stage was that in your training?**

When I got the wings in LAC [Leading Aircraftsman]. I don't think I got promoted until I graduated from that, I don't know what day I got sergeant. I actually was made a flight sergeant while, I was a flight sergeant when I went north and then during that

19:30 time while I was up there I was promoted to pilot officer. But the gazette didn't get up there so I didn't find out until I got back to Australia that I was I had been commissioned. But that is the way the system worked. You know in wartime that, it had to be gazetted before it was official and so on and the gazette was presented

20:00 and printed about one in every three months or so when they made it. But no I never worried too much about the rank.

I wonder if you could talk a bit about getting your wings and the parade that must have followed, you showed us a photograph?

Sure. It was a big significant step you know that is what the aim of the exercise was we had been working that was done in June I think

20:30 was the date. Now that was getting onto, now I joined in October, so we are looking at about nine months and it had taken me to get to that stage and you are sill not trained for operation by any means. But we had a big celebration, we all went into town and stopped in a hotel in Geraldton and had a big party for most of the night it was good.

21:00 **It was very much on a threshold of great change in your life, it must have been an intense period with all those fellows working together and did that pub celebration throw up any sort of great anecdotes of how you mightn't have made it?**

No, I think it was, it was all a case of relief that you really achieved your wings and you made the big step, that was sort of a big step. And it was just a,

21:30 we were all so happy, it was just a happy weekend that we had together. You know it is what memories are made of those big events but I never I just thought it has got to be down here from here because it had all been so hard but it actually got harder and the ATU was very tough down at Bairnsdale. The general reconnaissance course at Cressy, you know.

22:00 That was good relatively easy, stable, but the ATU was the hard part.

Well, this five day trip train apart from sounding hideous, what could you do in those five days?

Oh, we used to play cards or there were four of us from that course we were altogether in the carriage and there were others,

22:30 it wasn't like the west coast flyer or whatever they call it now. It was pretty basic travelling arrangements and as I said we, at meal times they would just stop at places that were obviously approved for it and set up. And we would just line up at the field kitchen and it would all be over in 45 minutes. So, they didn't waste too much time

23:00 on serviettes or anything like that it was a pretty basic sort of eating.

Well, this Vincent's disease, is that what you called it Vincent's?

Vincent's, now I haven't heard of it ever since but that is what he said it was and they painted my

23:30 mouth with some medication. And I had to go back several times subsequently until it cleared up but the minute they put the medication on it, it relieved it there is probably some anaesthetic of some description in the medication because it is very, very painful I can tell you.

Was it on the inside of your mouth or on your lips?

No, no. it was all on the inside were the saliva is.

24:00 But the whole of the gums and everything was covered in the stuff.

Like ulcers or something?

Yes, just very similar.

And infected by the sounds of it, were they infected?

Well, it cleared up so quickly that you would have to think they weren't. Because the medication that he used on it and I had to go back to the hospital to have it painted on so that it covered it all, and it was on my tongue as well.

24:30 So, that is what it was, if you do some investigation and find out what it is.

But of course I had my spelling incorrect and I couldn't find anything on it, but that sounds most unpleasant.

I have a Funk and Wagnall [dictionary] here, would you like to have a look.

I will look that up at lunch time now that you have told me what it is. I am just trying to imagine though…

It was only you know a recovery in about two days.

25:00 **I got a mental picture before of you fresh and things and the CO marching up and down and you vomiting in front of him it must have been almost…**

Well actually, they were explaining what form the course would take and it was very embarrassing to me I can tell you because I am in the middle ranks and I had to avoid the bloke that was in front of me. Well, it was embarrassing, particularly because

25:30 we were crewing up this day and here I do this performance in front of them I don't know whether the other three, my three blokes. Actually I assume they had seen me, and saw what had happened to me because when I went back I said, I told them all about it. But…

I bet it reduced your chances with the ladies at that point too?

Well, I had my tonsils out subsequently and I tell you, the recovery of that reduces your chances too. I was

26:00 about 25 then when I had them out. Oh no it was a bit younger, before I was attached.

So, when you got taken off parade and had to go and see the doctors, I get this sense that you have come back and there is just a few people left. It is like a football team or a cricket team and all the good ones have been picked?

Well, you don't know who the good ones are. There is no great, see they didn't know who the good pilots were and yet the lucky ones I would say.

26:30 We were lucky we got each other because they were a nice group of blokes and we worked well together and there was never any question about who was running the show. And that is why I tried to assert a little bit of authority initially and tell them that we each had to become, you know we would never talk normally to people like that but in the circumstances that I was in. I

27:00 felt that I had to say that each one had to be proficient in what, in their mustering so we sort of run up into an efficient crew and we were, well we were a very good crew there is no question. And we were highly rated but in the squadron the air gunner told me that Graham Bodnar, that lives up at Seymour, he said

27:30 that we were very long odds in the betting to survive you know when we started there. I said, "I never knew," but the ground staff used to run a book on who would make it and who wouldn't, but we gradually shortened the longer it went.

I hope someone made a lot of money on your account then?

I hope so, they would have if they backed me.

The ground staff must have been there for some time I imagine, were they, they had been working there for quite a long time?

You mean at

28:00 the ATU or the squadron?

At Bairnsdale.

I think a lot of them were under training still. You see I mentioned about Peter Gibbs before, he was an instructor down there at the time and he said that the as far as the pilots were concerned they had insufficient experience

28:30 to be making the step that they were. But because it was a war they had to be pushed into it earlier than what was desirable because they lacked the experience, now the same applied to every mustering in the air force I would have thought because the air force was expanding at such a rapid rate as a result of the Japanese coming in. And the services generally that people were going, being inducted and trained very

29:00 quickly in jobs which they had very little experience in. And aircraft are very, very sensitive pieces of mechanical equipment and they need some expertise to do it and they had to be supervised a lot of the time that. That was one of the reasons for a high degree of unserviceability at the station and why we would go down and there wouldn't be an aircraft available

29:30 to do an exercise. So, you would just have to wait until one came and all that is very you know that is more tiring on the trainee and quite often it lead to situations like Dave McConnell. We had all left the station to go up to Nowra and he is still trying to complete the syllabus and that is when he was, I found that he had crashed reading the Melbourne paper.

30:00 But it was you know, just a fact of life as far as in wartime the standards are varied. I mean you wouldn't get that going on in the air force now.

Was it discussed amongst the fellows at night this fact that you were being rushed?

No question, you know all you wanted to do was get

30:30 horizontal. Another thing, the sergeants in the group, the hut that we slept in was right at the end of the runway so you would have these aircraft taking off over the top subject to wind direction and you would

have ‘vrrrrrmmm’ taking over the top. It made getting rest pretty difficult but you were so tired, look

31:00 even at Cunderdin you were so tired at the end of the day because flying would start at 6 in the morning and that is the same down there. You would start at 6 and you would fly to midday, not necessarily the whole 6 hours but you would be in and out of aeroplanes and then after that you would go up and do four hour lectures from 1 till 5 and then you would have the rest of the day off

31:30 unless there was night flying. That is, that was the program and it just had to be adhered to and if you got behind you had to catch up because you would be starting up at Nowra on a set date and you had to be finished by then.

What sort of technique did you employ to become proficient in landing?

I think it is really practice. See, it was

32:00 in the Tiger Moth that I had the initial trouble, I think that once I got a better view of the ground I was able to master that but from then on it is co-ordinated action. You have sort of got to adjust the power, phase the power off as you approach the ground and flare the aircraft and the point that you flare at is very important but it is all co-ordination and

32:30 judgement.

Do you think that personality played any part in a pilot’s ability to land well or not land well?

I don’t know I, I don’t know why some pilots consistently land smoothly than others. The whole of my time at the ATU there was some pilots who were very hand fisted and which you had to try and break them of that.

33:00 In other words they over controlled and it is a bit like backing a motor car up a straight drive like we have got. You will find that I have people here who will over control, you have only got to pressure the wheel slightly if it is just a small correction. Now, but aeroplanes are even more sensitive because you have got the airflow over the wings. No, I felt that I think it is really

33:30 co-ordination is a big thing. That is why they, the tests that they do give pilots tend to concentrate on that aspect of your make up. Some people as I said you know have got two left feet, you see them some people are very clumsy now that is unfortunate but they wouldn’t make very good

34:00 pilots.

What part does instinct play?

Well, I suppose they all come in together don’t they. I mean your ability to assess things and make swift decisions, thinking all are part of that.

I have wondered if you worked for the same crew for a while and you are out there in this extreme situation. I wonder whether there is some collective consciousness at play

34:30 **or if the pilot is operating on behalf of himself but on everybody and therefore everybody’s energy is involved?**

No, I think that is a fair question. I actually used to train my, whenever I did a test flight I always did some practicing engine flying and as I explained to the blokes, I just want to make sure I am on top of this engine flying because if we lose an engine we may

35:00 have to fly a long way to get back. And the other thing I did was always strap the navigator in, because he was the nearest to me and if I was hit with shrapnel or something and was incapacitated they would be able to get me out of the seat and he could takeover and I taught him how to fly the aircraft well enough to

35:30 fly it from that point back to base. He knew the headings he was a navigator so he knew the way to go and what I impressed upon him that he was not to attempt to land it because he wouldn’t have been able to do it. It takes too long to develop the skills required to put an aircraft on the ground and this applies particularly…

36:00 it did apply to a Beaufort and every other aeroplane that you fly and that particularly to jet aircraft. It would never be possible for an untrained person to land one of those jets. But I mean that is getting a bit away from the war I know but it really it is something that I was very conscious of and when I had a chance to give the crew an option to do something I would do

36:30 it. But most times in operation you don’t have that choice you just tell them it arm the bombs or something and then when you are going into a bombing attack. In a bombing run the navigator has control of the aircraft in the sense that he tells the pilot by heading the fly and you have got to fly straight and level for a couple of minutes so there is no slip or skid and

37:00 that is when the aircraft is very vulnerable. But you know you can never train anyone in a short time to do that. I told them that if it happened on the way into a target to drop the bombs and get out of it

because there is a good chance that he could have got the aircraft back but I sometimes forget the question when…

37:30 **Kind of about sympatico and its ability to keep you out of trouble among the crew. I say that I guess because if you struck a personality that didn't gel with everybody else in those circumstances it could be problematic I am sure?**

Oh sure, in fact I was telling you earlier, there were some cases of where crew members weren't happy with the captain for whatever reason I

38:00 don't know I never heard what they were, but there was a clash of personalities or the captain wasn't happy with the air gunner or.

What were the channels one had to go through to alleviate that?

Oh, you just have to speak to the commanding officer, not a big deal. I mean they would make whatever arrangements, they know it is not satisfactory to have an unhappy crew. Most of the crews got on very well.

Would you have to have a reason though

38:30 **for presenting to the CO and saying you want a change of crew?**

Well, if you weren't satisfied if you were incompetent for instance if the navigator got you lost would be a pretty good reason.

A bit tough if it was the crew that wanted to get rid of the pilot though wouldn't it?

No, well it would be a bit tough I suppose because we never carried any spares we only ever had the exact number of establishment that we

39:00 needed. The exact number of crews to satisfy the establishment. But if a well one of those fellows up at New Guinea was very unlucky. He was flying with the medial services as a radio operator, the Aviation Medical Service they had. And he happened to be in Milne Bay when one of the gunners opted out

39:30 and he this fellow was asked if he could fill in as the radio operator and he was a certified on the equipment, he had done the course. So, he said he would and they got shot down at Gasmata. Now, how unlucky can you be. But that is what happens but as I said I never heard of a case

40:00 complaining about the pilot. I suppose if they put somebody in and he then complained about the pilot then they might start to have a look at it. But certainly I never heard of any case of that.

Swap tapes again.

Tape 5

00:31 **I would like to talk about those accidents if we could in Bairnsdale?**

Well, firstly the first one on our course to have an accident there was Geoff Parker, now he blew a tyre on landing now sometimes a tyre will blow on landing because it is worn out.

01:00 But it is very rare because the tyres are inspected and changed at regular intervals. So, usually when a tyre blows you associate it with a bad landing, either he has landed with a lot of drift on and the aircraft is going forward but drifting sideways, and that will put strain on it and the other

01:30 thing could be because it is a heavy landing. It could damage the side walls and break. I don't know what, it doesn't tell you in the report of his accident what it was but they he did a tremendous amount of the undercarriage collapsed and they did a lot of damage to the aircraft. And this girl Jan Herald told me that in most cases where fellows were

02:00 lost in crashes they had a previous history. Now in the case of, he passed the course and I knew him very well and he was extremely under confident. He was a chain smoker, he never had a cigarette out of his hand, and he was obviously under a lot of stress but he was passed out of the ATU and he went

02:30 to the, to Nowra to do a torpedo course and then he had another incident before he finally crashed up there too. So, you know there were a lot of signs that indicated that he had some sort of a problem but it wasn't detected and, as I said, there was pressure to get fellas through and as Peter Gibb said it is wartime and

03:00 the standards changed. I mean they were desperate to pilots or aircrew produced to crew the Beaufort, they were making them faster than they could train crews.

In a situation like Parker's first accident or incident what process do they go through?

Well, he would front the flight commander and he find out what happened. Now, as I said, I don't know

what went on but he

03:30 continued with the course so you would have to think his explanation satisfied the flight commander and obviously the CO of the station would be involved too in major accidents like that where there is considerable damage to the aircraft.

Was there scuttlebutt [gossip] around the base?

No, no I didn't know about it until I read that. I had been involved with putting a lot of this stuff together and I was surprised at the amount of

04:00 material that is in there that I wasn't aware of. Now the other one was, there were two others. I am only talking about the accidents that happened to us I will talk about the ones that…

Well, no, that is actually what we would like to hear really, is your experience?

Well, there were two others, aircraft were lost at sea and they weren't on our course but they never knew what caused that.

04:30 Now, it developed during the life of the Beaufort, there was a fault with the trim tab if it wasn't properly, the elevated trim tab, if it wasn't properly lubricated. And that wasn't discovered towards the end of 1943. So, no one knows how many aircraft of these accidents that happened over the sea

05:00 were lost due to that. Have you heard this before? No. Anyway, as Greenwood, these two aircraft as I said flew out doing exercises and we used to drop an aluminium sea marker and do gunnery on it and sometimes if it was what they call an oily, a flat sea no

05:30 waves at all, and you would get down there. They would become so absorbed in the gunnery or the bombing, whatever they were doing they would forget to pull out at the dive earlier enough, and there was a, from the time you apply back pressure on the control column, until the aircraft reacts it is a gradual action. And even if you pull it hard the aircraft will

06:00 keep going down and they think that is probably what happened. Well, anyway, we were warned about that. But in Greenwood's case he had a runaway propeller. He was doing a night exercise, and he took off at 1 o'clock in the morning and in this exercise you flew down towards Wilsons Promontory and then there was some uninhabited islands there which we used to drop a practice bomb on just to practice bombing and

06:30 because nobody every knew the result. So, you always thought you did well at that, when you did bombing training you did a lot of it they would mark the position of the bomb and tell you how you went. But out in the middle of Bass Strait and in the middle of the night you were pretty safe. But anyway, he did that flight to Hobart and you come back, now as it happened, and go through searchlights, as it happened

07:00 Greenwood had a runaway propeller. And this is concluded because from the evidence of people that heard the aircraft and sea spray they heard the engine revving up at very high revs, now that is what a runaway propeller does. It builds up at very high revs, he was either slow to react to it or he

07:30 reacted and he couldn't control it in anyway. And it just finally disintegrates the engine, you know, probably and then it caught fire they think and he couldn't control it or he didn't control it. Now one of the reasons he wouldn't have been able to control it is, I believe, inadequate training at that time.

08:00 **Are any expressions cast on the ground staff in situations like this?**

Well, not in this case, it was a faulty design, whereas subsequently that propeller that Curtis electric was replaced by Hamilton standard propellers and that is what is on the DC3 now and civil and everything.

08:30 And it was, one was electric and the other was hydraulic and it was a much more reliable propeller and we never had too much, we didn't they. I forget how many aircraft they had but they were nearly all down in Bairnsdale, they were nearly all, about half the fleet was Curtis electric but they were gradually replacing them. But you know, as I said, the training had to go on so.

How does the information of the death of

09:00 **a crew get presented back to the rest of the base?**

I remember when they lost one of those Beauforts to sea they thought it might affect our moral and they got us all together and told us that we should try and learn from their experience and not to dwell on it the fact that fellas had been lost and I think it was pretty good

09:30 advice you know it is pretty. I think I became a bit more callous towards death and this fearful of death because of the experience had in the services. I would say fearful, I don't think there is anything over the other side, but I know a lot of people do

10:00 particularly somebody of ill faith, but I… Say a few Hail Mary's, no but see you go into the war knowing it is a very risky business but it was unfortunate that we as a country were in a position were we were

in a very catch up mode and I think

10:30 a lot of good people paid the price.

I get this very sort of sad image of empty beds when an accident like this has happened. Did they move quickly to make sure that those empty beds are filled or rearrange them, something like that?

No they don't, I was living in a four man tent with the, with the, with one of my air gunners and two air gunners from the crew of a

11:00 plane that was shot down by the Americans, by the American Liberators and we, they came along as soon as the aircraft was reported missing or it didn't get back on time they came along and picked up, collected all their possessions. I don't know if they didn't trust us or not but that was the standard procedure. The

11:30 disciplinary would come along with another fella and they'd pack their all their personal gear which we didn't have a lot of. We didn't carry much up there, and I don't know what they did with it. I don't know if they sent any of their personal things home to relatives or what but we were left with a four man tent with two of us in it for sometime. But once we started to get replacements up

12:00 and it was about the time four aircraft at Gasmata it was just after that no just before that so it wasn't long before somebody else was in there. But you know we actually wished they didn't put anybody else in, we used to spread out a bit more. But no, no, as I said, you had to

12:30 be fairly callus towards that sort of thing. I think it made me a bit more that way, the only time I get emotional is if it is somebody young, it is always said when you see a young life, and I am very sad that this bloke. I got on very well with this fella next door and I am very sorry for him because he has virtually ruined his life but he has not only that he has had a detrimental effect on a lot of other

13:00 people particularly family.

Well, were there ever times when a plane went down because as far as you were concerned the pilot was too gung ho [foolhardy]?

Well, see we were sent to that, I don't know the case to answer the question. But when we went to Nowra the commanding officer gave us an address on telling us in what form the

13:30 conversion would take, what the training to drop a torpedo involved. And he emphasised that the first thing we want to teach you is how to fly below 20 feet . Now I thought it was terrific, I loved low flying, very exhilarating, but it is very dangerous and I always used to trim the aircraft till it was nose up so

14:00 that you had to exert a little bit forward, just a trace of forward pressure so if I lacked, lost my tension was diverted it would go up not down. But if it was incorrectly trimmed or if it was trimmed the other way it would go down and there are only two crews on that course that didn't touch the water with props while they were doing it while they were flying it. And it is very easy to do, as I said, on a flat

14:30 sea no wave or ripple or anything. But I actually I never had a problem with it, I never had an incident. And Jimmy Bourke was the other on the course that didn't, he was the other West Australian. There were four of us, we lost two of them one at Bairnsdale and one at Nowra, but everybody else either hit trees or hit.

15:00 You don't normally hit trees over water but the trees are on the edge of the water. Have you been to Jervis Bay? It is a beautiful place. We used to go down there on weekends but any way. The other trap for aviators, the reason we had to fly low like that because at low level, below about 20 feet the ships radar couldn't pick you up

15:30 because of the ground because if you got mixed up with the ground effect. Now, I am quite certain that radar now is improved to the point where it would pick you up. But when you got on the open sea there is just the odd rogue wave and that is, can be a problem. You have got to be very, very alert and you only get down very low

16:00 when it is absolutely essential as it happened 100 Squadron which was a GRB [type of bomber] torpedo squadron. And became a GRB squadron only by the time we got there so we never had to do that. But I used to. We had a patrol around the Louisiade Archipelago, it is a long stretch of islands

16:30 east of the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea. It must stretch for about 300 nautical miles because we used to go down there, we used to sweep it around there for shipping and that was a lovely place for low flying. You know, the idyllic situation appeared to be on those islands but you know damn well if you get on them you have got big problems.

Can

17:00 **you survive a freak wave hitting the plane at that level?**

Well, you might, see if you hit the water with the propellers, it usually bends the tips back because they rotate at a fairly rapid rate and they all get damaged if it is only the tips you can usually fly, fly it back to

base. But usually you have got

17:30 to use a lot of power, and it is not too good for the engines but at least you get it back and they change the engines if it is necessary. But if you hit a wave badly the aircraft would go in and that is what happened. Actually, I think Parker stalled it, he stalled the aircraft. I don't know what happened to that it might have been the stabiliser nobody knows.

And if a plane goes into the drink is

18:00 **there any means of escape?**

Oh yes if it landed, if it crashes into the sea it is unlikely that anyone will survive but if it is a controlled landing, oh it would be quite, see that one that was shot down by Americans he landed it.

Do they give you instruction on sort of evacuation in extreme situations like that?

Oh yes, we get dingy drill and we have got to

18:30 learn how to deploy a dingy and how to use what is in it, fishing lines and all that sort of thing, how to, oh yes there was no shortage of training in that. It is just a quest, it is in the in the wing, in the top of the wing the dingy, you walk out on the wing and release it, it doesn't automatically, it didn't automatically release.

That all sounds very simple but what if you are screaming along 20 feet above

19:00 **sea level, I mean there just isn't any time for that sensibility is there?**

Yeah, well if you have landed the aircraft in the sea it won't be screaming along.

Okay, I am trying to imagine doing this as you are heading towards the water.

No, no you don't let it go until you get out of the cockpit.

And then there are the sharks?

Yeah, well that is another thing; there are plenty of sharks up there too in New Guinea,

19:30 or in the New Guinea waters.

Well, they are in Jervis Bay if you are flying that low there is a good chance that you would have seen whales from time to time?

Well, I have seen whales in civil. Not flying at that low. We used to fly down on DC3s from Brisbane to Sydney and in the whaling season we would go down 1500 feet. It is quite legal to do that if you got permission. You could see sharks, you could see sharks

20:00 no kidding, that, waters up there team with sea life.

Don't tell the tourists.

No they will go and catch them.

They will. Did the Beauforts kind of have a characteristic that you could describe?

Well, it was a light bomber. I mean it had the same characteristics as any other.

Well, I was just wondering if a different planes

20:30 **have a personality to them?**

Well, it had a very steep approach to landing. That took a bit of adjusting to and that also tested your co-ordination and your eyesight, see the landing is all a co-ordination act, as I said you flare and then you

21:00 quite often are reducing power at the same time and changing the altitude of the aircraft into a more nose up altitude so we used to land at three points. That is the two main gear and the tail the tail touch the ground at the same time so you had a nose down altitude. So, you had a very big change in altitude as you did reducing power and air speed.

21:30 It is only something you can develop. The skill required is only to be developed by practise and some people adapt quicker than others and they normally have a cut of number and I took a while to adapt to the, I was slow conversion. I took nearly 15 hours to convert to the Beaufort too, but there was never any danger of me not making it, it was just

22:00 that it just took. It was a big change from the Anson and you had to be a bit more adaptable which I wasn't I suppose.

How did you learn to overcome fear?

Well, I don't know that you ever overcome it. The most frightening experience I was involved in was the attack on two Japanese cruisers

22:30 at night. And I often wondered if I had been in a single pilot aeroplane, no crew, whether I would have pressed on to the point that I did. I didn't do it to impress the crew, but I did it because that is what I was supposed to do. But I just wonder if you might not have dropped the bombs a bit earlier or something like that.

23:00 You know, the navigator was down the front and he had a machine gun and he was firing that and the cockpit was filling up with cord and you know damn well that you have just go to keep on going until it is the right time. But I still, I don't believe that too many people are not fearful of the consequences of when you put

23:30 yourself, when you are in that position. When there is all this anti aircraft fire floating past you, or it was ripping past you, it is just like a fireworks display, you know how they float up and then they explode? These float up, they appear to float up and then they zip past you, and then of course it is a continuos stream of the stuff coming, and they have only got to over correct a little bit and you know damn well that you are history. And

24:00 as I said, I have often thought whether I would have done that because I was young you know I was still, I was still 20.

Immortal at that point, at that stage?

Yeah, I turned 20 when I was at Jervis Bay and I thought that I was, you know I was getting pretty confident by that time I was well along in the tour.

24:30 It happened towards the last two months and I thought I had a good, you know I was pessimistic before I went up there because of the losses we had in training. I started to feel a lot more confident in my chances of survival but that doesn't mean to say I wasn't fearful of the consequences and it is a very rare person if you are not fearful.

25:00 **I think it was Hemingway who said it was 'grace under pressure'. I guess that is a pretty good description of it that you are not afraid you just push on anyway.**

Sure, because it is your duty. You know the other fellas expect that of you

You said that you told your sister that you thought there was a good chance that you would die?

No, I told her that there was a good chance that I wouldn't make 21.

Did you ever imagine your own funeral?

25:30 No, I never contemplated it. As I said, you know when you go in there that there is a high degree of risk and there is no point in worrying about it too much. And that really the message that the air force sent, told us, learn what you can from it but put it out of your mind and try and benefit from it than rather worry about it. Actually, I read,

26:00 I read before I joined the air force I read that Dale Carnegie book, How To Win Friends and Influence People and he said there is no good worrying if you can't do anything about it. He said or if there is something you can do, do it, but if there is nothing you can do and you have done all you can, no point worrying and that is the philosophy that I have used all my life.

I had no idea that book was written so long ago,

26:30 **it still sells well I believe?**

Yeah, I don't know where he lived, but, it still sells does it? You are probably a university graduate are you? That was my one regret in life that I never got the chance to do a university course.

Well, there are more things to university study though. Well, I mean actually I will take that back, it was pretty good, but you can either go and get a life's experience which is what

27:00 **the war probably provided for you which you would never have had otherwise.**

No no, in actual fact it rounded off my education. I learnt a huge amount in the air force more than I would have ever learned at university about life. And all of my daughters, we have got three daughters and they have all been university educated and you know, I insisted that they had to go on and do metric as it was then

27:30 and they all did that. And they all, you know they are more complete people even to have done that and I had to leave school when I was 14. But some people continue to crave for knowledge and I think I was in that category. I always wanted to get on top of what ever I was doing,

28:00 and as I said, I was telling you earlier I would have definitely finished up as an accountant I think if I had, not that that is a very, it is not a university course, but the way with my background that is what I was heading for.

Did you adopt any rituals or did you take any trinkets with you, or do anything like that you

know a rabbit's foot or something?

You would be delighted to hear this

28:30 because when I turned 20 I was down at Nowra and we used to drink at Foyles Hotel which was run by a Mrs Foyle who was a devout catholic. And she almost mothered me and she gave me a St Christopher's medal before I left, the last night we were there, she gave me a St Christopher's and she said you keep this. I have still got it.

29:00 And you will have a long life. Now, I hope you have got a St Christopher's medal yourself.

No, I don't I was a bit upset when they decanonised him, I felt a bit ripped off, no I quite like St Christopher I thought he…

Patron Saint of Travellers, she gave me that medal and that is about the only. I actually had a ring on, I used to wear a ring that my mother gave me

29:30 and it had my initials on it nothing else. They told me that the Japanese cut your finger off to get the ring off if they had any trouble so I never took it with me so.

Say in a situation like that do you leave something akin to a will that says please send these possessions to my mother or father or?

All of us had to make out a will the day after we joined the air force.

30:00 **You wouldn't have had much would you?**

No, I don't think there was much to leave but I used to pay an allowance to my mother, mainly because we all did that, we are still contributing, because we owe so much to our mother. Anyway.

That is a confronting sort thing to be asked at the age of 19 or 20 you know

30:30 **make out a will?**

Yes, you know you think you are immortal at that age don't you. It is quite sensible isn't it. The medical officer would lecture us on the risk of dealing with women too, loose women and the need to be protected against venereal disease. Oh no it was pretty good.

31:00 basic training, training that you would never, well I never had any other training like that.

Apart from precautionary instructions regarding that matter was there also any practical applications?

What do you mean by that?

Well if you, not you, but if one did contract a venereal disease what did the air force do with that person?

Well, I don't know of anyone that ever got it, but I don't know what they did. But there was probably,

31:30 I think penicillin was invented about that time wasn't it. I think they used to inject them with penicillin.

Might have been, I know it came in '44 or '45 or something like that?

No, it wasn't then, no I don't know that they did. He said, "Don't tell me you got it off a lavatory seat either."

I guess there was a lot, I bet a lot of boys had to catch up very

32:00 **quickly if they were a bit on the naive side of life?**

Oh well, I think there is a lot of loose talk in around the huts and that sort of thing. And actually, I will tell you something but I prefer to do it. No, I will tell you. Somebody told one of my friends that he impregnated a girl in Melbourne and he

32:30 said, "Can you lend me 25 pounds because I want to get an abortion." And I lent it to him and he didn't survive the war and you know it was unfortunate for him and also for my 25 quid. So there is, I think that is one of the reasons, not only for venereal disease, I think that was the main warning but

33:00 of course it was meant to be a, prevent pregnancies.

That is a huge amount of money too, that is a lot of money.

Yes, and another one owed me 5 pounds. We used to spend a bit of time in night clubs in Sydney when we went down there, oh up there from Nowra. And I lent somebody he was short this time and I lent him

33:30 5 pound and he got the chop too. So I decided that it wasn't good, it wasn't in their interests for me to lend people money. Bad business. But anyway, you can't do much about that.

Before you were sent overseas, I am curious to know what opportunities you had in terms of a bit of R&R [Rest and Recreation] and a bit of time off?

34:00 I didn't, from the, after I finished the course at Geraldton I had a month off waiting for them to have the space at Cressy and after Cressy I had another month off. Because they couldn't take us because they weren't ready to take us at Bairnsdale so that is when I, we all went back to Perth for

34:30 another four weeks and from that time on we went straight through. We had, we might have a week off in Sydney but it was no time to go home for us anyway. Maybe local boys would. But that year once I started the course at Bairnsdale that was on the 5th of January. I didn't get home again until December but that's

35:00 mainly because Perth was so isolated from the east coast.

Well, I am wondering then what you observed amongst the civilian population in response to the fact that a war is on?

As I said earlier, I think there was general support for us. Air crew was sort of, you know once you get your wings up you were sort of looked up to, to some extent. It was a bit of prestige went extremely well

35:30 with. I didn't have any ribbons at that time but when I came back of course I had a couple of ribbons to put up and you know, you were treated extremely well, you know.

Did people invite you home for meals?

Not too many, certainly nobody down at Bairnsdale. Of course you could understand they would be

36:00 inundated when I went back there as an instructor I went to private homes. But you were there long enough to establish contacts with people in the community but once we were on those ATU and the torpedo course and to some extent Cressy, Cressy was only a small town anyway so you were virtually living on the station. And if we were going anywhere we would go to

36:30 Melbourne if we had a weekend.

How did your mates and the Yank [American] air crew sort of shape up together?

Well, we didn't have too much contact with them, if we were bombing Rabaul we would normally go, we were at Milne Bay.

Sorry, I should have prefixed that by saying while you were in Melbourne.

There weren't too many Americans around there.

Okay.

37:00 Or Sydney for that matter.

Must have been a bit later on that they started coming. There is a place called the Dugout in Melbourne, I was wondering if you ever went there?

No.

Okay, well in the last five minutes of the tape I wanted to talk a bit about the simulated exercises that you did while you were training for torpedoes?

In the aircraft or in the simulator?

Oh no, in the simulator.

37:30 Well, there wasn't much you could do in a simulator. See the simulator were called ink trainers in those days.

Ink trainers?

Yes, they were very basic and they bore very little resemblance to an aeroplane but what they did was make you familiar with a procedure, they were more procedural trainers. Subsequently after the war…

38:00 Well, after the war and in civil now and in the air force too they got simulators that have got visual attachments so that they can simulate dusk conditions and they have got a high degree of fidelity. So much so that when you get a crew into these simulators that you get so involved that if it malfunctions or you crash

38:30 all the lights go out, and it is very realistic. And you when you are attacking there is a bit of a rumble and a little bit of movement, but in those days they were really procedural trainers. They called them ink trainers, they were never called simulators. But that is all they did, train you in a particular procedure. So that when you went up in the sky and

39:00 the instructor to simulate instrument conditions he would cover the screen with an opaque substance, it

might be a, I don't know if they had plastic then, ply wood or something, cardboard. So that you couldn't see out and you would have to do, in other words you would have to do everything on instrument but. Does that answer the question?

39:30 But as I said they were very, very poor fidelity and even when I went to civil we were still using an ink trainer from the air force.

Where they helpful?

Only for training in procedures, yes. It exposed you to procedure. The time elapsed would be exactly the same. They could simulate the, you would have to do the rate of decent and the

40:00 fly the headings that you would do in the exercise. So, to that extent you would know what the procedure was and then put it into practice in the aircraft.

Tape 6

00:31 **Could you for a person like myself, run me through what the systems check is when you get into an aircraft?**

Oh well, you follow a pattern, every aeroplane has a pattern and you start, in whatever the approved pattern is. Go through all the switching. Now, in the air force machines, they are very basic by comparison

01:00 to what a modern aeroplane is but the procedures are the same, you just follow a laid down pattern. If it is a two pilot aeroplane, in civil we always have a call out of the checklist.

Okay, just for argument sake we will talk about a Beaufort, take us from knowing you are about to get into a plane and your crew and exactly what everyone does?

01:30 Well, I couldn't tell you what everyone does but I could tell you what the pilot does.

So we are rolling again, okay, so your role pre flight on a Beaufort?

Yeah well, in every aeroplane you a pilot, you always do a walk around check to see if there is any obvious deficiency or some damage has been caused while it has been on the ground you never know. And in

02:00 the Beaufort because it was a much simpler cockpit layout you could do the checklist, go through the check in probably a minute. I can't remember any catch phrase we had for remembering it but I know that it was done to a specific procedure

02:30 and you are going back so far. The main thing that you check is that the ignition switches are off. Because it would be viable because somebody may have had them on and the minute you touch the starter you could get and engine roaring for your life when somebody is down around it so. The first thing we do is check the ignition is off. As far as pre take off, once again

03:00 in a single pilot aeroplane, you do it all on your own accord, and there was a little catch phrase we had to remind us of it. HTMP [Hydraulics, Trim, Mixture control, Pitch] fuel and flaps. H was for hydraulics, P was for pitch that went in a full fine Trim,

03:30 make sure the trim is neutral, and hydraulics make sure you have hydraulic pressure.

What was the M for?

Mixture control, sorry mixture control had to be in cut off. And that was the pre take off, and it was the same check we did prior to take off. So you would run through everything to make sure all of those systems were in the correct position for take off, so it was very simple. I

04:00 mean you are dealing with two entirely different types of aircraft because you had a single pilot operation in the case of the Beaufort and in the case of the commercial aircraft there was always a two pilot operation. And because of the sophistication of the more modern aeroplanes in civil you would have a check that's called and you would have the pre take-off

04:30 check called. And all the checks were to be called by the non flying pilot maybe the captain. First officer, whoever, non flying pilot called for checklist, but that didn't apply in Beauforts.

What would you say to your crew before take off?

Well, most of what you were going to say

05:00 would have been said regarding the operation they would know because we were all briefed together in the operations room before we started any operation. But once we got to the pre start check you would just make sure that everybody was ready before you started. And if the ladder was up. The Beaufort had

a little telescopic ladder

05:30 which went down from me to the back of the turret and that is how we entered the aircraft and left it normally. And you would make sure that that was retracted. There was no light to indicate to you in the cockpit so you had to rely upon the rear gunner who could not sit in turret during takeoff he would be down in that

06:00 area and he would have his headset off. We had headsets but the noise level in the aeroplane was extremely high and the reception was all HF [High Frequency] there was no VHF [Very high Frequency] in those days and consequently so much static. But quite often we didn't use the headset, just the operator would have the headset on and he would draw your attention.

06:30 He is just around the corner from the pilot and if there was something to be said by, he got anything by HF and there was no radio control. It was all by lights as regards to takeoff permission and permission to land.

So, you didn't use headsets among the crew, you just what, shout to each other?

No, use headsets except we didn't use them for take off and landing but

07:00 once we got onto an operation we would have headsets on. And you could communicate with each other, it was all right in position communication but terrible static. Because all the stations you were interested in, well there were some on New Guinea but most of the time I was there the inter tropic front was in the area

07:30 and that creates a lot of static. A lot of electrical action and that means that it is very difficult to hear much and it is pretty well all done on the key, and that is the wireless operators job.

How would you address your crew?

By their Christian name. It was all Christian name basis. Sometimes it was desirable to call a particular

08:00 station, current or a wireless station but mostly we were fairly informal and we knew each other. Almost you could recognise the voice anyway.

I was also wondering also, pre take off what sort of communication do you have with ground crew about your aircraft?

There would be a preset arrangement and they would usually stand by with a fire extinguisher,

08:30 in case there was a fire but apart from that they would have, they connected a ground cart for ground power so you wouldn't deplete the aircraft batteries on the start up. You could start up on air craft batteries so that they were reasonably fully charged you would start up on the ground power and they would disconnect and walk back and signal to you it was

09:00 approved to go. But that procedure was pretty simple but one thing that always impressed me and I was telling you that made you feel good. They were always there to meet you when you came back. It didn't matter what time of the night or day they would always be there and I thought that was nice. Sometimes they were just pleased to see you I hope well I think they were pleased to see you most of the time. No, it was just sort of,

09:30 as I said, the moral in that squadron was tremendous. Even though we were sustaining fairly high losses, you just felt that you had their 100% support.

And with the ground crew if they had to do anything mechanically would they say watch out for this or that or?

Well, they had no

10:00 means of communicating with you once you started the engines.

Sure, but before that, did they say watch out for this thing or that thing?

Well, we were parked in the coconut plantation and it was very narrow taxi ways and the idea, it was meant to be concealed. We didn't have any cover for the aircraft though but no they would warn you if you could go this way or that way

10:30 but the strip we operated in off from Milne Bay was metal stripping. They just flattened the earth with bulldozers and put down this metal stripping and that was it. It was built in three days and knock down the coconut trees and it was a terrible strip to land on because sometimes you would make a nice touch down and then you go down a pot hole and you get

11:00 airborne again. You soon get used to it, very noisy too.

You mentioned that your crew were excellent in that they knew who was in charge, I mean how was that established, did that take a little bit of ironing out?

Well, they were told in the pre start of the training that the captain regardless of rank would always be

in command of any decisions relating to the air craft and

11:30 the navigator while he was the navigator. He had to report to the captain and so did the other two people. See in the aircraft that was shot down the gunners in the American aircraft reported that our craft was shooting at them. And but until they were instructed by the

12:00 captain, in the American aircraft they weren't permitted to fire, and in our aircraft if somebody made an attack from the rear and he picked it up, our bloke would fire. But he would normally tell you anyway because it was just a matter of flicking a switch and he could say somebody has come in from the rear and…

Some initiative was allowed to your crew as well?

Oh sure yeah. It was encouraged.

12:30 Because you know we wanted to make sure someone was running the ship but they were expected to use their own initiative. As I said, the bomb aimer, the navigator was also the bomb aimer, they were called observers but they were responsible for the navigation and also on bombing runs doing high level bombing, they were responsible for

13:00 positioning the aircraft in the right position and then releasing the bombs. And all the pilot did, he would, when he was running up on the target he would say, "Bomb doors open," and the pilot would open the bomb doors. It was a bit like a selector for the undercarriage in fact quite close to it which is a bad cockpit design because you might lower the undercarriage instead of the bomb doors. You might retract the undercarriage

13:30 instead of the bomb doors, you know it was just a bad feature of cockpit design. So now they try and separate controls as much as possible and I am sure they have achieved that on aeroplanes today.

On something such as a bombing run, what rules did you have as captain?

Well, as I said, the direction of the aircraft,

14:00 the navigator would line you up on the target roughly but once you started to come under the nose I couldn't see it so then he would take over. And the bombs site had a long bar on them and he would get the bomb the target running down on the bomb site, running down the bomb site, and if there was a drift coming from one

14:30 side or the other he would say, "Left, left," and you would make a small correction. And if it wasn't sufficient he would say, "Left, left," again, and you'd keep turning left until he said, "Steady." And they would always wait for it to settle and once he is satisfied with that he would say one minute to drop or whatever the time was or ten seconds to drop.

15:00 Or with the run up he would also call for the bomb doors to be opened because he as he said the bombs couldn't be dropped until the doors were open and you didn't want them to drop either. And they normally didn't arm until they dropped away from the aircraft so there wasn't much danger of the bombs going off in flight.

So, this bomb site that you are talking about that is when the doors are open have you got someone looking through the bomb doors?

No, the

15:30 observers cockpit, the observers position is forward of the cockpit and it had a perspex, I think it was perspex. It may have been glass that he looked through, it was in a position where the bomb site was, under the bomb site. And so he had, he would lay down flat on his stomach

16:00 while he was doing the run in so it is probably clearer on one of those pictures. You see the glass is in nose. I think it would be glass because perspex can distort the picture. So, as our windscreen was glass all the other transparent areas around the cockpit were

16:30 Perspex. So, oh no he had a very, very good view there, but on the other hand he didn't have much protection whereas the pilot had a half inch steel plate behind and under his seat. That is one of the reasons why the Japanese aircraft were very fast and very manoeuvrable, they had cut down the weight to a minimum there was no

17:00 armoured protection at all. So…

Which would you prefer?

Well, I would like to sit on half-inch steel a bit safer in that area anyway, but of course if it came through the windshield I don't think it would matter what you had on wrapped around you. Oh no, they were pretty flimsy those aeroplanes, it is only aluminium sheeting really and there is not too much that would

17:30 you know, that stuff they used to fire at Rabaul, it used to explode or some of it and it would put out all of this red hot shrapnel. So, it would be pretty serious to get hit with that because if it got in the fuel

tanks you would probably catch fire anyway.

Did you take any hits?

No, none at all, never got hit the whole time so I give Mrs. Foyle's St Christopher's credit for that.

18:00 **In terms of evasive techniques, what did you employ?**

Well, once you dropped the bombs the pilot was free to do what he liked so I used to do a dive in term to build up speed and head back towards our base but I…if I had been in a lower level doing a dive bombing attack as we did at Gasmata

18:30 on several occasions, I would head straight down to the water go down to about not as low as 20 feet but I would go down to about 30 feet. Because they are very hard to pick up. We had a camouflage painting on the aeroplane there was a bit of a mix of brown and green and it would be very difficult, because fighter pilots tend to look for you up in the sky and

19:00 once you get below the horizon, the background gets down below the horizon, it is very hard to pick up any object in the distance whereas you can see everything. That was my tactic not everybody did it somebody said you would probably leave a blank because the Beaufort flew at a slightly nose up attitude when it was flying straight and level. In fact pretty well all aircraft did and as you use up fuel they become

19:30 more straight and level. Because of that when we are flying around Jervis Bay and if you are flying low anywhere close to water it would ruffle the water the wash from your airstrip because it was going slightly down. That would make it easier to see an aeroplane so you didn't want to go that low that you were left away but that was briefly.

20:00 The pilot was free once the bombs were dropped. He was free to do whatever he liked. And you would try and put the gunner in a position where he was good protection for your tail and you either went into cloud if there was any cloud around or I used to go down onto the deck.

Did your gunner have much to do?

20:30 Everybody was firing away when we attacked the cruises because that was a low flying effort and also when we did Gasmata because that was low level, they were free to select any target they liked. The navigator had a freestanding pivotal gun in the nose of the aeroplane. The pilot had two fixed guns in the wing and the turret had two guns and there was another free gun

21:00 which the other gunners could use on the left hand side of the aircraft only. So, we had a fair bit of armour, but we were nearly all .303 calibre bullets and you have to get reasonably close to military targets to do any good. But that was the equipment, when I went on the Mosquitos we had a cannon

21:30 and they were 5 millimetre cannons and we also had rockets. And they were terrific to fire. The only disappointment I had was that I didn't get to the war in time to fire a rocket. But you know life is full of disappointments.

I was wondering if you could describe to me, you get the call one minute to drop from the observer, what is the mood

22:00 **in the plane?**

There is no discussion at all. It is quiet, absolute quiet, everyone is concentrating on, you know it is a pretty finical phase because that is when you can expect the anti aircraft fire, if it hasn't already started. Oh no, there is no levity of any description and only necessary talk and that is what you have got to make sure of in any

22:30 situation that involves the possibility of any action you have got of sort of be. You have to have a strict cockpit and aircraft discipline on the radio so there is no unnecessary talk at all. It is all, get an hour back towards base and everybody is having a bit of a chat then because the pressure is off particularly at night because you know you are pretty safe.

23:00 **What goes through your mind in that minute when you are waiting and trying to keep it steady and everything else?**

You are required to fly the aircraft straight and level and that requires your 100% concentration, you know you are not allowed to move the wings or touch the rudders. Your feet are on the controls, it is absolutely essential in that and also a torpedo dropping exercise if you were doing one.

23:30 The aircraft must be straight and level for at least one minute and of course in that time you are flying, in the case of a torpedo, you would be flying, a torpedo drop you would be flying at 150 knots and you would drop it 1200 yards from the ship. Now, that was extremely hazardous and there would certainly be no levity then either, there would even be less of it I would think. As I said, we never had to do that in anger.

24:00 It is interesting we did a practice torpedo drop on the Queen Mary. It was being used as a troop carrier

and it had been in Sydney and we got permission, our commanding officer got permission for us to do a dummy practice run on the Queen Mary and the nearest anybody got to dropping to 1200 feet

24:30 1200 yards was 2000 yards because it looked so huge compared to everything else we had practiced against which were…The ship that we practised on in Jervis Bay was a former Sydney ferry the Barraba and you might have actually seen a picture of the Barraba in a lot of wartime

25:00 footage of movie news were two Beauforts or three were doing a demonstration beat up of the Barraba, movie time were filming it for this segment, I don't know what it was for, but two of the aircraft collided and they captured the whole lot on film. Have you seen it?

No, I haven't seen it, no.

No, it is on the

25:30 long film dealing with the empire training scheme. We were on the ship that day and we subsequently went to a funeral in at the cemetery at Nowra. They gave them a big send off and they had another guard and all that sort of thing but then in addition,

26:00 the leather jackets were so thick around the wreck, they knew. The divers went down there and they were so aggressive because they had been eating these bodies that they started to attack the divers so they never did recover the bodies that were in the aircraft. And we had another memorial service out there where they threw a few reefs on the bay.

26:30 You know there was a lot of, you go to a lot of funerals. They never got Bertie Greenwood back and we weren't there when Doug McCole went but we went to several of the other funerals there. So it was sort of a, it made you realise that it was a pretty serious business you were in and as I said I, after Mrs Foley gave me the

27:00 medallion. I felt bullet proof. You would have too.

Did it, perhaps a strange question, but when you attend a funeral does it make a difference if the body hadn't been retrieved?

Oh well, the fellas we knew, Geoff Parker I knew very well. You know, you think

27:30 it could have been me but here I am. I adopted the air force philosophy to try and learn what you could from it. It might sound a bit callous but if you didn't adopt that attitude it could affect your performance. I took that advice on board and I think most other blokes did, because we didn't talk about it too much. Very

28:00 little but, as I said we, normally got the rest of the day off and we quite would go down to the pub and have lunch in town they would send in a tender for us about 2 or 3 o'clock. I think you probably get hardened towards that sort of thing. And as I said, when you join the services you know that there is going to be a certain amount of risk

28:30 involved. It was rather more than I anticipated actually but still as I said there were people in Europe who very rarely get a group through a tour of duty. So weren't too, we didn't perform well, five of us survived the war out of the 12, or five of the crews. So, that is 20 people out of 48 but still you know

29:00 the odds were slightly against you surviving it. Because the loss rate was more than 50%.

When you get that half-day off would you talk about the guy that just died?

Oh yes, see two of those were West Australians, some of them you didn't know but you are still sympathetic. I don't mean you sort of

29:30 treat it with complete levity but you had the alcohol to try and put it out of your mind.

Did that work?

It did with me because I was a petty moderate drinker and I was, you know. I am sure most felt the same or very similar you know I mean you have to appreciate if you have

30:00 lost three out of 12 in training and you haven't got into an accident it is a fairly long shot that you will survive the war or in fact survive the tour. As I said, I just tried to make sure that I did everything right as far as our aircraft was concerned and hoped that the other fellas were doing the right thing too.

30:30 **Could you explain to me how you do a dummy drop with torpedoes?**

Yes, we used to carry to simulate the all up weight of the aircraft when we were training we would sometimes carry a cement dummy in the shape of a torpedo and we would be briefed on how to mount the

31:00 attack, there would probably be eight of us. We would have two who attacked together on the reciprocal heading of the ship and they were called the locking aircraft and their job was to put torpedoes in the water. So, that if the ship manoeuvred after we dropped those torpedoes would take care of it if he

31:30 turned, whichever way he turned. There would be three on the port bow and three on the starboard bow. The aim was for all of the aircraft to get to 1200 yards from the ship at the same time. Now, it was very difficult to do that without, and stop at 20 feet. The other objective

32:00 was to stop at 20 feet until you got to about 1500 yards and then climb up to 150 feet and stabilise the aircraft straight and level for at least one minute. And then when you got to 1200 yards we had a site a bomb site, or torpedo site which incidentally would have decapitated you if you, the position it was, it was a steal bar with a system of lights on it. And

32:30 we, it was very difficult to achieve that and stop at 20 feet so it's odds on that the ship knows now that you are now coming in to drop a torpedo and they also know that you are going to be at 150 feet and at 1200 yards and it was not unusual for them in Europe to lose all the aircraft in a bomb attack so

33:00 that was another reason why people weren't keen to go on the Beaufort. If you were dropping torpedoes not all squadrons, 100 was the only squadron at that time but subsequently they trained up eight squadron to specialise in it and they were didn't have much success either. One of the problems is that

33:30 when the torpedo drops it is in a straight and level attitude and goes down like that but if the wire happens to be coming up it will dive go down and it starts. What they call porpoising and it will keep coming up and down out of the water. If it goes down on the other side, the down side of the wave it will do the same thing. So really you need to have a whole lot of perfect

34:00 conditions. We had the American torpedo which sometimes if you are not relied upon gyros once it has got in the water and they sometimes were knocked off. They didn't function normally because of the shock of hitting the water so there is a very inexact science and I think they finally gave torpedoes

34:30 away. It was too costly in terms of aircraft if you dropped in the attack stage and it was also ineffective because the torpedoes were so difficult to get running truly on the path that they were meant to.

How much experience did you have with live torpedoes?

None at all, it was too expensive, too expensive.

35:00 Oh no, we might have done one at Jervis Bay but they did it there so it would run up on the shore and they'd get them back. But of course Jervis Bay was like a mill pond if you have been there it is you know a very narrow opening to the sea and even if there was a big sea running it would still be fairly

35:30 calm in Jervis Bay. Are you familiar with it?

I am not, actually no.

It is quite a big stretch of water but it has got two big headlands at the mouth of the bay and, as I said, they are quite narrow and it is protected from rough weather.

It is not really representative of an attack on shipping is it, the conditions?

No, no it is not and not the ship we practiced on but you could

36:00 drop precisely at 1200 yards on Barraba. The minute you ran out of the heads and saw a big ship it appeared huge and of course the Queen Mary was an exception, not too many ships as big as that. We did practice on wartime you know there was a Dutch destroyer and an Australian destroyer. When they were available we would use them on the open sea

36:30 on the open sea.

I was wondering how you felt when you heard that you were heading overseas?

Well, I never really was overseas. Do you call Papua New Guinea overseas?

Well, it is out of Australia, okay, when you were heading into action, when you got the call?

It is what we were expected to do because they were the only torpedo squadron and we knew once we were trained on torpedoes

37:00 dropping that that is where we would go. Oh no, I felt quite relaxed about it. Of course I had no idea what Milne Bay was like. But you wouldn't go there from choice if you had that knowledge. There was 50% malaria rate among the troops there. The army were in, the Japanese were still in the hills around there when I was there and every now and again you would hear a rifle fire. We had guards around our

37:30 camp but we didn't have to do any of that like we did on training we used to have to mount guard at night at Geraldton. No, no I was quite designed to go in there. I didn't really know what to expect. It is a magnificent looking country from the air but it is full of insects and nasties and the climate is

38:00 pretty ordinary. But if you get in the highlands they tell me it is all right but I have never been up there.

Just near the end of this tape, can you describe what you saw when you first arrived?

The big impression you got was all the coconuts and how they camouflaged the camp so well. We were in amongst the coconuts and they would frequently fall in the camp area. You know if one of those fell on your head it would be fairly serious.

38:30 But no, never got, but you would still hear them fall from time to time and you know it was a real tropical looking setting but we were in American bell tents. And of course everything used to get wet in this heavy down pour which occurred almost without fail. There was one occasion there were we couldn't get back in there for three days. We had to wait at Goodenough because the place was clogged

39:00 in. And once that you got a south eastern blowing up the bay into the airport area, there was no way we could make an approach, we was no aids, it all had to be visual, and we had to go and land somewhere else. The one we went to was Riverina and that is where the squadron subsequently moved to and it was like a

39:30 holiday resort after Milne Bay because it was a very dry climate and we were there for… I was there for about the best part of three months before I came home.

Tape 7

00:30 **Would you like to have a go at a torpedo?**

No, I really wouldn't like to because you knew very well you were a sitting target a sitting duck.

So soon after getting to Milne Bay were you into operation?

I think I was checked out, you had to be checked out by the commanding officer. You would do a familiarisation flight and then you would do a few circuits with him and I think we got down to tenth or something like that. And I was checked out six days later

01:00 it was just a question of his availability. I think I noticed that he did a few that day but some of the others weren't done for sometime later. So once you demonstrated, and it was just to give you experience of landing on that metal striping because it would make a terrible noise and also to just there was another airfield there too, Gurney, sorry we were on Gurney. The other one was

01:30 Turnbull and that is where they had a fighter squadron and one stage they had a Hudson squadron there. But no, it is fairly quick you know it gave you a bit of a chance to settle in and adjust to the climate. But from then on it was all go.

What was your first sortie?

I think the first one I did was,

02:00 if it wasn't the first, we were sent out calling up seemed at night at about six o'clock at night because there had been a siting of six Japanese destroyers coming south. And we were sent up to intercept them and we were armed with the appropriate armour piecing on and we took off. It must have been just after

02:30 seven but it was pitch black and we were going up in formations of three and I was flying with the flight commander called Ed Parson. And when you are formatting the leader takes off first and does usually just does a circuit of the field. And then the other two aircraft who are going to formate take off after him in order

03:00 and then take up their positions and while this is going on he has his navigation lights on, formation lights now. Navigation lights, as you know, is the white one on the tail and a green and a red on each wing and the my position was, I was flying number two to him which is on his right side and

03:30 while this is going on there is both the nav [navigation] lights and the formation lights on. And then after you settle down in formation he will switch his nav lights off and you formate on these blue, very small blue formation lights which are only behind the aircraft and I was trailing him, edge of the wing.

04:00 Then after about another half an hour when your eyes are accustomed to the dark. And it is a pitch black night this night there was no moon or stars or anything it is all overcast. And he switched, they switched off the formation lights and all you have got then to formate on then are these two red exhaust stacks and you formate on the right one of course. Anyway,

04:30 I was a little bit concerned because the navigator hadn't been out, it was his first time out too and I could see this big black shape coming up and I said, "What is that?" and he said, "Normandy Island." So that reassured me that he knew where we were in case we got separated. Anyway, not long after that the leader switched on all his lights again and you turned around and went back because you had been recalled

05:00 so we never did anything. But that was the first, that would be considered an operation. I don't know it must have been a miss report site but you never did find out. All our instructions came from nine ops

[operations] group which was in Milne Bay or on Milne Bay but it was completely independent of the squadrons it would just issue out the

05:30 orders for the squadrons, what they were to do. And all the information they had about the target but subsequently I just did whatever, what everybody else did. When you got there you were considered to be operational and you weren't protected in anyway because you had just arrived. But when I got back into the operations room the flight commander came over to me and said, "I am glad to see you back."

06:00 I said, "There is no way you were going to lose me I can tell you." But it sort of just illustrated that he appreciated my position I think to some extent. But I felt quite happy with that. We had done plenty of practice with formation flying.

So, you are flying up ahead with the leader, what is the best position to be in on a sortie?

I don't know if there is any best. I mean,

06:30 I know when the Gasmata attacked we all were in big echelon to the left, we all staggered we went up in that order. We flew fairly loose formation but nearer the target we took up closer formation. And what happened the leader then took us in at the right angle so that you had to make a turn onto the strip to do the dive bombing attack. Now, you would do that from about 3000 or 4000 feet and

07:00 he would do a dive bombing attack because that is the most accurate form of bombing. And we were trying to make the strip unserviceable so we carried 6, 250 pound bombs and they would have a slight delayed fuse so that they would penetrate the earth and then before they exploded and make a big hole. We went in,

07:30 I think I wasn't flying number two that day. I think I was fourth or fifth in the formation and you just went down and once you started the attack the navigator would be firing away with his gun the other aircraft would have cleared. You would see, I could see ahead right ahead of me and I would keep clear of this bloke. But it didn't really worry you,

08:00 from then on you were right. You were at liberty to do what you liked. But if that was the runway we would go over in an angle so that you would keep, so many bombs would drop on the runway. Whereas if you did it parrallely you might miss the runway completely so make sure that there was a training slip. It was only to keep the field unserviceable while the Americans were doing a daylight attack.

08:30 And really that sort of bombing doesn't close the airfield for that long, they just get bulldozers in and get natives into fill the hole and they could soon operate from it.

What can the navigator see to shoot at?

He would try and pick out, see if there were any gun positions or some object that he could

09:00 site. It had a bit of, it was a pivotal gun, but he had it at about 30 degrees either side and a bit up and down so he had a bit of flexibility. But he would select the target as we were going down and get away as much as he could. The tail gunner would, when you turned when you broke off the attack you would turn away and he would get a shot at whatever

09:30 was available otherwise if there was nothing that he could see he wouldn't shoot. You didn't shoot just for the sake of moral but you always had that strong smell of cordite in the cockpit when the guns were used. Because a certain amount of fumes stopped in the aeroplane but that didn't last for long.

On a dive bombing run, who is lining up the sites and dropping the bombs?

10:00 That is the pilot, does all of that. That is the big difference in a dive bombing attack you are virtually aiming the aircraft at the target. The problem with the Beaufort was if you went up much higher than about 4000 feet the speed would build up so quickly because it was a very clean aircraft and we had no speed brakes. A dive bombing aircraft have speed brakes where they come up on the top side of the wing and spoil the airflow

10:30 over the wing and consequently reduce the speed and they have them in civil too in the civil jets. If you want to slow down quickly you deploy the speed brakes. But in our case we didn't have that so there was a limit to how high you could commence the dive from and it was usually considered to be at 5000 feet. In fact 5000

11:00 feet I thought was too quick because even though you throttle back the aircraft still accelerates down hill a bit like an idling engine down a steep hill. The speed still builds up if you are in over drive it will free wheel. But anyway I, we did another one pre dawn attack on Gasmata,

11:30 that I was in and five of us went over for that day. And we got there just at dawn and you could see enough and that was quite effective too but we didn't lose any aircraft out of that one.

That first attack you described on Gasmata, what time of day was that?

About nine in the morning.

So it is pretty daylight, pretty clear?

Well, the Americans wanted us to attract the fighters down there at Gasmata,

12:00 the fighters were based at Rabaul. Now, whether it worked or not I don't know because I never saw any but they were concerned that seeing they were doing air attack in daylight on a heavy defended place. I would imagine the thinking was that if you could attack about half an hour before us that will send the fighters down to Gasmata. However, it turned out very expensive on the second day when we lost three out of the

12:30 ten.

Did you see them going down?

I saw one the day I went down. I just wondered whether he was going to pull out of the dive but he never did. And you feel pretty, well you are helpless too and then you have got to concentrate on what you were doing yourself. And I said to the navigator, I said, "He is late pulling out," and then I

13:00 stopped looking at him and I didn't see where he crashed. And neither would the navigator because he was doing with his gun what he was meant to do. You very rarely see your people crash at a time like that unless you come along later in the peace you might see the smoke and the fire and whatever happens. They make a bit

13:30 of a splurge because particularly if he hadn't dropped his bombs. They would have probably gone off too. But in that situation there is really no hope for them.

After you have hit a target do you reform to fly back?

No, we are free, it is safer to go back on your own. As I said, in those low level attacks I went I always went down low. Not everybody did, if there was cloud around

14:00 the other option was to get into the cloud and fly in the cloud. You felt pretty safe there. But in the morning in New Guinea the cloud doesn't normally build up till the afternoon. There certainly wasn't much cloud that day, there was nothing that would deplete the visibility of anybody at any height. So as I said, I felt a bit safer down there because I thought we were less vulnerable even if we were

14:30 picked up by a fighter but we never had to find out.

What was your procedure on return?

The procedure? When you break away?

Yep, and getting back to base what would you do?

As I said, in same in high level dive bombing and night bombing attack you have climb power on you put climb power on to go down hill and that way you build up the speed

15:00 very quickly. And then you throttle back to high speed cruise setting and go at whatever height you wanted to cruise at, but you would get up about 300 knots. You know that had a speed at straight level of over 300 but you would have to be up at maximum permitted thrusts. And that is very damaging in terms of fuel consumption

15:30 because you use up huge amounts of fuel, a bit like a motor car. And the other thing is that it is damaging to the engine too because the temperature goes up. We are able to control the temperature to a certain degree because we had gills on the aircraft engines and you could adjust them to allow more airflow through the cowls but that cost your performance because they put more

16:00 drag up too. So, you tried to avoid using the gills and use climb power for a short time to build up a speed and you would hold it, until you would drop at 1500 pound bomb and you used all the fuel coming to the target so the aircraft had a bit of performance anyway. Because you were much lighter than when you started out. A very important factor in aeroplanes.

16:30 But the more power you use the quicker you burn up the fuel and the more damage you do to the engine. So you have got to conserve power to get some life out of the engine.

When you returned from a sortie would you wait to see if the others made it back?

No, we always, there was a car to pick us up or a truck

17:00 or a wagon or a jeep to take us to the operations room and we were all debriefed individually. You just tell them what happened, what you saw, what you did, they were fairly thorough. And the briefing, the pre flight briefings were very thorough too. You would have the meteorologist, he would give you a run down on the weather. You would have the operations officer

17:30 who would tell you what the plan was and there would be another operations officer who would brief on where the gun positions where and any other information about the target which was relevant. And the commanding officer would quite often he would introduce all the speakers and add

18:00 a few words to that if he wasn't on. He might be coming on the job or he might not be coming, he didn't

always go.

Did it make a difference if he came or went, came or stayed?

Say again?

Would it make a difference if he was in on the mission?

If he was? No, not at all, you were free. You just did as you were told, take up a position in the formation if it was a formation operation

18:30 or if you were going up independently. And that didn't happen very often. Normally we would. When we were doing a bombing attack we would normally set out except at night sometimes we would go up individually. But there is you know if there is enough of you there is a bit of a risk of collision that way

19:00 but sometimes we would take off, there would be nominated start up times, they would be 15 minutes apart so we would be bombing the target over a longer period and it would keep them awake. And once again we were bombing Rabaul at night because the Americans wanted them to be attacked at night because they were doing the daylight attacking and

19:30 that is why we sometimes would take off about 15 minutes apart. And if you had 10 aircraft do that spread over about 2 ½ hours. That was the reason for the attack was, whatever it was. Whereas the cruisers, when we attacked them we all went up as a big formation but the formation broke up

20:00 because the leader. He was a flight commander made a turn too steep for the aircraft on the outside to keep up and the aircraft on the inside couldn't go slow enough because the turn was too steep. It is very hard to hold position outside about two aircraft from the leader and there were ten of us in that night. So,

20:30 he actually broke the whole formation up because I was flying number three that is on this left side and I was able to keep up but I used that much power and as I said to the navigator, "There is no way known anyone on the outside of us will be able to hold position." And mind you we were firing now on the exhaust staffs too and your eyes felt like they were sticking out of your head at the end of those

21:00 operations. Because this is, we had to, we flew to Rabaul and he turned around, he turned around at about 100, 100 degrees to the east and then he went along there for a while. And then he turned left and by the time we got stabilised on the easterly heading there was no one else. I could see there was nobody else in the formation there was

21:30 nobody on the left hand side because the gunner told me. And I could see that there was no one on the right side at all. So, that is the night we had the ASB [?] and my radio operator, Graham Bodnar picked up the two blimps, that's target ships, target ships were called blimps. He picked them up at 100 miles which was the extreme range of the equipment

22:00 and some other times it worked well and you would pick up coast lines. But a lot of times it didn't function too well.

On that occasion, what did that mean in practice to have broken up the formation like that?

Well, we were instructed, that if the formation, if you lost formation you were to do an individual attack and just follow the same plan as the leader was doing. And the plot was that,

22:30 if we hadn't found the two cruises by the time we got outside Rabaul you would do precisely what he did, turn right and go east and go through what they used to call Buka Passage which was the passage between the island of Buka and Bougainville. And the ship, they knew it was coming, they expected that it would come down there because it was a much shorter route than going to the west. And

23:00 this was after the code, the Japanese code had been broken. Well, not broken, but they got a code book from a Japanese small boat which had the code book and even though it had lead covers he didn't throw it overboard. And we knew, or the allies knew exactly what movement they were making

23:30 and we knew that 2½ days before that we were going to do that attack. So…

When you were approaching the cruises there were only three of you?

No, two well there were only two of us. There would have been others but nobody else to my knowledge had the radar but there was another aircraft there. What happened was that the

24:00 leader, we were flying at about 1500 feet and he was, and my radio operator picked it up and at that time we were 100 nautical miles. He said, "I got these two blimps and I watched them," and he kept calling them 90, 80 until we got down to the one mile scale. And I am formatting on the leader and he is still at 1500 feet

24:30 and I knew that was too low and we were going straight for them. So, we were on radio silence and you couldn't flash a light or talk so I couldn't communicate with him so I just put on power and climbed up and did a 360 degree turn. And by the time I completed the turn and soon after that he got over the ship

and they threw everything at him.

25:00 And it was such a surprise to him, well I don't know what he did, he never did drop his bomb, he didn't know. You have got to, there is a bit of preparation in doing the bombing bit and they weren't prepared anyway he never found the target again. But by the time I got up to bomb the ships, I might say there was a little bit of moon, and by this time I could see

25:30 these shadows on the water. And I didn't need the guidance but I wanted to get then between whatever moon there was and me so that you have got you are coming. You could see then the whole way down and I did that and another aircraft while I was getting in position another aircraft came in all the

26:00 guns of the ship went to him. So, I thought this is a good time to go in then, but the minute he dropped his bomb all the guns came onto us. You know it was almost like a drill, amazing, and his bombs dropped well short of the ship. And I, in our debriefing I said if somebody else dropped, you always logged the time you dropped so I don't know who

26:30 it was to this day but I said that the bombs. His bombs were well short and they wouldn't have caused any damage. But I said, as far as I was concerned I did a good attack and that was confirmed by the navigator, you have other people in the aircraft so. And we were credited with probably causing damage to it. But they said the ship was damaged to the

27:00 extent that it didn't come out of Rabaul again during the war. So, it was reasonably successful that attack. But with all due respect to this bloke, who is since dead, it was very poorly lead. I thought we should have, but it wouldn't have made much difference all those that didn't have radar working would presumably stuck with the leader.

27:30 But certainly there was no percentage in going over at that high, he didn't get hit.

And if you break the formation like that isn't it a warning for the ship that there is other planes coming?

Oh well yeah, but I mean, we were too low to do a dive bombing attack which is what we were meant to do. Oh well, you could have done one but it wouldn't have been too much of a dive, you know it was pitch, it was

28:00 night and the sea was quite dark. As I said, my eyes were so accustomed to the darkness all your instruments lights are off, you don't have any lights on in the cockpit at all. The navigator had a hooded light that he could use to do his log and that sort of thing but it was near enough to no light. But all of those instruments have got had luminescence

28:30 needles and also luminescence markings on the dials and they are all designed so that when everything was normal they would all be in the same vertical or horizontal position. And so if all the instruments were lying horizontal all whatever that position was you knew that, of course you could tell by the note of the engines too there was no variation

29:00 it was a very interesting attack.

Any losses in that attack?

There was a torpedo A squadron up and they lost somebody. But I don't know, they didn't do any good either. Yeah, there were two squadrons up that night. But no see I don't think a lot of them found the target. See as I said, you never get

29:30 told the result. Now, quite often you would be, there would be another crew waiting to be debriefed while you were being debriefed and you would leave the place and we went back to Kirawina and by the time I got back they had refuelled the aircraft and we just took off and went back to Milne Bay. So,

30:00 it might have been Biscayne whichever it was we went back to base. The reason we went to Kirawina because it was nearer to Rabaul than we were and it was necessary for us to have a maximum

30:30 range in case we had to we didn't pick up the submarines. The two cruises until they were bit farther back than were expected, but as it happened they were just about where they expected them to be. So, conversely we went up to Rabaul to make sure they hadn't got closer to Rabaul from the position they were meant to be in so that or otherwise we would have missed

31:00 them.

In a debriefing, how much room is there for you to express your opinion that it was bad leadership?

Oh, you were encouraged, everybody is encouraged to say their piece. I don't know, it would be bad leadership, if you were wise you wouldn't say. I just told them that the turn was too steep for the people on the inside. I said I just managed to keep up.

31:30 But the other commanding officer at that time who didn't fly Beauforts, he was a Hudson pilot, the one that commanded the second raid on. No not the second raid the first raid, Jim Hepburn, had dermatitis very, very badly and he came on the first Gasmata raid

32:00 with his hands all bandaged up. And he had this Jensen's violet which was supposed to be the fix for this tropical dermatitis that thrived in the tropics but it wasn't working too well with him. But anyway, the next day they did the raid and they lost three aircraft and he was sent back south medically.

32:30 It just happened to coincide with the fact that we lost the three aircraft. I just wondered sometimes if that wasn't a factor in him going back. But anyway, the new squadron leader a fella by the name of Roberts, Simon Roberts, these two fellas are both dead now.

33:00 Not that that is a factor in the equation but he, Simon Roberts was a Hudson pilot from the 6 Squadron which was on the other strip and he didn't fly the Beaufort. The CO of the squadron was flying in the jump seat, the

33:30 jump seat is really the main start and he was sitting in on the operation. I suppose, not to check the other bloke but he wanted to show that he was prepared to take the same risks but I have got no ideal what went on in the cockpit when they got shot on.

34:00 But they never did drop the bomb, and I said, I only know of two other aircraft that dropped and at the debriefing I did say the turn he made going to Rabaul was too steep and it was impossible for aircraft on the outside of me to keep up, because you wouldn't have enough power.

34:30 You can understand if you stagger out that way and he turns steeply that way they have got to make a fairly steep turn which is very hard when you are formatting on just exhaust stacks. And equally, the converse applies if you are on the inside because you have got to slow down a fair bit and you wouldn't be able to slow the outside

35:00 aircraft up enough to stop with the formation. So, unless people had radar, well one did, he may have had is radar going I don't know. He came in from the wrong side as far as I was concerned because he was on the eastern side and I attacked from the western side because the moon was over the east and you know all these things,

35:30 he must have. Well, he obviously saw the ships because he was on the heading for them. It is amazing what you see in that situation even though we had no lights in the cockpit, no lights on the ship of course and your eyes get so adapted to that night vision and this is before they had those night vision goggles

36:00 which they have got now. But no, I never ceased to wonder at what you can see when you are really accustomed to the dark.

Sounds like you can remember it quite vividly too?

Well, you did because, see I see Graham Bodnar and we often reminisce. He was out of aviation

36:30 after the war but I haven't had the same requirement I suppose, it is to talk about the war because I was in civil. And I was always progressing from one type to another and I was working with them, mainly with fellows who had been also involved in the war and we very rarely talked about it. And it was only recently I got involved with this

37:00 Jan Herald who has produced this account of her late uncles travels in the squadron that I, you know, I have taken a bit more interest. And as I said, my air gunner Graham Bodnar he is a great one for reminiscing and he got me

37:30 to ring up. He said you should ring up, because he knows, you know we saw a fair amount of action in a fairly short time, but you know it is all history.

Are you sort of suggesting that because the CO was in the jump seat and he wasn't familiar with the Beaufort that it might have had some influence in the wrong timing of the turn?

No, I think that, no I think that the mistake that

38:00 the pilot of the aircraft made was making the turn too steep. And it was impossible, as I said, for the aircraft on the inside of the turn to get slow enough or the ones on the outside to get fast enough.

What is the aftermath of a mistake in an operation like that?

Oh, just put it down to experience, I mean I don't know.

38:30 I told them that I thought it was too steep but I don't know if action he would take or if he would mentioned it at the briefing. I am sure he would have mentioned it to the CO of the squadron and he would have been a bit disgusted too I would have thought. You know I was a flight sergeant and you are not going to tell a wing commander or a flight commander what he has done wrong. I just reported, you report what you see of the operation and you do

39:00 that as accurately as you can. It was a simple fact and I am sure the other fellas complained too because they were the ones that were left. As I said, I don't know how many others had their ASB working. Certainly ours did and I wouldn't be surprised if the other fella had dropped did and that is why he was

there.

39:30 But otherwise you really you can't say much more about the attack.

The end of another tape.

Tape 8

00:32 **I think it is pertinent at this point to mention that you received a DFM [Distinguished Flying Medal] for that particular bit of business.**

Well, really, not that, it was for the whole tour, that was specially mentioned yes. I always feel a bit badly about it myself because the navigator got mentioned in dispatches but the two air gunners

01:00 got nothing. And it seemed very unfair to me that I should be singled out but it really was a crew effort and I, it was something I was absolutely determined to bring all the crew into the operations where it was possible. And where you have a chance to discuss anything and all your opinions

01:30 but apparently you know I felt a bit. I was a bit younger than all of them and as a result you do feel. You have got to sort of assert yourself sometimes but I must say there was never any question about who was running the show and to some extent I got the credit for it.

02:00 I suppose all the formation flying and that sort of thing and holding position, but the air gunner did a good job on the ASB and where do you draw the line.

Well, there is an arbitrary sort of nature to the business to handing out awards and so on?

Sure, they don't them lightly I don't think, and it is very unusual. And I was one

02:30 of several non commissioned officers who had been decorated in that squadron and there was another conspicuous gallery medal given to Reg Green who left the squadron when we replaced…he was one of the blokes we replaced and there was another DFM issued at some stage but most of the other awards went to the flight commanding

03:00 officers and the flying and the flight commanders, not always but…

When did you receive word that you had been decorated, that doesn't sound very good?

Decorated.

Decorated.

When I was down instructing at East Sale, that was about March. They only brought the lists

03:30 out about every six months and they announced them altogether. So, the procedure was that you would put on a 20 gallon keg in the officers mess. By this time I was commissioned but I also went over to the sergeant's desk and put on a keg too which was very well received.

04:00 No, it was good. And you know I got a huge number I have still got them, telegrams from friends over in Perth and people I have worked with. I think it was probably an acknowledgement I suppose. I said to the crew I regarded it as acknowledgement of work that we all did. I said, "I know I get the honour and glory but you don't want to feel

04:30 ashamed of anything you did up there." I did feel bad about it, I mean it was nice to get it and it is like getting wings, it gives you a certain amount of status. Not because it was handy in civil too because they used to put our name plates up

05:00 and if you had a declaration that went up to, so I took advantage of that in civil. You never wore any medals, declarations in civil but you always did in the air force. There is a picture of my sister and myself at the citation taking, not the citation at the presentation.

Are they all printed in the paper for the general public to read?

Every paper in Australia printed them.

05:30 **And do they do them posthumously as well?**

Yes, the ones that you wanted of course.

Sorry, to backtrack on you I wanted to talk a little bit about arriving in Milne Bay, it must have almost been a year since the big battle of Milne Bay when you got there?

No, I think it was in '42. Well, it was probably August was it,

06:00 I think it was August there is still, that is almost a year sure. The Japanese were still around in the hills around there. You know they seemed to be able to live off the land, but there wasn't much activity, no it was virtually, it was over.

What was the mindset of the men

06:30 **and or women who were still in Milne Bay who had been part of that battle and were still there?**

I doubt whether there were any women.

I wasn't sure, I thought there still might have been some nurses there?

Oh well okay. Sure they are women aren't they. I never saw any women up there that I know of and all we had there was a medical orderly.

07:00 I never went to the doctor there must have been a doctor up there somewhere. But I never got sick while I was there so.

Where you able to mix then with any members of the army or any members of the American services?

Very rarely because we all had different camps and you would have to have transport, which you only got if it was something official. No, there was. When we went to Kirawina that was an

07:30 American control base and Woodlark Island is another place that the Americans had off the north east of New Guinea. And we sometimes used to stage in there for fuel if we were running short. And the thing I remember about them was that they always had their coffee and donut machines down at the strip. And that cured me from eating donuts forever.

08:00 I could hardly face up to a donut because we used to eat as many as we could while we were there.

That would have made quite a good cushion for you I would have thought for you. There is nothing uncivilised about the way the Americans fought their war I guess?

No, they sort of looked after themselves. We used to give a handout of American cigarettes 200 a month. But that didn't do me much good I didn't smoke. So, I was quite popular when the cigarettes were

08:30 handed out with the smokers.

I was going to say, I hope you made a bit of cash on the side?

No, you just handed them over. I tried it. I tried smoking but I didn't like the taste of it in my mouth so I never did.

What were your conditions then in Milne Bay and also Woodlark?

Well, Milne Bay we had tents and I

09:00 never overnighted at Woodlark. But at Kirawina we had the American style bell tents and if we were getting to doing a night bombing of Rabaul we would have beds there. And then at about 10 o'clock at night they used to put on a meal for us which was usually Spam and all those delicacies that they had which we thought was good.

09:30 But of course, at 10 o'clock at night and before you do an operation you don't feel much like eating. It is amazing the tension that builds up. We would have the meal before we did the briefing but then you would take off at about midnight so, as I said, if you are going on an operation we used to take emergency rations with us a

10:00 little box tin container which was sealed that held sugar-coated almonds, two blocks of very dark chocolate and dried apricots. And really I would prefer to eat that than some of the food they served up to us. I mean there was nothing wrong with the food and it was nicely

10:30 served at a table and everything. They did everything pretty well. But it was just the wrong time to be trying to eat a meal. As I said, the last thing, you know everyone is pretty highly strung and the old nine holer got a fair bit of. There was a nine hole toilet, virtually an open air one that is probably there are no women around there

11:00 and that got fairly frequent use prior to take off. But no, the conditions that the Americans fought the war under were entirely different.

What I know this is a bit indelicate but even the thought of eating a meal like that prior to a flight in which you could experience great fear and tension strikes me as a strategic anomaly?

Well, we would get there and

11:30 have lunch and I suppose that was the evening meal for us. But you are quite right you don't feel like eating.

I bet you did when you came back though?

There were times when we used to go up to the officers mess all the other ranks, all the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] and other air crew would go to the officers' mess. And we would have bacon and eggs and that was

12:00 almost worth looking forward to.

They would be powdered eggs I would imagine?

No, I don't know where they got them from but they certainly lived a lot better than we did. But subsequently in the war when I went to the Mosquito squadron they had an aircrew mess and all the aircrew went there which is what they should have had in the first place because you know a lot of good will developed

12:30 between…because you hardly knew a lot of the officers and they hardly knew any of the NCOs apart of the fellas in their own crew. So, I think it is now recognised that I think pretty well all the aircrew and the officers in the air force, anyway.

We met a lovely pilot who told us he put an end to pilots eating beans of any description because of the gas that built up inside

13:00 **of them at high altitude.**

Yes, it didn't happen in our crew, but as I said, we used to get baked beans and tin bacon for breakfast quite often and one night Mullins crew, Bob Mullins crew were doing an attack on Rabaul, and this fella had apparently been breaking wind all the way from Milne Bay,

13:30 or Kiraween or from wherever he sent out from and he said, "Drop one now Ray and see if you can gas the bastards." That wasn't in our crew.

Well, in an intimate situation like the interior of a plane it wouldn't go down very well would it?

No, they were pretty well ventilated those machines, they weren't pressurised so they weren't sealed.

14:00 **In Europe that had those flying suits did you wear anything particular?**

I wore a summer flying suit most of the time. But quite often it was quite hot that you just drop it off your shoulders, it didn't zipper up it buttoned up and it was just a cotton thing, it was terrific.

Was there much altitude, oh sorry climate change, when you got to high altitudes in the tropics?

Yeah, much cooler, you notice my in

14:30 that picture it was taken at riverina, that is on Goodenough Island. My air gunner has got flying boots on. Very unusual to see any of those people in flying boots but I don't know why he had them on because one it was a better climate than Milne Bay. It was always closer to the equator than Milne Bay was always hot

15:00 there. I think he must have done it for the camera.

Did you have occasion to meet any pilots or aircrew who had come back from Europe?

Only when I was instructing down at the ATU. We were training a lot of them they were going onto Beauforts or in some cases Beaufighters, they would convert them to Beauforts before, but yes quite a few. And

15:30 of course the quality of the recruit improved dramatically because there were all experienced and you know I don't think a lot of them were happy to be back again. I don't know, they probably had.

I was wondering whether on any of the reconnaissance flights you did, whether you saw unusual things in the water that you could do nothing about?

We saw a Betty Bomber once,

16:00 presumably run out of fuel and he was in the water but we couldn't see any raft around and we didn't do anything to it. We just reported it. It was out of the war so it didn't matter to us. But I don't know what happened to the crew. They might have committed hara-kiri or something. But yes, I have an entry in my log book about that. Yes, it is

16:30 there was that and another time we saw a betty bomber going south when we were heading north and he was too far away for us to do anything about it. And besides we were getting close to Rabaul then and we were meant to be looking for shipping. Now, if you are into a position to attack a machine like that you might have taken it on but

17:00 but you had to make sure that you had the advantage because they were faster than us. So, if you could

have attacked him from behind without him seeing you, you could do it, but it would be very risky otherwise. And the other reason meant to jettison in a bomb raid so that you could improve your performance. There was no doubt it was a betty bomber but, as I said,

17:30 we were getting towards the extreme end of our reconnaissance sector and if you get involved in that you start burning up a lot more fuel because you use a lot of power and they are all things you have to take into consideration. But that was the other thing. We sighted shipping and I did an attack on some ships once between, off the coast of

18:00 between Gasmata and Rabaul, and we sunk one of them. There were several of us on that. We would do an anti shipping sweep. But apart from that there wasn't too much.

An anti shipping sweep?

Yes, along the coast, you would go up to a nominated point and then sweep along the coast and destroy anything you

18:30 saw operating around the coast because they were supply Gasmata by coast and from Rabaul. I take it so that is what you do and they probably had other out posts that we didn't know about or I didn't know about anyway. But it was a search and destroy that is frequent, whatever you find you destroy it.

Do you learn sort of the vulnerable points in which to aim your bomb

19:00 **on a ship and does it differ for each?**

Well, if you are in a position to select you aim for the centre of the ship to give you a bit of margin for error and providing it is you have got the proper armour piecing bombs you can skip bomb or you can dive bomb. But skip bombing is very accurate but it is also very dangerous. The time we attacked the ships we dive

19:30 bombed because we were at the height where we could do it. Skip bombing, you have got to get fairly close to the ship to drop the bombs and that actually makes it more dangerous particularly if it is a war ship but if it is an ordinary steamer it doesn't matter too much. Although, they all carry guns in those

20:00 days.

What about sort of unidentified ships that you know might have been merchant Japanese ships in some sort of disguise and so on. Did that crop up from time to time?

Well, we had a procedure which we had to follow before we attacked anything, except when it was a known enemy ship like those two war ships, you had to

20:30 flash. We had what they called a letter of the day and all the allied naval ships and aircraft were supposed to know the letter of the day. If you flashed them that letter for instance A da if it was A he, would be expected to come back with the

21:00 corresponding response. Now that is what happened when our aircraft was shot down by the Americans. When you signal by lamp you use what is called an aldis lamp. Do you know it? It is something like a strobe might accept it is a very bright flashing light.

Is that underneath?

Well no, that is a strobe light, that is different from an aldis lamp. An aldis lamp is activated by a trigger

21:30 and if you are sending A you would send 'di da' and he would have to come back with a corresponding reply which were changed daily. Both were changed daily, and if you were in doubt as to whether it was allied or for instance a submarine you would always signal and they would respond. It

22:00 happened to one of our aircraft when we were searching for the fellow that was shot down by the Americans. We actually, there were submarines out there looking for them too and they just flashed the letter of the day and they came back for them straight away. And we often used to if we were doing convoy escort duty and there was a naval escort ship escorting them we would ask for their permission

22:30 to do practice torpedo attacks and bombing attacks and they always agreed. All of that would be done by the navigator.

So, was that the sort of south pacific answer to the IFF [Identification Friend or Foe] used in Europe, the oldest lamp signal?

Oh no. That was a purely battery operated thing. It was just a light.

23:00 Like the nearest thing I could equate it to is a strobe light because it comes with a very bright flash. Now they do that by a system of mirrors I think. In the case of the ASV [Air to surface Vessel] that was there to service vessel and that was radar. And you could pick up, when it was working you could pick up the coast line it was very helpful at night because you could pick up an island from the shape of the coast and where you were

23:30 very helpful to navigation but it was very unreliable at that time. Now, I don't know how good it was towards the end of the war because we didn't have it in the Mosquitos. But I know now it has improved about 500% or more.

With regard to that US friendly fire incident, we have talked around it a fair bit I wonder if you could tell me the story as it happened?

24:00 Well, we had controls which radiated from around about Goodenough Island and they were all numbered R1, R2, R3, R4 and there were several change of numbers when we got farther east. The Americans who have no

24:30 or very little contact with our, 9 Ops [operations] group was our commanding operations group. They were under the South Pacific command of the US navy and they were based down in the Solomons near Guadalcanal and they had a liberator patrol which came up from the Guadalcanal along the, almost directly

25:00 to Rabaul. And then they turned around and went back, stood aside about 30 nautical miles and then come back. The idea was to pick up any foreign shipping movements in the area. Now they didn't know that our aircraft were going up there and then would make a turn to hit them about the same direction that they were going or in

25:30 the direction of the Solomons. And I forget what we used to step aside, about 40 miles or something and then you would go back and the next aircraft would do the same, you all go off about the same time. And that way we had a pretty good idea of what all the shipping movements were in the area. They came up from Guadalcanal, they said the weather wasn't very good. Now, we have only got the American

26:00 version of the event. They said this aircraft came out of cloud which is possible I suppose but fairly unlikely because we used to have to be under the cloud to do visual, to see anything on the service. And they definitely

26:30 said, they didn't say this initially, they say they saw gunfire from this aircraft and they thought it was a Betty Bomber firing at them. So, they reported it to the captain and they said open fire, so they said they would see that they were firing. Anyway, it was one of our aircraft and it was shot

27:00 down. Anyway, the pilot had sufficient control. Now I don't know what happened, maybe an engine was shot out or something but he successfully landed and then the Americans went around and circled him and realised that he had allied markings on him but even then they thought it was a Mosquito. Now, there is no resemblance to a Mosquito whatsoever. But I think what they

27:30 did was mistook for signalling of the aldis lamp which would have been Geoff Evert signalling the word of the day and they mistook it for machine gun fire. Now, as we said, we have only got their account and they said they were definitely shooting at them. See we knew, we spent a lot of time doing aircraft recognition and ship recognition now they would have no idea

28:00 of us, what a Beaufort looked like for sure. And I think they just shot up. You know that is my opinion of it. The account that is in the book is quite different to the American version of it is, but there is no doubt it was a blunder on their part and not the sort of blunder our people would make because of our knowledge of American aircraft.

And you said

28:30 **there was quite a rescue mission mounted?**

Oh yes, we put up some aircraft up but it was pretty close getting towards the end of our range. We put them up for a couple of days but they were never sighted and they were obviously in the water because they were sighted two weeks later by another one of our aircraft and they were drifting south.

Still alive do you think?

The Americans said they saw two of them get on the raft.

29:00 The Americans dropped them a raft and they swam to it. Now, why they didn't use the raft on the Beaufort I don't know but the American raft would have been probably better equipped anyway. I don't know if they had Coca Cola machine on it but it would have had a donut machine or something. You know Eddie Rickenback lived on one of those for about 40 days. But anyway, they swam to it and then

29:30 they proceeded apparently to paddle the thing down towards away from the Japanese hill territory. It was sighted two weeks later and we put up a lot of aircraft to look for them. But after about four days, the weather was frightful over the area too but that was good for them in that there was plenty of rainwater because you need rainwater to provide drinking

30:00 water. And they were sighted and one of them was paddling, the other one was standing up waving and the other one was laying down in the raft and they assumed he was injured in someway. Anyway, we didn't find them but another two weeks, about 4 weeks after the event they were seen again. And they

just about stopped the

30:30 war. I thought it was a tremendous effort that was put up. They were never seen again. They think that what happened was that the seas were very rough and they probably turned the raft over and they probably drowned. Finally, they were declared missing

31:00 to believed dead in 1947. They never declared them dead because they thought they might have got aground someway. Anyway, it was very sad episode, as I said, we only have got the Americans version of the event and it will never be known.

Was that an unusual for such a large amount of effort to go into at least trying to find them given the circumstances?

31:30 Well, I had never heard of it happening before but maybe it did but certainly everything, they got boats out there and everything and it was just fruitless. I did a ten hour search one day we had a long range Beaufort and the CO said, "You can go and do what you like," because two of them were in my tent and

32:00 we you know we saw a coconut tree at one stage floating and we were following it. We thought we had found them but we never saw them and several other times. There were big searches mounted and I think every effort was made to find them but I think the weather beat us in the long haul whether they got ashore anywhere I don't know.

32:30 **Alls fair in love and war apparently, was there any animosity shown towards for the Americans for that?**

Well no, not that I know of. They did, I suppose, what they thought was right. But I find it hard to believe that any of our blokes would be shooting at a liberator because you know we saw plenty of them up there. So, you have just got to assume a case of friendly fire.

33:00 **I am wondering whether in a situation like that you know whether the Americans to cover their, excuse the expression, cover their arse?**

No question of it. They said also they saw red white and blue roundel but we didn't have red in it at all, we had taken the red out, they were just blue with a white stripe and I think they realised that somebody

33:30 added a red roundel to the description. Our aircraft just had the blue circle with a white dot in the middle because the Japanese had the red, that was the rising sun actually, just over the horizon.

In a situation like that is there any official letter of apology of some sort from the Americans?

Well, the

34:00 south pac, they were called the South Pacific command, they expressed regret but you know it is too late for the blokes. Incidentally, just one other thing, they didn't know about the letter of the day either. There was no liaison between 9 Ops Group and south pacific command because I don't know if our people knew but there was a patrol of

34:30 theirs either. That was the other deficiency, the commands were at fault and but I would say that the Americans were noted for being a bit trigger happy then and still are. But I mean it sometimes happened that, you know, we were giving support to our troops that we might have dropped the bombs in the wrong spot too, so.

35:00 I mean it happens, it is a fact of war. I mean people are doing their best but in this case I think the fact was that they didn't know what the aircraft was or didn't identify it correctly.

It is a strange omission to have not considered that between the two commands at the time?

Yes, it is isn't it yeah, sure. I am sure it has probably been corrected by now but that is the problem with divided commands you

35:30 know. When you have two people commanding some with different activities, sometimes you are going to clash. But has this come all the way from Orange did it. It is all our equipment.

Did you get a chance to fly any American aircraft during the war?

No.

And

36:00 **after that incident did you try to make contact with the families of those men?**

I didn't, but I think you should turn this off for a minute. Jack Cootes who lived in the same tent as Geoff Elliot and also knew

36:30 George Collins and Billy Dane who were the two air gunners. Now, one of those air gunners we think was killed in the crash. Nobody knows which one but Jan Herald rang up Mrs. Collins, her name is Myra I think,

37:00 to get some details of George which she needed to complete her study and she said, “I don’t want to hear anything about that bastard. I hope he is dead.” She was very hostile towards them. Some of the people, I didn’t know, I never met her Mrs. Collins or Billy Dane came from Newcastle

37:30 and I never met, you know I never knew them I got to know them well because they were in our tent because they were in Cliff Davis’ crew and as a result I never had any contact with them but the CO always writes to the relatives.

38:00 But I never saw them because I went straight back to Western Australia and you know you have got to be very circumspect about resurrecting old wounds whether you go back 6 months or 12 months later. In fact, I didn’t get to Sydney again until 1945. So, I am sure

38:30 somebody would have. And of course their personal effects go down there anyway.

Not long after that I guess you were coming up to your 50 sorties, is that correct?

Oh yes, that was the end of November.

I have got a note here that says last attack on Rabual and you must have said something earlier today about perhaps one of your last sorties was over Rabual is that correct?

39:00 Yes.

Okay, well we should swap the tapes over.

Tape 9

00:35 **So, on that note Rabaul, you say is quite beautiful?**

Yes, I am talking about how it was in peacetime. I mean the harbour is very spectacular the only trouble with the place is that there is a constant smell of sulphur because there were a lot of active volcanoes around there

01:00 and they always seemed to be…

When you were doing your last sorties over Rabaul, I’m just trying to work out the dates the Japanese were probably not long for there then?

It was around about the 30th of November I think. I could check it up in my log book but it was around about there.

01:30 Because I that is the last one I did. What did you say about the Japanese?

They were probably not long for there the second battle of Rabaul.

Well, in actual fact, we were always, we didn’t bomb the harbour of the shipping we always bombed airfields. And that was to keep the airfields serviceable and those people up at night, that type of thing and it was all

02:00 dub tail with what the Americans were doing during the daylight. But they pretty well wrecked it by that time.

Were you able to get close enough to see the area with a naked eye and take it in?

Well, we always bombed at night.

Oh right, of course. Can you talk to me a bit about what it was like at the age of 20, I think it was your time was

02:30 **up as far as your operations?**

I was quite happy to hear the good news. You know we are all under, we all lost weight up there and you are under a lot of pressure. Every time you took off your eyes start to feel as if they are standing out of their sockets because you start scanning for enemy aircraft and shipping and so on.

03:00 So, you are pretty weary and that climate at Milne Bay was something again it was something again. It was really very tough living down there. We slept on our bed was siphon wire mattress you know are tubular, they are wire and there was no palliasse because insects get in there. So, all we had was paper on them and we had a pillow, that was the only

03:30 there was no blankets or anything, you didn’t need them. But it was really tough and the food was very ordinary.

Did the stress send anybody troppo [crazy]?

There was one fellow that came into the squadron I don't know that he went troppo but he didn't last very long. He was quite a young man with very dark hair and he seemed to go grey in a very short time and suddenly I noticed

04:00 he wasn't around and I said, "Where is so and so," and they said, "Oh, he went back, he got sent back south." You know, some people couldn't hack it for no fault of their own.

And your sleeping patterns, I mean they must have been totally out of wack [unstable]?

Oh terrible, that is what I said to you, and was the trouble, if you went to bed during the day you would be in the dark the first operation and they were very trying times nobody liked it there.

04:30 The malaria, we had mosquito nets, that was one luxury you had and you really needed them although they would have eaten you alive.

Did you get malaria?

No. It is funny I myself and Graham Bodnar, the two survivors in our crew didn't get it. The other two maintained a 50% strike rate for the Mosquitos. But neither of them drunk very

05:00 much but we put it down to the fact, you could buy, we had whisky and gin in the bar. So, when we had a day off we would always go and have a few drinks and we think that kept the malaria away.

Was there a time limit in which you had to stop drinking before your next operation?

Oh, we never drank unless we had a day off afterwards, in civil it was 12 hours but it has since

05:30 been to eight. No it was never a consideration. I drank for fellowship as much as anything else. You sort of get around and have a bit of a chat and forget about what stress you are going through the day. It really is a, just to go

06:00 out into enemy territory puts you under pressure. But no, I was very happy when they said, oh I didn't know, I knew it was 50 sorties but I wasn't sure and they said, "You have done your limit."

Well, tell me a little bit about life on Goodenough Island in that time then?

Well, that was nice. It was sunny and nice clear heat. We had access to a creek.

06:30 Goodenough is a volcanic island with a hill or a mountain in the middle of it that goes to 9000 feet. So, there was a stream that came down and there was a pool and a little water fall that formed into a pool and we used to swim in that but a lot of fellows got tropical ear. That is the trouble with that place, there is always a catch with everything that is

07:00 good.

It is like a beautiful woman isn't it?

Well, there is always a catch with them too.

Was there any thing of any, if you will pardon the expression, significance that occurred while you were on Goodenough Island? Was it really an opportunity to give you some rest for that time?

I think we, we were getting towards the end of our tour. And we weren't doing as much operations now because we had a lot of replacements come up and they were doing

07:30 a lot of patrol work. And there was a bit of a tendency to put us on the bombing operations probably because of our experience. I don't know why. As I said, I got involved in a lot of ferry work between Milne Bay and Goodenough. Sometimes I would stop at, we as crew would stop at Milne Bay for the night and take out a loaded aircraft in the morning. So, it was

08:00 fairly like almost a holiday to go to Goodenough, riverina.

Gee, I bet those 18, 19 year olds seemed like juniors to you by now with your mature 20 years of age?

I thought I had a bit on them while I was still there. No, but you know they sort of, I suppose they know you have been around by the colour of your skin too, we get that at them and they are yellow.

When you got back to Australia on

08:30 **leave where did you spend the bulk of that time?**

Well, the whole lot in Perth. I passed through Sydney and I stopped with my sister just overnight. In fact, I am not sure if she was there then. Anyway, whatever, you know I was keen to get back to Perth and you know we had about six weeks,

09:00 I think.

I believe your mother had passed on by the time you got back then?

Yes , she actually died, I knew that when I was at Goodenough and I was offered the opportunity to go back but because of the fact that she had been dead for five days and the funeral would have been over and it would have taken me probably that long to get there.

How strange

09:30 **was that then coming back?**

Well, it seemed like the house was empty. I had a sister who had taken over and she was 18 months younger than I am and she really had taken over the running of the house. And the brother had not been released didn't joined the air force. That was the end of '43 when I went back there and

10:00 he joined the air force in February '44 so he was still there. And my father was coming home a bit, he was based at Karrakatta in the army so he was spending a lot of time at home so. Yes, it was sad but you know that is life and I was lucky, I was lucky that she, things were looking

10:30 up by the time she died because we were always battling up until that time. And my older brother had gotten married when he came back and had to complete his time so there was always action going on. But no it, you know it was just the wrong time to happen as far as I was

11:00 concerned. I knew she wasn't well but I didn't know, well she died in the operation, they said it was a heart failure, so at least that wasn't too bad, too bad.

Was it still home?

Oh yes, I spent the whole of my leave there. Charlie Walsh was back in Perth too, he was one of the pilots and we used to meet him there and you

11:30 know everything continued pretty well. It was just, it was just a relief to get in a safe environment and just relax, do what you liked and eat some decent food.

And did you get around in civvies [civilian clothes]?

Only occasionally because I didn't have too much left you know they.

12:00 I didn't when I, I went into the office in town and always wore a uniform because they expected you too. I had civvies, I did wear civvies too, depending what I was doing.

How did the business of the instructor's course come up then?

Oh yes, the instructors. Now, when I went through as a trainee

12:30 my instructor, as I told you, had one hour on Beauforts now that constituted all the training that he had got to train me. When I went back, I told Wing Commander Hepburn before with the Jensen's pilot and dermatitis, he was the chief flying instructor and he had charge of what they call the test and instructional

13:00 training squad. He flew everybody that came there and there was a serious of lectures that you went to learn the patter associated with teaching and then you had to go up and learn to fly from the right-hand seat because you would be doing dual. And when you did

13:30 that you would go up again with him and do or maybe one of the other trainers there, demonstrate that you were competent in the right seat and but in addition I had a huge amount of experience by this time on the aircraft. And it was entirely different situation because my instructor

14:00 was definitely learning as he went along but also the maintenance had improved dramatically because they had since found out that this trim tab caused some accidents that they knew of. And it had been, they had taken steps to modify that so that eliminated that possibility but

14:30 the other thing was we were getting trainees with a lot more experience than we had. There were a combination of factors with the inadequate, inadequacy of the instruction that we got and I will name them. The lack of the inability of the instructor or

15:00 the fact that the instructor himself had not have enough experience on the machine, one hour is not enough experience. The serviceability was a problem on our course, the serviceability of the aircraft and we ourselves had limited experience and fairly insufficient for the steps we were making and, as I said, it was acknowledged that there would be some losses. But

15:30 it was justified because of the emergency of the situation at the time and that will happen again in another war. I mean, you know things aren't going to happen according to the book but I am not being critical of anyone but that was the fact of life at the time. It was unfortunate for the,

16:00 I think also in hindsight they probably should have, some people, some peoples inadequacy should have

been picked up by a proper system of monitoring. And I am specifically thinking of one fella who was extremely under confident. In fact two of them that I know of that crashed. They were both considered to be under

16:30 confident on their records.

At the time that you are training these fellas, the EATS [Empire Air Training Scheme] is that still happening the training scheme?

This was the empire air training scheme, oh no it folded. It was purely set up for the war. I mean there was no question about the competence of the air forces training now. I mean they have got simulators and…

Oh no, I mean when you were at Sale was the training scheme

17:00 **still in operation?**

The whole time I was there, yes. It was maintained, yes.

And the threat of Japanese invasion is now past, so what is the kind of prevailing attitude then as you are training these young men to become pilots or flyers?

What was that again?

The defence of Australia is reasonably secure by this stage..

17:30 Yeah, sure.

So, what is the prevailing sense in terms of training all of these young pilots, what do they think that they are going to do then?

Well, for a start, by the time I finished instructing there the trainees that we were getting were coming from Europe and they were very experienced pilots, you know there was really no problem it was just a formality to go through with them. There was one fellow who was very, he was six-foot-

18:00 six and I was his instructor. So, they all used to think it was terrific to have us walking out together to the aircraft and he trained, they did a conversion on the Beauforts and then he went to Mosquitos.

How did he fit in, I mean how did he actually get into the cockpit?

Well, probably no problem in the Beaufort but in the Mosquito it was pretty narrow but he did it anyway but he got

18:30 shot down the second last day of the war, so how unlucky was he.

Did you sort of try and keep track of these men after you had trained them, did you have that sort of a relationship?

No, very few of them, there was one fellow Clark, a Melbourne family, you probably heard of them.

The rubber family?

The Ruperts, the Rupert Clarks, he was a member of that family.

19:00 I saw him several times and I, you know Kimber Knight was another bloke, he has a wealthy Adelaide family. He pranged a Beaufort when we were at the, this was at Nowra. Pranged means he crashed it, it was a right off.

I said, I am unfortunately familiar with the term.

What is that?

I said, I am unfortunately familiar with the term.

19:30 I've had some motor car accidents too. It was a bit of English, a lot of the slang that we used in the air force came from the RAF [Royal Air force] but anyway. Kim pranged this Beaufort up at Nowra and his father who was Lavington Beniathon who owned the Adelaide Advertiser

20:00 before Rupert Murdoch took it over. He said he would replace the aircraft and it cost him $48,000 to buy to finance a new Beaufort because that is how cheap they were in $48,000.

Wasn't somebody buying Mosquitos for $100 bucks or something?

50, 50 pounds,

20:30 yeah that would be near enough to $100 bucks.

You went and converted onto Mosquitos, you said you were offered something that you probably should have taken in retrospect?

Well, Jim Hepburn said to me that, "You should go onto transports because then you will be ready for

the switch over to civil," and I said, "No, I want to fly the Mosquitos." So he said, "Okay." And when I got to TAA the

21:00 flight superintendent was none other than Jim Hepburn and he said, "I told you so."

So, that means at that point people were already starting to look beyond the war?

Yes, yeah it was you know Europe had finished and it was only a question of how they went about getting Japan out of the war and the atomic bomb satisfied that requirement. And that saved a huge number of allied lives and

21:30 I have always, you know sometimes when the Americans are being criticised for dropping that bomb but they don't realise what carnage there would have been because those Japanese on Okinawa. And we went there on the way up ferrying those fighter planes up to Japan they it was diabolical the way they fought and they knew it was

22:00 an honour. It is a bit like the Muslims to some extent. You know it was an honour to be die for the Emperor. No. I never ever would be critical of dropping the atomic bomb on them.

What was the Mosquito like to fly?

A lovely machine to handle. The only ever aeroplane that I ever flew better, not that I had a few number of types.

22:30 I spent most, I was on the Beaufort on the Tiger Moth and Anson. I flew the Beaufort and the Mosquito and then I went into civil and I flew pretty well all of TAA's aircraft except the con… but the Mosquito was a beautiful thing after the Beaufort but it was not as nice as the DC9 to

23:00 fly. The DC9 is beautiful it just felt like you were part of the aeroplane and once you got in that pilot seat, everything, a very complicated cockpit but everything was accessible but the Mosquito you know it was the hottest machine at the time. I didn't want to fly fighters so it was the hottest bomber, the fastest machine in the sky.

Where you in action then at Labuan?

23:30 No, I went there, I didn't get up there until about a fortnight after the war had finished and then I went to a Mosquito ferry flight at Richmond. Because we were used then to ferry the Mosquitos up to, not the Mosquitos the fighter wing up to Japan.

Sorry, is that Richmond in New South Wales or in Queensland?

Richmond, just out of Sydney.

Yep, right.

There is a Richmond everywhere. There is one in Melbourne,

24:00 one in Sydney.

I didn't think there was much of an airstrip in the city of Melbourne. So, where were you for the end, when the war was declared over?

I was at the ATU at Williamtown.

Oh okay.

I just finished the conversion and we were waiting around for posting and two of us were posted to one squadron as replacements for that fellow Dick Brown who got shot down and another

24:30 crew he went south for some reason. I think he was made a flight commander in another squadron so we went up to replace them. Another, a fellow called Lee Archer and myself. And with the navigators and then the trip to Japan was muted and we would escort the fighters up so I did that and we were in Japan for

25:00 about three weeks. We got through to Tokyo. And they had wood cuts I got up there at that time.

How did you receive the news of the Japanese capitulation then?

Oh, it was a big party night in the officers mess. Everybody in the station finished up in the officers mess, it was good. You know it was good that everyone was involved. Of course you know it was quite a big relief but it was quite obvious that it was coming.

25:30 It just happened so suddenly after they dropped the atomic bomb.

You had met Joan by then, I wonder how far away she was from you at that point?

Well, she was still in Melbourne.

Right.

We hadn't married. We didn't marry until 1947.

No, I just wondered whether you were able to get on the phone to her?

Well, in those days it was hard to get on the phone and you only rung in an emergency. I am not

26:00 noted for making a lot of contact, we have got our mobile but we don't use it very much. We are trying to keep up with the grandchildren.

Post war when you got this ferry flights can you describe for me what you actually saw then in post war Japan?

Well, the

26:30 Australians were based at Okinawa and that is not very far from Hiroshima. So, that was one of the first things we would do went down and I was horrified at the fear the Japanese showed when you walked into shop or anything. You know

27:00 it was shocking to me, they felt that they were, they were probably brainwashed I don't know. They thought you were going to abuse them or something. I don't know but so we I think it was probably because of the bomb had been dropped on the city and it devastated. But subsequently one of the blokes could type and I could type a bit too but,

27:30 so we typed out a movement order authorising us to proceed to Tokyo and there was a train we could catch. And we just went down to the railway station with our overnight gear and presented it to an American, transport, railway transport officer and he accepted the document verbatim so we got to Osaka.

28:00 And Kyoto, isn't very far from Osaka and I was very keen to see Kyoto because it was the ancient capital of Japan and we spent a few days. The Americans provided us with transport and they had a regular service there so we stopped there for a few days in Osaka at a place called the Electric Light

28:30 Club which was a club taken over by the Americans and it was quite good, good accommodation. So, with the movement order which was made out for us to proceed to Tokyo to go to proceed to whichever city we wanted to go to but Tokyo. And they said, "It is a night train," so we said, "That will do us."

29:00 So he put us on the night train. And of course we got to Tokyo and it was cherry blossom time and it was beautiful but I have never seen so many people that were around that place. I went up again in 1964, we bought a DC9 off JAL [Japan Air Lines] and I went up to accept to do an acceptance flight and fly it back.

29:30 And I took a crew up with me, mechanics and everything we had with us to check the aircraft out and each time I have been up there it has been April. And you have got no idea what that place is like, you know the cherry blossoms it really is a pretty place and the people on the street. On the weekends they are just wall to wall people and all you can see are these black hairs, black heads.

30:00 No white heads anywhere.

Well, you were very snowy. I guess your presence must have been quite overt around the Japanese who had dark hair and your snowy white hair?

Well, I was conspicuous up there. Well, there were plenty of others that had fair hair that were up there too. But we weren't supposed to be in Tokyo. The Americans didn't want anybody else up there and as luck would have it

30:30 I bumped into my brother-in-law. My sister was married to a naval officer and he was in the Australian embassy up there and he said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "Oh, we just came up on the train to see Tokyo." I said, "We had a bit to do with getting here." He said, "Listen, do yourself a favour and get out of here or you will be in big trouble." So, and then you wouldn't believe it

31:00 we bumped into my drill instructor from my intake course at Pearce. He was Stan somebody he was in the military police by this time. And he said the same thing, but he not only did that, he came down to the station with us and made sure we got on the train.

What were your observations then of say Japan, you mentioned that before but of the relationship

31:30 **now between Japan as a conquered race and the presence there or of the American presence there?**

I think they would be pretty smart, you know the country got out of it without very much damage apart from the atomic bombs and the few bombs in Tokyo and Osaka. And a bit, I mean they were smarter than the Germans they turned it up before the country was destroyed. But

32:00 both of those beaten countries, Germany and Japan, seemed to be to winning the peace, you know they have been very, very prosperous. I think they are having a bit of an economic decline according to my

sharebroker but anyway.

But did you, were you able to sort of see the Americans in action who very recently conquered Japan?

Oh, there were plenty of Americans about

32:30 but they didn't interfere with us.

And did you get a chance to see Japanese soldiers returning?

No, you never saw them. I never saw any. You wouldn't have thought they had an army. You know, I think that they had gone back in the cities. That was about eight months after the war. That was April 1946 and that was eight months, I think the war finished in about August

33:00 and you know they were well and truly. Although, as I said, the people at Hiroshima were still, I don't know why they were like that. We had our uniforms on at that time so maybe that was something new to them but they didn't know what to expect.

How were you placed then in the post war Australia in terms of your view of

33:30 **what you had experienced and your hopes for the future?**

Well, I didn't know whether to go back to my job in Perth or continue in the air force and ultimately I kept stalling my former employer. And ultimately I told him that I intended to stop in the air force and I got a short service commission. That was for

34:00 12 years but there was a possibility that you would finish up with a permanent commission as Sam Dallywater finished up with. But I could see that anybody as short as I am is at a disadvantage. I did a course down at Labuan. I could see that I would be at a disadvantage because of my height and probably because of my academic

34:30 qualifications or lack of them. And I knew, I was fairly confident I could get a job in TAA. Joan had become, this is about March 1940. Dianne was born in November. I think I did that course in March. And she had become pregnant

35:00 which was partly my fault but nevertheless it meant that we would have a baby to cart around. And I knew I was going back to East Sale as an instructor and it didn't have much any attraction for me. I was going to do an advanced instructors course which would have been very good experience but I also knew that I had a very good chance of getting an airline job so that is the way I decided to go.

35:30 Strangely enough, I met my friend Sam Dallywater in Melbourne and he said, "I am thinking of going to Qantas." And I said, "I have decided to stop in the air force." The next time I saw him he was permanent in the force and I was in the airlines. So, he always said that you pulled a thrifty on me. He was going to Qantas, but I didn't want to go to Qantas because they went overseas for three weeks at a time on a trip, you know you would go as far as Baghdad,

36:00 in stages. And then you would come back and this would last for about three weeks so I wasn't interested in Qantas. But no, it was a good choice actually and I got the job almost a week after I asked and I went down and saw John Riland.

Did civil aviation at that time have a kind of glamorous cachet you would certainly enjoy in the '60s and '70s?

Glamorous?

I think civil aviation had a kind

36:30 **of a...**

You mean in the airline? I thought you might have meant in the civil aviation department.

No, no, no, not the CAA [Civil Aviation Authority].

No, okay. Civil airlines it wasn't that attraction for me it was just that I, I was rather keen to get a job which involved full time flying. And the only sure way to do that was go into civil and you know

37:00 I have been successful in it in that I went right through to 60. It has been fairly well paid job in the community and I don't regret this decision. And you know we built this house here and I sublet this a lot of this and did a lot of this myself and we have lived here for 50 years now. More than 50 years

37:30 and we don't regret it. I should have upgraded the house. I should have gone to a better house because of the position I chose with the company. I knew Joan was happy here and you spend a lot of nights away from home. And so I decided to hang the expense and entertain in restaurants.

Just in the last few minutes,

38:00 **how would you reflect on the good and the bad of the war you fought for Australia?**

To Australia or to me? To Australia.

Both actually, but start with Australia.

Well, I think you have a lot more freedom of expression and certainly we cease

38:30 to have those strong ties with the UK that we used to. I mean I would never vote for a republic if they put politicians in there. I mean you might as well just put up with, well unfortunately the religious archbishop whatever his name was. It wasn't a good choice but there are plenty of good people to handle that job without going to one of the royal

39:00 family. I sure feel that if the republics got control of that procedure without us having a vote you could get anybody and probably a lot of politicians and that is what has happened before.

And for you personally the war?

Well, it really got me into aviation and the fact that I survived and I was able to profit from that it has given me a very, very interesting career. I

39:30 have travelled the world at the company's expense and the best time is when I got on at the airbus because I was still in charge of the introduction of the air bus because at the time I was a flight training manager. You know it was a wonderful opportunity and the two fellows who had been two of the most successful in the company were according

40:00 to the last manager, that I had Frank Ball. I still meet at lunch once a month with a group of these management pilots said to me, "You know, you and John Rosenburg had the best careers in the company and we have been looking around and we looking for success and we found that you are both uneducated to year 9,

40:30 and here we are. We won't even look at anybody now without particularation and probably a degree by now," and he said, "We are not to sure we are on the right tram going for the highly educated people." But I think Rosenburg was a very good believer too and I think you make your own luck. I think you make your own luck. I mean I was dead lucky to get through the war. I know that.

41:00 But I think the fact that my career has just been one up and it has been upward all the way with effort that I made and I think that is a personal thing and it has to be the individuals choice what he does. I mean, I didn't sacrifice any family life, we have got a very good relationship with each

41:30 other and also within the family. And I have still got a good relationship with my siblings. So you know, you have got to think there is a lot to be thankful for and, as I said before, I give St Christopher a lot of credit.

INTERVIEW ENDS