

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Dudley Dunn (Dasher) - Transcript of interview

**Date of interview: 18th November 2003**

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1085>

### Tape 1

- 00:39 **Now what we will do, just look at me, just ignore the camera. Ok so the first thing I wanted to ask you was just about where you were born and early**
- 01:00 **childhood memories of Wagga and what it was like during that time?**
- Well it was such a long time ago, but I do remember that I was born on the 9th of January 1922 in Wagga. It was 22, was beginning of things getting tough, beginning of the Depression. My father was a stock and station agent in Wagga. We had a small property out of
- 01:30 town. But he, he felt the draft so that, I grew up and went to school in Wagga. I went to my secondary school was the Wagga Wagga high school. The Depression was in full train by the time I was ready for secondary education or tertiary. But there was no money, the Depression had hit so I just went to school locally
- 02:00 in Wagga. I had always wanted to join the air force. The RAF [Royal Air Force] was applying, was advertising for people to join the RAF as short service commission as pilots, they could see the war coming. I wrote off to air ministry and received a very nice letter back saying, thanking me
- 02:30 for my application but they had observed that I was 16 and I should apply in a year or two. So I finished my education at Wagga. I joined a bank for a short time, just filling in until I was called up for the air force. I volunteered for the air force and was rejected the first time round because of
- 03:00 alleged colour blindness. So I went to Victoria then and applied again and was accepted. But there is a question in your application form, have you previously applied for entry into any of His Majesties Services? I didn't answer it I just put a dash but they found out of course and they gave me a full workout in Melbourne and then finally agreed that I was a
- 03:30 pretty good type and they wanted me. So I left school, short time in a bank and then into the air force.
- What was Wagga like when you were there during that time?**
- Wagga was a town of about 8 - 10,000 people. We knew everyone, everyone in the district really, of course amongst other things my father was a wheat buyer, he
- 04:00 was buying wheat so we knew everyone. And our family had been there since 1840 so, so we had a long history with Wagga.
- You had a lot of brothers and sisters, was that a big family at the time?**
- Yes it was a big family. I had three brothers and three sisters. And I was right in the middle, which is sometimes a good place to be. But in, I think it was 1940
- 04:30 I was accepted for the air force, but they couldn't, they couldn't take me in because all our elementary flying training schools and the initial training schools were full. And they were still being constructed. So I was on the reserve as they called it for some, or some ten months, which was very agitating for someone that wanted to get into it.
- Why do you think you were so remember at that time?**
- 05:00 **I wanted to ask you, why do you think you were so interested in wanting to fly, join the air force?**
- Well I suppose I was motivated by a cousin Bill, Bill Dunn who had an old gypsy moth [aircraft], and I just wanted to fly and the quickest and best way to do was to join the air force rather than buy expensive flying lessons.
- Did he take you up in**

05:30 **the gypsy moth?**

Oh yes. Yes and but you know not very much, just enough to make me realise that this is what I wanted.

**So how old were you when you went up in a plane, in the gypsy moth?**

I suppose I was about 16 I suppose, 15 or 16.

**So what was it like going up in that kind of a plane, and what did you see, and where was that?**

06:00 Oh he kept it on his property and we just flew around and he did a couple of mild aerobatics which was, just whetted my appetite more. But you know as a young man in Wagga I was a keen swimmer, I used to train regularly and swim competitively and played water polo competitively which was good. And we had quite

06:30 a strong swimming club in Wagga. I used to train in the Murrumbidgee by swimming upstream, and you know, I could swim a mile or so upstream against about a three knot current, which is the way to do it.

**What, how did other families cope with the Depression at that time, can you remember other families?**

Yes, well no one had any money. My father carried a lot of the farmers. We tried

07:00 to carry them until he ran out but everyone ate, everyone sort of gave a hand. I can remember coming to the door and asking if they could do any jobs to get a feed or to get some money and that happened very frequently. At least a couple of times a week. People would sort of knock on the door and would say "Have you got anything for me

07:30 that I can do to earn a bob or two [a shilling or two]?" Yeah they were tough times but everyone was very brave you know in the situation and they helped each other out, it was really, it was really a good lesson in humanity.

**Did you at that time go to other places in Australia and see the effects of the Depression on other families?**

No

08:00 I didn't. I was a troop leader in the boy scouts and I went to a jamboree I think they called it in Adelaide and another one at Frankston in Victoria and I travelled around with my father after I left primary school. I was dux [top student] of the primary school, and my father was on a wheat buying trip in northern New South Wales so I sort of went along with that as a surprise for becoming dux of the school I suppose.

08:30 So I travelled around quite a bit. But subsequently of course my travels were very very wide indeed.

**Indeed, which we will definitely talk about in length. I wanted to ask you with the troop leading and the boy scouts, and you seemed to be an over achiever really academically**

09:00 **and sport an all rounder, did you know that you wanted to go into the air force, was that your first priority or was there other things that whetted your whistle?**

It was my first and only priority, there was nothing, you know there was nothing less than the air force, you know I was determined as was evidenced I guess by my second shot of application. But they seemed to appreciate it. They read me as a pretty keen type so.

09:30 **And how did your family respond when you were eager?**

Well my elder brother was in the army and I was going into the air force, and my two younger brothers both went into the navy, but you know thank God we all survived the war. But they had the normal apprehensions but I was at the age where I was pretty determined and they knew I was determined

10:00 and so there was really no answer to it but to let me go.

**Did you have much contact with veterans from the First World War and any family members tell you any stories?**

Oh yes I had uncles of course who were in the First World War and you know being born in 1922 of course as I grew up I was exposed to all these old digs [veterans], and that was interesting, but one found that they didn't talk much

10:30 about it, it must have been an awful experience that France, awful, and that is perhaps why I joined the air force. I didn't want all that mud and muck. I could see the air force as a good clean way to go.

**Indeed because I am quite fascinated about how a lot of people just didn't talk about the war. Did you find that you could just get snippets of information about things?**

Well there were

11:00 one or two quite garrulous people around and we used to sort of fish information out of those people particularly after we would buy them a beer or two and they would sing, sing for their supper really, but as a rule people were reticent and didn't want to talk about it.

**Did any stories kind of turn you off infantry or, you mentioned that you wanted to go into the air force, were there any stories that you managed to get out of these old diggers that you can remember?**

11:30 It was just the awful slum of the trenches in France or Belgium, which turned me right off, I didn't want my war service to be carried out in a slimy trench with a lot of dead people around. So hence, the air force is a pretty clean way to go.

**Did you feel**

12:00 **that when you were applying for the air force that you also wanted to do something for Australia?**

That was the, the national thing was there all the time and one just accepted that, but we wanted to do something for Australia, that was constant, but I was never really conscious of doing it, it was just a background thing.

12:30 That one had this loyalty to Australia and the Queen and the King rather at that stage. And it was just so natural and I don't think anyone worried too much about the loyalty thing, it was there, it was a fact in the back of our minds.

**Do you think lots of people in Wagga at that time also had similar connections to Britain and to**

13:00 **Australia?**

Oh yes I am sure, most of the chaps that joined up around my age you know were all motivated by the same thing.

**How would you describe Wagga as a town, would you say it was middle class, working class or a combination?**

Oh it was really, when I was there in my young days it was a service town for the Eastern Riverina the

13:30 pastoral and farming just east of the Riverina. And after the war of course that changed quite rapidly, it became an education centre, it became light industry moved there, I think Dunlop moved there and the place Wagga just took off after the war although I didn't go back. I went back for one race meeting I think but I never really went back and lived in Wagga.

14:00 **Have you been back since?**

No, not recently.

**How has it changed, so you haven't been back at all?**

Well I have, I have been back a couple of times, once about four years ago and then prior to that I think probably six years. So it is four years since I have been there but my impression is that it is a go go town, it is really self generating now,

14:30 it is about 70,000 people I believe and it is almost self generating so that it will continue to expand and progress.

**Because it is supplying it's, the industry is keeping the town alive or because it's vibrant enough to extend into other communities, how do you think it is going to be self sustaining?**

15:00 Well it's communications are good, there were many flights that will go to Melbourne and Sydney. It's handy to both centres Melbourne and Sydney. There is a good workforce there, good education facilities and the place as I say is self generating. Industries will go there because there is good labour

15:30 and good transport and generally good conditions.

**How has it changed in terms of the buildings and the way that the streets and cars, how are those things different to how you remember it as a boy in Wagga?**

Well I remember the first car that I had was an Essex super six. It would do 100 miles to a gallon of oil. But you know they were old cars before the

16:00 war everyone, you know I was only 17 and as soon as I got my licence I bought this old Essex super six. And everyone sort of lived pretty well. We had to scrounge around I even bought second hand oil for the car. You would use so much though it didn't matter. But I found the place, it wasn't apparent in 1939-1940 that Wagga was going

16:30 to boom to such a degree that in fact it did. But my connection with it now Wagga, my connections are a

bit remote.

**Did lots of people have cars at that time?**

Yes, yes cars were pretty thick on the ground, they weren't very good quality, the performance wasn't there like modern cars, but they were there and of

17:00 course being servicing the farmers and graziers in the district everyone had to have the car.

**Can you describe for me the Essex, what was it called the Essex super?**

Super six, oh yes well it was an open Tourer, it had a reliable six cylinder engine.

17:30 But it was breezy, you know, I once took it on a trip to Sydney and nearly froze to death at Goulburn, you know it was very very cold. So you would dress up in sweaters against the cold, driving at nighttime around Goulburn and even Nowra is pretty cold. But it was wheels and it was transport but I was happy.

**Was it a convertible?**

18:00 I am sorry?

**Was it a convertible, is that why it was so breezy or?**

No it wasn't a convertible, it was just a tourer that means it just had a hood that you could fold back. No wind up windows.

**And was it all leather inside and chrome and that kind of thing?**

Yes yes the upholstery was generally leather. But it was pretty rough, you know the doors rattled, but it went, it was quite

18:30 reliable.

**So did you travel around much in the car?**

Oh yes, yes I used to go to swimming carnivals all over the Eastern Riverina. You know to Leeton, Junee, Adelong all around the districts of course wherever there was a game of water polo or a swimming carnival, I would be there.

**Was there much competition in the area**

19:00 **for swimming?**

Oh yes there were some pretty good swimmers there. My brothers and I were pretty keen, we swam a lot and trained a lot and we liked water polo so we chased the swimming scene. It was a good sport and still I found women and cigarettes and that didn't help much.

**And were there lots of women swimming as well, girls swimming, were there**

19:30 **any girls swimming in the carnival?**

Oh yes yes yes there were girls races, not many but there were indeed and relay races they were the exciting things of course, but it was all a bit bush and all a bit rough but great fun and a good healthy way of life.

**Would they be mixed meets, carnival meets?**

Mixed.

**For the swimming carnivals, where there girls and boys or?**

Oh yes

20:00 they would have a girls race at the one carnival.

**But the girls wouldn't compete with the boys?**

Not really.

**What was it like swimming in the Murrumbidgee?**

Well one got used to it. It was sometimes muddy, sometimes quick, sometimes slow. Depending on the height of the river but Wagga had a good beach, a natural river beach and the swimming club or life saving club really was just there

20:30 adjacent to the beach and it was very pleasant and clean. I preferred it to swimming in bars.

**Was it quite a social gathering around the Murrumbidgee?**

Yeah well it was, the social activity was simple but quite intense. There were race meetings,

21:00 you know even though things were tough, we still had race meetings, we had the show and various functions, balls, balls forever I can remember so there was quite a heavy sort of social, fun, young life.

**Was the river used for other things as well?**

Well it was used for irrigation of course. There were a few primitive

21:30 steam driven pumps would take the water out very slowly, market gardens and that sort of thing, but there wasn't much irrigation. Irrigation on a broad scale was pretty much well unknown before the war. Except of course in the MIA in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area where it was quite intense.

**And was it,**

22:00 **were there any industries or other things that were based on the Murrumbidgee at that time?**

No not a hell of a lot. It was really just the water supply. There was no, there were no boating clubs or, a lot of canoes, we all had canoes kids

22:30 and you know we had great fun stealing watermelons from market gardeners which would be irrigators along the river. I had a boat, a wooden boat with a wooden floor and my friends, two of them went off and stole a couple of great melons and they threw it from the top of the bank into the boat and it went straight threw the bottom of the boat. So that

23:00 was, so I suppose that was poetic justice.

**With the market gardens, were they set up along the riverbank for people to buy things from?**

Yes yes they would be out from the riverbank probably 4 or 500 yards but they would be river flats and very rich river flats.

**Were there markets and sort of**

23:30 **commercial businesses around the waters edge as well?**

Not really, in those days there was nothing, the beach was for swimming. And you know kids and canoes, there was no sort of commercialisation of the river.

**Was there anything good to catch in the river?**

Oh yes there was Murray cod and perch,

24:00 golden perch or yellow belly and you know they were very good eating. But we had a lot of fun really going fishing, but I always took a shot gun going fishing because the ducks would fly up the river and you could pick off a duck or two in addition to the fish, just in case.

**So tell me about those fishing and duck**

24:30 **hunting exhibitions?**

Sorry.

**Tell me about those fishing and duck hunting exhibitions?**

Oh they were very simple, they were just, sometimes you would go away for a couple of nights and camp along the river bank, we all had our favourite fishing spots and if that didn't work, there were no bites there you would move somewhere else. But it was just a bit of insurance that I took the shotgun to bag a duck or

25:00 two if the fish weren't biting.

**Did you every catch any ducks?**

Oh we struck a few ducks yes.

**Did you go with your family or did you have a group of friends that you used to hang out with?**

No, mostly with friends, but they were, we used to cook and camp and you things that young boys do.

**So mainly the boys**

25:30 **would hang with the boys and the girls would hang with the girls?**

Sometimes the twain met. As often as possible as I grew up. But yeah mostly it was a male thing to just go fishing and shooting, it was very much a male thing but we had dances and sort of a mixed bag of social life.

26:00 **Where would the dances be held and would everyone come to them, what were they like?**

Well I can remember 'The Wonderland' in Wagga which was a huge hall, or seemed to be huge, seats around the edges, there maybe a bar or a sort of a drink service and of course the Australian male

thing, they would all get together and

- 26:30 when the music started they would race out and ask a girl to dance. And it was you know just a normal country dance.

**So the men were quite ok about asking women to dance?**

Oh yeah, oh yes particularly if you picked a good sort, you were very keen to do it. It was you know there was no reticence about it but after the dance,

- 27:00 after you saw your partner back to her place you would rejoin the boys, go again the next dance.

**What kind of music, would they have a live band or?**

Oh yes, always a live band, yes and they were quite a few of them around, there was always a piano, a saxophone, a drummer, sometimes a trumpet and always a pretty handy band. And that was you know the great American jazz

- 27:30 and the thing was taking off and so there were plenty of bands around and they were not bad either, they were good.

**Were they local musicians or?**

Local, you knew everyone, you knew the band, you knew everyone in town really.

**How was your family placed in the town in terms of how other people viewed your family and?**

- 28:00 Oh we had an adequate, quite an attractive house, there were seven kids after all so we had to have a biggish house. Which we had. And it was just another good house in a good town and there were plenty of, you knew everyone, you knew everyone in town

- 28:30 which was an amazing thing, And you knew everyone's background, you knew their history. Some were good, some were bad, you know the odd drunk and the odd but you knew everyone and the history of everyone which was maybe a good thing or maybe a bad thing but at the moment I just like my privacy at the moment. So why am I doing this?

- 29:00 **Did you grow out of Wagga, did you want to get out of it or stay there?**

Well you know the air force saw to that. Yes I wanted, it was time to leave and get on with my own thing, yes I wanted to get out and get on with life on the broader scene.

**What were the expectations of a really**

- 29:30 **well formed young man at 18 years of age, what would other young men be doing when they finished school and?**

Well the war was on and everyone was obsessed with that and everyone was, every young man joined a service, chose a service, either the army, navy or air force and the girls began choosing sort of volunteer groups

- 30:00 so there was no in my 17, 18, 19 there was no really career path for anyone other than the war. There was, you know there was very few people elected to go to university, they chose to join the services.

**How did it infiltrate, how did the war infiltrate into**

- 30:30 **Wagga at that time, how did everyone know that it was happening?**

Well it was the same as the rest of Australia really when Robert Menzies [Prime Minister of Australia at the time] made that fateful announcement that England is now at war and as a result we also are at war. So that was, I can remember that on the radio and

- 31:00 it was universal and everyone knew it was going to be a. Well people thought it was going to be a shorter haul than it actually was. But you know thank God it was a long haul because that is the only way we won. If it had of been short, Hitler would have been the victor.

**Did it feel personal**

- 31:30 **when Menzies made that announcement, did Australians feel that the war was personal for them?**

Oh yes oh yes there was yes, it was a dramatic thing in everyone's life to realise that we were actually at war. And you know 1918 wasn't that long ago so a lot of people had very hard memories of World War I.

- 32:00 But generally among the youth we all wanted to get into it. It was, that was pretty universal I think, most young chaps wanted to get into it and get where the action was.

**Where were you when the announcement was made, did you hear it?**

I was at home in Wagga, I think it was a Sunday night. I was at home I think.

32:30 And we all had the radio, and we knew things were hot, so the news was, everyone listened to the news, the 1 o'clock news and the evening news, everyone was sort of glued to their radios.

**Was it your whole family gathered together?**

I have forgotten really, but I just remember hearing it, I think my father was there, maybe a brother or two.

33:00 But then we all started discussing it and what we were going to do and my two younger brothers reckoned they would go to the navy and my elder brother said he was already in the militia, so his choice was automatic, he joined the AIF.

**Why do you think your brothers opted to go to the navy, your two other brothers?**

I don't know they just thought a good

33:30 clean, a clean way to go, they rather enjoyed I suppose the order and the cleanliness of a shipboard life and they both served in corvettes.

**What about your sisters did they also want to join up for the war?**

Well there was nothing doing for the girls when I left.

34:00 There were a few voluntary things and of course they were all packing parcels for Britain and this sort of thing but there was no sort of organised outlet for girls really in the war effort apart from these voluntary operations.

**Did they want to get more involved?**

I think they were, I think they were

34:30 involved enough, they were both young and good sorts too I think, so they had a pretty active social life so I think a bit of voluntary work and their social life and some of it mixed together made things pretty comfortable for them.

**Where were they placed in the family, your sisters?**

The eldest was a girl Jean, the second

35:00 eldest was a girl Edith, then there was my brother Jack who was older than I am, then me, and then Eric, and then the navy came in Eric and Roger.

**And how did the dynamic work between all the brothers and sisters?**

Very vigorously in a large family, it was a pretty vigorous life, you know there were fights and jealousies and

35:30 consolation, we would look after each other in a rough sort of way, but it was a good vigorous life you know being in a large family.

**Where any of your sisters married at all at that point when the war?**

Yes my sister Jean got married just as I left for the air force and my sister

36:00 Edith married when I was away I think, I can't be clear on that.

**And were married men allowed to go to the war or did they marry before they went?**

Oh yes they were they were but they were not encouraged. Later of course it became, when they needed a lot of people they actively recruited married men

36:30 and sorted them out. But it depended on your qualifications. I had a cousin who was married with twins and he went to the war and he was a prisoner in Malaya and died there.

**Did you have a sweetheart at the time?**

Yes I did, yes I think I had one or two.

37:00 I think, Dawn Williams was my first love and I think no Laila Williams and then Doreen Williams they weren't sisters but, but I think they are both dead. But you know I grew away from them and I went overseas in the air force.

**Were you sad to go?**

Sad, no

37:30 no I was very pleased to go, it was what I wanted and what I had been waiting for and training for and

so I was, we wanted to be in it.

**Well that might be a good point too change tapes.**

## Tape 2

00:38 **Dudley can you take me through the process of when you first tried to enlist and getting knocked back?**

Yes well a recruiting train, an air force recruiting train came to Wagga and I of course had long been waiting for this and

01:00 a chap, they gave me a very long medical, I was ok everywhere else but he said "you are colour blind" because I failed this Ishihara test where there is a lot of coloured dots and you are supposed to get a number out of it and I couldn't get the right number apparently. So I was rejected on the grounds that I was colour blind. But however

01:30 some, a month later I knew of another another recruiting train was going to Albury which was in the Victorian scene so I drove to Albury and was accepted with great joy all round. And some months passed and then I got a letter from the Air Board I think it was,

02:00 I thought it was my call up to go into initial training school. But I opened it and it said you failed to answer a question on whether you had previously applied to join any of His Majesties Forces but we request that you come to Melbourne for an interview and for a further medical and enclosing a rail warrant of

02:30 course. And that I did and they gave me the full works of spinning me around in chairs, and everything. But the Doctor was a pretty good chap and he agreed, he said "No you are ok, acceptable, acceptable, we think you are a pretty good type so you are in". So then one had to go back to school, really we

03:00 were doing sort of elementary navigation and electrical science and studying in our own time, pending being called up once space was available in these initial training schools.

**Before we go onto the training school, were you given another colour blind test that you passed?**

No no that was it.

**Can you paint a picture for me, can you paint me a picture**

03:30 **of some of the tests that they did on you to see if you were really a worthwhile potential pilot?**

Well there were all sorts of psychology tests, the detail of which escapes me now. The whole process took about two hours, there was psychology and of course your diction was important,

04:00 your sight was important, and I had 20 20 vision but it was alleged that I was colour blind initially. But we fixed that finally but they were the most exhaustive medical tests that we had.

**So there were physical tests as well?**

Oh yes, oh yes. You know the usual things, balancing, closing eyes and

04:30 all the usual things. But you know I was young and healthy and very fit really.

**So from there you moved onto a training school is that correct?**

Yes well having done all the study for about ten months it was I think eight or ten months before I was finally called up to go into an initial training school at Somers in Victoria. Number 1 ITS [Initial Training School] I think it was.

**Ok so just so I understand both of them,**

05:00 **the training school you are talking about is that the ITS?**

That is an initial training school where one learns the way of the air force. You learn air force law, electrical science, navigation, maths, logarithms and it was quite an extensive course.

05:30 Really to assess and it was at this initial training school, which is all aircrew of course but no one was yet designated a pilot or a navigator or a wireless air gunner so that was designated after at the end of the course. So my preference of course was to be a pilot and fortunately they agreed that I should be a pilot and a single engine

06:00 pilot. Some pilots were assessed as perhaps more sober, I don't mean sober as in the tipples, but in their approach to life and they went onto bombers and it was a general rule that the very young chaps went



onto fighters and the older ones went onto bombers, twin engine trainers.

**The**

06:30 **training school, was that in Melbourne?**

Out of Melbourne near Frankston. We were very fit and we trained and drilled and ran and you know and swam and studied and worked hard and played a bit hard too whenever we could. We hated the drill sergeants.

07:00 But they finished up pretty good chaps because when we graduated from initial training school they bought the beer and wished us luck see. Which is pretty good but we hated them while they were bullying us.

**Just on the drill sergeants, is it because of the discipline or just because who they were that the dislike was developed?**

Oh they were bullyboys but they have to be to get the sense out of us. You know we were

07:30 pretty wild and we'd take the piss out of them too. So we got it back in spades but as it finished up we recognised that they had to do it. And we had to drill, and we had to learn the ways. But they finished up buying the beer and wishing us luck so.

**Did you train in all weather when you were there in Melbourne?**

Oh yes it didn't matter, yes it was

08:00 classrooms, we were in huts, and we slept in huts, it didn't matter if it was raining you would go for a marathon run along the beach and it was very attractive country there at Somers out of Frankston.

**Any larrikin pranks that fellas got up to at that time?**

I can't remember much at that time but later of course, they flourished, but at that time we were all busy

08:30 getting on with it.

**What was the training school called?**

It was called Number 1 Initial Training School Somers Victoria.

**And what were the subjects that you excelled in?**

I excelled in? Well I could box a bit, and so I was a boxing tournament and the chap I picked was, somehow after I had won a couple.

09:00 The chap I got was Arthur Kell who was about half a stone lighter than I was. He just cut me to pieces, he had a lightening quick left hand which I couldn't perish so I, I felt it. But we were so fit it didn't matter. There was meteorology, navigation, and you know I passed comfortably in all of those things.

09:30 Electrical science, because later on we had electrical science and electrometric controls were used in firing mechanisms at aircraft.

**In retrospect were there examinations for these subjects or was it a case?**

Oh no there was an examination at the end and if you failed you were out.

**Much pressure on you at the time?**

Oh you know we were pretty well trained and

10:00 I wouldn't call it real pressure. Most of us passed it pretty easily. And enjoyed it, funnily enough enjoyed it because we were learning and we wanted to learn, that was the magic. We didn't have to learn, we wanted to learn, because we were going to use that knowledge later on when things got serious.

**Were the majority of those fellows aiming to be fighter pilots?**

Yes, most chaps would

10:30 go for the glamour of the fighter pilot, but people who were not, whose reflexes weren't quite as quick were made navigators or wireless air gunners. Mostly one found that ex schoolteachers would be, a schoolteacher would be the ideal navigator, you know slow, contentious and meticulous

11:00 whereas the fighter boys were pretty off the cuff [slightly rough and outspoken].

**Ok so what was after the training school, what happened then?**

After this initial training school, well then I was selected as a fighter school or a single engine pilot so I went to Elementary Flying Training School at Temora on Tiger Moths, flying Tiger Moths. I had a cousin

who was a flight

11:30 commander there and he had been a commercial pilot before the war and he was a flight commander and I fortunately lobbed up in his flight. My, I had a good instructor Roberts and I went solo in about seven hours, six hours 50, seven hours. Which was a great

12:00 feeling. It is one of the most exhilarating things in ones lifetime is to go solo and be in sole charge of an aeroplane. Having you know being confined to fairly rigid instructional processes.

**This cousin that was flight commander, was he the cousin that took you up in a Gypsy?**

No no, he was also an instructor but

12:30 he was he became an instructor at a service flying training school in Wirraways, that was Bill. This one was Max. My flight commander was Max. But they were both very experienced pilots and were really disappointed that they didn't really get into operations, they were confined to instruction for the rest of the war.

**And were they from the same family or two different?**

They were cousins, they were cousins themselves and they were my cousins.

13:00 It was a big family of Dunns.

**So talk to me now about the start up procedure, the actual start up procedure for flying the Tiger Moth, what actually were you to do in the cockpit walking around the plane and checking and that sort of stuff?**

Lets see you would prime the engine by the mechanic would swing the prop, we didn't have a self starter, he would swing the prop and

13:30 then he would blow out a, it would prime the engine with petrol and then I would say "Clear contact" and just flick the switches and he would pull the prop through and it would fire. So and then chocks, there were chocks in front of the thing, there were no brakes in a Tiger Moths and then when you were ready, make sure you were strapped in properly, parachute right, you would just

14:00 wave, wave the chocks away, the airmen would pull the chocks away on a length of rope, they would just pull them out and then you would taxi out and take off and do your own thing. But which, there were prescribed things that we had to do, there were aerobatics which were loops, slow rolls, rolls off the top. Spinning was very necessary, forced landings,

14:30 simulated forced landings so that you knew what to do, engine failure on take off, you know you had no time, you had to stuff the nose straight down otherwise you would stall out. But all those basic things which go to make a pilot.

**For my sake can we go through each of those things so we have an understanding, a roll is what?**

A roll in a Tiger Moth, you have to get some speed up really a

15:00 Spitfire would just roll. You could do three or four, but a Tiger Moth you have to dive and get about 130 I think miles an hour on the clock and then you pull it up and then you roll with the stick over and rudder and when you are on your back you have got to push the stick forward to keep the nose up and then you complete the roll and roll out. So it was

15:30 very important to learn to roll and to learn inverted flying where the controls are really reversed.

**And why was it important to keep the stick up when you are underneath?**

Well if you pull the stick back you just go straight down and if you push the stick forward you go up. It was the reverse, it was the reverse to ones natural correction.

**Of course, of course. Spin, what is that?**

Spin, you pull it up into a stall, pull the aeroplane

16:00 up into a stall, stick full back and if you wanted to do a left hand spin the left rudder, right hand spin right rudder. So that it would flick off into the spin and to get out of the spin you just simply push the stick forward and apply it opposite the rudder and it came out quite easily.

**Ok, forced landings what was the process there?**

Well we practiced forced landings, you pulled the power off and say

16:30 "My engine has failed I have got to land, there is the spot" and when you are being instructed, the instructor would do that, he would pick it, a tight spot, pull the throttle back and say "Right, force land, land the thing" and then you would have to pick a, watch for the winds you would have to know which way the wind is blowing because you should land into wind, if you land down wind you take a much

longer run,

17:00 landing run, so you must if possible land into the wind or cross wind I suppose, but it was, we got practice at that and it was very necessary because later on, I did have a few engine failures which on operations but that basic instruction was so important.

**And how do you pick the wind, obviously because wind is in your face when you are travelling?**

Smoke,

17:30 dust, cloud shadows, windmills, operating windmill sort of points you to wind. The way trees were blowing, you know many ways to pick the wind.

**Good, finally now the last one was, engine goes, fails on take off what is the process of bringing it back down again?**

Well engine, one has to be quick

18:00 because the aircraft is in a critical phase whereas because you have got full power on for take off and you are only about a few say, say two or three, four percent above your stalling speed so you very quickly have to sort of stuff the nose down regardless of where you are or you must stuff them, the first thing is to push the nose down and keep your flying speed up otherwise you will stall out.

18:30 **The design of the aircraft, the Tiger Moth this is, two seater, obviously training pilot is that right?**

Two seater instructor is normally in the front seat, pupil in the back and solo flying was always from the back seat.

**Your vision wasn't obscured?**

No, your vision was ok, but you did blind flying in the old Tiger they had a hood that they would put over the pupil and you would have to fly it on the very primitive instruments that a turn and bank indicator

19:00 was about all we had an altimeter of course.

**Can you just explain those instruments again for me?**

Oh well, in the Tiger Moth there was a slip or a skid indicator and a sort of a bat and ball, it was a bubble, what do they call it?

19:30 A bubble level really and this, you had to keep that ball in the middle otherwise you were out of function and it was very primitive, the seat of your pants was no good if you were on instruments you had to fly on those instruments, but of course later on we got much more sophisticated with artificial horizons and instrument flying was quite simple then.

20:00 **So therefore the Tiger Moths would fly with the basic and just feel?**

Yeah it was a good a trainer, it was very kind generally, but could be, could be critical as they say if your engine failed on take off and you had to really sort of throw it around to get any action out of it you had to sort of get your speed up, for instance a roll off the top, that is a roll off the top of a loop and you had to really wind up and stuff the nose down

20:30 and get your speed up and roll up to the top and then roll out. And so, but you have to go into that in a Tiger Moth with plenty of speed.

**Now you arrived at the base, and with how many new recruits?**

Our course was about 30 I think.

**Were there any, because you were obviously all quite fresh in respect of flying, were there any major accidents or things that went wrong?**

Oh a couple of collisions

21:00 and I think we lost two or three people on the course with collisions or just finger trouble and going in and not jumping out.

**And what were the instructors like sitting in front of you would they rant and rave if you did something wrong?**

My cousin was famous for ranting and raving, I was most embarrassed on one

21:30 occasion. We were out at a satellite airfield from Temora, sitting on the fence smoking cigarettes at about 5.30 6 o'clock in the morning and this Tiger Moth came in and you could hear the instructor shouting "That is right you silly bugger 20 feet, close your eyes, pull the stick back you clob" my cousin, it was very embarrassing.

22:00 **Because I could imagine some of the instructors would probably be on the edge given new recruits?**

Oh they got brassed off with it, they got fed up with it dealing with all these mug pilots but a lot of them were very good, patients and you know thank God Flying Officer Roberts who was my instructor was a patient kind man who did a lot, I suppose he kept me alive through the war.

**So what was his history in respect of flying?**

22:30 He had a lot of experience, a lot of hours and he knew his aircraft and was just very good at getting his message across.

**So besides the seven hours that you did in flight, what other training schemes were there?**

Well then you do formation flying, elementary sort of formation flying, there is some low flying,

23:00 aerobatics, these are all, cross country exercises, instrument flying, just good general practice.

**Ok, just so I understand what instrument flying is opposed to what you had been doing with the Tiger Moth?**

Well instrument flying they cover your cockpit with a hood and the instructor is out in the breeze, he can see everything,

23:30 and so you sort of travel around in the sky on instruments, sometimes accurately and sometimes wildly.

**So as if it was dark, it is almost like night flying?**

Well it was night flying really, it was pure instrument flying.

**Were there many times that you felt absolutely helpless and the instructor had to take over during?**

No I don't think so generally you had a reasonable feel for it.

**Ok, so what then happened after**

24:00 **the training there, where did you move onto?**

Well I then, we moved to surface flying training school flying Wirraways at Wagga funnily enough and that was a much more powerful aeroplane, much more sophisticated, it had flaps and one victors gun, two victors guns mounted firing through the prop.

24:30 Retractable under gear, variable pitch and quite a sophisticated to us because we were coming from Tiger Moths, it was quite a sophisticated cockpit. But we very soon got three or four hours instruction on it and then went solo and the same process over again for another, I suppose another 60 or 70 flying

25:00 hours.

**Ok, lets concentrate then on the wiraway can you go again through the start up procedures for that?**

Oh, hell I think I have forgotten, but one would have to, there were simple things, you sort of had to prime the engine, make sure that you had the fuel there, you had to check that before you pressed the starter button, you had to check that it was clear, that the chocks were in, you had to check the

25:30 the aleurone and the elevator controls that they weren't chocked. Having done all of that and primed the engine and got fuel to the elevators you pushed the jit and hopefully the engine started, so you would have a touch of throttle on it and it would blow smoke and oil everywhere for half a minute and then you were off, you would wave your chocks away and go off

26:00 and do your exercises.

**Ok. So.**

You have to select before take off, set the flaps down 30 degrees a flap I think.

**Ok, and the engine was obviously bigger than the Tiger Moth?**

Yes it was a Pratt and Whitney, I think it was about a 600 horsepower engine.

**The Tiger Moth was, do you remember?**

Oh the Tiger Moth was a little gypsy, gypsy engine

26:30 it was only about 130 horsepower.

**Ok, now that was only a single seater plane at the Wirraways?**

No there was room for an instructor of course it was seating.

**Ok, given the guns were in the front did you ever use armaments as you pleased?**

Oh well we practised firing, we sort of did practise bombing and there was a little

27:00 bomb rack and you would fit a sort of an 8 ½ pound practice bomb on it and you would try and bomb something. I wasn't very good at bombing but I wasn't a bad shot. But sometimes this impulse, there is an oil impulse which controls the firing of the guns so that they miss the propeller. But sometimes they don't and you know

27:30 it was common for people to shoot a hole in their propeller.

**But not common to shoot the propeller off I trust?**

No no never. Just a hole in it.

**Ok, now were all the procedures with the wiraway the same as the Tiger Moth in respect to rolling, spinning?**

Well the principles were the same you know the theory of flight applies regardless of aeroplane. So it is the

28:00 same the same thing, aerobatics were much easier in the Wiraway than they were in the Tiger Moth.

**Could you do more in the wiraway given the power of the engine?**

Oh yes you could do, you could do a roll off the top easily without sort of diving down to get speed, but you have to wind up a bit, generally it was a kind aeroplane to fly. It spun

28:30 nicely and came out the way it should, it rolled quite well, it was a bit slow in the climb but generally it was a very good trainer.

**What were the instructors aiming to teach you given that you already knew how to fly the Tiger Moth?**

Well they were teaching us to perfect what we had learned at elementary flying training

29:00 and to use the power of the modern aeroplane properly. And avoid any critical situations. The Wiraway was a bit inclined to ground loop, that is spin around on the ground so you had to sort of watch that. But otherwise it was a very kind aeroplane and formation flying was, it was good in formation, it was a very steady platform.

**Just on the Wiraways spinning around on the ground**

29:30 **what caused that?**

Well a touch of, usually a touch of brake or rudder and the tail wheel would sort of caster, so if you just didn't watch it and correct very quickly you would do a complete spin on the ground, sometime touch a wing.

**Almost like a doughnut in a car?**

Well exactly,

30:00 it is just.

**And what would you counteract with, if you got?**

Oh opposite rudder and brake.

**Immediately?**

And a burst of throttle too to correct.

**What were common things that guys did wrong in the Wiraways that instructors had to concentrate on fixing up?**

Well there were the usual things, we all had our frailties I think, mine was night flying, I was a bit slow on night

30:30 vision, but I soon corrected that and got it right but I was a bit slow off the mark on going solo at nighttime. But other chaps had their own little problems, nothing of any consequence, some were well above average, one or two of them. One chap there was, he went solo in I think five hours

31:00 and he finished being up as being assessed as exceptional, but generally the service flying training school was getting there, you knew you were progressing and as the word is service flying training so that is active service so you are training to really get on the combat aircraft.

**Ok, so how many hours did it**

31:30 **take you to actually go solo?**

In the.

**In the Wiraways?**

In the Wirraway, oh I think three.

**Was that the first time you had gone solo?**

Well I had been solo in the Tiger Moth. Of course I think I had 50 or 60 hours in the Tiger Moth.

**Right solo as well.**

Yep.

**Can I just go back to your flight solo, what were you thinking and feeling at the time, any nerves?**

Absolute exhilaration. No nerves.

32:00 But it was the most exhilarating thing, you know you shout with joy really, you are up there in control of your own aircraft and normally you just do a circuit and landing and the instructor is there watching, making sure that, so you taxi in, you land alright, first solo, taxi in. The instructor then says "Ok that is good away you go, go and do

32:30 practice spins or aerobatics or whatever so off you go" and you get familiar with everything and you get confidence.

**So just on both of these planes, the Wiraways and also the Tiger Moths, I take it that neither had radio communication with the ground or anywhere else?**

No, no communication at all, control was by way of a green light, an aldus lamp was the only control that we had.

**So how did you let the ground know that you**

33:00 **wanted to land hoping no one else wanted to take off?**

Well you had to watch for it yourself. It was largely over to you to make sure that you were clear, clear to land and that there was, I always had a look behind because you didn't know if someone might be making an approach from behind. But it was over to you to make sure that the way was clear.

**Is that the same with the Wiraways as well?**

Yes yes.

**Were there any incidences when you were at these training schools?**

33:30 Oh yes, there was always the odd collision.

**Did you see any?**

Did I?

**Did you see any of these collisions?**

No I didn't, the odd collision, no but fortunately they bailed out they both bailed out.

**Ok. Just looking at target practice with the Wiraways, you said that you were quite a good shot, was it just firing on the grounds or are you trying to fire?**

No firing at a still target on the ground, that is all it was.

**So how would you do that, how would you actually bring**

34:00 **the plane in to fire on the position?**

Well you would bring it in on power and a bit of a dive, the target is on the ground of course so you would normally come in at about a 30 degree angle, and then leave it as late as possible before you pushed a button to fire because a 303 was relatively short range so about 100

34:30 to 150 yards was the optimum and close right in as close as you could get. But it was usually about a 30 degree dive and open fire at about 100 to 150 yards and hold it as long as possible then pull up out of it.

**In respect to the bombing and the practice bombings, were you given warnings not to go too low in case the bomb**

35:00 **actually exploded?**

Oh they were only 81/2 pound practice bombs, they were only made of smoke anyhow. So it wasn't

critical but bombing was mostly from straight and level at about a couple of hundred feet and you would have to sort of know where the target would pass underneath and you would have to judge it and push the button and release the bombs. But you know practice

35:30 makes perfect so.

**Just explain to me sorry the flying process to dropping the bomb, how would you actually approach the target again and how high up would you be from the ground?**

In the Wirraway?

**Yep.**

Oh I suppose a couple of hundred feet, mostly straight and level, not in a dive. And you would simply have to judge it as the target passed under the aeroplane and you would have to judge when

36:00 too release the bomb.

**What speed were you meant to be travelling at?**

Oh that would be about 100 I suppose 130 140 miles per hour.

**And once you released the bomb would you be climbing or just continuing?**

Oh you would continue on and maybe get on with it or go back, whatever you had sort of lined up, there was usually bombing and

36:30 air firing and then if you had time you would go off and do some aerobatics.

**Ok, with the aerobatics what different types of things would you do, similar to the Tiger Moths or were there other things you could do with the Wirraways?**

Yeah, you could do a flick roll, which was not, I didn't do them but some, one or two chaps did it they were forbidden of course.

37:00 But it was a very quick, you sort of pull the stick back and kick on the rudder, very quickly and it goes flicks twice in a real flick but they were forbidden, they were ok later on in Spitfires where I did them but I didn't do them in Wirraways but some chaps did. And they were a very strong aeroplane.

**A lot has been said about these as about G force, do you feel stress on your body as you were flying the wiraway?**

Not particularly in the Wirraway,

37:30 later on in the war of course I did but not particularly. You, we had practice dog fights and you would wind up a bit if you sort of spun and coming out of the spin and then pulling back, but 6G [G Force], six times gravity would have been a big load then

38:00 but later on of course it was up to 9G.

**Just remaining on the Wirraways, the dog fights. What were you instructed before you actually took off as how would the operation actually work?**

Well you would take off with someone or formation on them and you would split and then mix it and a dogfight usually resulted finally in a steep turn, both aeroplanes

38:30 in a steep turn. That was the final result but there were all sorts of things that people tried. You know if someone was overtaking you, coming in, a trick was to drop your flaps and skid. So that he couldn't get a beat on you, so you would drop your flaps and he would over shoot and then you would open,

39:00 pick up your flaps and open your throttle and you had him, you were behind him, but they were just, just wild, we all enjoyed sort of practice dogfights.

**We will just pause there because the camera, the tape is going to run out.**

## Tape 3

00:31 **I won't ask this just yet. Just sticking a little bit with the Tiger Moths and Wirraways. Can you talk about the trimming and the pitch, what is trimming and what is pitch and how did they work?**

Well it was pretty simple trimming really on the Tiger Moth it was just a cheese cutter and it was just fore and aft trim and

01:00 if you trim your aircraft properly it makes flying so much easier but it was only a cheese cutter sort of thing fore and aft movement, the Wirraway had a wheel and that was mostly fore and aft, I have

forgotten if there was a rudder, a rudder trim, I don't think there was, I think it was only fore and aft.

01:30 But, it was more critical in the Wirraway you had to sort of get your trim right. And change your trim with the altitude of the aircraft of course.

**How does trim actually effect you when you are flying?**

Well it sort of evens out any sort of irregularity in the altitude of the aircraft. And if, if you're coming into landing you

02:00 wind the trim forward so that the aeroplane naturally you don't have to push it forward with the stick it is doing that naturally and if you are in the climb situation you just wind the wheel, the trim back a bit so there is no load on the stick on the control column while the aircraft is climbing. It is as simple as that.

**So given the trim is so important obviously for take off and landing when you were doing those emergency, well the take offs**

02:30 **and there was a problem in both I presume the Wirraways and the Tiger Moths did you have to adjust the trim quickly or would there be?**

No you would trim for take off and then in the case of the Tiger Moth if your engine failed you had to be very quick and get the nose down, regardless of what was in front of you, you had to get the nose down otherwise you would stall out, less critical in a Wirraway

03:00 but it was still important to, well the Wirraway had much more power but it was still always important really to go straight ahead and get your speed back, go straight ahead and then sort it out.

**And the next question pitch, what was the point of pitch, and where was pitch on the aircrafts?**

Well pitch is the altitude of the propeller. So that is pitch, course for

03:30 fine for take off and fine for landing and then as you progress you coarsen the pitch and that results in less revs. But it, it is very important that you get your pitch right because that improves the performance of the aircraft, and the economy,

04:00 it uses less fuel at the right revs.

**Excellent. Now before you graduated what other things were required from you, examinations?**

Yes we still continued to do more sophisticated ground subjects and navigation and then of course physical fitness was an important thing, but the people. We had a satellite airfield and

04:30 I would normally land there and have a cup of tea with the Millers who I knew pretty well. And they were very good the local people in Deniliquin. I forgot to mention that Wagga became an aircraft depot while I was training there and we had to move to Deniliquin for the later part of the service flying training course. But the Deniliquin people were magnificent really

05:00 and then we progressed through the course and then came the question of rank. You graduated you got your wings and then you were either made a pilot officer or a sergeant and fortunately I was commissioned of course and I think there was about six or seven of us commissioned of course. And the very first night, there was a dinner in night for the, in the officer's

05:30 mess. And the president of the mess and the CO [Commanding Officer] kindly suggested that we would join them for dinner in the night. So with a little thin stripe around our arms we pitched up and big stuff at 19 you know in the officer's mess. And we had the dinner, the port was passed always to the left always not touching the table. The King

06:00 was toasted and the stewards offered cigars. I didn't know much about cigars but I picked a coroner about this long and sort of finally got it going and the CO bellowed down the table, "Dunn remove that cigar you look like a pig's arse with a straw in it". So much for the sophistication of the officer's mess.

06:30 **What is the custom of not having the port touch the table?**

I don't really know but it is certainly, it is firm in all service messes, army and air force, passed to the left and don't touch the table.

**What are some of the key things that you are taught in navigation**

07:00 **within the schools?**

Oh the effects of winds of course is the paramount thing. It was, and you, the parallelogram of velocities or the triangle of velocities you know clearly tells you how to, how to calculate or plot the wind. You set a course, you apply wind component and then from the end of that line to the wind



- 07:30 component to the destination that is your course, that is the course to steer to make good that track. So it is the wind, the control of the wind. Other navigation, map reading of course was terribly important. We didn't, we didn't do astro navigation at all, the bomber boys did of course later on.
- 08:00 We did mostly map reading.
- Were there any lessons that you learnt in that initial training that lasted you throughout the war?**
- Yes all of them, all of those, all the, every hour I flew I learnt something.
- Was there anything that you weren't trained on that they were trying to teach you that wasn't useful in the war?**
- Drill.
- 08:30 We had these parades, but on an operational squadron I didn't attend one parade except a funeral or two.
- Good call. Ok, we will move on now, so what happened at graduation? Just explain the graduation process and then the story of what happened then?**
- Well you were presented with your wings and very proudly they are sewn on and in my case I got a little stripe, Pilot Officer
- 09:00 Dunn. Big stuff and then you are posted then, you are ready for operational training. We were posted to an embarkation depot in Sydney where we really just cooled our heels waiting for a ship to the UK [United Kingdom].
- Ok, what year are we talking about at the moment?**
- This is 42.
- Ok so the war**
- 09:30 **was well underway?**
- Oh yes.
- Japan was in the war?**
- Japan was in the war.
- Any expectations to actually fight Japan in the air?**
- To fight?
- Japan in the air?**
- Well it could well have been but I was on my way to Europe, but some of the chaps went, they went onto Kittyhawks I think, learnt to fly Kittyhawks and went north to New Guinea.
- Ok now explain to us**
- 10:00 **the journey. Actually I think you went to Cape Town and then England, what boat did you catch and where did it sail?**
- Well we embarked at Darling Harbour into an old Dutch coal burner called the Western Land and we went south around Tasmania because there were Japanese submarines allegedly.
- 10:30 South of Tasmania to Fremantle where we joined a convoy, we had stopped in Fremantle and had a few days there then we joined a large convoy accompanied by war ships. There was one Dutch destroyer I remember Von Fromp, it was a beautiful looking thing. And we set course, the convoy set course to the
- 11:00 northwest. And we thought well we must be going to the Middle East but half way across the Indian Ocean the convoy split and some went straight onto the Middle East and we went southwest to Durban. So the accommodation in the ship was ok for officers, it was quite good, but for the sergeants
- 11:30 it was abysmal, it was awful. You know they had been carrying sort of British troops and low NCOs [Non Commissioned Officer] and the ship was full of fully trained aircrew. There were pilots, fighter and bomber pilots, navigators, wireless air gunners, you know we were all fully trained and there was something like 800 of us.
- 12:00 And so the accommodation wasn't really good enough and we all stood up for the sergeants and made the point and they changed the ship. We sailed from Durban to Cape Town in and they took us off into a transit camp there and then we joined another convoy a very nice ship the Highland Brigade, to everyone's great joy.
- 12:30 The South Africans were very kind to us when we were there. I remember a friend and I had met a

couple of great South African girls and we were having a moonlight picnic outside Cape Town on the cliff going down to the sea, baboons were around and suddenly a gruff voice said "What you

13:00 doing there?" and it was South African security people, they had us sending lights out to submarine see so we explained to the girls "We are doing the best we can, thank you for your help". Anyhow we retreated from that and went to a nightclub. The South African's were very kind to us and then we sailed off in this

13:30 convoy, some of which was destroyed with U-boats. I didn't ever see any and then we went to Freetown in this splendid ship the Highland Brigade. It was a beautiful ship but we had boxing bouts and you know, medicine ball things and we were very fit, very fit

14:00 young men indeed. And as a matter of fact in my cabin was shared with an English flight lieutenant RAF who was joined us in Cape Town and.

**We might just pause there. Can you tell us about the RAF flight lieutenant?**

Yes well he, it sticks in my mind that he just explained over and over again that he had never seen

14:30 such a fit, fit looking bunch of chaps as we were and we were damn fit you know, all raring to go and all pretty young. But then we stopped in Cape Town. We left Cape Town, the next port of call was Freetown in Sierra Leone.

15:00 Where we only stopped to drop off a few people I think, only for a few days but while there I had a yellow fever inoculation which came back on me later. Then we went to Sierra Leone for the UK and then we docked at Avonmouth. From Avonmouth we

15:30 disembarked from Avonmouth on a train to Bournemouth which was a reception depot. In Bournemouth we, I was accommodated in the Royal Bath Hotel, the bar of which was called 'The Bath Tap' and we frequented 'The Bath Tap', turned it on occasionally. But

16:00 that was good. But we still, we wanted to get flying again and we impatiently waited for posting to an operational training unit but in the meantime of course. London was only a couple of hours away in the train, a very good train so we spent a lot of time in London.

**Let's focus a little bit more on that boat trip and the impatience of a boat load full of**

16:30 **pilots, how long did the trip take?**

Oh overall 102 days out of Sydney, that is including the stopovers in Cape Town and in Durban.

**What month did you leave Sydney, do you remember?**

I think it was July.

**Ok, can you explain a daily sort of routine, you would wake up and then what would happen for the rest of the day?**

Oh you would wake up and

17:00 have breakfast, have a shower and do your ablutions, have breakfast and then you would take some exercise, normally walking around the ship. Then probably as the sun got up you would peel off and bake in the sun and read or box or skip or throw the

17:30 medicine ball around and that would go on until lunchtime. And you would normally have lunch and more or less the same thing. There was nothing particularly organised, we just organised our own fun. Which was, you know there was a lot of two up [Australian gambling game] being played and gambling of course. Nothing very serious but a lot of gambling. I remember

18:00 a pair of twins ran the two up school and they made a fortune you know. Because they had everyone captive for all this time. But after lunch, and the food generally was pretty good. After lunch was probably more of the same thing. Dinner, reading, talking, the odd

18:30 lecture, we would get someone, even the padre we would get, things were that grim. But the time passed but we were terribly impatient, it seemed to be very very slow.

**So given the intense training you had in a sense, you had a long time of monotony?**

Yes yes it was a bit monotonous but with all these vigorous sports

19:00 and reading a bit it, there was usually a pretty adequate library in the ship, but yes it was monotonous, not so bad once we left Cape Town in this ship that was cruising, the convoy was cruising along at about 15 knots which was not bad in a convoy. Whereas the old Western Land would limp along at 9 knots, which was agony.

**Who did you room with when you were**

19:30 **travelling from Sydney to Cape Town?**

Sydney to, oh, I think there were four of us in a cabin, Harry Markby who is dead, Johnny Coats who got burnt up, I can't remember the other one. I don't know who it was.

**They were mates before you left Sydney?**

Oh yes oh yes we contrived to share the cabin because

20:00 we had been on course, they had been commissioned with me of course at Deniliquin.

**And were they going to the same place?**

Oh yes, yes yes we were all going to Bournemouth. And I suppose from Bournemouth it was the real thing then we were going on to start flying again. And we had been you know not flying for 120 days,

20:30 that is five months.

**Just staying on the ships. Did you play practical jokes on one another to fool around and can you remember any?**

Oh always always. Someone had stolen a big bell from somewhere. One of these big old town crier bells and possession of that bell was very important. And that bell was sort of passed around the

21:00 ship. It was hidden, a spy would find out where it was hidden, it would be stolen and then rung and then the people, the party who had stolen the bell would think of an original place to hide it so this bell thing just went on and on even to when we were pulling out of the train at Avonmouth, someone was leaning out ringing the bell.

21:30 They were silly things. There was also a photograph of Hitler framed in a lavatory seat, which was in much demand. Also that sort of went around. Oh just the usual practical jokes you know, funny stories. Of course there was a lot of, some people used a lot of imagination also, there was some outrageous stories

22:00 which I can't really tell here.

**I would appreciate it if you would.**

Oh no I can't a bit hot, no no. I will tell you some later on, once we get onto operations.

**Were there theatre nights onboard, light entertainment?**

Some of the more theatrical of us, I wasn't one but they would form their groups and run a play,

22:30 there were no women of course so we sort of run plays or there was some music. Bob Budd was a beautiful pianist so he would play the piano on the ship. And a few people were very accomplished musicians, some had good voices and sang a bit.

23:00 So you know the usual thing.

**Now you mentioned the chaplain, occasionally he gave some talks, do you remember what he was like as a man and what he talked on?**

Well, there were three, not in that ship, but I can't remember that chaplain in particular but they were all pretty good guys really, the service

23:30 seemed to knock some of the formalities out of the chaplains. And I had firm friends and later on in three chaplains, Bob Davis the Church of England, Johnny McNamara the Roman Catholic and Fred McKay the Presbyterian. And they were, they were just so well co-ordinated,

24:00 that we all went to, I was a Presbyterian but I went to Johnny McNamara's service or Bob Davis' service and they were quite famous. If one was indisposed the other chap would do his talk, so you know we were all on common ground.

**Those three boys weren't the ships chaplains were they?**

No, no they were later on but they were all famous

24:30 people.

**Where were they stationed at do you remember?**

Well they went through the Middle East. I met up with them again in Corsica.

**Great. The boxing bouts, did you fair any better than you did at the training camps?**

Well I held my own pretty well I think. But the Roman Catholic padre kidded himself that he was a pretty hot boxer. And he got in with Peter

25:00 Glanville, Bush Glanville and Glanville was a very strong rugby union player and he broke the padre's ribs, with a right hook he broke his ribs so the poor padre was in agony for the rest of the trip really.

**But everyone found that quite funny?**

Oh yes hilarious really.

**And was it difficult boxing onboard or doing exercising onboard given a ship turns?**

No no it was pretty

25:30 stable.

**Ok. Just memories of Cape Town, the layout and landscape of the place, do you have many memories there?**

Well the beautiful, a beautiful city Cape Town and Durban they were both lovely cities and really. Apartheid was, had given the name that it existed obviously, but it hadn't been given a name and there was none of the hate in apartheid that rather developed later.

26:00 Clean, orderly, sport loving was my impression of Cape Town. Good bars and entertainment areas, gin at 10 and sixpence a bottle. I can remember, you know booze was so cheap. We went out to

26:30 Paarl which is a wine growing area and we stayed at, were given a night and a day with some retired people. They were retired Indians, civil service who had retired to Cape Town or out of Cape Town. And it was very interesting to see South African wines you know actually being grown. Their sporting clubs were open to us, we were honorary members of everything,

27:00 and people were very kind and we were very well looked after and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

**Did the cities of Cape Town and Durban remind you much of Melbourne or Sydney at the time?**

No they had their distinctive character, overall you know there was the black heavy dense black population and one was very conscious of that, you know, whether,

27:30 it didn't worry anyone but you know you didn't have that in Sydney. For instance in Durban there were Zulu ritual boys and they were most dramatic, you know, they looked splendid in all their gear. And we had ritual races and all the usual nonsense. But both towns, both Cape Town and Durban were a delight to be in.

**You said you had a**

28:00 **picnic with a couple of girls and a mate of yours, how did you actually meet those girls?**

I forget, we met them at an Australian place, he was an engineer, an Australian engineer and he I think we met him in a bar somewhere and he said, "Well you must come home". And he invited a couple of girls around and there they were, beautiful girls, they had a little car so

28:30 we arranged to meet later so we arranged a picnic. And with the baboons and the policeman but that was very pleasant.

**Given obviously that the men had been on the ship for so long from Sydney and then Fremantle and then they were over in South Africa. Did a lot of the men go off to the brothels and the things like that, did you hear stories there?**

I

29:00 don't think so. I think, I don't know anyone who sort of went to a brothel. It wasn't very well difficult to meet a South African girl and do your best. Or worst.

**Were there dances put on during that time?**

Oh yes oh yes, it was, it was splendid and it all happened so informally and but usually

29:30 we would be invited to one club for instance would invite us to their place and individuals would invite a group of us to their homes, very kind.

**Now just looking at the two ships, can you give me for my imagination, a bit of a walk through of what those ships looked like and how the accommodation compared in both of them?**

Oh

30:00 well the old Dutch ship the Western Land was its official title was HMT. His Majesty's Troop Ship, Western Land she was Dutch registered really. She was built in 1906 coal burner, slow, comfortable for the officers, hell for the sergeants, food

30:30 was, was quite good, Goanese servants, the crew generally were Dutch with an RN [Royal Navy?] chap

here and there, but she was slow and held up the convoy so that is why everyone was pleased to get rid of her.

31:00 I think. The other one from Cape Town to the UK was a modern, Highland Brigade, one of the brigade line and she had been, she had been on the South American run I think, but she was quite modern and quick. She could cruise along at 22 knots. But

31:30 of course the speed of the ship is that of the slowest ship in the convoy. But very comfortable, good food, you know plenty of exercise space, and good amenities you know we weren't dry our ships weren't dry. We had booze. So she was a modern,

32:00 fast, clean, competent, comfortable ship the Highland Brigade.

**She was a bigger ship than the Dutch?**

Oh yes yes yes she was about 18,000 tonnes I think and the Highland Brigade was about 10, 9 or 10.

**And were the 800 men automatically just transferred?**

Yes and there were other troops also onboard. Some South African troops going to the

32:30 UK, no yes South Africans going to the UK. I think they might have been troops, but quite a, or most probably British troops who had been in South Africa sort of, but there was a mixed bag of passengers.

**Were they any ever problems on the second ship in particular between men where fights broke out or differences?**

Not at all. No I can't remember and I had at least,

33:00 seen really on either ship, it was, everyone was tolerant and understanding. For instance when the sergeants had such a rough deal on the old Western Land we would get them around to our cabin, in the officer's cabin, get them around, so they could have at least a decent bath and a clean up, and we would give them a drink there. But a lot of them, a lot of them sort of just bailed out of these hammocks that they were in below decks and slept in the

33:30 lifeboats.

**And the reason you changed ships was because you complained?**

Oh yes the old Highland, the Western Land was condemned really, she was far too slow. She was rough for the troops, for the other ranks she was very rough. But our sergeants really warranted something better than a hammock and a stuffy hold with

34:00 low water or decent plumbing or so. So we tried to help as much as we could really.

**Your three mates that you were accommodating with, you just shared the same room in the new ship?**

Yeah our cabin was a four berth cabin.

**In both ships?**

Yes I think we stuck to it in both ships, I think we fluked it. I can't be sure. But we organised it

34:30 anyhow so that we were together.

**In the two cabins that you were living in can you imagine if you were standing in it now what you could actually see around the room and describe it?**

There was just one porthole. There were four bunks two tiered. There were rockers, a table and

35:00 some chairs, but that was about it, it wasn't anything grand but it was comfortable enough. We bathed in, good bathing down the hall down the passageway there was good bathing facilities.

**What security precautions were taken for submarines?**

Oh there was a well of course there was the convoy had its

35:30 ships protecting it, destroyers and a cruiser in each, one or two cruisers in each convoy. And destroyers and then we had lookouts, we had a gun, I forget the size of gun, it was mounted aft, but it was a pretty heavy, heavy

36:00 artillery piece and there was a permanent crew on that and then we learned how to handle it and we would relieve them occasionally. But it was just there in case a U boat surfaced and took us on with its 88 millimetre which was a magnificent gun that, and I don't think our 10 pot thing would have hurt it much.

**And did you have to black out your own porthole?**

Oh yes,

36:30 oh yes. They were blacked out, open during the day.

**Did they get hot at night?**

Yes very hot, but if you were in darkness you would open the porthole and not put a light on.

**Great, great.**

But anyhow it was a large part of our lives, 102 days in transit from Sydney to the UK was quite a long time.

**Did you know what your orders would be when you arrived in the UK?**

No

37:00 no. We had no idea, we were just put on a train, and well organised. Disembarked into a train down to Balmouth.

**How long were you in Balmouth for?**

I think about 6 weeks. And from Balmouth of course we were posted then to operational, well not operational training units to a familiarisation course, to get our hands in again at flying and also in

37:30 our case we were flying a Miles Master, which was fast, much faster and more sophisticated than the Wirraway. So this was preparing us to fly Spitfires or Hurricanes. So that was, we went to Ternhill, the single engine boys some of us went to Ternhill, which was a, a pre war permanent RAF station. And it had squash courts and

38:00 beautiful snooker tables, good food, a beautiful mess. So we were pretty happy at Ternhill and our course there lasted I think probably another four weeks and then we were posted from there, we were posted to operational training units where we learnt to fly Spitfires or Hurricanes as the case may be.

**We will just stop there because we have to change the tape and stuff. It would be good just to talk a little bit about.**

## Tape 4

00:31 **I wanted to ask you about what pilots are like as people, the difference between fighter pilots and bomber pilots?**

Well among the pilots it is like a normal group of

01:00 people, there are all different types. But I suppose we start by observing some differences between fighter pilots and bomber pilots. The bomber pilots normally were older, so that if one had, if you were 23, 24 you would be carefully considered as a bomber pilot. If you were 19, 20, 21,

01:30 22 you would be carefully considered for a fighter pilot. I suppose the rationale behind that by the service was that the younger people have quicker reflexes, which is necessary in a fighter. All very quick reflexes are highly desirable in any fighter aircraft.

02:00 The bomber pilot was older, a little more sedate in his approach, normally. They were very brave people the bomber pilots, they had immense losses later on and they operated as a crew. We never had the luxury of flying with someone, but they, there would be a Lancaster crew

02:30 normally would be captain who would be the pilot, there would be a navigator, there would be three wireless air gunners, there would be a bomb aimer and an engineer. So they all talked to each other and they were, if they got into trouble they could help each other. If you were hit down the back and the wireless air gunner was in trouble you could get to him and

03:00 help him and give him first aid. Whereas in a Spitfire you would be in formation and we used to fly in very tight formation. You would be only a matter of 20 feet from the chaps sitting in another aeroplane but you couldn't sort of lean out and touch him and comfort him if he was in trouble, you were on your own. So I hope that illustrates some of the

03:30 differences.

**So the fighter pilots must have had a lot more youthful dash or some kind of?**

Yeah well we all believed we had a bit of dash. It was very necessary to have that dash and to have that bit of a flair to give it a go. Yeah it made up a lot of

04:00 our professional flying. I will call it that because we did become quite professional at it, though it was, you had to have the dash you had to have the flair, you have to be aggressive. Whereas the bomber boys

really were, they had a more controlled situation.

**It sounds like you were negotiating a lot of elements though as a fighter pilot, having to navigate and**

04:30 **having to work all the mechanisms within the plane, what was that like flying solo?**

Well one was used to it and quite experienced in the aeroplane finally, hopefully if you lived long enough you would know your way around pretty well. The navigation was really no problem, we had all learned navigation, we could all read maps pretty well.

05:00 I remember I got a bit stuck in England once in a Spitfire and I climbed up to 25,000 feet and I could see both sides of England so I knew exactly where I was. But you know that is only by the eye. But map reading was no problem, flying the aeroplane was no problem we had been trained for that, it was instinctive, the same time you were watching your squadron if you were flying in a

05:30 squadron that is normally 12, three sections of four you were keeping sort of battle formation, you were keeping your eyes out because beware of the hun [enemy] in the sun sort of thing, you'd get jumped, you would watch for other aircraft, and it was really no problem. You couldn't help each other, but we all did our own thing, but

06:00 usually as a squadron. That is 12 aeroplanes, three sections of four operating to a carefully devised plan where you would have one section up sun. If the sun is there, well you would have the section up there and the other two down here so that the chap up top, the section up top could cover you in case there is someone, the enemy came

06:30 out of the sun. So there was really nothing unique about it, it was quite simple to operate the Spitfire and map read and keep battle formation and keep your eyes out and your finger out.

**Can you expand more about the sun factor when you work as formation in your squadron?**

Well you

07:00 know in the First World War the fighter pilots were told to beware of the hun in the sun that was so if he came out of the sun it is very difficult to see an aeroplane if you are looking into the sun and he is coming out of the sun. So it was an advantage to come out of the sun. But to cover that eventually you, you would stack up a couple of 1000 feet up higher part of your squadron,

07:30 a section of your squadron would be higher than those people up sun so that he could see anything coming out of the sun better and quicker than the chaps lower down.

**And how would the formation actually work?**

Well it worked, we operated finally in pairs, so that would be six pairs really, but three sections of four, but each section would break up into a

08:00 battle formation which was quite loose and flexible and there would be you know two, two, two so there would be six twos really. But it was, it was simple really, but it was just common sense tactics to cover yourself and have your

08:30 top section covering the bottom section.

**And did you communicate, could you communicate?**

Oh yes oh yes we had good VHF [Very High Frequency (radio)].

**And what kinds of things would you say to each other when you were in formation?**

Well normally, normally there was radio silence was essential because both the hun and we had a wire services call where you would pick up the broadcast and if,

09:00 if the hun knew that you were coming in from a certain direction well he would alert his flake and if he had them would send up fighters to intercept. So you, radio silence was very important, but if you got, later on when we had absolute air superiority it became much looser.

**Did you talk in codes because you knew it was being tapped?**

Oh there was a rough code it was

09:30 pancake was land, angels was height, buster was go through the gate at maximum throttle, maximum power, mattress was in cloud or Popeye was in cloud, mattress was in between cloud and you know the usual and then we all had our own funny little things.

10:00 Douglas Bader for instance, I wasn't a contemporary of his, but he was known, he was known universally as dogs body DB you see, so his famous controller was Woodhall and he was called Woody. But we developed funny sort of call signs and codes and of course your fingers can be very expressive if you are flying flight formation and you are only 20 feet

10:30 away from someone you can talk with your fingers.

**What would you be saying, when would you need to talk with your fingers?**

Well that is just 'get stuffed'.

**If they got too close to you or were you just being larrikin kind of stuff.**

No no that is all, sometimes we would, you would tuck in very tightly, very tightly so that your

11:00 wing tip was almost touching the fuselage behind the leaders wing and finally he would chicken out and say "Open up open up" he didn't want to people to be so close to him, but it was all just in good fun.

**And did you have contact with your pilot commander, how did it work?**

Oh a radio.

**How would**

11:30 **they instruct you when you were in a formation?**

Well they would call the call sign "Now all turning left, or turning port" and they'd do a port turn and everyone would adjust to keep formation with him. And then in an attack situation you are more or less on your own. You are covered but

12:00 you are on your own really. And in the attack mode there is nothing anyone can do to help you much except observe and so.

**Is there an incredible amount of trust that needs to develop between the pilots?**

Oh there was, there was. The spirit of the fighter pilot was just incredible and incredibly close. You know we knew what each other was thinking

12:30 pretty well.

**So even though you described the bomber pilots as being a crew of a lot of people on one, one aircraft it was almost like you were one sort of body of separate planes in the fighter pilots, is it almost like you worked together in sync [synchronisation] in formation as you worked as a unit?**

Oh yeah in certain things you did as a unit until the attack came and then you were very much

13:00 alone, you were on your own.

**Were you ever in a situation where one of the other pilots in your formation had something happen to them and you were?**

Yes I had a, I was a flight commander later in the war and we were climbing through in Spitfires climbing through 18,000 feet and my number two was only about 50 metres away on the port side he just

13:30 lazily sort of rolled onto his back and went, dived straight into the earth so he obviously had run out of oxygen, but I screamed at him to "Oxygen, oxygen, oxygen, bail out bail out" but he was out. He was unconscious from lack of oxygen.

**So describe to me, so do you want**

14:00 **to just tell me that story again because we had the light come through.**

Right I think you asked if I had experienced an odd situation where you wanted to help someone but you couldn't. Well I was leading a flight in Italy and we were climbing through 18,000 feet, my number two was about 50 metres away on the port side and when I saw him lazily just go in a diving

14:30 turn and I realised that he hadn't turn his oxygen on or there was a fault in his oxygen supply so, but I screamed at him "Oxygen oxygen bail out bail out" but he didn't hear, he must have been unconscious and went straight in.

**So what happened?**

Well he was killed and we carried on.

**And that was in a middle of an actual**

15:00 **campaign, an actual battle?**

I am sorry.

**Was that in the middle of?**

No it was climbing up, we were in an operation, we were over Italy, over enemy territory.



**So what did the rest of the formation do?**

Well you just closed up and carried on.

**You couldn't go back?**

Well there was no point. We were perfectly serviceable and we carried on with a fighter sweep. I think we were doing over the Po Valley, and so we just carried on with the sweep but there

15:30 was nothing we could do for the poor chap.

**Just explain for my benefit the thing about oxygen. So when you are actually inside the plane you require certain devices that allow you to breathe?**

Yes there is a fighter pilots mask, it is both a microphone and an oxygen mask and there is a tube connected to your oxygen supply, which you connect it, most important part of your drill and then you just turn your oxygen on

16:00 before you get to 12,000 feet normally because the lack of oxygen starts to take effect from about 12,000 feet and at 22,000 it is quite critical, in this at 18,000 feet it was quite critical, but you breathe it you breathe the oxygen through a mask.

**And what is that, what are the logistics of bailing out of the plane when you can't maintain your oxygen supply?**

16:30 Well if you can't, you can't operate at heights if you haven't got oxygen, so that is restrictive, so if you are doing a fighter sweep which is normally done at 20,000, 25,000 you are not much use so you normally go home if your oxygen was unserviceable and you realised it.

**So is there some sort of**

17:00 **ejector seat, how do you actually get out of the plane?**

Well in a bail situation, well right if you're hit and you have to bail out, well firstly you transmit if you can for a fix so that base can get a fix on you, or if you have got a number two you tell him to climb up and climb higher and get a fix over your position so having done that you,

17:30 you then take your helmet off, with the whole thing and just throw it down, you take your, disconnect your oxygen supply, get rid of the radio, the radio plug so that there is no impediment then, and normally then you roll the aeroplane on it's back if you can and fall out is the way and then have your hand on

18:00 the d-ring of the parachute and once you are clear of the aircraft pull the d-ring and the parachute opens. And then if you are falling into water we carried a, or sat on a little k type dingy. So if you are going into the water, into the drink, you make sure you don't release your parachute until your feet touch the water. Because a lot of people just didn't judge it properly and just fell out of the parachute at about 100 feet. So it was important

18:30 to in my case, I let my feet hit the water and then released and then you swim away from the parachute and there was a dog lead from your Mae West [life jacket] attached to the dingy which is a pack you sit on, you swam away from the, carrying the dingy, you opened the dingy, there was a series of press studs, you just rip it open, and there is a little CO2 [carbon dioxide] bottle

19:00 there, carbon dioxide bottle there and you turn the handle of that and that inflates the dingy. You climb aboard and throw some fluorescence over the side, which makes a stain in the sea so you can easily be seen by any rescue aircraft and then you just sit there and hope. But normally sea rescuers,

19:30 the RAF Sea Rescue Service is quite magnificent. But I can later on I think as we progress through this I can give you a quite a graphic personal, sort of idea, an idea of what I personally had. Which is a saga in itself.

**Indeed, I am looking forward to that. I wanted to ask you a few questions, just a little bit more about this process. When you are in the plane it must, there must be incredible**

20:00 **pressure, just physically with having to use this oxygen, what is it actually like the experience of sitting in the plane?**

Well normally the Spitfire wasn't heated and it was normally cold, but as you climbed up to the height of 32, 33,000 feet and it got very cold, you know your hands would freeze. But you, we got used to all the gear

20:30 it is only an oxygen mask, your helmet carries the earphones and your microphone is in the oxygen mask, so you know it is pretty straightforward.

**In a, in a tense situation though isn't the body likely to breathe quicker, is it difficult to sort of keep everything in check that?**

No not really, the oxygen did that, you just froze your hands, you know over 30,000 feet your hands

would be

21:00 freezing, even though you are wearing gloves.

**Was it important to be really steady?**

Steady?

**Steady and not to shake or was the plane going to shake anyway just by the velocity?**

No it doesn't, it doesn't move around much, it is probably trimmed and there is no turbulence, no, it is easily controlled.

**So in a situation that you described about the other**

21:30 **pilot in the formation whose oxygen supply was cut, how much time do you have to bail out of your aircraft if something like that happens?**

Well at 18,000 feet he'd have plenty of time if he had been aware, but he just went unconscious, or he may have had a heart attack or something, but we assume that it was oxygen failure, and that was only an assumption there was no way we could prove it but it is

22:00 consistent with your own experience.

**When you talked about actually ejecting out of the aircraft and the parachute waiting for the right moment to pull the shoot is that because the shoot had a kind of force that pulled you back quite dramatically or how do those things?**

Well you want to be clear of the aircraft, you don't want to open the shoot and have it tangle in the aircraft and you go in with the aeroplane.

22:30 That is not recommended, so we had no ejection seats at all, we had to jump out or fall out or you know in some cases you roll it on its back, if you had full control of the aeroplane roll it on its back and just fall out, undo the Sutton harness and you would fall out. On another occasion if you are very low and you hit and you have to get out, a good trick is to

23:00 open the hood and undo all your gear and put your foot on the stick and give it a good kick and that just, the aeroplane does that and it throws you out, so that you maintain a bit of height and you open and pull the d-ring very quickly and hopefully the shoot opens. And there is a little pilot shoot, which opens first and that, pulls out the main shoot.

**So how do they prepare you for these things in training,**

23:30 **sounds like a lot of work?**

There was no, we never did a parachute training jump, you get all the clues though, the parachute packer was, is very important, I always made a point of knowing who was packing my parachute and there was no training for this it is just you are told

24:00 what to do, you know what to do, a lot of people have done it and done it successfully so therefore it is a good system.

**Did they simulate, did they simulate jumping out of or falling out or these other options?**

No, no. There is no training for it.

**So the pilots felt prepared in every circumstance or you were given the assumption that there was the initiative to deal with these situations when they came up?**

24:30 Well it was self evident really if you were hit and your engine, your aeroplane starts to burn you get out very quickly. If you are hit in a control service, which is, and you can't control it, you have got to get out very quickly. So it is an instinctive thing and it is a sort of self preservation thing and I will tell you more about that later.

**I wouldn't mind asking you**

25:00 **just to get my head around just the interior of the actual aircraft, how did it actually work, you described the Wirraways planes and the Victors, air, is it the Victors, do you call them guns or?**

Oh well of course on operations we didn't have Victors, we had two 20 millimetre cannons and four machine guns and they were

25:30 controlled by a button on the control column and you could fire, select cannons alone, machine guns alone, or the lot machine guns and cannon.

**So can you describe for me the layout of what you were operating with both hands?**

Yeah, well a Spitfire seat would be about the size of this seat, you would be sitting on a parachute, you would be sitting on a dingy

- 26:00 and then underneath that a parachute, you would be wearing a parachute harness you would be strapped in with a sutton harness, you would have your helmet on, your oxygen mask on, you would be flying the aeroplane and just there is the throttle and the mixture control if it wasn't automatic and the pitch control is just there on your left hand.
- 26:30 Flaps, I think, I am a bit hazy now, flaps are just there and in a Spitfire your flap control was full flap or none at all and then your instruments, then your reflector site straight in front of your face for aiming the guns, then on the right hand side I believe we had the radiator, temperature, oil pressure
- 27:00 and of course there was a rev counter and boost, boost gauge and then on the right hand side, there was a wheel trim, trim for rudder and, and elevators, on the right hand side is the undercarriage selection lever. That is about it.
- And how quickly would you have to negotiate your way through everything or were you just**
- 27:30 **favouring certain sort of devices when you were in the aircraft?**
- Well once you are in it and flying along of course it is very simple, you just, you are just cruising along and if you want to increase speed if you are chasing something or trying to get out of flak [enemy fire] you just go through the gate which gives you maximum, maximum power and you can sort of accelerate hopefully away.
- And what about operating the rifles that were**
- 28:00 **in the right hand did you say it was?**
- Well they were machine guns.
- Machine guns.**
- There were four machine guns and two 20 millimetre canons and they are harmonised normally at 200 yards, you could get a spread harmonisation or a spot harmonisation, the spot obviously has a greater impact, so if you have got your range right and
- 28:30 you push the button to fire your cannons and your machine guns and you have got your reflector site on him and you have allowed enough deflection and with that spread if you are within 200 yards you know you should hit him.
- So what is the spread?**
- The spread was about, the spread was about 30 feet, a spot of course was back to about a little
- 29:00 a diameter of about 5 feet I suppose, but there was immense power there with two 20 millimetre cannons and four machine guns sort of honing in on a five foot diameter target.
- How close did the range, did 30 metres for instance seem when you were in up in the air and close to a target, did that seem close or far away?**
- 29:30 It is pretty close, depending on, I didn't do much air fighting because I was so late in the war and we had absolute air superiority although I did shoot down an aeroplane, but there weren't many around so we were mainly engaged on strafing, boat strafing and you that was, you would have to come in on a diving
- 30:00 attack and then give, give the target a good squirt, open up at about 200 metres close as close as you could before you had to pull up and then either stay down behind the trees or give it full power and pull up to escape the flak which was inevitably very close.
- I wouldn't mind going back to your first solo flight,**
- 30:30 **what was, was there anything in your mind about sort of the dangers of what you were getting yourself into?**
- No not at all, there was only exhilaration and elation of having gone solo.
- Is it better not to think about those things?**
- Well we didn't think anyhow, I don't know anyone who on his first solo was saying "Christ what have I let myself in for?" you know normally it just
- 31:00 was great exhilaration.
- What about things like when there were accidents and mishaps, how did that reflect the other guys?**
- Well if a guy is missing you are sorry, but you, that is the name of the game, you don't think a hell of a lot about it, you regret a friend whose seat is empty at the mess.
- 31:30 You know he is either a prisoner or he is killed. So there can be no funeral, so it is just a fact of life or

death as the case maybe, but it didn't worry anyone too much.

**I am interested to know if anyone didn't want to become a pilot?**

32:00 Say that again.

**If anyone didn't want to become a pilot, it just seems like.**

And he wanted to stay in aircrew, well he would become a navigator or a wireless air gunner.

**Were they just the jobs that were kind of fobbed [passed] off to the people that weren't good enough?**

Oh not really, not really, age was a big thing, reflexes and psychology tests and so on. But the chaps who were wireless air gunners and navigators

32:30 and bomber pilots they had an enormous chop rate later in the war it was, it was terrible, very.

**Do you think they knew what they were getting in for?**

Yes yes they knew.

**Was it the glamour that overrode all those other elements?**

It was initially it was all go, I am going to sort of get into this, this is the bomber boys.

33:00 And then people get very frightened in a flacking situation, we all do, and night fighters and so on and the pressure builds as they carry out more operations and the German flak and night fighters were so effective that the losses were enormous. And they were very brave, those bomber crews, they carried on, they pressed on, they knew that

33:30 the hope of finishing a tour was very slender, but the tour of duty I think was 40 operations or 35 operations or something, but they pressed on regardless.

**I know that you were not involved in that area specifically, but do you have any recollections about how the actual crews were working and how the morale was between them knowing?**

34:00 Oh there was tremendous crew spirit, generally in bomber command, the crew was, they would drink together, they would have parties together, they would, they were inseparable really. And they became friends, very firm friends and there is nothing like naked fear to make you want to become a friend with the nearest chap. And

34:30 they just had this wonderful courage to press on knowing that the expectation of surviving a tour of operations was not that good. But they pressed on with this enormous spirit. And the captain, it was usually over to the captain to organise his crew and lead them and always lead them. But on the ground of course they were firm friends and they would play

35:00 together and they would go on leave together and wouldn't fly with another crew if they could avoid it.

**So it would impact much more significantly on them if there were losses in their crew?**

Oh yes well you know well flak would normally sort of kill someone or injure them or a night fighter would injure someone in one of the positions and the rest of the crew would do what they could

35:30 for him. You know there were first aid dressings and things that could be applied, but fire was the awful thing, fire was devastating.

**Was it difficult to bail out of a bomber?**

I think it was more difficult than a fighter, but usually if it was hit by flak there were certain escape routes that everyone has and I am not really familiar with

36:00 the detail of how a bomber crew bails out or who goes where, but there were generally a few holes in an aeroplane that you can get through anyhow.

**I am interested, there sounds like so many things that were at stake before you go up into the air, were there any special mascots or rituals or anything that the pilots would do before they go up in an aeroplane?**

Most chaps had a favourite scarf or his girlfriends

36:30 stocking or. Yes most chaps had some little thing, in my case I had a favourite scarf and I wouldn't fly without it.

**Where did you get the scarf from and why was it your favourite?**

London, Simpson's in the Strand I think. And we wore a scarf because you know in a fighter you are turning your neck all the time, turning your head and that's very abrasive on your neck so we used to wear a silk scarf

37:00 to tuck in not flying in the breeze.

**And what would all the fellas do before they jumped into their aircraft in the fighter pilots?**

Well you would normally have a nervous pee on the tail wheel until they brought out a I think a Kings regulation of Air Council's instruction to say "Thou shalt not pee

37:30 on the tail wheel" because it was rusting them away. But that was about the thing you would have a nervous pee. And then get strapped in, sometimes you didn't have time it was a scramble and you would jump into the cockpit and start it up and go.

**Would you ever prior to the banning of peeing on the planes, would everyone wait before everyone, would you have to**

38:00 **wait until everyone had peed on their plane before you could leave or?**

Oh a fighter you had nowhere to go in a fighter but in a bomber they had a piss on the tour I think as they called it. A sort of a tube.

**And in your formation, what about if somebody couldn't pee for instance like would you wait for them before you left the ground?**

No no way, no way no no normally

38:30 you make sure that you are ok.

**That might be a good point to change tapes.**

## Tape 5

00:30 **Dudley can you tell us once you arrived at Shropshire the advanced flying school, why you were there and what you actually learnt at that time?**

Yes well it was an advanced flying unit or refresher flying unit and in the permanent RAF flying station in Shropshire, Ternhill was the name of it.

01:00 We were there because we hadn't flown for five or six months, to do a refresher course on general flying but also to fly an aircraft with increased power, which was not short of the Spitfire and Hurricane, it had many attributes which were similar to the single seater fighters which we were later to fly so it had two purposes. One was

01:30 to refresh our flying, two was to prepare us on an aircraft likened to a Spitfire so that when we graduated from that course we would transfer into a Spitfire where there is no dual of course you are on your own immediately, we would have had some experience of an aircraft with about 70 percent of the power of the Spitfire.

02:00 **So what were you actually flying during that time?**

We were flying Miles Masters. Miles were a famous old English aircraft manufacturer and they produced this very good trainer a Master and it had a good rate of climb, good performance, good turn of speed, altogether a fitting aeroplane to prepare us for a Spitfire.

02:30 **Two seater or?**

Oh yes there were two seats in it but we only had a couple hours dual before we went solo in it because we were all reasonably experienced and quite well trained but it had been a long time since we had flown.

**Now just quickly talk me through the start up procedure and the actual cockpit layout as you are sitting in it?**

I can't remember the Miles Master too well it, it

03:00 was a very easy aeroplane to fly, it had wide undercut, very stable on the ground and in the air and the start up procedure was, it started with an trolley accumulator and it was just a matter of getting your priming, getting petrol into the cylinders, check that you are strapped in properly, your parachute everything is connected, your

03:30 mask, have oxygen and radio is serviceable, a general check around. And that is simply getting, getting fuel I think a priming system into the cylinders and pushing the button and it should start and it usually did. Then of course there was the chocks away and you would taxi out and do your exercise whatever it was.

04:00 Formation, low flying, aerobatics, simulated dog fights, high high speed high pressure climb, that is a

battle climb, use maximum power, altitude achievement, flying as high as the master would go, which wasn't that high it was 21, 22,000 feet

04:30 and that is about all there was to it, it was very simple really.

**How many hours were you trying to clock up in this particular aircraft?**

Well I had, we did, I think, my impression is that it was about 40 hours there on the Miles Master. But we had a very mixed course of people, we had on the course there were French, Belgians, Danes, Norwegians,

05:00 Australians, Canadians, the odd American, so it was a mixed bag and they were a great bunch of chaps to be with. As a matter of fact Pierre Closterman I think was on the course, he became a famous French fighter and later a member of the Chamber of Deputies.

**Did you integrate much with the other guys?**

Oh all the time, yes all the time, it was just mixed up beautifully, a beautiful melange of

05:30 young characters from various nations.

**Any lasting memories from that period?**

Oh the Belgians I remember very well, Pierre Lamarre because we used to love to dog fight each other and but there were, no no lasting memories of any character but Closterman was perhaps was the,

06:00 he was a chap who most stood out.

**Given that you were one of the top guys in Australia coming through to one of the fighter pilots how did your skills rank up against the Canadians, Belgians?**

Pretty even in a dogfight. We learnt to throw the aeroplane around and to trust it absolutely and to trust ourselves and that was the object of these simulated dogfights.

06:30 **Did you ever have equipment failure as you were flying?**

No never, not in the UK.

**Ok good. Can you, probably at this point in time you were beginning to learn about enemy aircraft is this right?**

Oh all the time we had enemy aircraft recognition and enemy ship recognition and that was constantly with us. We had it even in the dispersal there was various silhouettes of the various German

07:00 lufafa equipment.

**Were you taught in respect of their aircraft, their strengths and weaknesses of their aircraft?**

Yes generally, that was always a subject for discussion in the mess and the instructors who had been operational some of them had DFCs [Distinguished Flying Cross] they had been operational and they would talk to us in the mess over a drink and we would talk for hours and hours and hours.

**So were you given tips about if you were coming**

07:30 **against a German fighter and how to dogfight them?**

Yes we were really but informally.

**What sort of things were said?**

Well a Spitfire could always turn inside a 109 or a 190 for that matter, so you sort of always tried to turn inside him. The 109 was quicker in a dive, it would go away from you initially in a dive and he would go straight

08:00 down because he had a, he didn't have a carburettor he had an ejection system and we had a carburettor with a float in it so when we applied negative G the float would come to the top and cut off the supply of fuel, so to follow a 109 down we would have to barrel roll and keep positive G on the aeroplanes, we would have to roll around him so that we kept positive G on the carburettor.

**I presume then in that**

08:30 **particular case once you had him down low, the strengths were in your hands because of the?**

Oh there was a pretty quick aeroplane, there was very little difference in the speed. At various altitudes there was a faint advantage either way but the 109s great defence was his capacity to dive.

**In respect to the war and your experience with the spitfires were they by far and away the best plane or were they the best plane in certain circumstances?**

09:00 Well the Spitfire I think was the best pure fighter of the war. It had various Marks, it was a I, II, V, VB,

VIII IXs and there was photographic reconnaissance, it was a very versatile aeroplane you know, I think the Spitfire which I love, I just love that aeroplane I think it was

09:30 probably the best fighter in the world. Altogether 22,000 were produced and they were flying until I think about 1949 or 50 operationally and Malaya there was a squadron of Spitfires in Malaya flown by and commanded by an old chum [friend] of mine so I think it really went from 1937

10:00 to 1948, that is 11 years in constant operational service.

**Ok, after the advanced flying school, actually before we go on, you did some night flying with that, can you tell us a bit of that story and what it was like?**

Oh yes we did night flying of course. Well there were, night flying was demanding, I always found it demanding.

10:30 Some people just took to it naturally, but it was always, I was always more comfortable with a horizon. This didn't in later years but in that time you know I was conscious that I preferred really to fly in the daylight rather than at night time. There were some crazy accidents in that. One chap, you stop at the end of the runway and make your check.

11:00 But he had lined up and he didn't put his brakes on while he was making his prolonged check and then opened the throttle and he was almost at the end of the runway and sort of cleaned up the trees at the end of the runway, so you know there was no future in that sort of thing. But night flying was part of the thing, but operationally the Spitfires was an awful aeroplane to fly at night time because you were blind, the

11:30 exhaust came straight back in your face, so that the exhaust flares were there and you could barely see anything outside the flare from the exhaust.

**That was one of its big weaknesses, lack of ability to fly at night then, is that right?**

Oh well yes yes. They did scramble a few at night time, never with much success, the Hurricane was a better night fighter, but along came the beaufighter and they were magnificent night fighters.

12:00 **Ok. What happened then after the?**

Well then the serious bit comes, we have done our training all through initial training school, elementary flying training, service flying training, refresher, now we get posted to an operational training unit where Spitfires are. I went to a Spitfire ATU [Air Training Unit], there you simply check in and settle yourself

12:30 down. And you go with normally the flight commander who will sit you in the aeroplane and he explains all the controls, all the bits and pieces, the switches, now he goes away and says "Now study it yourself for an hour or so" and you get to that stage where you can touch everything with your eyes closed.

13:00 Then he says "Ok, you feel ok, off you go" and of course you are alone in a Spitfire and it is such an exhilarating thing to take off with this enormous power and climb away at a very steep angle, so I enjoyed it so much that I was on my first solo in a Spitfire, I was airborne I think for an hour and a half doing aerobatics and generally enjoying

13:30 the aeroplane.

**Just one sec [second] your collar has, there you go. Your wife will kill me. I want you right now if you could for me pretend you are actually sitting in the cockpit of the spitfire and just describe to you, to me what is actually around or in front of you?**

Right well we are sitting in the cockpit, it is a very small cockpit, you can feel your

14:00 shoulders touching either side almost. Now straight in front of you is the control column on which are mounted the gun buttons firing the cannons and machine guns. Above that at eye level is the reflector sight to your left, at your left hand at about that angle is your throttle and your mixture control and

14:30 pitch control are all there at your left hand. And in front of you are the flying instruments and the engine instruments, temperatures and pressures the oil pressures, temperature of the radiator, on the right is the under cart, the undercarriage control lever is on the right. There are petrol cocks of course, which are self explanatory

15:00 and the rudders, the rudder pedals were low down so that you were sitting always with your legs sort of about I suppose a 30 degree angle to your body. There were brakes in the Spitfire, they were air controlled, they were pneumatic brakes, the firing controls were

15:30 operated electronically you know the gun was cocked and you needed both power and air pressure to operate the guns. Oxygen was another thing, we had an oxygen indicator, the oxygen connection we had of course compasses,

16:00 bat and ball indicator, slip and turn, and artificial horizon, there was no radio compass or any such

refinement as that. It was in modern terms it was a very basic cockpit.

**Ok so you have now learnt or familiarised yourself with the spitfire, you have flown it a few times where do you go from there?**

Well

16:30 I was hoping to go to a squadron in England. But they kept me on at the ATU as a staff pilot. I was a sort of doing all the ferrying and a bit of testing and this irked me a bit and so I tried everything to get on operations. But finally they posted me, oh I had a bit of experience on a Spitfire which was the last thing, great aeroplane

17:00 and in the light of that experience they posted me out to North Africa where I did a further amount of stooging. That was interesting in itself the trip to North Africa. We went out in a ship, I think it was the old Orion which used to be on the Australian run, the Orient line. And onboard we had some beautiful FANYs, now FANYs is, are First Aid Nursing

17:30 Yeomanry. They were selected very finely because they were doing hush hush [secret] security works, they were into services signal units and they were in contact with agents in France and in Northern Africa. But they were great girls so our short trip to North Africa was much

18:00 enlightened I suppose with these great girls.

**What year are we talking about, and month?**

This was 43.

**And do you remember a month at all?**

I can by reference to my logbook. But I think it was.

18:30 **So what year and month did you?**

My recollection is it was 1943 about May.

**Now was Rommel still active, were the Germans still active in?**

In the Western Desert yes, but just barely. The retreat was on, the retreat in the western desert and the retreat from the 5th army and the British 1st army I think it was in North Africa that is

19:00 Algiers and Tripoli. So that those two armies met, the hun retreated to Cap Bomb [?] and that was the end of the hun in North Africa and the Italians.

**So what was their strength air wise during 43 in the Middle East do you know?**

Well they were spread so thinly, they had, well they had the western front

19:30 of course, the boys were keeping them busy from the UK in fighter sweeps, but they had sent a lot of aircraft to the eastern front and they, they started losing aircraft very heavily and we prevailed in the desert, prevailed quite comfortably and the losses there were enormous and the supply across the, across the

20:00 Mediterranean was interrupted so that they couldn't supply their army in North Africa. On one occasion the squadron that I joined shot down 18 giant transports, German transports carrying troops and fuel. And there was just mayhem it was just hopeless, so they gave it up after that. They tried to do it at nighttime.

**Was that during your time, before?**

That was before my time.

20:30 **Ok. So what squadron did you join and where was it?**

I joined 154 squadron in Italy, I was doing a bit of ferrying and flying where I could in North Africa and ferrying aircraft to, or Spitfires to Italy and my good friend Frank Cooper and I delivered a couple of Spits to Spitfire Bs to 322ing at Gioia, Gioia del Colle in Southern Italy.

21:00 We liked what we saw so we asked to be paraded to group captain Peter Hugo [actually Phillip Hugo] who was the CO of the wing and he did the job for us, he fixed it with postings with whoever in the bureaucracy and we stayed there, we just stayed there, we left our kit behind and just stayed with the wing.

**Before we get to Peter can you just explain the process of how**

21:30 **the Spitfires got to the Middle East and then your role in flying them over and getting back to fly more over?**

Well, they were in, in the Middle East and in North Africa at this stage in numbers. At this time they were flying them out, quite a few were flown out over Takoradi and West Africa and across Africa. But



the numbers were there and the ones that

22:00 were damaged or had time expired engines or so on they would go to an engineering sort of service thing, the name of which escapes me, it has got some abbreviation but there they would repair and replace and put new engines, new bits on old Spitfires and produce generally a good machine. So

22:30 I got the job of ferrying a lot of these into Malta and Italy. On one occasion I flew one into Malta and Malta still had those little bays, those protection bays were they parked their aircraft during the blitz and I taxied it into this and just turned the aircraft around and the aircraft fell down, one leg gave away and the group captain

23:00 in charge of the station I think Luka, came over to me cursing and swearing, his eyes blazing, he says "You bloody fool look what you have done" and I said "I just turned normally and the bloody thing collapsed sir". They lifted it up and they got a coals crane and lifted it up and left the leg lying on the ground, it had sheared off. Wasn't my fault.

**Given that the climate in England where spitfires were**

23:30 **designed and made is different to the Middle East what impact did the desert, the desert sand and heat have upon them?**

Oh well in the desert they did suffer badly so they invented a filter which filtered the sand and dust before it got into the engine intake. But nevertheless there was still, still quite a bit of early unserviceability because

24:00 of the dust and sand.

**And you were selected for the role in a sense to transport because you had flown spitfire 9s?**

Well that was extensively the reason I was in North Africa because they were re equipping with 9s.

**Therefore what is the difference between a spitfire 9 and the spitfire, I know you have talked about a range?**

About, about a 15 to 20 per cent performance is the difference. The Spitfire 9

24:30 with a 60 series Rolls Royce Merlin was pulling I think about 1650 horse power as against the earlier I think 37 Merlin in the 5B about 1250. So there was much more power, much more speed, great climbing capacity, its ceiling was about

25:00 35,000 feet, good ceiling, it was just generally a superior aircraft.

**Ok. Once you finished that you got your transfer to 154?**

154 RAF squadron yeah.

**Well begin the story there of starting out there?**

Right well, well both Frank Cooper and I both joined the squadron there and then we were anticipating going straight up the Adriatic Coast into

25:30 action you see but instead of which our wing was pulled out of Italy to sit on the Turkish border in Syria and demonstrate the power, the air power of the allies to the Turks who were a bit reluctant to come into the war and Churchill [Prime Minister of Great Britain at the time] decided that we better put on a bit of a show here so he sent our wing out to do this. But it, I was flying all the time and getting experience.

26:00 But we did have the only operational, serious operational thing that we had was detachment on, on Cyprus and they got a, or we got a Junkers 86, I think an 86B with a diesel engine that flies at

26:30 36,000 feet. But fortunately we got in a bit low, I wasn't in the flight, in the section that clobbered him, anyhow that was about the only bit of excitement there, except that the, the Cyprians produced a drinkable brandy and our Spitfires had a nice new slipper tank a 30 gallon slipper tank fitting underneath the belly of the aeroplane. So

27:00 we used to fill, fill a tank with Cyprus brandy and fly it back to the wing and north of Aleppo right on the Turkish border.

**So the drinking was pretty good but you must have been frustrated?**

We were absolutely frustrated. We, Aleppo was the nearest town of any consequence so we would drive into Aleppo and beat it up occasionally.

27:30 The French had an officers club there and we were invited to be members. Which we were and one particular night we had a big Canadian with us Eugene Hectovich he was Norwegian Canadian and he was big and tough, but he couldn't drink at all. So he passed out, so we

28:00 put him in the back of the 1500 waiting outside and some of us as we were leaving later, some of us

removed a large picture from the hall of the club and we got back to our camp at North of Aleppo and someone realised "Hell we were guests there we better get that painting back to them how do we do it?". So the next morning everyone said

28:30 to Heggie "Poor show Heggie, you shouldn't have done it" "What did I do?" "You stole the painting from the officer's club, now you speak French so you must go back to the mess and apologise and return it". Which he did and never to this day, he doesn't know that he didn't steal it.

**Very good, very good. So the war has been going on and you're not in it, did you ever think you would make it to the war?**

Oh yes I always thought if it lasts long enough

29:00 we will, I was in it soon after that. We flew then down to Haifa. A place called Ramut David and re equipped with Spitfire 9s, and we flew them back to Corsica over Cairo west and through the western desert Marble Arch, and then from Tunis into Corsica and we

29:30 started operating the very next day. We got in, in the evening and we were on bomber, bomber support, bomber protection the very next day, so we were into it.

**Ok. So now talk to me through that very first mission when you were in bomber support?**

Well it was exciting of course to cross the enemy coast and realise that you were, that you were into it and we were squatting some Mitchells I think B25s

30:00 and they got shot at pretty badly and they lost one or two, which we saw go down flak that is not fighters, but we were bomber escort in case of fighters. So I experienced on the first operation some flak and some realised what a frightening thing it was, but we were pretty well removed from it we had to cover these B25s

30:30 but it was distressing to see two of them go. So then we started fighter sweeps and road strafing and all sorts of exciting operations. We got pretty good at this road strafing you know there was a lot of, anything that moved in daylight, it was German, so we shot it up. And

31:00 I don't know what our wing score was but everyday we would come back with you know 20 or 30 vehicles destroyed. And I destroyed a few which, I didn't really enjoy because they were such sitting ducks, you know just driving along the road, but the flak was pretty heavy. And on one of these operations we were

31:30 strafing and Frank Cooper my friend was hit very low on his attack, he had done one attack and he still had some ammunition left so he was coming in again and the flak got him and he couldn't do anything but just crash land straight ahead, he was cut about a bit and taken prisoner and they started to cart him off to the

32:00 north of Italy and they were jumped, the next day they were jumped by partisans lead by a South African captain and Frank was released and they passed him back through the lines, the story is worth telling. At Naples he was waiting for an airlift back to Corsica and decided that some food and drink would be a good idea so went to the officers club or mess as it was in this rear section

32:30 Naples was well back then and they wouldn't let him into the club because he looked so scruffy, he had blood and dust all over his sweater. But the, he found his way into this sergeants mess and they welcomed him he wine and dined there very well. But the lesson is that you want to think twice before you deny anyone entry because Frank finished up as Sir Frank Hooper as permanent Head of the Ministry of Defence. So

33:00 now he got back to Corsica and in the meantime of course I flew the very next day, doing the same thing, attacking ground targets and I got shot down, I got hit, but I didn't know that I had been hit in the engine immediately but I was hit in the port and had to have two hands on it to hold it but I decided that I didn't want to jump out there and be a prisoner so I decided to try and get out to sea.

33:30 And I did, I got out to sea about four miles north of, what do you call it, four miles west of Cecina I suppose and just north of Elba and it was then I realised how bad the engine was because all the dials were off the clock and it was hot as hell and then it looked as though it was going to start burning so I left it. And my

34:00 actual bail out was easy, I had two hands on the stick just holding it and all I did was get rid of my helmet and gear and let go of my stick and I got chucked out the side so, but everything worked, the parachute opened and I landed in the water and fortunately it was summer and the water was quite warm. And then I swam away from the parachute and I

34:30 pulled the dingy with my dog lead from the Mae West, opened the dingy, turned the CO bottle tap and up she inflated. So I climbed aboard, threw the fluorescents over the side and waved to my number 2 who had come down and was making low passes and waved to him to let him know I was alright. But before I left it of course I transmitted for a fix and told them that it looked as

35:00 though I had, I was going to have to leave it so I hurled out a couple of May Days [distress signals]

before I jumped out. But the rescue service was very good. Everything worked perfectly and I was covered by French Spitfires then because we were very close, Elba was still German, in German hands and I was only I suppose only four miles

- 35:30 off it and four miles from Cecina on the Cecina seacoast. So the French covered me also until it was almost dark and a beaufighter came out, a night fighter came out and that was covering me as far as we could in this diminishing light until finally out of the west where there was almost a sun was just out below the horizon out of west the
- 36:00 waddled this old Walrus which was a by plane sort of flying boat with one pusher engine mounted high, a bristol pegasus I think, so this chap found me, I fired off a couple of rockets, and he found me and landed in the 6 foot swell and broke off some of his port main plane which meant we couldn't take off, we could taxi, so I carried
- 36:30 aboard this wreck of an aeroplane by this time and we started to taxi 70 miles back to Corsica through a 6 foot swell with bits flying off the aeroplane and we did this until about, I suppose we were making about three knots, awful, until 1 o'clock in the morning we got a hale and then a light from an intercept that was a high speed launch from
- 37:00 Basita that had picked us up. So I climbed aboard the high speed launch and into some rum and some dry gear and we took this old Walrus in tow and towed the bloody thing all night and in the morning I was sitting up having breakfast on the deck of this high speed launch with the captain who was a flight lieutenant and we looked over to see where we had dropped the Walrus mooring
- 37:30 to see it sinking slowly and it gave its last gurgle as we got into our scrambled eggs. But the sea rescue was exceedingly good, well that demonstrates how good it was. The chap shouldn't have landed probably, he knew there was a fair risk of breaking this aeroplane and he did and we all survived except the aeroplane. But they are wonderful stories. We were briefed of course, before
- 38:00 every operation where the high speed launch would be, they deposited one or two at various points mid way between Corsica and the Italian coast because the people a lot of people were being hit and damaged. And there was one famous story of a, a thunderbolt pilot, American P47 thunderbolt. And he was hit pretty badly but managed to get very close to this high speed
- 38:30 launch, and he chose not to bail out but sort of tried to land on the sea which he did and as he did so the captain, very good seamanship of this high speed launch sort of raced alongside and stuffed the, pulled the stern so that the stern of the high speed launch was right on the,
- 39:00 right on the wing of the thunderbolt which was sinking but this American captain just stepped out of his cockpit, walked along the wing and stepped onto the high speed launch and didn't get his feet wet, but it was that good, it was terrific the sea rescue service, thank god.

**He had the right idea didn't he? We will just stop there.**

## Tape 6

- 00:35 **Now you tell your story of your bail out, so matter of fact, what were the emotions going on?**
- Well first let me explain that I was away overnight and got back the very next day, Frank Cooper was away for a couple of days and we shared a tent
- 01:00 in Corsica, so there was nobody at home at our place for a couple of days. But ones reaction to jumping out of an aeroplane there is naked fear course is there but the alternative is to burn with the aeroplane, a Spitfire will not land in the sea very happily. The radiators pull it under and it goes very quickly down, so it is not recommended
- 01:30 that you sort of try to crash land or land in the sea in a Spitfire, much better to bail out. So there was really no option and I was confident that everything would work and it did. Yeah there was great relief when the parachute opened, that was great relief. To know that you know that part of the operation was over, that you
- 02:00 floating down so peacefully to the warm sea below and that suited me.
- Can you rather now than tell the story, though I want you to go through the story from the time that you actually got hit by the flack, just tell me actually what you were seeing and feeling, the pressures, the smells to the point of bailing out?**
- Well I strafed this, it must have been a
- 02:30 flak wagon. But it was a very a huge truck and I saw some strikes on it, my own strikes on it but it was covered in branches so the identification of the vehicle was pretty difficult and as I climbed away pretty quickly I got hit in the port aleon and obviously in the radiator, I didn't know that I was losing my

coolant at the time.

03:00 I thought I could handle this thing with two hands on the stick because the port aleon was almost fused with the main flare and I was operating the throttle with my elbow. But then the engine started to run so roughly, very very rough, and all the dials went off the clock, all the temperatures, the pressures dropped to nothing and

03:30 the oil pressure was nothing, the radiator temperature was off the clock, there was a stink of burning and fortunately I was out to sea and I knew I wasn't going to be taken prisoner.

**So the temperature of the cabin was increasing?**

Yeah it was getting pretty warm, and I was afraid of fire, every fighter pilot has a terrible fear of fire.

**Is that because you have heard of stories?**

Well you have seen people burnt and you have

04:00 seen them sort of fixed up. McIndoe that famous New Zealander, he did a wonderful job in England in fixing frightfully burnt faces. So we all had this, naturally a fear of burning, more than, so much so that in my case I am not going to be, I am going to be buried I am not going to be burnt. And that is

04:30 how deeply engrained it is, perhaps silly.

**You were talking earlier about night flying how the spitfire is not good, well it is not great because the fuselage the smoke comes out, I take it as you?**

The flame, the flare from the exhaust.

**Yeah sorry the flare from the exhaust was there anything like that or were all your problems, your plane was actually in the rear?**

No no I was hit in the engine and it was

05:00 pretty plain that I had lost all my coolant and the aircraft and the engine was going to cease. I am sure that it ceased as I left it and I was afraid that it was going to burn.

**Ok you came to the realisation that you had to bail out, did you prepare yourself by getting to a certain altitude?**

Oh well I struggled for it, I had done it already, I was about 2,000 feet I suppose.

**You had to work your way up to that?**

No it climbed away before, while it still had coolant the

05:30 engine operated perfectly well but it was only after about I suppose a minute that I lost all the coolant and it started to overheat.

**Flying is very much about following procedures ok, you are about to bail out did you run through any procedures of what you had to do with your parachute?**

No I knew very well. You know it was instinctive, we all sort worked out what you would do and how you would

06:00 get out. Normally the thing was to roll on your back and fall out but I couldn't let go of the stick you see so I couldn't do that so it was very simple to get out of the aeroplane, let go of the stick and it chucked me out.

**So what was the last thing you said to your number 2 plane?**

Climb up to 8,000 feet and get a fix.

**And then you went?**

Yeah, well I knew they would

06:30 cover me and they almost did until they were out of fuel and then they had to go back to Corsica and then the French came in and then the beaufighter came in.

**Ok. Then going down to the water, you told us earlier that you waited until your feet touched the water, ok, can you just talk to us again through what you were feeling rather than the story, when you hit the water, and you know the temperature?**

Yeah well my, my reaction was when my feet hit the water was

07:00 thank Christ for that, because there I was in something I knew very well, water, I wasn't afraid of water and I was a good swimmer so I could have swum easily to Elba or back to Cecina but there was no point in taking that on so I decided just to stick to the little dingy and it was all pretty well automatic.

07:30 You know you had gone through it so many times in your mind you know, if this happens what do I do? and I think everybody did and the tales were many and varied of various experiences, but it was always clear that you know parachutes normally worked and worked well, dingies normally worked and worked well and provided the water wasn't freezing you had a pretty good show of making it.

08:00 So it was quite comfortable really.

**Ok. What happened then after that, so you returned home safely?**

Well yes I, we got back to Bastia as I say I suppose about 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. Then the squadron sent out a car to pick me up from Bastia and I went back and they were doing, they had a fairly quiet day, they only had

08:30 another two operations on. I had already missed one and the CO said "Well the adjutant is doing a booze run over to Calvi over the other side of the mountains in Corsica in the west coast, why don't you go with him?" so he gave me a day off. I was flying the very next day though.

**Your wife mentioned to me that the 'Catch 22' [novel written about World War II] stories?**

Well it was

09:00 later on in Corsica we moved over to Calvi on the west coast, gearing up for the invasion of the south of France. And we were strafing all the radar installations on the south of France. And we were operating under General Patch, he was the commanding officer of the United States, anyhow we were in his operation. And we were pretty efficient

09:30 operationally and it impressed him and he called on old Dutch Hugo the CO and said "Peter is there anything you want, can I do anything for you?" and Pete said "Oh well a communications aeroplane would be handy we have only got an old Fairchild Argus here". So the next day a B25 arrives with guns and armour and it is ours as a communications aeroplane. And we took

10:00 the guns and the armour plate out of it and it was very quick low down. We went to, we went to Algiers and we picked up some of these fanys I was telling you about, two of them anyhow and then took them back to us to Corsica. That is a story in itself, it was highly illegal to do this but Freddy Rothwell he had experience in Bostons he could fly a B25,

10:30 he was really the skipper, I was the stooge, first officer sort of thing, but I knew the women. So we loaded these women and all the booze and fresh vegetables into the aeroplane and flew back to, flew back to Calvi and there we had a wonderful time, they had a wonderful stay but got into all sorts of trouble the girls, because they were supposed to be on a 48 hour leave and they were away for about five days

11:00 but they got away with it alright. But the girls, one of the girls married Freddy who was the captain of the aeroplane and he became a vice marshal and as a matter of fact his wife Swithy will probably be in Australia in a couple of months, she is coming out to see us. Freddy died but she is still going strong. So

11:30 then we operated the B25, we would go to, I didn't fly it much, Freddy did all the flying in it. But we would fly to Sicily for tomatoes and eggs and we would fly to Gibraltar for booze and Cairo for leave and low down at a great rate of knots. This is very similar to 'Catch 22'

12:00 this happened in 'Catch 22' as you might recall.

**Were you ever reprimanded for all this?**

No I wasn't, Freddy nearly was, but we all, it was such a wild thing, Freddy didn't fly them back they had to make their own way back and finally they all got passed through. No Freddy could well have been gotten the chop [been fired] for that.

**So your commanding COs never found out about that?**

Oh yeah, he met, he enjoyed the girls.

12:30 We all enjoyed their company, they were the toast of the island.

**What did the relationship between you and the girls, what was that?**

Oh well you know I loved this fany Gay Hicks was her name, she rather liked me I think, but that was fine, that caused it, that sort of precipitated this

13:00 sort of thing. I sort of got formerly engaged to Gay and gave her, by this time they had sent me my little caterpillar pin, which is a little gold caterpillar with a ruby eye and I didn't have an engagement ring of course or any other sort of thing so I gave her this to wear behind her lapel. Subsequently she returned it to me, she had met a captain, an army captain who she rather liked so. But anyhow that was it, is

13:30 history. It was good.

**She met the captain during the war?**

Oh yes yes.

**Did you find anyone else to replace her?**

Did I, yes I did, well not immediately but I found many as a matter of fact.

**Bit of a ladies man then?**

Not really, not profess, I am not very good at it, but it seemed to work alright, very natural I think.

**The girls liked pilots?**

- 14:00 Yeah well they seemed to, particularly the French girls. Because you know I come into this next week from the south, from Corsica we go into the south of France. As I mentioned we had been softening up the radar installations on the coast and strafing anything that moved through Italy and southern France and there were no German aircraft there much.
- 14:30 But D Day [6th June 1944, when the allied forces landed in France] finally came and that was an immense sight. There was a great armada of ships and gliders being towed in and quite incredible paratroopers landing and we went in, they bulldozed a strip through a vineyard come orchard. And I flew a Spitfire in and taxied around in the dispersal bay, very dusty
- 15:00 and took about 20 paces from the aeroplane and picked a bunch of grapes and an apple. It was you know it was that time in the south of France. We operated there but the hun retreated very quickly up the Rhone Valley. We finally went up to Montelimar which was famous for its nougat in the Rhone Valley a couple hundred miles north of, north of
- 15:30 Cote d'Azur I suppose and then we came back to, back to the coast of France I think Fraiz was the place we were at and the desert air force, which we operated under, had requisition of the Hotel Montana in Cannes and we bathed, we drank, we ate, we enjoyed delicious French girls for three or four weeks and it was just wonderful.
- 16:00 And then I was promoted in another wing, which was going back to Italy to you know to get back into the serious war again and I was a flight commander on 72 Squadron. Commanded by a famous fighter leader Duncan Smith whose son was the recent leader of the Liberal party of the UK, sacked the other day I think. Anyhow drunken Duncan was a great chap.
- 16:30 And we flew back to Italy into Corsica, over Corsica into Florence where we operated from a little strip with a lot of mud around it for three or four weeks. And we had some success there we got a, we got a couple of kills there, a 410, Messerschmidt 410 we got.
- 17:00 And then we transferred over to Rimini on the Adriatic coast, which was much better it was a good strip, it was cleaner and you know we could operate properly. So we did we did strafing in the Po valley and wherever we were there was any action. And finally I was sent down to another wing
- 17:30 to learn how to bomb from a Spitfire, they just fitted five hundred pound bombs onto their spits. So I went down and did a few operations with them and this rather appealed to me this bombing from a spit so I became pretty good at it and I went back and taught the squadron, my squadron 72 you know how to bomb and we got very good at it and I think the Spitfire although not
- 18:00 designed as a fighter bomber was really a very good one. The form was to approach your target at about 10,000 feet and the target would pass under the inboard canon stub on your main plane and then just pull up and do a ring over an into a 70 degree dive which is very steep and you would wind up to approaching 500 miles an hour with a bomb on
- 18:30 and then you would just pull through, pull through the target and count, I used to count to three, one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three and push the button and release the bomb, and I got pretty good at it and as a matter of fact it was one of the proud things in my log book, is an assessment as a fighter bomber pilot exceptional.
- 19:00 But anyhow it was a very effective weapon because the army got stymied, the Germans were very obstinate in their retreat in the Po Valley and they were hard to move so desert air force had developed this fighter bomber close support system and it was, we had a cab rank where we had four aeroplanes, usually two sections of
- 19:30 four circling at a given point and you'd call up rover control which was an RAF pilot in a tank or an armoured vehicle and he was called rover control so you would go "Rover paddy malvo red leader have you got any trade for me?" and he would say "Yes red leader we have got some trade pull out your map number so and so" and out of your
- 20:00 boot you would pull out a map and a photograph with a graticule on it letters across and letters down and he would say "B4, got it" "Got it rover control" "There is a road running north east south west through that square have you got it?" "Got it" and he says "Well two thirds on the road on the right hand side there is a farm house,
- 20:30 we suspect that is an enemy strong point, give it the works". So we would line up on this, normally four

or six, and six 500 hundred pound bombs, very close, pretty frightening and if there wasn't too much flak you would give it a good squirt with guns, machine guns and cannon. And we always bombed along the bomb line, there was only a few hundred metres in front of our own troops.

21:00 So you bombed along so that if you overshot or fell short you were still in enemy territory. But it was on one occasion I remember for a strafing run I pulled back over our own lines and came in again and open fire over our own lines on this house and rover came up and said "You are strafing your own people" and I said "Oh balls"

21:30 what is was my empty shells were falling on our own troops. So that is how close it was.

**Ok. Don't treat us with kid gloves, but going back to the women issue, really interested just in relationships between servicemen and stuff like that, can you talk us through some of the relationships you had with various women?**

Well you know Gay Hicks was a

22:00 star, we were, geographically we were well separated, she was out of Algiers, west of Algiers and I was in Corsica so it was a bit difficult to have any much of a joint social life, hence the B25 sortie but that sort of disappeared.

22:30 Oh there was an ESSA girl in Syria, ESSA was the entertainment service. And Brenda I remember Brenda, great girl, great looking girl and good singer too, we had a brief flutter there. And finally at the end of the war, and we were not there yet, but I was in Cairo and I was waiting for a ship home. And I

23:00 met a WAAF [Women's Auxiliary Air Force] there, not only did I, did we get close but we actually got married there which was perhaps a mistake. But we didn't have a very exciting love life, there was no time for it, no opportunity really. We let off steam really by playing hell in the mess. You know we would play football in the mess

23:30 every night, break all the furniture and it was easy to go somewhere and steal some more. But and we, sport we would play rugby, we would play anything.

**But the air forces give you any regulations about fraternising with local women or even Doctors talking about precautions to take?**

Not really, they knew their mark,

24:00 they knew that we wouldn't observe them anyhow. There was no point in Italy well it was almost impossible anyhow the way these girls were protected. Although there was Brian Eaton who was an Australian group captain commanding 239 wing. He had a beautiful trailer, which he used to live in and he discovered this Italian countess.

24:30 So he brought her up and she lived in this trailer for some time and then the word got out and the air officer commanding the desert air force was coming down to Brian's wing for an inspection or some such thing, conference, first thing I knew, Brian was, by this time I was in southern Italy running an advance flying unit, Brian landed in a Kittyhawk two place Kittyhawk

25:00 they had one Kittyhawk with two spots in it, two seats and this beautiful girl got out, countesses, Brian helped her down, and he said "Dudley for Christs sake lend me a jeep I have got to get her home, the AOC [Air Officer Commanding] is on his way and I have got to be back in about two hours" so dear old Brian. We better watch that one pretty carefully because Brian's wife is

25:30 still alive. Brian died recently, he would have been a great mark for this sort of thing, he had a DSO [Distinguished Service Order] and bar and DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] and bar and he was shot down I think three times in two weeks. But a very brave man Brian Eton. Well he had to be to keep a countess in his caravan.

26:00 **And what about yourself meeting up with women, was it usually in bars or pubs or?**

Did I frequent bars and pubs?

**Yeah and how did you meet the girls you actually met?**

Oh well mostly you know they were service girls and you would meet them actually in a mess or at a party you know, it was largely inside the

26:30 service that we met these girls. We didn't have a very good sex life I must say. You know one did the best one could but we let off steam in other ways.

**What do you mean by the phrase ones does the best one could?**

Well you know one would try

27:00 to get a girl in a corner and proceed carefully from there. So that was the best one could do.

**And when you were engaged to Gail, Gay, were you disappointed when that was broken off?**

- Oh not, well I was disappointed yes, she was a great girl,
- 27:30 but I soon got over it, you know it didn't disturb me deeply, I just pressed on with living.
- Now you promised me earlier on you had some larrikin stores, you told me about the B, the B, what was it, the one where you picked up the women and other sorts of things?**
- What the B25?
- The B25,**
- 28:00 **what other larrikin stories did people get up to in Corsica or even in the Middle East?**
- Well all sorts of things, you know you would go fishing with Italian hand grenades. And one of the jokes was for someone to dive in and someone throw a hand grenade near him, so you know.
- So what would happen when you lobbed it in?**
- 28:30 Well they would bleed from the nose or ears, it was a good way to go off flying for a while but we were really fishing and just larakinising around. In France we, you know we had an absolute ball, the French girls were magnificent and
- 29:00 they just loved us being there and we were welcomed. Lets see at the Hotel Montana, a friend of mine was running the hotel and he had a Bugatti that he confiscated somewhere, everyone had a, I had a French car and then I had a Mercedes in France.
- 29:30 It was a captured vehicle, it was RAF captured number so and so but the cunning hun when they left it they had sawn through the steering controls and I finished up against a bloody great tree and out cold. Cunning hun. But I must say that the Germans were a very gallant enemy, and so were the
- 30:00 Italians.
- So just coming back to the car and cutting through, what happened, you were driving from?**
- I was driving in the south of France. I was driving back to Montelimar, I must have been down in Nice or somewhere and driving back with a chap who spoke French, you know fluently, and the bloody steering sheared
- 30:30 and we went straight into this enormous tree, he got out of it alright and I cracked my head and was out cold and they sent a truck down to pick us up and take us back. But the French sort of picked me up and patched me up, but you know it was only a knock on the head, so a couple of stitches and I was fine. There is a
- 31:00 wealth of things that happened. You know if a senior officer came to inspect or for a party we always had parties, enormous parties, after dinner or after the party someone would climb a pole and we had tents, EPIP [English Pattern, Indian Product] tents and there were two poles and then there was a hole at the top. And one of the tricks was to climb the pole and go through the
- 31:30 hole at the top, walk along the ridge of the tent and come down through the other hole and pole and some of the senior officers who tried this were a bit flabby and couldn't fit through the hole so we had stranded senior personnel stranded on the pole, quite often but they were famous the, the air force parties were just fabulous.
- 32:00 We had a famous character Crocky Dundas who was again a wonderful, he was CO of a sister wing of ours our 324 wing and but he was so wild, he was very young and wild, he would just drink all night,
- 32:30 he was a long skinny chap and Cocky could drink all night and sing dirty songs forever. So they were all characters and the air force was full of characters. One chap a New Zealander, Blackie Barber, he was short service commission before the war and he should have been at least an air commodore or group captain or air commodore but he was still a flight lieutenant. He had lost so
- 33:00 much seniority because of all the wild stupid things he had done that he was still a flight lieutenant.
- What did he get up to?**
- Oh anything, breaking motorcars, punching people, you name it.
- Can you remember one story?**
- Yeah well Blackie Barber, a group of them had got taken down by a taxi driver in Hifer, so they got out and rolled the
- 33:30 taxi over, you know just physically picked it up and rolled it over. And this chap naturally complained bitterly and came, we got word that he was coming out for an identification parade. So Blackie and I were about the same size, he parted his hair in the middle so I got his battle jacket and parted my hair in the middle and glared at this fellow who came, this little Arab who was and he said "That is the man" pointing to me,



34:00 but I had an alibi I wasn't anywhere near the bloody taxi, so it got him off. Yes there were things that was probably a bit, how good is your editing going to be?

**Fantastic just tell us?**

Well Blackie Barber was quite famous also for having a lot of beer in the mess before he took off on an air test, to test a Spitfire, and he had forgot to evacuate his bladder

34:30 before he left and he was quite a long way up, he didn't have time to land and do it so he had to let go in the cockpit of the aeroplane and he landed and the airmen came in to unstrap him and he said "Oh you have got some liquid on the floor, it is not glycol", glycol had a sweet taste. That was the acid test, you could taste the sweetness

35:00 in glycol. No that wasn't glycol. It is hard just to remember them all just off the cuff, I will wake up in the middle of the night. Oh some funny things the Americans had a, they had a P47 in Italy, a P47 Negro squadron,

35:30 and they are pretty good chaps, but they had a funny, their radio their RT [Radio transmission] natter was incredible and I, actually they were over a target these two chaps and the natter went something like this "Hello black leader there is a black tool, there is our target there, black tool

36:00 black leader, ok boy you go down and give them hell" and "Black tool to black leader, no sir you got some distinguished flying cross, lets see you do some distinguished flying" they were very funny on the RT. I can't bring

36:30 anything to mind that is screamingly funny.

**What about some of your censored stories?**

Some of the.

**Your censored stories,**

The what stories?

**Your censored stories, the stories which are a bit risque?**

Oh it was all good honest fun. I can't really

37:00 tell you any sort of risque stories that are without a great risk. So I would prefer not to say, some of, the people, some of the people still living would burn with embarrassment. But there are not many still living I must say, we are getting pretty thin on the ground. But anyhow where were we, we were in the south of France, we were back in Italy. We were at Rimini.

37:30 **Yep can we pause there.**

## Tape 7

00:40 **I might just begin by asking you just a couple of questions to clarify the some terms which we talked about in the previous tape. Dogfight, context and meaning?**

Ok, well the dogfight is simply a fight between fighter aircraft

01:00 and there were lots of them so it really looked like a dogfight, the way dogs fight, so it is really a battle in the air between enemy fighter aircraft, enemy and our own fighter aircraft,

**So when you'd look out of the plane you can see everything would look like a dogfight?**

Well you know you're usually so

01:30 busy in a situation like that you are watching out, watching your tail and that you, and watching out for a likely target that you are really not conscious of the overall, the overall scene it is a strange phenomenon but you can get a mad dogfight which will be going and aeroplanes being shot down, people floating down in parachutes and in about three, after about three

02:00 minutes you look around for someone and there is no one there, the sky is empty. It is a strange thing and then eventually you pick them up, you pick the specs up and you reform, but it was a strange phenomenon, everyone that I know of speaks, has the same experience. The sky just clears itself of aeroplanes after about

02:30 three minutes.

**And then does it resume?**

No it is done and then you usually lick your wounds and get home and come out again.

**So on average an actual flight in the air will last no longer than about three minutes?**

Oh no the flight from take off to landing.

**No no just the actual**

03:00 **clash yeah?**

Oh seldom more than seven or eight minutes.

**Can you describe how the other enemy planes would interweave with the formations and how, what you would be seeing out of the cockpit?**

Well you know, as I say I didn't get mixed up in many dogfights because by the time I got operational we had air superiority

03:30 but you were so busy really making sure that there was no one on your tail and watching, trying to watch if you had a section, keeping your section together, and you were so busy doing that you had little time for a general observation so it was really every man for himself in a situation like that. Once

04:00 you are into it the formation doesn't matter, the formation is gone and it becomes a beehive really.

**Would you just notice things like the lights the taillights or of the other aircrafts or?**

No it well it was all day fighters and there was, you could, the giveaway was a vapour trail at height, when someone was firing, the Germans you would see grey smoke coming from their

04:30 wings. They used a tracer and if you had a tracer, a tracer coming by and you knew about it and it was quite discernable, frightening in fact.

**What about the night flights that you did, they were never in a combat situation?**

I didn't do it, we didn't do it much, we did some pre dawn take offs

05:00 from Corsica to patrol along the French coast and we did some after dark landings at the same time but the Spitfire was no good at night.

**Do you want to have a bit of a break for a sec so you can have some water, sorry, are you alright. A lot of talking. So they weren't every, they were never at night that you were**

05:30 **ever in a situation like that?**

No it was all, they were day fighters.

**What is it just other meanings, strafing, stooging, flack?**

Strafing is I think it is probably a German word but it is shooting at targets on the ground from the air. So you are in a Spitfire and you are firing at a target,

06:00 a truck or a bunch of troops, that is strafing. Flack is the anti aircraft fire and the Germans were very good at it, very very effective flak, again it is a German word I think flak, but it simply anti aircraft fire but usually very very dense and very accurate.

**Could you ever see it coming at you or only when it hit you?**

Yes you could see these

06:30 red hot dingle berries coming at you and hopefully going past. And the heavy flak that German 88 millimetre was a great big puff and it was very accurate again and very good you know at 18,000 feet it was very accurate.

**A big black puff in the shape that it would make in the air?**

That was the explosion of the shell in the air.

**And you could see that looking**

07:00 **down from the cockpit?**

Well sometimes it was right there, you could smell it, you could smell the cordite and hear it on occasions you could hear the boom and then smell it. Get the stink of it.

**So they had a, each type of flack had different sounds?**

Yes the light flak was 20 millimetre, 37 millimetre, 40 millimetre and that was

07:30 good for up to about 7 or 8,000 feet, beyond that the 88 millimetre the heavy flak was, was used.

**And you could hear the difference between them?**

Oh yes.

**So what did the heavy?**

They were white puffs and tracers, white and grey puffs and tracers but the heavy flak is black, dense black, after the explosion.

**And what does it**

08:00 **sound like?**

Very loud explosion, but you know it is only muffled in the cockpit of a Spitfire with your head, your phones and your ears and your helmet on, it is muffled.

**And how much control did you have to get out of the way of these things?**

Well normally you learn where the flak positions are and you try to avoid them. But

08:30 you can't really because every attack is, you have potentially got flak, firing at you. So that on occasions you can weave, in a fighter you can weave out of, out of heavy flak, you can weave your way out of it by losing height and gaining height and the gunners can't keep up with you, but light flak you just can't do that it is

09:00 so dense.

**Is there any places on a spitfire where they are more vulnerable to flack or is it vulnerable per se?**

Well as I say the radiator is the most vulnerable, your coolant system that will bring you down if you are hit in the cooling system, which is a, it is an inline engine and it is cooled with glycol, a glycol mixture cools it and if you lose that coolant

09:30 you know your engine is going to cease.

**Your situation where you described earlier where your plane was hit and you went down, was that the only time you really were caught in sort of a very dense flack kind of?**

No I was hit many times but not shot down.

**It must have been terrifying?**

Yes well in the end we were doing three operations a day

10:00 and being shot at, at all of them, that was close support fighter bombing in Italy. Yes the flak was frightening, it was. A lot of people got flak happy, I think I was probably a bit flak happy.

**Flack happy?**

Flack happy means just mad with it, you were just scared of it. You were just nervous,

10:30 you don't like flak.

**What would happen if flack went through the glass of the cockpit, could you be hit or were you protected enough in the?**

No no you were hit, the only protection was some armour plates behind the seat. But it is only Perspex, the hood of the aeroplane is only perspex and the flak could go through that or bullets will go through that.

11:00 You have got in a Spitfire you have got an armoured shield in front of your eyes only about that square but it is armour plate glass there.

**So every time you went up you were at risk, at risk of being?**

Oh yes, well it was unusual not to be shot at by flak if you were over enemy territory. You

11:30 know it was a normal occurrence.

**So how do you prepare yourself before you go up into a, into a plane knowing you may just get shot down?**

It is just part, it is just part of the business, that is the business we are in, so you know you live with it. And hope you are lucky, and one gets, always had the feeling that it can never happen to me. But it

12:00 did usually there were not many friends that I know who weren't shot down. It was you know I suppose on a squadron there would be about 20 pilots and if they had done, most of them would have been shot down once, at least once, shot up many times.

12:30 It is not a pleasant thing to encounter flak, it is a bit bitey.

**Did you see other planes going down?**

Yes, of yes often, quite frequently. We were escorting B25s again over, when I was in Corsica, and we were escorting B25s

13:00 and they were going into a target and they were, we knew the flak very well where it was and this was the south of Spezia and they were going over some very heavy concentration of flak which we knew was there because it used to shoot at us. And I called up the last bomber leader and last fighter leader "Don't go in there bomber leader it is very hot" and he said

13:30 "We have got our orders fighter leader, we are going straight in" three of them got shot down. Three out of 12 and it wasn't necessary, they could have just as well veered to the south and then gone in and then corrected by coming a bit further north. All we did was just pull well away from them because we knew what was coming.

**And what were the thoughts of the other pilots when they knew it was futile**

14:00 **going as the planes went down?**

Well they were just sorry for the stupidity really. It was stupid to make yourself vulnerable to that heavy flak, heavy concentration of very heavy flak when they had been warned about it, we were there we knew it. We used to fly over it every day.

**Were there often cases of that sort of discrepancy happening where orders were happening and the pilots knew what was happening more than**

14:30 **where the commanders were giving orders?**

I think the Americans were very brave to stay in their formations, but it was misguided, they didn't have the, well they didn't have the navigation expertise that we had in our bombers, so they had a bomber leader who was also doing the navigating, so they were more or less compelled to stay in a very tight

15:00 formation. But it was, it was just a bit silly, stupid really to incur those losses when they weren't necessary, they could have achieved their target by just going south about five or 10 miles to the south, it was just a couple of minutes to the south, then compensated by taking a new course for the target. But

15:30 no they had a line drawn on the map to the target and that was it. So that is just an illustration of how accurate the German flak was. If you gave it a show, if you gave it a chance.

**Indeed and what were the implications if a plane was hit and went down?**

Well normally you would

16:00 breathe a sigh of relief if the crew got out, if you saw a parachute. Most of them burnt in the air and you didn't have much of a show really. But it was just, well you just feel sorry for the poor chaps inside it and then there is a war on and that sort of thing happens every day.

**So how quick would it happen if you were hit by flack, how quick would it be that**

16:30 **it would combust or fire would happen, would that happen?**

Well it depends, sometimes if it hits in a fuel cell, explodes in a fuel cell it is immediate, it is just one explosion and bingo it is gone, otherwise a fire in one wing, the wing will finally break off, but that at least gives them a show of getting out. But normally if you are hit by, you know badly hit it is pretty immediate.

17:00 If you are hit and lose some of your tail plane or some of your wing well well and good you might struggle back or if you lose an engine in a bomber.

**So you would see some of those things right next to you perhaps?**

Oh yes, you would see the red hot dingle berries coming up from the ground. It is a, you can see it, you can smell it and

17:30 sometimes you can feel it, you know when it bumps the aircraft without hitting it.

**Were some of the fighter pilots religious, did they believe in god did they?**

It wasn't apparent, you believed in your own luck I think.

18:00 You know we buried occasionally, you would have to go on a burial party or a funeral party and they were the only times really when we heard any preaching. We weren't, we weren't sort of conscious of god, although he had a hand in it in keeping you going I suppose.

18:30 But it didn't cross our mind much.

**I can just imagine it would be so scary. I can imagine it would have been so scary being up there and seeing things, knowing that you could be hit any minute?**

Yes scary but you sort of get used to it and expect it. It is you know par for the course really.

**Can you remember anything seeing any of your**

19:00 **fellow fighter pilots going down, being hit?**

Yes I had a number two hit at about 15,000 feet over Italy and he was like the other chap who went in and the lack of oxygen and he was about 50 metres away and it was a direct hit from 88 millimetre and it just blew his wing off and he spun in. So he must have been dead,

19:30 killed in the explosion, but that was, they were very accurate, that was a bit of a freak accident I think. To hit a Spitfire at 15 or 17,000 feet whatever it was, pretty good shooting, because the Germans had, a lot of it was automated, automated flak, automatically knows the course of the aeroplane and the track of the aeroplane whether it is

20:00 climbing or diving and it is sort of programmed in. It was one of the best, the German 88 millimetre gun was one of the best weapons of the war.

**Can you tell us more about that gun, about that weaponry I mean?**

About the.

**About the 8 millimetre?**

88 millimetre.

**88 millimetre.**

Yeah they were fairly, they were normally

20:30 in a battery, automatically controlled. And they could push up a great area of explosions in the air but I didn't know much about the gun myself I wasn't a gunner except that we had a very deep respect for it.

**How did you feel you mentioned before that the Germans and the Italians**

21:00 **you regarded them as gallant, did you have much contact with them apart from being at a distance?**

Yeah they captured people, I had an Italian batman once and he was very good, very loyal and we became good friends. And the Italian pilots were wonderful aerobatic pilots but we had better machines so we prevailed. But I

21:30 spoke the Germans were always, always hard to beat, they were very determined and they were very brave and they had very good equipment, you know their weaponry was wonderful.

**Did you every encounter them in the air as well?**

Not to speak of only about two, twice

22:00 I was one of the few aeroplanes that shot a 410 down and another 88 yongus 88.

**What happened in that incident?**

Oh well the aeroplane, in the case of the 410 the plane just blew up, the chaps didn't have a show of getting out of it.

**And there were several fighter pilots involved in shooting it down not just one?**

22:30 Yeah there were six of us all having a squirt so the poor chaps really didn't have much of a show.

**Was it another fighter pilot just a solo or was it a bomber?**

Well this is about Lake Garda in northern Italy and we were just on a fighter sweep and we were sweeping for other fighter aircraft and we picked up this 410 and clobbered it.

**Just going back on just defining terms a little bit more you**

23:00 **also mentioned the word 'stooging'.**

The word.

**'Stooging', is that right?**

Say the word again.

**Stooging?**

Oh well that was just filling in time really doing simple tasks like flying, ferry flying, you know, that is what they call stooging is just filling in time really.

**Sort of like cruising or?**

Yeah well you would be looking for

23:30 something to, you'd be, ferry flying I called stooging, it was just stooging around, filling in time.

**So with the ferry flying, just how would that actually work, would you, would you just literally jump in a plane and drive where you were meant to go or?**

Yes well you would normally pick it up from this engineering place where they prepared the Spitfires or overhauled them and

24:00 they would have orders to deliver in our case say these two 5B Spitfires to 322 wing in Italy. So we flew from North Africa to Italy and delivered them.

**Were there any dangers involved with ferrying, were there any dangers involved with ferrying?**

Not really, not really, we had control of the air by this time. Yeah

24:30 there was maybe a one percent chance that you would run into enemy aircraft, but not great you could look after yourself anyhow.

**You mentioned earlier that there was different types of spitfires, you mentioned spitfire 5 and spitfire 9, what are the differences between them or are they marginal?**

Power was the enormous difference between them and weight and firepower in addition to engine power. The first Spitfire was I think half the weight

25:00 of the final Spitfire. And it was just power and they went from 1 to 21, the Spitfire or the Spitfire 21 was the last production Spitfire, but it was interesting because we had, the Germans would, they introduced the 190, well that was quicker in most circumstances than the Spitfire 5.

25:30 So we introduced the spit 9 and that held the 190 but without that, the need the urgency to improve the performance of the aircraft that probably wouldn't have happened. Then they had very, when the Germans woke up that we had a spit 9, it was better at 18,000 feet than the 190 they took all sorts of tactics, and we could change then the blower

26:00 height with a Merlin 61 engine or a 66, we could change the height at which the super charger came in. Well the super charger gives you so much more power and they come in at a certain height and if you can fight at that height you will do much better than the height the hun dictates, because he will try and dictate the height for his best performance. So you know there are a lot of subtleties in the thing.

26:30 But the French, the German and British fighters seemed to leapfrog. One would improve in a subtle small way perhaps and that would be compensated for and then the Brits would improve with a two stage blower, so it was an interesting development. So the Spitfire was the only aeroplane I think that was flying in 19 1937

27:00 and was still in massive production at the end of the war. Some 22,000 were produced. And you can now if you want to buy one it will cost you about 1.5 million dollars today.

**What are the implications of power in the performance of them in the modified versions?**

Well power is the key to, the key to successful fighting, unless you have got the power

27:30 at least the same power and performance, power gives you performance, and unless you have got the same competitive performance you are not going prevail.

**How did it give you good performance any more height in the air, or is it better?**

The power?

**Yeah the power itself.**

Well it just gives you more speed, a quicker climb a higher ceiling,

28:00 you know the late Spitfires can get up to 40,000 feet but without the power they are not going anywhere.

**Were the Germans innovating their technologies as quickly as?**

Yes they were very quick in the various marks of the 109 and then the 190 and then the long nose 190, they were very quick to improve their equipment and then of course the Germans came through with those magnificent early jets the MET 62 and

28:30 163.

**Did you have contact with those at all?**

No never saw them. They were mostly based in Germany, no but they were very hot aeroplanes, very

quick for their day.

**When you were just going back to when you were actually in the Spitty [spitfire] and you were actually hit by the flack, where were you actually**

29:00 **hit on the plane?**

Where was I hit?

**Yeah.**

In the port aleon, the aleon is the thing that gives you this and that was really fused to the main plane and I didn't know it immediately but I was obviously hit in the coolant system or in the engine.

**So how long did you have time to get out of the plane?**

Well I managed to get out to sea, I stayed with it until it, it seized up, it was about to seize up

29:30 anyhow there was nothing on the clocks and I was afraid I was going to burn so.

**I was going to ask you, with, what was the general view when expensive machinery like the Spitties were lost during battle and things happened to them?**

Well normally sort of later in the war there were plenty of them and you would get a replacement so it didn't really worry you

30:00 and there were plenty of pilots also. But during the battle of Britain they were short of course and they were, it was bad if you lost an aeroplane and pilots were short then too.

**What happens and how were you treated when you were rescued in on the little dingy in the water?**

When I?

**When you were rescued by the Walrus in**

30:30 **the when you were?**

How was I treated by whom by?

**By rescuers and what was their attitude towards you when they rescued you?**

Well one of relief on both sides, but the poor chap who broke his aeroplane as he landed into that swell you know he wasn't feeling too happy about things but you know it was there and it was

31:00 taxing that night, that, my cigarettes were wet and at that time I was a heavy smoker so and I asked the pilot of the walrus to give me a cigarette and he said "No smoking we are invading Elba tonight and the boats are out". And I looked up and there is an exhaust flare about 1.5 feet long about half a metre of exhaust flare coming out so I pointed up at that and so

31:30 he handed over his cigarettes because mine were all wet.

**So were you and other people that were rescued in situations were they were either injured or wounded were they considered heroes or was it just part of the way things were?**

Just part of the operation, you know it was an every day occurrence.

**And when you were returned back to your,**

32:00 **back to the rest of your squadron how did they respond to you when you came back?**

Oh with much joking, and "Oh we didn't want you back, throw him back" no it is just rival funny things, they make a big joke of it.

**What how would you describe an Australian,**

32:30 **how would you describe the RAF and compared to, I mean I understand that there were the Commonwealth kind of countries involved, how would you describe the Australians compared to the other countries involved, were there particular characteristics of the Australians that stand out?**

Well the Australians in, who were in bomber command in the UK had a magnificent record, wonderful record.

33:00 And all the Australians squadrons serving in the RAF also had very very fine records but there was so many Australians serving in RAF squadrons that, that is where most of us were in RAF squadrons and the chaps who were still in the Australia were unfortunate in a way because Macarthur [General Macarthur] didn't want the Australian Air Force or army really to participate in the action he wanted to claim it all for himself

33:30 and America he didn't want to spread the glory so he hogged it and precluded the Royal Australian Air Force from any major operations through the islands.

**Why do you think he was motivated to do that?**

Why did he do it? Because of his mad ego.

**Was there a sort of colonial attitude or anything like that involved or?**

From Macarthur? Oh no I don't think

34:00 so.

**No nothing sort of?**

No it was just his mad ego, I think he wanted to be, he and his boys, I shall return, and he did return and precluded Australia from participating.

**I would really like to go back to where we were in Rimini and continue the story, we actually came up to the point where you were a pilot commander.**

34:30 A flight commander.

**Oh sorry a flight commander and I think you just arrived in Rimini is that right, is that where we got up to?**

Just arrived in Rimini, yeah well I was made a flight commander on 72 squadron in 324 wing in the south of France and came back to Florence and then to, over to Rimini. But a flight commander a squadron is broken up into two flights, A flight and B flight.

35:00 Each flight has its CO and it has its own engineering warrant officer normally and it has its own pilots, although it shares the mess of course and its own ground crew, now in this way by having its two flights broken up we could move really from, we could move over a distance of over 300 miles and not loose, we would take off from one place

35:30 and land at the new place and we would have sent one of the flights forward to receive the aircraft and the others to despatch the aircraft so that we never lost one hour of operation in moving the squadron from point A to 300 miles away to point B. This impressed the Americans. We, you know the incredible efficiency of the royal air force at the time.

**Why**

36:00 **was it important to impress the Americans at that stage?**

We didn't even think of impressing the Americans we just did the job.

**Did it just kind of come back as sort of bits of information that the Americans were impressed or how did you find out that?**

They told us. And gave us all sorts of commendations and sent us copies of them.

**What was your impression of the Americans?**

36:30 Well they were very brave, very well equipped, sometimes very badly lead, sometimes well lead. I had the impression that they were a bit too casual about things, they weren't quite as positive as I think we were.

37:00 And they were, my impression is well they, this is the rule we will do this, they wouldn't deviate from the rule to save themselves or a few aeroplanes, that I think is the difference, they didn't think really, they followed orders and didn't think for themselves.

**You wouldn't describe Australians as casual?**

37:30 Not in the air no, in the air no they were very, very determined, just followed the RAF line really and we had a saying in the RAF 'never explain and never complain' and that is not bad advice.

**What about the British, what were they, what were your impressions of them?**

Oh they were magnificent, they were fine, and we were all mixed up with the Brits

38:00 and the South Africans and the Canadians and the Americans all in the one squadron in the wing and it was really very good, a mixed squadron was the best place to be.

**Because why, because of why, why was it the best place to be?**

Oh just because of the camaraderie, the funny sort of fellowship that sort of developed among all these nations for the

38:30 one cause in the one spot. And they all had their quirky national characteristics.



**That might be a good point to wrap up this tape.**

## **Tape 8**

- 00:41 Well one night while we were just south of Bastia in Corsica we were raided or our wing was raided by
- 01:00 we estimate 25 yongus 88s and they dropped a whole pattern of anti personnel bombs among the aeroplanes, although they were dispersed, most of them were hit and made unserviceable, not a great number destroyed but they were unserviceable for a day or two and there were a few chaps killed.
- 01:30 I had a friend and he said he threw himself under a truck as all these bombs were falling and then he realised where he was, he was under a petrol bowser, the truck was a petrol tanker, so you know that was a very silly thing, but we lost quite a few chaps, I think 18 or 20 chaps were killed. But
- 02:00 the, they had a pretty devastating effect on the serviceability of the wing so that the next day we were only able to muster six serviceable aeroplanes and we were able to do this by taking the propeller off one and the wheel off another and sort of just making aeroplanes out of bits really. And it was very good that we were able to get these aeroplanes serviceable because six of us were
- 02:30 called out in mid afternoon the following day to attack four enemy R boats, an R boat is a fast coastal cargo vessel about 40 metres long and these four R boats had been reported by, somebody had reported them, some intelligence service. Anyhow
- 03:00 we picked up these four R boats not far from off Genoa. And we climbed into them and six Spitfires that was 12 20 millimetre cannon and 24 machine guns so we, we really destroyed these four R boats, at least they were dead in the water smoking and one was going around and around in circles and we all used all our ammunition so that
- 03:30 was really quits for the previous night, we felt much better about it then, that is just an incident that is a bit blood thirsty so you know you didn't feel entirely happy about strafing these poor chaps, but they had anti aircraft guns but we soon, our fire was much stronger and we swept them off the deck really. But that was a pretty successful
- 04:00 operation.

**So when were you at that time in Corsica, where were you when that happened, that incident happened where several of the planes were made unserviceable?**

Where was I? I was drinking beer up at our squadron mess, which was away from the airfield and up a beautiful creek a little river and no bombs were dropped near me that night

- 04:30 but they certainly did on the airfield. Very noisy, spectacular.

**So what happened? Did you just hear it, were you in the bar and you could just hear it?**

Well once the bombers had gone we sort of immediately drove down there to see if we could help but things were pretty well organised.

**Do you want to have just a sip of water?**

- 05:00 **So you went down to go and help?**

Yes we went to see if we could help some of the people that had been injured.

**And what kinds of things did you encounter?**

Oh you know people with bits missing and limbs and you know just these anti personnel bombs, they are very devastating as they are designed, as anti personnel, it is not a huge explosion

- 05:30 but it is enough to destroy and severely damage an aeroplane and a person.

**So how do they, what is the impact of them and how much do they effect?**

Well they drop from the air and they explode on impact and I suppose an anti personnel fragment would travel probably, probably 15 metres.

- 06:00 It would be lethal within 15 metres.

**So it is not just the impact of what it hits it will then?**

It spreads, it fragments and those little fragments are pretty lethal.

**So an attack like that would have been totally unexpected?**

Yeah, completely, we didn't have a night fighter squadron base with us. And I suspect

06:30 the Germans knew that because they just took their time in the raid about 20 minutes it was on and our flak wasn't nearly as effective as the German flak. Just put on a good fireworks show.

**Were there medics and things like that available on hand?**

Oh yes every squadron had a Doctor and then there was a wing, there was a mobile

07:00 sort of hospital that we had so, they were pretty well looked after.

**So was it adequate enough to?**

Oh yes yes, no there was, it was ok, everyone was well looked after, there was plenty medical assistance and there were beds, hospital beds, all in tents but nevertheless.

**Things like**

07:30 **that are quite devastating, how do the other survivors respond knowing that their mates have been?**

Well you know it is a war and we sort of expect that. It is not you know, no one is surprised at it.

**Nobody was effected by it or lost their cool or had second thoughts,**

08:00 **reservations?**

Oh well you know if you lose a friend you are always a bit upset but as I say it is not unexpected in a war. And we were well and truly into one.

**Yep, do you think that the, you could maybe expand on when you were awarded the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] and your time in Rimini?**

08:30 Well I suppose I was awarded the DFC for fine leader ship I think the citation says. If I give you the citation

09:00 to read. Or do you want me to read it, no no it is better if, it is better you read it I think.

**Yeah it is better if you read it because then it comes from you not me.**

This is a citation received on the award of my DFC it is undated but it would have to be

09:30 late 1944 or early January 45 perhaps. It is from the Governor General addressed to my parents presumably Honours and Awards Royal Australian Air Force, Flight Lieutenant Dudley Clyde Dunn 409284.

10:00 And the citation reads, "Flight Lieutenant Dunn has proved himself to be an outstanding flight commander, whose fine leadership, courage and devotion to duty have largely contributed to the many successes achieved by his crews. On one occasion his aircraft

10:30 was forced down to sea but undaunted by this hazardous experience he has continued to operate against the enemy with the utmost determination and invariably presses home his attack with great vigour".

**That is wonderful and was that sent to your family or was it?**

11:00 No it was sent to my family at Wagga.

**So how, what is the procedure with when you are awarded such a thing?**

Like a hell of a good party, that is the form and you buy the drinks. Normally of course if I had been in the UK it probably would have been Buckingham Palace but I was virtually

11:30 on my way home at the end of my tour, my operational tour. So it was collected from, I was operating in Brisbane for Qantas when I got word to report to a, I have forgotten what they are called, a levy at Government House in Brisbane to be presented with the DFC, physically sort of pinned on.

**So**

12:00 **you found out about it in Rimini but it wasn't until?**

Oh no I knew about it in December 1944.

**Were there many of you awarded a DFC?**

Oh yes quite a few, quite a few, I couldn't give you the numbers but, particularly in the RAF where there was plenty of action, you know there were quite a few DFCs

12:30 awarded.

**So in Rimini you were a flight commander?**

Yes.

**What were some of the duties that happened and what were the details of that time?**

Well you were in charge of normally about 10 or 11 aeroplanes. Ten or eleven pilots, 120 ground staff, a certain amount of administration but not much, it was mostly flying

- 13:00 and leadership but you just have to see to it that the ground personnel were happy and the ground staff and mechanics and fitters and armourers and the wireless people, maintenance people were quite magnificent, they would work all night you know to get your aeroplane serviceable. One of the duties I had as a flight commander was to serve
- 13:30 the airmen Christmas, Christmas in the wing mess Christmas dinner and of course we all had a lot to drink, it was snowing outside and then after I had a lot to drink and I had finished serving the Christmas dinner to the airmen, I remembered I had two chaps sitting in aeroplanes at the end of the strip at absolute readiness you know. So I decided being a good flight commander
- 14:00 that I would go and relieve them, so I took another chap who was probably as drunk as I was and we relieved these two chaps and I was just being strapped in when we got a double yellow from the tower, ferry pistol and there was snow and the cloud base was about 200 feet. So I pressed the button, got the engine going and opened up and the chap who had been in it before hadn't
- 14:30 kept the engine warm, so the result was it threw oil all over my windscreen so that I couldn't see. So there I was drunk, in a Spitfire, in a snowstorm, unable to see forward so it was pretty interesting. Some poor chap had ditched a Baltimore, it was a large bomber that we had, and there was no hope of finding anymore but we tried,
- 15:00 even at 100 feet we sort of, I was looking out the side of the aeroplane. We tried to find him and I was airborne for about half an hour, it was obviously, if they had pranged they would have been frozen, the water was freezing. So we struggled back to Rimini and I sent the number two into land because I knew I would have a hell of a time because I couldn't see. And the strip is only a little peel plate
- 15:30 strip only about 30 metres wide and mud and everything through it so it is very slippery and I think I made about five attempts to land before I finally made it. The word was out of course that I had this trouble because I reported it and there were all my alcoholic friends applauding and jeering every time I missed a landing and then we had much rejoicing of course more rejoicing when I finally did get down.
- 16:00 But I have got a log, a note in my logbook, never again fly when tight.

**What is it like when you are flying in such conditions, snowing and?**

Well we were pretty experienced on the aeroplane and you could sort of crab it in and look out the side and then kick it straight, but that is alright if you have got a very wide strip or a grass airfield but we have only got about 30 metres of

- 16:30 slippery steel and mud either side of that, it is not that easy, anyhow.

**And what was it like spending Christmas in Rimini, was that Christmas day or, was that Christmas day?**

Yes it was, yeah Christmas day.

**And what was it like spending a white Christmas in Rimini?**

Well we just had a hell of a good party.

- 17:00 Like any other Christmas, well it is just, the Adriatic can be very cold. In summer it is a delight but in winter it can be very cold.

**And what year was that?**

It was Christmas 1944.

**So you must have, you had been away for, how many years since you had seen your family or had you had contact with them?**

No I had no contact with them

- 17:30 apart from letters. It was 42, early June 42 say, 42, 43, 44, 42, 43, 44, 45, so there was three years then.

**So there must have been a lot of home sick fighter pilots and aircrew?**

I don't think so, we

- 18:00 didn't, there was so much action nobody was worried about being homesick.

**Are fighter pilots addicted to adrenalin?**

No, I don't think so, I think they know when it is pumping.

18:30 But a lot of us were, we drank a lot, you know we were pretty drunk every night. You know whatever the booze was in Italy, it was a very poor brandy or a marsala or vermouth because beer and scotch were very very rare. It was quite an occasion when you

19:00 get onto a load of scotch or gin. So we drank a lot, we relaxed in a very dedicated way and that didn't you know we didn't have time to be homesick.

**Was it quite a culture, was that just the RAF or was that a mixed country squadron?**

No my squadron the 72 that was a mixed squadron

19:30 72 RAF and it had Alabama was in it, he was an American from Alabama, we had another American Jimmy something, we had New Zealanders, we had South Africans, plenty of Brits, Australians, a Pole I think at least one Pole,

20:00 that is about it I think. But that is not a bad spread of nationalities.

**Was it just the Aussies that were into the booze?**

No everyone, everyone. It was part of, you know part of life really.

**And did you have much contact with the locals?**

Not much, we had one my co flight commander he was a CO of B flight,

20:30 he was a real Romanoff, he was a, his official title was Flight Lieutenant the Prince Emanuel Galitsen [?], and Emanuel had cousins everywhere, he had them in, in the south of France, he had cousins in Florence, wherever you went Emanuel would have a cousin. In France we reckoned we

21:00 needed some decent transport so he got his cousin on the job and his cousin organised a magnificent Alfa Romeo Monoposto with a driver all operated on aircraft fuel of course. But that was a, that was a great joy. Old Emanuel Galitsen he could speak, he could speak Russian, English, French, Spanish, Italian. He was quite incredible,

21:30 he only died recently.

**Whereabouts is Rimini in relation to the rest of Europe?**

Rimini is on the Adriatic coast of Italy, that is about two thirds of the way up the leg of Italy on the eastern side.

**Did it feel vulnerable being there, the squadron being stationed there?**

Not

22:00 really, not really, we were vulnerable to night attack from enemy aircraft, they wouldn't move them during the day, that didn't happen they just didn't have the aircraft to use. No there was, we weren't, we weren't conscious of any vulnerability to attack, there were all sorts of stories abroad that the Germans would land on the beach and cut

22:30 the, we had a running along the beach there was a fuel pipeline running right up too the front and that obviously would have been a prime target for a German raid, but it never happened.

**You were just talking a second ago about one of, Emanuel Galitsen. Did you have a nickname**

23:00 **or some name that your other guys used to call you?**

Oh yes later on for some reason or other I was called Dasher it was probably nicely alliterative with Dunn, Dasher Dudley Dunn so it had a nice alliteration about it I suppose, but anyhow it seems to have stuck to me, I still get called Dasher.

**Can you remember how it originated?**

No not exactly I can't remember it, I suppose

23:30 we were all Dashers we would dash here and dash there, it just seemed to grow.

**Did you as a flight commander find that you had a different relationship to everybody else and more responsibility did that change things?**

Well we, well yes I had a great sense of responsibility, well I had 120

24:00 airmen and 9, 10 or 11 pilots and probably a dozen aeroplanes to look after, plus armourers and fitters and but it wasn't difficult the adjutant would pick up the squadron, the adjutant would pick that up and our main job was to lead in the air. That was our job.

**Was moving into**

24:30 **flight commander position a natural progression for fighter pilots at that point or were you one of a selective?**

Oh well you had to have a bit of a record of being able to handle yourself and having some sense and sense of responsibility to others so they were very carefully chosen. Old, dear old Rofold [Archibald?] Duncan Smith

25:00 chose me in the south of France to you know the group captain he interviewed me and he seemed to agree that you know I would be suitable and I had a great time as flight commander on 72 squadron, it was a wonderful experience.

**How many of your, of the other of your guys were chosen to be holding positions like**

25:30 **that?**

Well Frank, Frank Cooper was still, he was made a flight commander on Treble 1 and that was it I think, only two of us were flight commanders. Because when we were transferred in the south of France, the old wing was breaking up, it was going back to the UK to be broken up and you know

26:00 sent off in all sorts of directions. So I was very happy to continue to be operational and enjoyed being a flight commander, but there were only two of us promoted to flight commanders.

**Did you feel quite vindicated that the work that you had done had enabled you to hold this position?**

Oh well I think it was a matter of record,

26:30 you know they wrote confidential reports which I never saw but you know I know Frank Cooper and I were pretty good at what we did and you know completely confident so and that I think shone through in the promotion.

**Indeed. I am just interested, earlier you mentioned that some of the relationships between other flight commanders and**

27:00 **the fighter pilots and some of the aircrew, because I have heard some pretty terrible stories how the infantry were treated by in their rank and file, how was the relationship between the aircrew, was it a different kind of situation because the stakes were a lot higher?**

Aircrew aircrew, airmen, an airmen is a sort of private, was splendid, was excellent we had great respect for these chaps

27:30 because they would work their heart out to get your aeroplane serviceable, you know the fitter 2E was the engine man, the 2A was the airframe man, the armourers would re arm your aeroplane and do it quickly, the radio technicians they were on the ball even the cooks and the medico they were all, we all sort of respected each other.

28:00 And as a matter of fact we used to go down and play football in the sergeant's mess, so you know. So it was all a very close relationship and mutual respect from the pilots, all the pilots with all the ground crew.

**Did you find when you, when you spoke to your brothers in the navy when they came back did you, did they have different experiences**

28:30 **of with that kind of relationship between the ranks?**

No I think the navy, I think the navy was pretty stuffy about you know their relationships, officer seamen relationships, although in a small ship I am told it was pretty good, but they were a bit stuffy, and really they didn't see a hell of a lot of action in the Australian waters.

29:00 So there is nothing more boring than being trained to fight and being unable to do so. It gets very boring and very wearing.

**So what were some of the duties that you carried out as flight commander in that squadron in Rimini at that time?**

You were mostly in the air, you would lead the squadron to carry out its function its operation for the day, whether it was dive bombing or

29:30 strafing or fighter sweep or whatever but it was leading in the air and sometimes I would lead the whole squadron of 12 aeroplanes and as would the CO and the other flight commander so you know but it was leadership, you have to command your flight and that was in the air.

30:00 And be sensible about it.

**What were your approaches to leadership?**

What was my?

**Approach to leadership.**

Well it was to do the job and do it well to the best of our ability, not to show any fear but just climb into it and do the job. That was, do the job and observe and

30:30 then debrief, we had a briefing before we went from the intelligence officer and we would come back and we'd debrief with him and then you would make sure all the ground crew were ok when we came back, that was my duty, my approach to it was just to make sure that everyone was ok and well looked after.

**Do you think you learnt a lot from your cousin who you mentioned was also**

31:00 **a flight commander?**

No never heard from them. There were three of them in the air force and one was flying liberators out of Darwin I think but I never heard from them but I saw them all after the war.

**You mentioned that one cousin in particular was quite, was a flight commander when you were, when you were going through your initial training and you spoke very highly of him, did do you think made an impact**

31:30 **to your approach as a flight commander?**

No no, well no being a flight commander at an elementary flying training school has no bearing on being a flight commander of an operational Spitfire squadron.

**So it is a totally different kettle of fish [situation]?**

Totally, totally different kettle of fish.

**So when you were in that position did you experience any**

32:00 **mishaps or kind of problems that might have, like what was the general line of things that happened when you were in Rimini at that time?**

We lost the odd, the odd pilot, the odd accident and flak of course none from enemy aircraft operations but certainly quite a few from flak.

32:30 But generally it was, our losses were not exceedingly high, they were quite tolerable and didn't worry anyone really.

**And what was the, just in terms of numbers so I can get my head around the scope of it, how many were there from each of these different countries and how many men were you in**

33:00 **command of at that time?**

Well I was in command of as I say 120 airmen and 9 or 10 pilots and probably 10 or 12 aeroplanes.

**And you were also in contact with the other squadrons that were close by?**

No this was just my flight, no the same number would happen in B flight there were A flight and B flight and that was 72 squadron but this was repeated four times in

33:30 other squadrons, there were four squadrons to a wing but all on the same airfield.

**Ok, ok true. So how long was that period of time in Rimini with that squadron and did you then, what happened then, what happened after that?**

After Rimini? I was declared OTE operational tour

34:00 expired because I had done something like 165 operational trips and being shot down and shot up a few times and so they decided to give me a rest so I was made chief flying instructor out at an advanced flying unit out at Perugia, and then down to another, we moved from Perugia to La Guardo which is just south of

34:30 Salerno, still in Italy. And it was there that, we had something like 70 odd aeroplanes, we had Spitfires, Kittyhawks, Mustangs, Bostons, I think that was it. And it was there, the idea of that place was really to bring the people

35:00 who had not been flying operationally for some time. Just to give them a course for about three weeks, as I was straight off the squadron so and I was just bringing them up to speed on the current operational techniques.

**Like a refresher course kind of thing?**

Well it was a refresher course yes yes it was a refresher. But also you know we had to sort of

35:30 relay to these people who were coming through and some were going to a squadron for the first time,

we had to get over to them the operational techniques that we employed at that time, which were so, they changed every year or so you know.

**So they may, was there different aircraft, you mentioned the kitty**

36:00 **hawks and various other aircraft, were you familiar with those ones as well as, as well as you were with the spitfires?**

No I wasn't as familiar, I made sure, I flew them but just to say I had flown them. The Kittyhawk I flew quite a bit, that was the P40, the Mustang not so much and the Boston hardly at all.

**And what, just as an overview briefly what**

36:30 **what were the distinctions between the different aircrafts and did you still love the spitfire most?**

Oh well, well no, the Spitfire is the most beautiful machine to fly, it has got a personality of its own. The Kittyhawk is a beautiful stable gun platform and the P51 Mustang has a terrific range and high speed but it is

37:00 not a fighter aeroplane that the Spitfire is. I think the Kittyhawk was stronger and a better gun platform and they were very good in dive bombing also Kittyhawks. But it was there that we are now talking about May 1945 that we knew VE day was imminent victory in Europe day so we

37:30 had a conference at with the senior people that we didn't want anyone killing themselves to celebrate the great event so we immobilised all 72 squadron, all 72 aeroplanes on the airfield. So that no one was able to take an aeroplane into the air and try to beat up have fun but kill himself so.

**Were there many incidents of that**

38:00 **happening before?**

Yes many, many, you know many on many occasions people would kill themselves in a celebratory beat up you know trying to do a climbing roll and having had too much to drink or some such thing and falling out of it.

**That might be a good point to just wrap because I think it might be the end of the tape isn't it. Yep ok.**

## Tape 9

00:41 **I just want to go back to the night you were bombed at Pereta by the Junker 88s, you were in the bar as you said, basically after they had dropped their bombs and you went to help out, can you just walk us through exactly what you**

01:00 **did, who you helped and what happened?**

Well, we went down in 1500 weight trucks and jeeps, everyone sort of just went down to see if they could help, but there was mayhem generally with aircraft damaged, a few people killed and a few injured but the casualties were remarkably light considering the number of small

01:30 anti personnel bombs that were dropped. But it was obviously apparent once I got there that we weren't going to get many serviceable aeroplanes the next day, that was quite clear, there were people a bit shaken, but generally you know people accepted it is war and they were

02:00 pretty calm about the whole thing you know, there was no great distress anywhere.

**So once the truck arrived you got out and what did you automatically do?**

I automatically walked around our own dispersals where our aircraft were and where any airmen who had been hit or wounded would have been working. And I walked around you know my own 12 aeroplanes and I could see

02:30 that I could of perhaps been able to fly one maybe two with half an hours work on it. But none of my flight were injured, they all escaped miraculously none of the ground staff, a couple of pilots in the wing were killed and they were already being attended to and comforted so we

03:00 were just there really to see what the damage was and to help if we could. And we couldn't we weren't sort of medically trained and there was plenty of plenty of expert medical help available.

**Was that the first time that you had been on a base or anywhere and it had been attacked from the sky?**

No I was in Algiers I was bombed and I was driving a jeep, I had been out to see my girlfriend Gay Hicks

03:30 and driving back at about midnight in a jeep there was a very loud explosion almost beside me and an eruption of earth and I bailed out of the jeep and into a, into an American laundry mobile laundry that they had so. So I suffered the bomb raid in clean sheets.

04:00 No they were the only two bombings that I actually encountered. I think I dropped more bombs than were aimed at me.

**Ok. Turning our attention now to the chaplains, you said there was some good stories about the chaplains and how they operated,**

04:30 **three of them in particular I take it, what are their names and?**

There names were Bob Davies was the Church of England padre, Johnny McNamara was the Roman Catholic and Fred McKay was the Presbyterian. And these three operated as one and was in Corsica, they came to see the

05:00 Australian chaps in Corsica pilots and they wanted to go pig shooting so someone pointed them off in the right direction and they were confronted by an irate Corsican farmer because they had shot this big sow, so the padres were very embarrassed. But they were splendid chaps and they progressed, and Bob Davies

05:30 I think became Bishop of Tasmania and Fred McKay of course headed up the Presbyterian Church and was famous for his work on the inland. And Johnny McNamara I am not sure where he finished, but they all progressed their calling very well.

**In what ways progressed their calling,**

06:00 **good witness, preached?**

Oh look they were just so good and their brief services, Sunday services or anytime services were to the point and they could take over from each other and it was just magic, there was no margin between the religions. They worked as one and it was quite magnificent.

06:30 And Bob Davies and Fred McKay became firm friends after the war.

**You are not a religious man are you?**

No.

**How did they touch your lives, your life sorry?**

Oh they were just good friends, good chaps, I respected them and I think you know they respected me and over these fleeting exciting encounters during the war in

07:00 Corsica and Italy I got to know them over a long period of time or be it glassingly on each occasion, but we built up a good friendship, which endured for quite a while after the war.

**Was the chaplain's roll to listen to the men's problems and counsel them in times of difficulty or was it to actually teach them in respect to?**

They were many pronged in an operational squadron

07:30 they were there, they would, there was a wing padre, there was no squadron padres, but there was a padre on the wing oh several and they would, they would counsel where it was necessary, if anyone needed a bit of counselling. They would console those who lost a friend or something, they would carry out

08:00 church services, burial services and any spiritual requirements were met very readily, but they didn't drone on with you know boring sermons, they were all good punchy sermons.

**Now boys will be boys, did they give the chaplains a hard time at times?**

Oh yes sometimes yes yes,

08:30 particularly in the mess you know they would take it out of them but in a great sense of fun you know, for instance someone would go up to Fred McKay and said "Father I want to confess" and Fred was a Presbyterian of course or alternatively they would go up to Johnny McNamara and say "You know no sport on a Sunday,

09:00 no dancing". Johnny is Roman Catholic, they just fitted in beautifully because it was over to them really, they were very intelligent men and they knew, they knew where to fit, which way to go.

**Ok. So there were no actual jokes played on upon them despite a bit of banter between them?**

09:30 Oh no doubt there were because they all had a good sense of fun. But I never, with those three padres became friends, but I was never with them very much not being on an Australian squadron and they concentrated their endeavours on the Australian squadrons and only occasionally would meet Australians serving in RAF squadrons. But on 239 wing there were two Australian squadrons and they



spent a lot of time

10:00 there.

**You talked earlier about football in the sergeants mess can you explain the rules and how it actually operated, a typical game?**

Well everyone was desirably drunk I suppose before you declared it on and the football itself would be a waste paper basket or something and the idea was to get it up the other end of the hall or the

10:30 mess, the mess hall. And it doesn't matter how you did it, so the idea was to get it there. So it was a free for all. We had people with broken legs, oh it was quite common to break a leg in the mess.

**Now you are a boxer, you are a little bit of boxer, how did you fair?**

Oh well there was no, it was just good fun, there were no punch ups.

11:00 No one minded being knocked around, it was just good happy, rough, young men's fun. Another game we played was book book, which was a South African game. And the anchorman gets his back against the side of the mess or hut and his team then packed down like in a scrum except in a straight line and the idea of the opposing team was to

11:30 break the back of the team that is in the scrum and you do this three or four times and inevitably there is a broken limb somewhere you know, not every night, but we would average about a broken limb every three or four weeks in the mess, in the various messes on the wing.

**Now you seem to be a pretty gutsy sort of bloke especially about the B25 story you told**

12:00 **earlier, what is one of the funniest pranks you played on your friends or the funniest things that you did?**

Oh it is difficult to recall immediately. There were I relived that only about six weeks ago I was

12:30 at a dinner party here and there was a celebration, they had a marquee and there was about a 10 degrees slope on the ground and I found my chair was leaning against the girls chair, a girl I knew very well, a very good sport and I looked down the line and I just recalled something that happened in a similar situation in Italy. And I reckon I could domino the 14 people

13:00 down that side of me, down hill. So I asked June Ross who was beside me "I reckon we can get those in one hit" and she I said "Are you going to be in it?" she said "Lets go for it" so I, she collapsed and we dominoed the whole 14. And that was exactly the sort of thing you know that we did in the mess. That was only a repeat of one that happened much more vigorously in Italy.

13:30 **You mentioned earlier that one of our mates enjoyed a few dirty songs, do you remember telling that story?**

That was Cocky Dundas, well we all did.

**Can you sing us a couple of songs?**

Oh god, they are pretty rough.

**It would be good for us?**

Well there is a song called Salome. One verse of it I can remember very well.

14:00 'She's a great fat cow, she is twice the size of me, she's got hairs on the belly like the branches on a tree, she can run, jump, fight, fuck, wheel a barrow, push a truck, that's my girl Salome'. So that is.

**And another one?**

Oh they get worse.

**It would be good, can we please have one?**

I can't. I hesitate.

14:30 **When I was playing football we had a few so, please share them?**

Oh yes I am sure. In Mobile did you sing in Mobile, it was an American song I think.

15:00 'The eagles they fly high in Mobile, the eagles they fly high in Mobile, they shit right in your eye in Mobile and then it goes in Mobile in Mobile in Mobile, there is a shortage of good whores in Mobile, there is a shortage of good whores but there are not holes in the floors and keyholes in the doors, it all happens in Mobile, there is no paper in the bogs in Mobile, there is no paper in the bogs

15:30 in Mobile, so they wait until it clogs and they saw it off in logs, there is no paper in the bogs in Mobile'. So. That is a football song.

**Any more? What was your favourite song with your mates?**

Oh my favourite was Salome. And I have just given you the punch

- 16:00 verse from Salome. The others I'm afraid I have forgotten. 'There was once an Indian maid and she was so afraid that some buggar would stuff it up her as she lay sleeping in the shade, now the moonshine night pretty red wing pretty red wing then the warrior, this warrior he was wise,
- 16:30 he crept between her thighs with an old gumboot on the end of his shoe he soon made red wing open up her eyes'. And then it goes on. 'Red wing she whipped out a barry knife, chopped his buttocks from his arse and now his love life is a story of the past'. And that is about it. What else have you got?

**Keep in mind that future generations**

- 17:00 **obviously a hundred years from now, are you sure there are not one or two more songs there for me?**

I will send them to you.

**Sing them to me?**

Oh there are a few blood thirsty ones. To the tune of Lilli Marlene I think and this was a 239 wing song.

- 17:30 They, the Kittyhawks had 6.5 machine guns, as did the Mustang. And this is a Desert Harrier's song I think, pretty blood thirsty. '6.5s beside you petrol truck ahead, wonderful position for filling in with lead, I flamer for you, a grave for Fritz [Germans], he's blown to bits, right where he sits, and poor
- 18:00 Malane's boyfriend will never see Malane'. That is a terribly bloody approach.

**That is good, it gets us the very culture of you know picture fighting and what is actually happening at the time.**

Well it was you know, great to get a flamer as a petrol truck but you didn't even think of the people inside of it. And that was the amazing thing about the war, you were shooting at an aeroplane

- 18:30 not at a person inside it, or you were shooting at a truck or you were trying to bomb a building, not people in it. Well the war was, to me a great education so, it really was my university I think. And I am not proposing that war should be some sort of a finishing school for anyone because
- 19:00 that is the last thing we want. But it was thrust upon me and it certainly broadened my country Wagga boy outlook. I came back a different person.

**Lets come back to the bars though, there is still one more song I think you have got in you to tell me?**

Oh there is the 'Old cats on the roof tops'.

- 19:30 Well you know that one don't you?

**No can you sing it for me?**

'Cats on the roof tops, cats on the tiles, cats with the syphilis, cats with the piles, cats with their arseholes reething smiles which they revel with the joys of copulation, now the donkey is a solitary bloke, he very very seldom has a poke but when he does he lets it soak as he revels in the joys of copulation, now the hippopotamus

- 20:00 so it seems very very seldom has wet dreams but when he does he comes in streams as he revels in the joys of copulation, cats on the roof tops, cats on the tiles, cats with'.....and so it goes on.

**Just a rounder.**

'Do You Ken John Peel' I guess. That is to the tune of 'Do You Ken John Peel'.

**Now when would these songs come up**

- 20:30 **that you would sing them, just in the bar?**

Oh in the mess every night, someone would start a song. And usually there was someone who could play a piano and usually we have got a stolen piano in the mess, so you get launched off into these boardie songs and they would go on for hours with more fuel being consumed.

**Did you have a song about the Americans?**

- 21:00 No not specifically no.

**What about the Germans, another one about the Germans?**

No not really, not really, no I can't recall other than 6.5s beside you, petrol truck ahead. That is the only one that I know, German, aimed at the Germans. No I can't remember any.

21:30 They were meant to be fun, good fun things and they were hilarious, as you, you know as you got a bit drunk and people went off and did solos.

**Did you ever solo yourself?**

No not really I was very shy.

**Come on Dudley you seem to be a bit of a boy's boy. I reckon you would have got up there once or twice?**

No no not really, everyone had a turn,

22:00 those cute little rhymes, everyone had a go at those silly little rhymes that was a cute little rhymes. Tell us another one just like the other one tell us another one do, and then they would break off (UNCLE) I've forgotten what happens.

22:30 No I have forgotten.

**Now there were songs, now when blokes get together there was always jokes, what jokes were told?**

Well usually there would be a topical joke

23:00 of the day, you know something funny would have happened and that was retold in the mess and always it was guided a bit and as the night wore on it got better and better. And for instance the party that we had after the Christmas debacle and I had to make six approaches I think to get down in a snowstorm drunk and we had a wonderful party

23:30 after that and I took a hell of a ribbing [teasing] you know. I was struggling to get down and these chaps were out there applauding every time I'd have a shot at getting down, drift off the runway and open up go around again, 200 feet, but these bastards were there applauding they were loving it "good on you Dasher".

**What other jokes were told, you don't have to be a good joke teller**

24:00 **but what other jokes?**

Oh off the cuff I can't, I can't recall off the cuff of any particular interest or anything at all really. The jokes were just topical and usually at somebody's expense you know.

24:30 There was a, we had on our wing quite a few chaps with German names and within two days we had a Phil Schneider [Philip Schneider], an Australian was shot down, Johnny Mentz a German, not a German, a South African with this German name was shot down, and Brett whose name escapes me but we will call

25:00 Rhinehart and they were all shot down in the space of a couple of days on this close support fighter bombing and the one German officer did the interviews, the interrogation of all three and then he said Rheinhardt, Rheinhardt today, Schneider the day before yesterday and the other chap all with German

25:30 names and this Lufar chap must have had a sense of humour because "War is madness don't you agree?" and he was interrogating. That story is told by Phil Snider who was a sergeant an Australian sergeant pilot in my wing and he got back to us, he escaped and made

26:00 his way back, in the meantime of course, all his friends had eaten his fruit cake.

**Ok just remaining on the joke subject, can you go back to just telling the story about the three guys who are captured with the German officer and continue that on, what happened?**

Oh well, Phil Snider escaped

26:30 and got back and he told the story and it was highly amusing, the very unGerman sense of humour of this Luftwaffe officer doing the interrogation. Well Phil got back and he was fine virtually the next day, back in operations. The other two I don't know I think they went into the bag into the Stalag Luft and finished the war there. But this was

27:00 late 45 so they didn't have long to wait, you know only six months.

**And what about jokes about the girls?**

Jokes about the girls, which girls? Any girls? Oh come on I don't think that is a fair question. No I can't recollect off hand of anything that would amuse people in 100 years time that I would say about women.

27:30 **Not amuse, just to tell about, just to tell about the humour of the time and the culture of the time, people understand it is about war?**

Well the culture, we were young men, vigorous young men and driven with a considerable sex drive and war has a habit of somehow stimulating the sex drive in women also. So that

28:00 you know it was, it was faintly promiscuous certainly in England, the only problem in England was that they were on British summer time, double summer time and it was still light at 10.30 at night so if you are trying to race off with someone somewhere you had to do it in broad daylight.

28:30 **So no jokes?**

No jokes, no I have no jokes.

**Ok. During your time what was the dumbest thing a fella ever did?**

The dumbest. Well I would say that American leader of the 12 aeroplanes who was advised by

29:00 people who knew to just change course a bit for him to go in there obstinately and lose three aeroplanes and three crews, that is about 21 men, I think was one of the dumbest things I have ever seen. It was very dumb. Not brave, stupid.

29:30 **In respect to, just coming back to context ok, context of environment, context of time, how were women actually treated during the war years?**

Well I, I think they were treated with more or less the same, same way that they are treated

30:00 outside in peacetime. The opportunities for socialising between the sexes were not perhaps as great, they certainly were not in the desert and in North Africa and Malta and Italy, Sicily but they were, the

30:30 opportunity was ramp on, on both sides in the south of France. But women were treated you know as women, given normal respect and courtesy. I am not conscious of anyone of the war altering ones attitude to women pretty much.

**You used a bit earlier in the interview the word magnificent in regards to French women, what does magnificent**

31:00 **mean?**

Well these, what did I say these magnificent.

**Delicious.**

Delicious, delicious French girls, well they were, they were, we had been denied you know much female company, so that they were sparkling and very sexy

31:30 and liked, they seemed to like the pilots fortunately because we all had you know a wonderful time. Good sex. And we, we just, and it was only a brief encounter for five or six weeks but it was, it was a

32:00 very pleasurable experience to have these delicious French girls sort of welcoming you and always. And then it was back to the war in Italy. We helped ourselves as much as we could, when we could. But I am not conscious of any

32:30 great change in ones approach to women for you know a young vigorous man.

**Given the short time in France when you were there, how did you actually meet the French girls?**

Well we had Johnny Kemp a friend of mine in the squadron spoke fluent French he was very good and in Cannes I think we were at a café or something

33:00 and this chap came over and spoke in English and he was a French radio, not radio, film producer and he was escaping the war in the south of France. And he told us where his farm was and Johnny Kemp and I found it in a couple of Spitfires and beat it up you know really coming in on the deck and doing climbing rolls and then they

33:30 asked us out to the farm and we drove out there and did the obvious thing, we took a few gallons of petrol out and some rations as we had so we became friends and it was through him and Max McClare I think his name was. And he had been in the film business and he had all these great looking young girls around him

34:00 and he shared them with us, so that is how we met them, just because he came over and spoke to us in the café.

**So what contraceptive device did the fellas use to obviously?**

Well there was the invariable French letter, there was no pill in those days

34:30 so it was, but the Doctor had, the Doctors understood the problems, so if you did have a problem it was quickly fixed. Not that I had that problem.

**Did you keep in touch with the girl that you met up with there?**

No no we moved back to Florence initially and then over to Rimini and into a very serious war and there

was nowhere you could even

35:00 write and it was only a fleeting wonderful piece of fruit.

**All part of the war I understand. You mentioned earlier there were some stories about some mates who were still alive, what are those stories?**

Oh Johnny Gates [John Gates] he still lives, he got shot down in a typhoon and got burnt, quite burnt,

35:30 you know the thing flared and he got out of it, he bailed out. But it sealed his eyes, he couldn't see because the flesh had sealed his eyes, he just couldn't see so he landed quite heavily and the parachute helped. And was taken prisoner right away, when he woke up and was able to open his eyes there beside the bed was a sausage, a piece of sausage and some black bread.

36:00 Now some German had gone without to make that available to him you know, which was a pretty nice gesture. Which he tells the story with great feeling, because they had very little to eat the Germans. So it was kindness if one was wounded and burnt or knocked about and taken prisoner, there was kindness on both sides, both the Brits and

36:30 the RAF and the, well the Brits generally and the Germans generally and the Italians were the same, they were very kind, once you are out of action they try to help all they can.

**Again just to help me understand the context of war, what about some of those stories that are a bit risque and hard to tell, the stories that are hard to tell can you tell me some of those?**

37:00 The stories that are hard to tell, oh people being horribly burnt, being fixed up but after probably two or three, no two years at East Greenstead, going back onto operations and being killed almost immediately, or killed in an accident, this happened to, stupidly to the man who wrote the last

37:30 enemy, Richard Hillary, he got horribly burnt and was patched up you know new nose grown and little ears and it took over 18 months or so to get him presentable and then he wanted to get back on operations and he was killed on his first flying accident, you know his first, on the first flight he had, what a waste,

38:00 after all those. Fire was the horrible thing that we all feared more than anything, more than death itself. Well no one was afraid of death really. But death by fire is pretty frightening.

38:30 **We will just stop there and change tapes.**

## Tape 10

00:40 **Can you tell us firstly about your friend who was King for a day, the context of that story, who it was?**

Oh Brian Eaton, yes, Brian of course was a wonderful flight leader he had 239 wing in Italy and the word came through that King George was

01:00 going to visit the wings and there was a procedure to be followed and some practice was necessary so they had to find a King to drive around in this magnificent limousine, so they picked Brian, Brian Eaton who is a small man in stature, huge in courage. He was King for a day and of course everyone perpetuated it and he was your Majesty so it just went

01:30 on and on and on. It was a very funny day for Brian Eaton, which he has never forgotten, and everybody else enjoyed. I met up with Brian sort of later on, he was still a group captain in the permanent air force and he kept telling the story of how he was King for a day.

**What was the most mischievous thing that you and your mates**

02:00 **got up to?**

Hell, there was, life was just one long rumble, it is hard to be specific about any particular mischief but that story of old Higgie and the French Officer's club painting is

02:30 fairly typical of the way, the way things went. And the same thing in England I remember some idiot stealing a sword in a pub, you know one of these swords that was on the wall. And he suddenly developed a gammy leg [walked with a limp] and it walked out with his leg straight. But of course that had to be returned and explained again with apologies. But he walked out with his leg

03:00 straight.

**What about one of the jokes done on you?**

Well there were you know, it was just everyday there was some idiot thing, I can't remember anything

worth telling really.

03:30 Everyone was really amused, everyone in England and in the RAF and generally was, the fact that I came from a place called Wagga Wagga. This gave them a big charge. Most improbable name according to the Poms, you know Wagga Wagga ho ho ho. We were referred to

04:00 with great endearment as colonials, you know we were colonial troops, the some sections the South Africans were called the black troops and they hated that. But it was just a great sense of fun and one long beat up really the war, but to be specific on

04:30 small jokes is terribly difficult for me.

**You have come up with some good ones so far. Was there a fear of pregnancy with the women?**

Not that I know of.

**And not from your point of view either.**

Not from my point of view no.

**What about diseases or even the subject of morality?**

05:00 Oh there was some I suppose there was some gonorrhoea, I was lucky, I never experienced any problem, any venereal problem. But you know the Doctors were very good, they could fix it with the M&B [?] I think it was the drug that fixed it very quickly. But there was no, no one that I knew

05:30 had a venereal disease, but it was amazing that there wasn't much, but we didn't get much opportunity really to catch it.

**So the girls that you mainly knew, they were English girls or?**

Yeah, yeah well, English girls, French girls

06:00 were very careful and clean, there were no problems there.

**What was the bravest thing that you ever saw?**

06:30 I think the bravest thing, I didn't actually see it but it is told to me by a dear friend who was flying a typhoon, they have got rockets and they were going and they were devastating in France, the Germans retreated they would shoot up their convoys. And Harry Markley was his name, a very well known

07:00 typhoon pilot, great rocket shot. He tells a story of how he was lined up on, on this truck which was leading the convoy and a man jumped and waved a white flag and you know Harry had his finger on the button and it would have just blasted that chap, but he relented and took it off

07:30 and then found that there were, they wanted to surrender but there were a couple of ambulances sort of spread in the convoy so they let the ground troops sort of handle it so I think they might have, I think they did in fact just shoot up a couple of trucks on the other end and that sort of blocked any further, any further movement of the convoy.

08:00 But that was a very brave thing for a man to jump out and wave a white flag with rockets and four canons sort of bearing down you know the, the thing would be to jump into a ditch, not in front of your truck and wave a white flag, that is one of the bravest things but there were many. I didn't see it, it was Harry I think all our ground attacks

08:30 were carried out with considerable bravery. But the bravest of the brave, I don't know I think you would have to go. It probably wouldn't be known it wouldn't be decorated the great things, you know some of the great things. They

09:00 were brave on both things, you know one respected that. But I wouldn't, I couldn't think of the bravest thing that I have seen, I have seen so much of it. You have got to consider to be shot at three times a day, we were flying in Italy on this close support fighter bombing. We were flying three times a day

09:30 and inevitably you were going to be shot at on each occasion because you are committed to your dive and your strafing, so you had a fair chance of being hit but it was, that was the normal procedure so. Everyone was brave a few, very very people were

10:00 failed to do their duty and those who did were LMF lack of moral fibre and that was a terrible thing to happen to do to anyone because it just destroyed his life really in the service, you would probably be alright in peacetime. But you know to be sent lack of moral fibre, you were a coward was a terrible thing.

**Anyone in your squadron?**

Yes.

10:30 there was was one chap.

**What happened there?**

I think he was reduced to the ranks.

**But why was he regarded?**

Oh he always had a fault to his engine and we returned to base and there was always some damn thing that he wouldn't carry on. And it began to show, you know so plainly, he just couldn't hack it.

**Only one fella?**

11:00 Only one that I know of yeah. Others have, others have sent them off but there was only one in our wing that I know of, but it was a very confidential thing you didn't talk about it, it was a no no.

**Coming back again I don't mean to harp on it, your stories about your mates, can you tell me one or two stories with no names but just what happened?**

11:30 Oh no I really can't remember, I can't recall sufficiently clearly to make it a real story. Or be it incognito, no I can't do it. They were all faintly mad I suppose we all were

12:00 a bit mad. You just do mad things, you see people who can fly you know drunk in the mess and they would get up on the mantle piece and try to fly, you know and crunch. It just goes on and on you know all those stupid things.

**Go on Dudley you can tell me one or**

12:30 **two?**

Oh no I've got nothing really.

**Just looking at the issue of manhood and the fact that boys don't cry, was that culture prevalent within the services?**

Well I think it was. There was an old saying "I never complain and never explain".

13:00 But you were, we were all conscious, we were measured by our peers and we were very conscious of that so it wasn't enough just to be performing you also had to appear to be performing and that was altered in a lot of bravery I think because you just could not, not perform, you had to perform

13:30 and that was absolutely necessary. There are things that happened to me, to me it was a very minor thing but on the pito [?] head is where the, where you measure your airspeed which is quite critical in a Spitfire to know your airspeed and I took off with a cover, the airmen hadn't removed the cover off the pito head so I had no speed indicator and no speed indication at all

14:00 and I formed up and the CO saw my problem and said "You have got no airspeed have you" and I said "No" and I said "I know the pito head cover is still on" and he said "Well go back" and I said "No I would still like to carry on if it is alright with you I can do a formation landing when we return" which I did, I just formatted on a chap with an airspeed indicator and we landed

14:30 in formation but that apparently impressed old Sam Saunders because you know he sort of recommended me I think for the flight commanders position and what not. But that sort of thing was common, it was every day really. But if you, you know you had to press on in my view, the thing was to press on, don't turn back

15:00 unless you are knocked back. Of course the people who turned back and turned back sufficiently were showed lack of moral fibre.

**Vietnam a lot is said about Post Traumatic Stress syndrome, what is your views of Vietnam that and were you affected?**

Well it is a new word, it

15:30 was unheard of post traumatic stress in the First World War, it was, there was no animal, there was no such animal. But a lot of people were marked by the war. But I have never been conscious of any post traumatic stress in myself. Probably because I kept active, I flew immediately after the war,

16:00 continued flying for a while.

**Was the war worth fighting World War II?**

Well it had to be fought, it was declared and then it simply had to be fought, yes it was worth fighting and I, I had no regrets about serving in the war. I am sorry I may have killed a few people

16:30 but that is war. I was lucky I didn't kill myself but I have no regrets about the war or my part in it. And I think that is pretty general, certainly among aircrew.

**Does**

17:00 **war have a place in our society?**

Well I think it doesn't but I am afraid inevitably there will be a war somewhere, somewhere, sometime, I think it is part of human nature. I am not going to talk about the Iraqi campaign. I think it is flawed

17:30 but people have their reasons for rattling sabres and having a show of enormous firepower. That was good reasons for that, but that war didn't really kill many people, only a handful of people, a hat full of people, you know I think they only lost a couple of hundred people. Well bomber command in one night would lose

18:00 80 or 90 aeroplanes, each with seven people in it, so you are know you are loosing 5 or 600 a night.

**We are pretty much up to the end of the war in your time line, just explain what happened after the war after you're instructing?**

Well from Italy I went down to Delta, Cairo waiting for a ship out of Cyprus back to Australia and

18:30 we were in a sort of transit camp there which was quite comfortable and there was a good club down at the great bit of lake and I swam a lot there and then met a WAAF, we sort of liked each other and we got married there and had a wonderful honeymoon at Mena House [actually Hotel] at the foot of the pyramids, then we came back to Australia, arriving in late November

19:00 1945.

**How long had you known this woman?**

Oh only about, this girl?

**Girl.**

Only about before the marriage only about five weeks six weeks, it was faintly mad, I shouldn't have done it but I did, it didn't work out, well it did for a temporary basis.

**Why did you propose in the first place?**

Oh just young and silly I suppose. But

19:30 you know I felt there was something there but it dissipated and.

**Tell us how you first met, tell us how you first met?**

Oh I think down at this club at the beach club on the great bit of lake you know where we were swimming all the time. She was a great looking girl and I think I just fell for the looks. Then back to Australia arriving in November, so I had to get a job

20:00 so I applied to Qantas for a job and was accepted as a pilot. Although I hadn't flown twin engine aircraft much, they still accepted me, so I went to Brisbane and was flying DC3s or Dakotas from under charter to the American Air Force flying

20:30 from Eagle Farm to Manila. Up and back in five days, which in an old DC3 was quite a lot of flying then back to Brisbane and then I went on the inland service which was a service still on DC3 it was flown by Qantas from Brisbane to Darwin. Brisbane, Charleville Blackall, Longreach, Camooweal, Daly Waters, Katherine, Darwin. Then I got a bit brassed off with that.

21:00 And they offered me a job on the flying doctor service. Qantas operated the flying doctor service at that time so I joined the flying doctor service and operated out of Cloncurry for about eight months and Charleville for I suppose another year. When I was at Charleville I read an advertisement that the Royal Australian Navy

21:30 was seeking experienced fighter pilots to take delivery of the two aircraft carriers Melbourne and Sydney, this was in 1947, 46 or 47. So I sent off an application to join the Royal Australian Navy air arm fleet air arm and then I was posted out of Sydney with Qantas and I was flying Lancastrians to Karachi,

22:00 handing them over to BOAC [British Overseas Airway Corporation] there who took them off to London. But I got a telegram or a letter really from the Secretary of the Navy asking me to appear at HMAS Rushcutter for an interview with a selection board, which I did and I walked out of there knowing there that I probably would be accepted and then I was accepted and I was told

22:30 that I was accepted into the fleet air arm or naval aviation with the rank of lieutenant with three years seniority and then I did my sums and then I realised that it was going to cost me 1000 pounds a year to join the navy, the navy pay for a lieutenant was 4 or 500 hundred pounds a year plus his keep and all those perks but I was being paid 1,500 a year as a pilot flying for Qantas.

23:00 So I sent a telegram to the Secretary of the Navy saying reluctantly I can't afford to join the navy. Lancastrians to Karachi and then Lancastrians under charter to the Australian air force, to British Commonwealth Occupation Force rather. Flying them to Iwakuni in Japan or Bofu first and then Iwakuni where of course I met up with Brian Eaton



- 23:30 and all squadron commanders I knew, they were all the senior people I knew from Italy and other parts of the service. So I knew my way around pretty well. Then Qantas Cedric Turner was the acting General Manager at the time, he asked me to go ashore to live in Japan and see if, operate and control that end of our operation but also to get commercial rights
- 24:00 for Qantas to operate in Japan. So in the third year I was successful in that endeavour in getting commercial rights for Qantas. The Korean War helped things along a bit because we were running air evacuation services from Japan back over, their island their naval base at Guam
- 24:30 and so we got the. I stayed in Japan for four years had a wonderful time in 19, from 1948 to 52, 52 I went back to, was acting line manager for all our far east operations. And then I went to South Africa, because we just recently opened a South African service, of course the Indian Ocean.
- 25:00 My job there was to get the traffic to Australia to fly over Johannesburg instead of going as it traditionally did over Rome or Cairo. And that was a great couple of years and quite successful. And then a short period in Melbourne with the Olympic games coming up. Then to New York for two years, where we negotiated around the world rights for Qantas through
- 25:30 America. Which was operated and we got approval for it but it was never really successful because we didn't have the frequency across the Atlantic. It was only three times a week. And then to London for a couple of years where my parish was from Helsinki to Cairo so I had all of Europe and wonderful, wonderful job really. But then in 1960
- 26:00 I decided to retire from Qantas and form my own business which I did but it was pretty shaky for the first year but it very soon prospered. We had operations in Port Moresby, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth and it all sort of worked and I started to make some real money.

### **What was the business?**

Well it was airport services. You

- 26:30 know with bars, and restaurants, in-flight catering, duty free shops, gift shops, anything in an airport. And I had quite a few of them so it worked pretty well. So made some money out of that and poured some of that money into properties at Bourke. Where we were the first commercial grower of cotton there, we grew 6,000 acres of irrigated cotton in the first, in the
- 27:00 second year I think yeah anyhow it was quite considerable.

### **So when your mates get together what are some funny memories that you share?**

Well we call gossip, gossiping about old times, and the good times and the bad times and you know the

- 27:30 old feeling of being able to talk about it with someone who understands, being able to talk about the war, I am speaking of wartime friends. And that was personified with my relationship with Frank Cooper because he, we got together in Sydney, he only had time for breakfast with us, but then we resolved to on our next trip to the UK that we would see him
- 28:00 and we did and he was very kind to us, among other people. And we gave a lunch at the Ritz in London just to appreciate, to help the people who had helped us, well been so kind to us while we were in the UK and Frank and I got a bit drunk I suppose we drank a lot champagne and we were having our last bottle of champagne after lunch when we said, we agreed that this was a bloody good idea
- 28:30 and that we ought to do it again and we said "when?" and I suggested the same day in the year 2000 and we did and that was 11 years between, no Frank came out a couple of times to Australia. So we had this monumental lunch at the Ritz again in June, June the 13th in the year 2000,
- 29:00 a couple of years ago. And Frank and I had a wonderful beat up of London and we actually went out and patted Adrian Swire's Spitfire at Duxford and sat in it and got the wonderful smells of the old Spitfire and they have got a very distinctive smell, hydraulics and the fuel and just that mixture of melange of smells was a
- 29:30 magic thing, it took us right back.

### **What does it smell like?**

Well it smells of hydraulics and little faint background of fuel, it is just a, it is just, to those who have experienced it, it is a very nostalgic thing, it sort of sends you right back to the Spitfire.

### **And for those who haven't experienced it?**

Well it is just a smell of

- 30:00 hydraulics and fuel and oil and I suppose some glycol mixed up in it, but it has just got that wonderful wonderful smell to those that know it, to those that don't it is just another stink I suppose.

### **Are there dreams or nightmares that recur every now and then for you?**

No not really. Not

- 30:30 really. No the war was pretty good I was, I didn't like flak much but it didn't scare the hell out of me. It was something that had to be contended with, but that was the only thing. I think it was fair enough you know to be shot down, because we had done a lot of damage to them and that was pro quo,
- 31:00 so no there was nothing traumatic in my service in my war service. But I suppose I think someone once said that god had given us freedom and the price is, it is something like this, and the price of that freedom is eternal vigilance and
- 31:30 I suppose that was the point in my war service, you know we had to be vigilant and I being a young man felt I had to participate and had no regrets.

**Can we just stop the tape there.**

Spitfires were a joy and a delight.

**What are the things you don't think are appropriate?**

I'm sorry?

**What are the things you don't think are appropriate?**

- 32:00 Well it would not be appropriate to tell you.

**Could you just give me the titles areas?**

No no, there is nothing that really is appropriate. You know it is other people's business. They should be telling the story not me. And one can't, we are getting a bit thin on the ground now and one gets a bit sentimental about you know old Frank Cooper, he died a year

- 32:30 ago, two years ago and Harry Markley that typhoon pilot I was telling you about he died this year and we are getting a bit creaky and vague and blind and deaf so I still enjoy life, I have no regrets about the war and I am proud of the war.
- 33:00 I can't say I didn't enjoy it and I did, I had some great times and it was an education as I said earlier, it was my university.

**Ok, ok.**

You asked a question.

**Just seeing how far that you would be willing obviously to share, but as you said your friends are dying it would be a shame to lose anything there that is all.**

- 33:30 I'm sorry as I say I am deaf.

**Your fine, your fine. Let me just ask then one last question in respect to Sir Hudson Fish [?], how well you knew him, what he shared about his war experience with you given that you were both?**

Well Hudson had a, he got a DFC in the First World War in the Australian flying call. And his partner

- 34:00 in Qantas was McGuinness was the pilot and Hudson was the observer, they both got a DFC for what they did in the desert I think. Hudson didn't speak about his First [World] War experience much, hardly at all, and we didn't speak about our Second [World] War experience much and we all wore ribbons on our uniforms. But Huddy was
- 34:30 he was a good man and a kind man and he wanted to know everyone and he gave everyone good fatherly advice in those days of course you knew everyone in Qantas. Qantas only had, a total staff of 3 or 400 hundred in Australia, so you knew everyone and we got together once a month in the basement of Shell House and Qantas bought the beer and we had some sandwiches and generally just
- 35:00 touch base. But I remember Huddy telling the chaps he said, "Look you are flying, you are quite well paid, but when you finish flying you have got to have something, so why don't you get out now and while you are earning good money and start something up on the side". And you know that was good advice and it was kind advice because potentially those we could have been distracted by what we did on the side.
- 35:30 But he was just a very good man. He wasn't quite up with the times I think. Cedric Turner provided the jet experience, he gave it the jet push, but they always had a very good board and I had very happy memories of Qantas and Hudson Fish and Cedric Turner.

**Finally Anzac Day, what did it mean to you before the war**

- 36:00 **and what does it mean to you after you have served in World War II?**

Well it didn't mean much to me before the war, I had uncles in the services of course and we used to go along with kids and used to get bored with all this droning on and alcoholic ex diggers lying around the place so it didn't mean very much. And I didn't pay much attention to it because

- 36:30 I was so busy after war and overseas so much, but since coming into the country in Australia I have given the address at the Armidale school here and on the spirit of Anzac and also at Glen Innes out at Glen Innes I have forgotten the name of the place, I have given the dawn service there.
- 37:00 So it has got two meanings for me and I have written two addresses on the thing. So it has meaning but I don't, I don't sort of go much to the two up and the booze and the excesses that go on. I prefer to sort of quietly have a meal with someone who you want to share your wartime experiences with.
- 37:30 So Anzac Day is important and it is great to see the young participating in it, the very young, the kids, that is tremendous. And if we can preserve the spirit of Anzac Day with our young people, I think that is, that would be wonderful. And if Anzac Day does that, it is well and truly worthwhile.

**Do you have any further questions you want to ask? Ok terrific I think we can.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**