

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Ronald Williams (Glen) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 24th November 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1232>

### Tape 1

00:35 **So Glen can you tell us in brief, your life history?**

Well I was born on the 17th March 1924 at 7 Stirling Street Toowoomba at my maternal grandparents' home. I'm the second son of Ronald and Heather Williams. She was a Watson. My father at that stage of the game was

01:00 manager of the Cloverdown Station, 38 miles from Cunnamulla. We lived there until 1932 and my father then became head manager of a pastoral company and he went down to manage Beverly Station about 32 miles from Bourke. A quarter of a million acre property.

01:30 My school, for the first year or two, was by correspondence and then I was sent off to Toowoomba. I was pretty homesick for a while and on got home twice a year. I went to Toowoomba Prep and then onto Toowoomba Grammar. I stayed in school until the end of 1940, the end of 1940.

02:00 I had two brothers and two sisters. My younger sister died a few years ago. She and her husband had a property out Bourke way. My elder brother is still alive and is living in Dubbo. My younger brother is living retired up near Hervey Bay, and the older of

02:30 my two sisters is living at Tahmoor near Camden. Her husband is an ex bomber pilot and was the headmaster of a state school. After I left school I was offered a job in the Bank of New South Wales which would have meant me staying in the Toowoomba area. I wasn't keen on that so I didn't tell my parents.

03:00 In 1936 my father gave up managing the property to take over his own small property which he owned near Bourke. I went back to live with them and obtained a job in the stock and station agent in Bourke at 12 and 6 [12 shillings and 6 pence] a week I remember. And at the end of two weeks he put me up to 15 shillings which I thought was good and I bought my first pair of socks for one and six.

03:30 I was only there a little while but the big benefit of the job was that I was allowed to drive the boss' car. I just got my licence and I remember he had a Pontiac car and on one occasion he was away and he left me in charge of the office, and a drover friend of mine mentioned that there was some land near Barromina available for agistment and I thought I'd do the right thing, so I rang the abattoirs at Bourke to

04:00 speak to Mr Tancread. I didn't find out until later that he wasn't in the office, he was over at the third floor of the killing section and they had to send for him and brought him back. I said it was David Traharn & Co and I wanted to speak to Mr Tancread and he arrived. I said, "Mr Tancread we have some land available in Barromina for agistment, would you be interested?" He said, "No, no. But thank you anyway." He hung up and the next day he rung up wanting to speak to the young man who had rung him

04:30 about agistment. I said that was me and he asked how old I was which I didn't think was pertinent but I told him I had just turned 17. And he said, "Would you like a job with me?" I said, "What doing?" And he said, "Junior pay clerk, I'll give you 25 shillings a week." I thought that was pretty remarkable but I said I would have to think about it and speak to my boss. He said, "Would you like me to speak to him?" I said no I will do that. So when Mr Traharn came back I mentioned it to him. And he said, "Well the way business is, you'd be advised to take the job."

05:00 So then for about 6 months I was working up there and one day the boss said to me, "Look, we're closing the works for the moment. The drought's on and we can't get enough stock. But don't worry. You're staff so we'll send you down to head office in Sydney."

05:30 He said I would learn a bit down there. And he put my wages up a bit more. He was very good to me. Then he said, "Don't worry about accommodation. You can stay with Mrs Tancread and the family, I'll be down at Bondi." So I was staying with the boss and his family at Bondi and going to work at head office

- at Rozelle. After a week or two he said, "You had better knock off at five o'clock
- 06:00 instead of half past five so you'll be able to catch the tram home in time for tea." So I was enjoying my life in Sydney and not paying any accommodation and getting a reasonable wage. Eventually a few months went by and he told me they were opening the works again but I'd be advised to stay at head office, "You'll learn a lot more." He said he had arranged for me to stay with his sister, Mrs Houston over at
- 06:30 Meadowbank. "She'll be charging you a pound a week board but we've adjusted your wages." So he put me up another quid and I stayed with his sister at Meadowbank there for another 6 months and when I was getting on towards 18 I had been pestering my father that I wanted to join the air force. He was very reluctant to sign the authority because my elder brother was already in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] in New Guinea in the army, and I kept saying
- 07:00 that as soon as I turned 18 I would be called up anyway, and I'd rather be in the air force. So Dad said that if I looked like getting called up he would sign the papers. So I was coming on 18 and I asked the other Tancread brother who was in charge of the office in Rozelle that I wanted to go back to Bourke and he said, "Why?" and I told him I wanted to join the air force. So they gave me a first class sleeper and sent me back. I reported for the army and the doctors gave me the usual test.
- 07:30 They said, "You're a bit young and immature you know. You could get a referral. What does your father think about it?" And I said, "I want to join the air force." So he said, "All right we'll find a job for you and he passed me for the army" and before the army could call me up I got my father to sign the papers for the air force. So I was called up to go down to Sydney and I had to report on the corner of Palmer and Plunkston Street. I remember
- 08:00 at Woolloomooloo. Palmer and Plunkston Street I think it was. So I waltzed in there feeling very adult and grown up. I gave over my papers and I think the fellow was a sergeant. He looked at me and he looked at my papers and he said, "Are you sure it's not the Air Training Corps you want to join?" And I said, "No I want to join the air force." So I had my medical examination and what not there and I was sworn in on the reserve. I was heading home and I
- 08:30 remember there was a navy bloke getting out at Nyngan I think it was. When the train pulled in there he said, "Are you going to come and have a drink?" I wasn't used to going into pubs, but I said, "Yes." So I went into the pub and they wanted to know if I was old enough to drink. So I had a beer. I waited for the air force to call me up. About two months went by, I suppose, and then the next thing I got a letter to say I was to report on the following Tuesday.
- 09:00 They had sent me the rail ticket. So I left it to the Friday and I said to Mr Tancread, "Mr Tancread, I'll say goodbye now because I'm going down to Sydney on Monday's train to join the air force." "Oh," he said, "you'd better come around to see the family tonight." I thought he was going to do the right thing and wish me well so I went around and we sat and talked for a while and then the phone rang and he got up and talked and talked for a while and he said, "Glen, you've been manpowered.
- 09:30 You needn't go this Monday." That was a big shock to me and I was held up for another six months or so, eight months I think before I could even join up. He stopped me. Reserved occupation, so called. Anyway I pestered him and he would say, "You don't want to hurry. I was in the last show [war]. You don't want to go too soon." I said, "What were you Mr Tancread?" He said, "I was a corporal physical training
- 10:00 instructor in the New Zealand Army." Anyway he was very good to me. Eventually I got away and reported to Sydney and went out to Bradfield Park for initial training. We all had to do ten subjects. A pass in every subject with a minimum of 60%, otherwise you failed the course. You couldn't pass in nine subjects. You had to pass in ten. Anyway I managed to get them all. I did all right.
- 10:30 We went before the categorisation selection board as to whether you were going to become a pilot or a navigator or a gunner and so on, and like the rest we all wanted to be Spitfire pilots. And even as a kid I wanted to be an airline pilot before the war started. I went up before the board and I had done fairly well in my exams.
- 11:00 They asked would I like to be a wireless navigator? I said, "No, I want to be a pilot." "You wouldn't want to be a wireless navigator?" I didn't realise that that was one of the top categories because you did navigation, wireless operations and air gunnery and you went onto aircraft like Beaufighters and Mosquitos and stuff. It was the top category. But I said I didn't want to be a wireless navigator. And the Board said, "Why?"
- 11:30 I said, "Well if someone was going to shoot at me, I'd prefer to be a wireless air gunner because then I could shoot back." That caused a bit of a giggle and so they said if that was what I wanted...so I became a wireless air-gunner. I was sent to Parkes and did my training there. About 7 or 8 months.

**Can I ask you, why weren't they keen on granting your wish to be a pilot?**

They probably thought I was a bit young.

- 12:00 And plenty of blokes wanted to be pilots. I had two other cousins who were fighter pilots, or Lancaster pilots and then fighter pilots. I don't know, just one of those things. And my mother said, "Don't go

- overseas until you have to." So having been selected for the training, they said, "Those who want to go to Canada
- 12:30 to commence their training, step forward." I was very tempted to step forward but I remembered what my mother had said so I didn't step forward and I did my training in Australia. I went from Parkes when I graduated from the radio school, I went down to West Sale in Victoria and did it there. Then back to Bradfield awaiting embarkation with much secrecy, the camp closed and all the rest. We weren't allowed to ring out
- 13:00 We all thought we might be going on one of the big ships in the harbour, instead of which a team of buses arrived and we all got on these double-decker buses, went out to Hornsby, loaded onto a troop train and went up to Brisbane into an army camp. Much secrecy again supposedly, but the telephones were there and the fellas were ringing home from the camp until they woke up. Then that night they loaded us up again, took us down to the wharves and
- 13:30 put us on a Victory ship, or Liberty boat I think they called them. Then we had 18 days on that. No convoy or anything. 18 days to San Francisco. There were a lot of American troops on board. Mostly Americans, and Australians who had graduated. I was a sergeant at the time, and some of the trainees going to Canada. So we had 18 days, nothing to do except 2 meals a day and we played bingo and so forth, or housie or what ever it was.
- 14:00 Cigarettes were given away freely and I wasn't a smoker at that stage but I thought I would give it up after the war. So I started smoking like the rest of it. A couple of the boys who were a bit older than us and had been in the army before, and they joined the air force. A friend of mine, 'Shiner' Wright had a Military Medal from Tobruk before he joined the air force. He was a gunner. He knew the ropes. Every time we went passed the padre's table going to the meals, he would help himself to the
- 14:30 American cigarettes. By the time we got to England he was able to sell them at five pounds sterling a carton. He and a couple of his friends ran a two-up school on the ship. He told me that he wanted to have 2000 American dollars in the 18 days going to San Francisco. So he and his friends lived like lords. We had a troop train across and a few days in San Francisco and then a train across to New York.
- 15:00 I remember they told us that we shouldn't discuss politics, racism or religion because it could offend people. So no sooner do we get on the Pullman coach, one of the older blokes went around collecting a couple of dollars from each of us, handed them to the porter in charge and from then on we could talk politics, we could talk religion and everything. So
- 15:30 we just ignored rules and had a good time. It was about a 3 or 4 day trip across to New York and we had a fortnight's leave in Camp Shanks. We went into Camp Shanks and then they gave us a couple of weeks leave to go into New York which was quite phenomenal. At the stage of the game a lot of American troops were in Australia and of course a few Australian uniforms showing up in New York were a bit unusual I suppose. We were shown around.
- 16:00 I remember a couple of my friends and I were walking around in the streets one day with our Australian flashes up on our shoulder and two elderly women went by and I heard one of them say, "Oh look, Austrians." Then we were moving around one day and we asked a police officer...who turned out to be just like a Hollywood cop, as Irish as Paddy's pigs...he put his arms around our shoulders and walked us across the road
- 16:30 and said, "Have you been down to the New York Police Crime Museum yet?" We said no, and he said, "Well that's worth looking at. You go down there." So we went down to the American Police Crime Museum and a couple of big plain clothed detectives showed us around and told us the best way to crack a safe and all sorts of things. There were blood stained axes and God knows what. When we were leaving one of them came with us to go to the underground, or they call it the tube I think.
- 17:00 We were walking through this crowded area and he had his hands up on our shoulders like that. And my mate said, "What are you doing that for." He said, "It saves problems when you're walking in a crowd like that. A woman might yell out, give me money or I'll scream that you molested me." If I walk like that with you, they won't. Anyway we had a pretty nice time in New York. It was great. We went to lots of free shows. An ice skating show and Porgy and Bess and
- 17:30 shows like that. We had a great time there. Then they put us on the old Queen Elizabeth for Scotland. Some of us were on designated anti submarine duty. One day I was up on the port bridge and the German Condor, a big long range bomber was floating around on the horizon, hovering around and obviously reporting us.
- 18:00 Shortly after that had departed a RAF [Royal Air Force] Warwick aircraft from Coastal Command came along. It's lights were flashing and we started to put on speed and the ship started to turn around and I said to the young sub lieutenant, "What's happening?" He said, "We've been warned that there's a German wolf pack [submarines] waiting ahead and so we're going to go around via Greenland." And I said, "What speed are we going?" He said, "Thirty three knots, 40 mile an hour," which wasn't bad for an 82,000 ton ship
- 18:30 with 20,000 people on board. I think there were 18,000 troops and 2,000 crew. It was a massive ship, a beautiful thing. Two meals a day there. On one occasion I took the wrong turn. I was sharing a cabin for six which was normally a cabin for two. I was on B deck, and I took the wrong turn and I went down a

couple of decks where

- 19:00 all these American Negro troops were. One Negro said to me, "What you doing down here white boy, are you lost?" I said, "Yes." It was a huge ship. I wouldn't liked to have been in an attacking aircraft because they put on a practice one afternoon where they started firing and put rockets up in the air
- 19:30 with parachutes that opened. They had little mines that dangled down on steel wires. So any aircraft attacking it would have been taking a chance. Then they opened up with all the guns. My God, they had Bofors and 20 mls [20mm cannons]. But she was too fast for convoys. Instead of taking 3 or 4 days to get to Scotland we took 7 days. We went into Glasgow and the
- 20:00 next morning we were put on a troop train down to Brighton where all the transit troops were held. The Australians were staying at the Metropol Hotel at Brighton and the New Zealanders were living at the Grand Hotel. We were there for a few weeks waiting for dispersal. We were in time to see the Mulberry Harbours being floated across the English Channel getting ready for the invasion.
- 20:30 They were big boxes, a portable harbour . They floated them across to Normandy. We didn't know that at the time. We wondered what these things were. But just before the invasion started I got shot up to Whitby to do a commandos' course out near Newcastle-on-Tyne. It nearly killed me for the first week or two. And we did that for about 6 or 8 weeks
- 21:00 and then I got posted to an Advanced Flying Unit down in Gloucester. I met up with one of my cousins who had also arrived from Australia via South Africa. As a matter of fact, my two cousins and I all arrived in England on the same day from different routes. One of the cousins came via Canada, he had trained there. The other came via South Africa and I came via America and we all met up at Brighton on the same day. One was an officer and two of us sergeants.
- 21:30 They went off to do their training on Wellingtons and I was on Oxfords. I applied to join one of my cousins as his crew member. He wrote back to say he was suffering in hospital with the mumps. He missed out on the training at the time, whereas the other one went on to Lancasters and had a number of trips. He got shot up over Bertschesgaden, Hitler's mountain hideout. But he got
- 22:00 home all right. Lost a motor. They shot a motor out of his plane but he got home all right. By that stage of the game the war was just about over in Europe anyway. I went from Gloucester down to Pembrey in South Wales and I was there on staff duties for
- 22:30 awhile. That was where my friend, the Spitty [Spitfire] pilot got killed down there. I was there for a while and I had been introduced to some people who were friends of the Colonel Blandy I was staying with in Wales. They were very well off people. He owned a couple of steel works, so I used to spend my weekends there and kept in touch with them after the war. When I went back there they had a big estate and I used to ride to the hounds with them.
- 23:00 Fox Hunt balls and I had a marvellous time. I still keep in touch with the daughter. After I left Wales... that's right, the European war ended and they were talking about forming a squadron to go on to the Lincoln Tiger Force to go to Burma. I volunteered to go as a straight gunner to get on operations. So instead of getting posted to that I
- 23:30 got posted to Northern Ireland to do an advanced gunnery course. So I was in Northern Ireland. I arrived in Belfast on my 21st birthday in March having spent my birthdays in England, Scotland and Ireland, all three. And I remember I had 8 shillings in my pocket when I arrived in Belfast. But 8 bob was 8 bob and a couple of friends of mine and I bought a bottle of Emu wine. It was
- 24:00 terrible stuff. But still we were being patriotic I suppose.

#### **They sold Emu wine in Northern Ireland?**

Yep. They had some Emu wine there bottled at the pub. One of the fellows nearly got himself into some strife. We were all a bit boisterous by this stage and an Irish fellow said, "Hey, what you got the grass in your coat for?" The bloke took offence because he was wearing a shamrock you see.

- 24:30 Anyway we got posted down to Bishops court and we arrived there. I think there were 17 Australians and New Zealanders in this very big unit. There were about 5 New Zealanders and about 12 Australians. We did this gunnery course there. I was flight commander of our little group at the time. One of my flight was 'Dicky' Attenborough,
- 25:00 who became Lord Attenborough. He used to have pin ups of his wife, Sheila Sims I think her name was. She was an actress. But Dicky was all right. He wasn't a bad bloke. He told me one time after the pictures one night after we had graduated that he didn't like George Formby. George Formby was that so called comedian who would fiddle with his guitar.
- 25:30 **Was he Australian?**

No he was an English actor. But Dicky was doing a gunnery course to get a brevet...a wing because he wanted to fly as a flying photographer, but couldn't do so unless he had an aircrew wing. So he did the short course in the gunnery school. He did very well. I remember in his final aircraft he got 100%. Then of course the war finished and that was it. I never saw him after that.

- 26:00 Later on I heard he became Lord Attenborough. I think I started hearing about him when he was director of that film Ghandi. So what happened? I went on leave again. The Colonel
- 26:30 and Mrs Blandy, they had a Doctor and Mrs Hild from Hamstead Heath, London staying in the village too. He had a big Rolls Royce and being an honorary air commodore in the air force he was able to obtain coupons for petrol and he used to take us trout fishing. One day we were out fishing and Mrs Hild said to me, "You'll be going home soon now the war's over Glen." And I said, "I expect so." She said, "I must give you a letter of introduction to my daughter, she lives in Sydney."
- 27:00 It turned out to be Mrs Vincent Fairfax of the Sydney Morning Herald people. When I came home at the end of the war, I was in the mess one day and someone called out, "There's a Mrs Vincent Fairfax ringing for you." She invited me up to a garden party up at Woollahra on the Saturday. So I went out there and she introduced me to an English fellow, a captain somebody or other. He was in mufti [civilian clothes]. I was dolled up as a young warrant officer
- 27:30 and thought I was pretty good. We were talking for a while and he said, "I believe you're just back from the old country?" I said, "Yes, and you're with the British Army are you?" And he said, "Oh no, actually that's my ship over there." And he pointed to the Rose Bay area to the HMS Indefatigable, the largest aircraft carrier that had ever come to Australia at that stage. So I pulled my horns in. captain of the bloody Indefatigable!. He was a nice fellow. He didn't bung it on [pose] too much.
- 28:00 **Did you meet the daughter?**
- Yes of course I did, Mrs Vincent Fairfax, that's where the party was. And her husband offered me a job with the paper. He asked me what I was going to do? And at that stage of the game I was on leave and I hadn't decided what I would do. He asked me if I would be interested in a job with the Sydney Morning Herald.
- 28:30 I said I was thinking of joining the air force, which I did. I signed on. I had been getting clearances you see. You had to get a clearance for here and there and it was rather tedious and come five o'clock I hadn't quite finished getting all my clearances to get my discharge, so I took my papers back to the officer's' air crew section and I made the remark to one of the blokes that it takes more time to get out than what it did getting in,
- 29:00 and he said, "Why don't you stay in? They're looking for fellas to stay in the air force." I said, "Give me a look." So he handed some papers over and I signed it. Then he said, "I suppose you want a couple of days leave now do you?" I said, "It would be no good to me." He said, "Why?" I said, "I live in Bourke." He said, "How about 11 days, will that do you?" So I rolled back home again still in the air force. Old 'Bunny' Tancread came out to visit
- 29:30 to welcome me home and he said, "We're going out looking for some stock tomorrow, would you like to come with us. We'll start you on the stock buying when you come back." I said, "Mr Tancread, I've joined the air force again." He said, "What, you were going to be trained to be a manager here one day." So they were very good to me, but
- 30:00 anyway I stayed in the permanent air force then, or the interim air force at that stage. I got posted along with one of my cousins who had been the Lancaster pilots, down to Tocumwal to a Liberator squadron. And of course there was nothing much doing down there at that stage, the war was over. I did a couple of flights around the place. Warrant Officer Pete Cooney and myself got put in charge of the guard house and the service police.
- 30:30 We were responsible for that. From Tocumwal I got posted to Beaufighters at Richmond. They were doing special duties, radar calibration
- 31:00 with the navy at South Head and the army at North Head and CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation] developing that DME [ Distance Measuring Equipment] which is used worldwide now. I was on that for a while and I enjoyed that. It was a very nice aircraft the old Beaufighter. We had authorised low flying. When we were doing the calibration with the navy at South Head
- 31:30 we would go out to see about 80, 100 mile and then we would try and sneak in under their radar. In other words we would be as low as you could possibly get. Sometimes we were getting prop wash on the water, trying to sneak into the Gap and they were calibrating their radar. And Wally said to me one day, "You'd better tell the navy to get someone out there to move those people from the Gap because we're going to blow them over the Gap." We used to come in
- 32:00 right under the Gap and up over the top. We could have easily blown anyone over the Gap. So we mucked around with that for a while and the next thing we started losing power on our starboard motor. So I called up 'Thimble'...'thimble' was the call sign. We were Tow Boat. "Thimble from Tow Boat, we're losing power on our starboard motor so we're returning to base," which was Richmond.
- 32:30 They called us, "You're now 60 miles from Curl Curl, what is your height? Can you maintain?" It was like this all the way in and when we landed at Richmond ...we landed all right, taxied in and cut the motor, and I heard one of the ground staff blokes say, "No bloody perspex." They used to like getting the

perspex because they could make brooches and badges out of wreckage. No perspex, we hadn't pranged [crashed]. So I was on that for a while.

- 33:00 Then I got posted to Catalinas at Rathmines. Then we went up to Brisbane and we were flying some people who had bought 100 pound Liberty bonds. They would get a free flight. We were staying at Lennards in Brisbane and over the weekend we were flying up and down the Hamilton River there. Up to New Guinea a couple of times.
- 33:30 Then we flew the Australian Disposal Commission people around auctioning off all the bases and stuff. Quarry equipment at one place, Milne Bay and all over the place. Auctioning off all our war time disposals. Colonel Sinclair, I think it was who was in charge,
- 34:00 and we were flying him around. He was the boss of the whole set up. We were in the little pub in Lae one evening and it had been the army girls' quarters but they had turned it into a pub, the Hotel Cecil I remember. All they had was gin and cold water. I'm sipping cold water and they're having a few gins and Sinclair said, "Any of you chaps want anything tomorrow at the auctions?"
- 34:30 Our pilot said he wanted a Caterpillar tractor. Sinclair said, "They'll be sold in half dozen lots but I'll see what I can do." Then he turned around to me and said, "What about you, have you got any money?" I said, "I've got a couple of hundred pounds." He said, "For that I can get you one and a quarter million feet of single and double and four strand copper insulated wire. A lot of it is on spools and the rest of it is strung
- 35:00 up around the camp." And old Anderson the sausage king at that stage - he was Anderson Sausages, a big company in Sydney - he had a Liberty Boat (he was flying with us too), and he told us that anything we bought he would get it home at cost price to us. I thought I'll buy this and he said, "Where's the money? Have you got a cheque account?" And I said, "No, it's a savings account." He said, "You'll need the money."
- 35:30 So I missed out on a big deal there. I found out after I got back to Australia that that 4 strand copper insulated wire was worth about 3 shillings a foot. Anyway as soon as I got home I opened a cheque account in case I got the opportunity to do the same again. Went over to Rabaul, Torokina, Bougainville and through that area, Morotai,
- 36:00 Admiralty Island. We flew the body snatchers [Commonwealth War Graves Commission recovery teams] around on one occasion. We flew them around to a few places where they recovered bodies from war time burials. Went over to Ambon. I remember at that time the Dutch occupied the place and the fellas at the control tower were telling me down at the intersection of that runway there, there's 300 Australian soldiers buried.
- 36:30 They had been slaughtered. They had been captured as prisoners of war and killed by the Japs. Executed as prisoners. So I was on that for a while and then I got posted down to Rose Bay in charge of the Marine Section. I was there for a little while and I used to meet up with a Tony Bircher,
- 37:00 who was a flight lieutenant, signals officer who had been on Beaufighters with me at Richmond. He had shot down over Germany in a Lancaster and had been taken as prisoner of war. He got a DFM [Distinguished Flying Medal]. Being the signals officer at that stage of the game, he had a bit of influence and I said to him one time, "Can you pull a few strings for us?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I want to get onto transport command." I told him about a good cobbler [friend] of mine and I mentioned about Pete over at Robina now.
- 37:30 I said, "He's on transport command and I'd like to get onto transport command for the Japan run." He said, "What's your number?" and I told him. The next weekend he came home. He was married living out. He said, "Don't say anything to anyone but you'll get a posting within a week." So sure enough a week went by and then they advised me. They sent a Catalina down to pick me up. I went back to
- 38:00 base and then I was posted to Schofield out towards Richmond on 37 Squadron. I did a couple of short Canberra runs and then I got transferred to 38 Squadron at the same place for the Japan run. We were doing the Japan courier run. They had 2 planes a week going and coming all the time for months.
- 38:30 We would go Sydney to Melbourne. Then overnight Melbourne and leave in the morning. Go to Parafield in Adelaide, slip crews. Later on we would go to Malalaba but first of all Parafield. Slip crews, stay there and pick up the next aircraft coming through, lunch at Alice Springs, Darwin overnight, Morotai overnight, Clark Field in the Philippines overnight, lunch at Okinawa and then to Iwakuni
- 39:00 We would have a few days in Japan and then back. Have a few days off and do the same again. Black market was operating very well in those days so you could always do a bit on the side. When I came back from that...no, the last trip we did before handing over to Qantas. We took
- 39:30 Bert Ritchie who was the senior route captain for Qantas, we took him with us as the supernumerary. So after Qantas took over and we were doing the odd job, we were coming back from Perth. We had been over there for a few days. We left early and landed at Forest and Ceduna and Melbourne. Had dinner at Melbourne and we picked up a crew of young army blokes, 18 or 20 of them
- 40:00 who were heading back to Sydney. We struck very bad weather and we started to ice up badly and there

were chunks flying off the prop and bang, bang on the fuselage. Then we got turbulence and we had to change altitude. We got over Sydney and we were coming in on the final approaches to Schofield. I was flying with a chap called Dave Brennan at the time and I had flown with him on Beaufighters. Coming in on the final, we were just about over the fence on the tarmac and

40:30 a real squall blotted out all visibility. Dave hit the throttles and just took her up again and we had air sick people everywhere. We headed out to sea again and gained height and then tried to come back in again and we were having wing trouble. We could see the lights of Katoomba and maintained our height so we wouldn't hit the hills. We were having trouble getting in and Dave said, "Righto we're going to have to divert. Who wants to go to Wagga and who wants to go to Dubbo?"

41:00 One of the blokes said, "I'm not fussy." I said, "Hang on hang on, I'll get a DF [direction finding] bearing." So I called up Mascot and got them to open up the Direction Finding Station at French's Forest, and using the Morse key and whatnot I got bearings.

## Tape 2

00:35 **You were just telling us about the courier runs.**

Yes that's right. Anyway by alerting the DM station at French's Forest we got bearings and got in about midnight or one o'clock in the morning. And the next day Dave Brenner said to me, "I'm going to this Operation Pelican, to

01:00 Germany, for the blockade there. How about coming with me?" I said, "Yes I'll be in that." So I got onto his crew there but his wife gave birth to twins and she wasn't too good. He had to pull out of the trip and I finished up with Dave Evans, who eventually at the end of the war and all the rest of it, finished up as Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshall. I flew with him for a few months

01:30 and then they decided to send the second pilots home and so instead of a four man crew we'd have a three man crew.

02:00 They checked out our second pilot, Dave Harn, he became captain and Dave Benson was the navigator and I then flew with Dave Harn for the rest of the Berlin Airlift. We were on that from August 1948 when we flew over to do the conversion in England to the English equipment which we had been on, to the American equipment which we had been on in Australia. I went to

02:30 Lubeck, was based there and we stayed there until the end of September 1949. Back to England for two weeks and then came home. Our crew did 226 trips which wasn't bad. We had a few good little incidents but everything went all right. Some funny little things happened at different times. I don't know if you're interested in them.

03:00 **Actually we'll talk about that a little later.**

We were lined up there one day. The aircraft would be lined up. You'd land at Gattow We went into Tigel a few times when they were stuck for an aerodrome there, but mainly we went into Gattow. The Americans were there in force with their Skymasters, four engines and we were on Dakotas, the 2 engine stuff. You'd land just in time to get a cup of coffee while they unloaded the coal

03:30 or food or whatever it was. Then back on and you'd be lined up nose to tail and they were virtually a minute or two apart. One would get permission to go and he'd be just getting airborne and the next one would be lined up and starting to take off. The American Skymaster ahead of us one day there started to roll and we lined up behind him and he was just getting airborne and was up about 500 or 600

04:00 feet and he lost both starboard motors. And the aircraft yawed and started to sink and Dave Evans said a short couple of words and said, "He's going in, he's going in." And he was down low, he must have been 50 or 100 feet off the deck and he slowly pulled himself away on the two motors. He was going back empty you see so it was fortunate he didn't have a load on. There was a hush in the air. There was no gabble on the aircraft

04:30 or the radio. He got up to about 1000 feet and this Yankee voice said, "Not bad for two fans ha!" And everybody started to laugh their heads off. He got away with it. He was back on two motors. Shortly after that you could hear the call up, "Control this is two four three, am I clear on three?" "Stand by two four three."

05:00 They checked, then "Two four three you're clear on three" and they would take off on three motors. So one of our fellows being facetious one day lined up and instead of calling out Able Baker Charlie or whatever it was, said, "Able Baker Charlie, are we clear on two?" There was a hell of a panic for a second, "Stand by, stand by." Then he said, "Dakota Able Baker Charlie, you're clear on two." And then a Yankee voice came up and said, "Goddamn Aussies." It was a bit of yaking [talking] going on and things like that.

05:30 We had a bit of fun. One night we took off from Berlin. It must have been one o'clock in the morning...

before that happened, we were going into Berlin and it was raining like hell and for something to do, as we were getting onto final beacons, we pressed the button to listen to Tempelhof Control Tower which was in the American Zone.

- 06:00 We heard this American voice come up, "Triple duce this is Tempelhof Control, continue your decent on instruments." And the Yankee voice came back, "Triple duce here, there will be a slight delay I cannot locate one of my oars." Boy it was raining. It caused a bit of a laugh you know. Another night we took off from Berlin, probably 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning and it was raining like buggery.
- 06:30 We had only been airborne for about 5 or 10 minutes and up came a Morse, "CQ, CQ, all stations, Berlin is closed to all traffic." That's how bad it was because Lord, they were flying in some horrible weather. But it was closed to all traffic. That didn't matter to us because we had fuel left but up came the CQ all station call again, Lubeck closed to all traffic which was our base.
- 07:00 So we thought we'll go to Hamburg. A few minutes later, Hamburg closed to all traffic. We'll go to Fezburg. Heading toward Fezburg, Fezburg closed to all traffic. That caused a bit of consternation. We had about 20 odd German evacuees. We had parachutes because the Russians said that if we strayed out of the corridor they would shoot us down, but we couldn't bail out anyway. You couldn't with passengers.
- 07:30 We thought, "What the hell do we do now. Where do we go?" We decided the best thing to do was to head for Denmark to Slezwig. That was all right but we didn't have any maps for there. So we got the back of a Com Nav which is a non scale thing and we were trying to work on that and the radar went on the blink. I thought we were going to buy it tonight," Boy. We're going to buy it tonight." I even wrote a bit of a letter to Mum and Dad in the log book in case it was ever found.
- 08:00 The only thing that saved us that night, we were heading in the general direction and they had a searchlight at the end of the airstrip and it was pointing straight up and revolving and we saw it through a break in the cloud. So we got in there and got stuck there for two days. Boy I had a hangover the next day. Three or four of us got stuck there. But still it was good. We went to a night club...none of us had a proper
- 08:30 uniform on at that stage. I had flying boots on, a battle jacket, a shirt with no collar, a roll neck sweater and a Yankee zipper jacket. I went into the night club like that. Other blokes did similar but it was war time, well not war time, but we had a bit of a party there.
- 09:00 Anyway that was that. When the airlift was all over we went back to England. Attlee came over to thank us at one stage to shake hands with everybody when he was Prime Minister. Went back to England. Of course I had been in touch...we used to get back to England every two weeks, then fly for two weeks, have two days off then take a plane back to England.
- 09:30 I used to always dart down to Wales and stay with these friends. Sometimes I would spend the time in London. I had a great time. We were due to come home by ship but the last minute the RA said they would fly us home on the York aircraft. So we went to this mate's wedding just two days before we came home. He left his little bride there waving us goodbye as we took off from Manston down in Kent.
- 10:00 I went to Malta, spent a day and a half at Malta. Then had lunch at Fyad. Went to Iraq, then we went to Karachi in Pakistan and had a big party. The American Consul bunged on a cocktail party which lasted until 2 in the morning. Then we went down to Ceylon.
- 10:30 Then across to Singapore and had two or three days there. Night in Darwin and back to Sydney and home. I think we arrived home Melbourne Cup day because they said any of the fellas who wanted to go down to Melbourne for the Melbourne Cup, stay on the plane and we'll take you down there and fly you back tomorrow. But me, I caught the train home to Bourke.
- 11:00 What happened then? I went home on leave, came back and I had bought my first little car, a Ford Anglia Tourer 7 horsepower for 501 pound 7 and 6. I remember that. I drove back to Richmond and they said I was posted to Rathmines again. So next day I drove to Lake Macquarie and arrived there about 3 in the afternoon and they said, "Good, you're leaving for Darwin about 4 in the morning. They're waiting on you."
- 11:30 I said that I hadn't booked in yet but they said, "That's all right, the crew's waiting on you. You're going to Darwin for 4 months." I thought, "Hell!" I was muttering, "Where am I going to park my car?" and one of the navigators said, "Do you want to sell it?" I remember his name, Flight Lieutenant Cassidy. He said, "Do you want to sell it?" I said, "Yes." He said, "How much do you want?" I said, "Five hundred." He said, "I'll give you 490." I said, "Done." So off I went to Darwin for 4 months, came back and I bought a Morris Minor then.
- 12:00 Then I got posted down to Hobart on recruiting duties. Actually I was posted down with the Air Training Corps. I only did it a few times because the recruiting was pretty busy and I was doing all the aptitudes and interviews and I finished up getting out of all that stuff and just did recruiting. The CO [Commanding Officer] said I was supposed to be in charge of the stores too. And I said, "With respect, I wouldn't accept responsibility of the stores without doing
- 12:30 a store's course." So next thing we had a sergeant posted to look after the stores. He had an off-sider

sent in to. Then I wanted a couple of more, so I got a couple of fill-in instructors sent in to do all the ATC stuff. And I just stayed with the recruiting. So that was good fun. I liked Hobart. It was very nice. I was there for 2 years 8 months. That's where I met my wife, actually. She was a nursing sister at the Royal Hobart,

- 13:00 a theatre sister. The CO was pretty good to me. I got along with him pretty well. He pranged his car once and I got it fixed for nothing. I was in the Masonic Lodge and I was staying with the army because we didn't have air force quarters down there. I went down there and got to know a few of the blokes and they said that the Brigadier here
- 13:30 is the Master of Lodge. And they suggested I go out to Lodge one night. A couple of days went by and the Brigadier arrived down at the office and saw my CO and said, "Where's Mr Williams?" He came in and introduced himself, we yarned for awhile and he said, "I'll pick you up tonight and take you out to Lodge if you like." Well, the commanding officer was eaten up with curiosity.
- 14:00 He couldn't understand. He came in sucking his pipe and he said, "Do you know the Brigadier do you?" I said, "No, you just met him?" Eventually I told him and he said, "Well you do the liaising with the army." I don't know if these things should be said on this interview. It doesn't matter. Anyway they're all dead now probably. One day I go down to the office. We had offices down near Anglesea Barracks in Davie Street and
- 14:30 we had a staff car. Only the boss and I used to drive it, but I had my own little Morris Minor so I didn't use the staff car much. Here's the right hand side all bent it. He said, "It's my fault. I pulled out last night without looking and got hit. I told the bloke I would pay to get his fixed up. I don't want an inquiry. I'll pay for it all." I said I had better take the car down to get it repaired. So
- 15:00 I take the Dodge down to the people who did the repairs. But the service manager there was in the Lodge also you see. So I said, "What's it going to cost to fix this up?" And he mentioned a figure and I said, "A D Service (?) would just about cover that wouldn't it?" He said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "A sign for a D Service would cover that cost wouldn't it?" He said, "Yes." So
- 15:30 I took the car back and I said to the boss, "I've arranged to get it fix but you'll have to sign for a D Service." And he started to go crook [get angry]. "It's not due for a D Service yet. You had no right." I said, "If you sign for a D Service it will be fixed up at no charge to you." So I got the staff car fixed for him for nothing. When I was leaving Hobart he said, "I've fixed the paper work up and it's been countersigned for a D commission." Anyway I arrived in Townsville.
- 16:00 Eventually I asked for a posting back to flying duties and I thought hello I'm going to get a commission. But at this stage things were held up and just when they were going to do the commission I decided to get out. I was due to go to Malaya. I had an English wife, one child and another on the way and she couldn't go with me. But I had a good time in Hobart. The old CO....he finished up as an Air Commodore Retired. I met up with him a couple of times.
- 16:30 He took me to lunch at the Imperial Services Club in Sydney one time. He died a couple of years ago. A good bloke. An ex-navigator of 10 Squadron. In Sunderlands during the war. He won the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross], and then he was the navigator for the Duke of York when he was out here as the Governor General.

#### **And what did you get up to once you had jumped out of the air force?**

When I left the air force, my brother had a garage up near Warwick

- 17:00 and he wanted me to join him. Eventually I bought in half shares with him and did that for a while. We got hold of an International harvester agency and built up a fairly good little business there for a while. We also had the picture show. Dad had bought that. He had retired more or less. He had bought the picture show and the elder brother and the younger brother were running it. Dad had gone back to the bush. He reckoned he couldn't
- 17:30 retire, that it was going to kill him. So he went back and managed a property for one of his cousins out near Meandarra. So we had the picture show and the garage. We had a coach, a hire car and what else? He was the captain of the fire brigade and I was in the fire brigade. The younger brother was in the fire brigade, and one of our mechanics, and the plumber and his son. That was the fire brigade for Kalannie.
- 18:00 We did that. We were doing all right. My elder brother was mad keen to go back and buy the Ford Dealership in Bourke where he had served his apprenticeship before he went into the army. He wanted to buy the business. So eventually I said if we can make up enough money. He went out to do the deal and rang up and he said he wants x amount....I can't remember the figure. I said that we couldn't afford all that. He said,
- 18:30 "Can we form a company? So and so wants to join in with us." I said, "Yes" and so we went and bought the Ford dealership in Bourke and went back there and did that for a few years. We did quite well out of it actually. Then the younger brother went and bought a farm. I decided, we had 3 kids at boarding school at that stage of the game,
- 19:00 and that was starting to hurt a bit. That was when the wife went back nursing. I decided, I had an

opportunity to take over Pastoral Protection Board...I was Secretary of the Pastoral Protection Board. So applied for it and got that job. Then I sold my shares in the garage which went towards the boarding school fees. Then I became the Executive Secretary of the Board and was with them for about 17 years until I retired at the age of 60.

- 19:30 In Bourke I was President of the RSL, secretary of the Lodge. I was First Principal of the Royal Arch Chapter twice. I was President of the Serviceman's Club for 9 years. I was Chairman of the Ambulance Board.
- 20:00 I was President of the Chamber of Commerce for a couple of years. I was occupied in practically everything. You do in a small town. You get into one and then you automatically get into another. Then a particular friend of mine, he was a builder by trade, but he also had a few business's in the main street. We would knock around together a little bit and
- 20:30 I was keen on clay target shooting and I was captain of the pistol club and Secretary of the Gun Club, and when the wife died, she'd had an operation, got a blood clot and died. Fortunately the kids had all finished their school and were at university or so on. So
- 21:00 that was good that they had finished their schooling , but I'm always sorry she didn't live to see them do so. Anyway this cobbler on mine took me under his wing a bit, "Come on, come over and have a cup of coffee." He was a Dutch fellow who had been in Australia since he was 21. They were very good friends and I was Uncle Glen to all their kids. One day his wife said to me, "Garry's mother is dying of cancer in Holland,
- 21:30 he's wondering if he should go back and see her. I think he should and I've told him he should go, so if he says anything to you, try and push him." So one day we were having coffee one Sunday morning and Garry said, "Lea reckons I should go back and see Mum." I said, "Garry if you can afford to and you can and Lea wants you to go, then you might not regret not going." He said, "How about coming with me?"
- 22:00 I said, "Oh I couldn't do that." He said, "Why?" I said, "I've got to get the rate notices out by the end of June." This was early in June. So he said, "Right we'll go the first week in July." I said, "All right." So I went home that night and thought my God, I'll have to arrange an overdraft. The next day I rang Vic Gordian. He was the man at the bank, I knew him pretty well through Rotary. I was Secretary of Rotary and Treasurer.
- 22:30 I said, "I might need an overdraft Vic." He said, "Why, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm going to go over to Holland for 6 weeks with Garry." He said, "Come over and see me when you're ready." I did and he said, "Come into my office." He got the papers out and he said, "Do you own your own house?" I said, "It's a war service home." He said, "How much do you owe on it?" I said, "A couple of thousand dollars. I built it as a bank home first and then transferred it." He said, "What have you got?" I said, so and so.
- 23:00 "Ok" he said, "I'll give you whatever you want. I had a pretty big retirement fund built up. So a few days later I get my bank statement and here's this huge overdraft on it. Three bloody return tickets were booked up to ...I had told him that Garry and his mate were going to, and he said to me, "Do me a favour will you?" And I said, "What Vic?"
- 23:30 He said, "It doesn't mean much, but if you could book your travel through the Wales then it's good for me on the record." I said, "Ok." The next thing I find is there's 3 return tickets to Holland booked on my account. When we came back from Holland the first letter I opened was one saying I was \$432 overdrawn.
- 24:00 And no arrangement had been made. I bore [raced] over to the bank and gave it to Vic. He was busy at the time and I waited. The accountant said, "Can I help you?" I said, "No I want to see Vic." And I waited and eventually he said, "What's it about?" And I said, "That bloody letter." "Oh" he said, "Mr Gordian was on holidays while you were away, so was the accountant and the new manager didn't have it in the diary."
- 24:30 So he just tore it up. I was only having a shot at Vic anyway. But other things that happened. I used to have to get a return of land and stock for a property called Wallemburra. It was about 15 or 20 mile out of town on the Cobar Road. Fifty two thousand acres and the Bank of New South Wales in those days was the Mortgagee in Possession. And I had to get a return of land and stock for each property.
- 25:00 Nil horses, nil cattle, nil sheep and so on. Then you'd rate them on carrying capacity. I was over there chasing Vic to get this return and I said, "What the hell's going on?. This is the second or third year it's been empty." He said, "The bank's going to sell it for what's owing to them." I said, "How much is owing?" He looked at me and said, "Come into the office." He got all the papers out and he said, "About \$22,000." I said, "What, for 52,000 acres?"
- 25:30 He said, "Yes." I said, "Give me first offer." He said, "What would you do with it." I said, "Never mind, give me first offer for 24 hours." I raced and saw my cobbler and I said, "Garry let's buy this Wallemburra between us. Its 52,000 acres, a good homestead, good shearing sheds, the dams are all silted up and the fences are all good." He said, "What would we do with it?" And I said, "Make a quid." "All right" he said.
- 26:00 So I rang Vic and said, "We want the option." "Ok" he said. Anyway a few weeks later Vic gets

transferred to Sydney as the Metropolitan Manager. Peter Wright takes over. He's also in Rotary and one night at Rotary I said, "How's things going with Wallemburra?" He said, "I think we've got a buyer." I said, "No, I've got first offer." He said, "No, a fella called Bailey's buying it." I said, "Vic gave me first offer." He said, "He didn't put it in the diary, but I don't think Bailey will buy it anyway." But Bailey did.

26:30 Within 12 or 13 months he had sold it for \$110,000 and I could have got it for \$22,000. And I believe when I was leaving Burke it was on the market again at a higher price. But just the opportunities that come and go. No regrets. I've had some good times. I had a great time in Holland. Met his mother and father and with all the family, I wasn't a tourist.

**I might take you back now Glen.**

27:00 **. If I can start by taking you right back to growing up in Bourke. Can you give us a bit of a picture of what it was like for you and your brothers and sisters?**

Well my first memories? My first memory is sitting in the sand pit at the Toowoomba General Hospital when my sister was being born. I must have been about 3 at that stage. My

27:30 maternal grand parents, or my grandmother was alive and my grand father died just after I was born. He was Land's Commissioner for Queensland. He had been a bank manager. Manager of the Bank of New South Wales. As a kid he went from Brisbane up to Port Douglas which was the port in those days and with pack saddle and horse he went out to George Town to take up a job as a teller in the Bank of New South Wales.

28:00 He finished up as manager of Crowdon in the gold mining days, and then went to Sydney and left the bank and got the job as Lands Commissioner for Queensland. He was Lands Commissioner when he died. He got pneumonia and they suggested he should go for a sea trip. So he was on his way back to Port Douglas where his wife and family lived. And he died on the boat. September 1924.

28:30 **What about your own mother and father. How did you get on with them?**

Mum was the only daughter of the Lands Commissioner and Kathy. Her mother was a Tunney, who had been brought up in Port Douglas. Great Grandfather was a British Army bloke. He'd been Ambassador to Greece before he came to Australia in 1845 and he settled Hannaford and Hannaford Station out near Dalby.

29:00 From what I can gather he had a whole entourage and was going to set himself up as the 'Landed Squire'. He had his own doctor and all this sort of business. But things didn't go as well as he had hoped as far as I know. And then he was in charge of some settlement in Brisbane. He died in Brisbane and was buried there. I think, supposedly, he had been a general.

29:30 But that I don't know. But my Grandmother Watson said he was a peppery old man. He sounded like a general. Dad's father and his two brothers were the first white settlers on the Warrego. They settled there in 1858. Great Grandfather married Elizabeth Jenkins in 1832 at the

30:00 Church of England in Berrima and in 1834 he with his new wife and in-laws went looking for land down the Murray and they settled the lower Murray. His mother-in-law died and he and my great grand mother settled Gol Gol Station on the Murray. It's still on the map now, Gol Gol. Between Wentworth and Mildura. They got title to that.

30:30 The Mildura Historical Society did a paper about Elizabeth Jenkins, the wife of Henry Williams and they restored their graves. Found the original headstone. All those papers I've given to my eldest son now.

**Growing up on the land as you did Glen, what did you get up to as kids?**

Living on quarter of a million acres, our nearest neighbour was 16 mile away. My elder brother and I... well

31:00 I was taught to shoot when I was about 8. I can remember being...under guidance being shown.

**What were you using?**

A 22, and as we turned 14, Dad gave us a Winchester 22 Repeater. We had a 410 double barrellled shotgun, the little small gauge one. We had our own reloading outfit. We had instructions. We weren't to shoot anything within a mile of the homestead, and

31:30 no willy wagtails, magpies, kookaburras, peewees or parrots. But we were allowed to shoot pigs and goats, eagle hawks in those days too but I wouldn't do it now. Kangaroos of course and ducks. We were only a mile from the Darling River. We had our ponies. There was a motor boat on the river. We had a ball. We used to camp out. Our cousins on the school holidays...three cousins would come out from Burke,

32:00 first cousins and they all finished up in the air force too, two pilots and one air gunner. They'd stay with us on the school holidays and God, we had a ball. I hated it when I got sent away to school. Get home twice a year. We had the world at our feet actually. We had a few ponies.

32:30 It was a great time. The things you'd get up to. We built a cubby house in the side of an old dam about

three quarters of a mile from the home, down near an old grave. There were 3 old graves on the property. One near the cow yard, one down towards the river and one at Burrabunawona Bend. Unmarked graves with fence posts around them sort of thing. We didn't know who they were.

33:00 Had been there for dozens of years probably. Anyway we built a cubby down near one of these graves and Dad had made the remark that we wouldn't be able to camp out all night near the grave. "Yeah we're going to camp out." He said, he would give us a pound if we stayed out all night. Anyway we got some chops and we cooked a bit of a feed down at our cubby house. And we were settling down for the night. It was getting dark and we heard

33:30 whoooo...and whoooo a few times. And we thought, "What the hell!" I don't know who it was but someone broke, followed by 3 others and at high speed we got back to the homestead. And the short time later father walked in with a smile on his face, "What are you doing here?" Boy did we take off. We never did get our quid.

34:00 **Did you get into much mischief?**

Oh yes. We had the station store and there was all the rations there and everything was in bulk. We found we could get in through the back. By climbing up the back we found a small window where we could get in and we could get a case of lager occasionally. The swaggies [swagmen] used to come by during the Depression days. Oh poor beggars.

34:30 Never together, they always came singularly. Looking for jobs, they'd move from one station to another and Dad employed George as I remember as the blacksmith and a fella by the name of Frank White, he got the job as station mechanic. But they would come, 3 or 4 or 5 a week or more sometimes. Dad said they were killing 12 sheep a week for meat. He always kept a few wethers down the yards and butcher shop had meat in it.

35:00 They'd come along and they would get a handout. They'd get tea and sugar, flour. Maybe if they were lucky they would get a bit of tobacco or something. But always some meat and if there wasn't enough meat in the butcher shop, Dad would say take what you need. If there's not enough there, kill a sheep, take what you want and put the rest in the butcher shop. And they were going through 12 sheep a week. No, it must have been 12 sheep a month.

35:30 **So quite a few swaggies would come through?**

Yes, one after the other. It went on until the end of the Depression years.

**How would they...**

They would just carry their swag. They would get to a town and get a ration book handed out at the police station and then told to move on. Off they'd go and pull up at a sheep station and get a hand out. They were all willing to take a job too. I remember Dad saying that there were good qualified men on the track. There was no pensions in those days. They were genuine, just looking for a job.

36:00 Never got back of course. They always got a feed and then they'd carry on to the next property which was 16 mile away. Yambacunna was 16 mile east. We were 32 mile out of town on a dirt road and 28 mile from Birrarriner. In 1934 my younger sister got pneumonia and

36:30 it was teeming rain on a dirt track and the doctor put chains on his car and came out 32 mile. You wouldn't get that nowadays. Doctor Levins. We called him out and he drove out on a dirt track.

**Were your parents strict on you growing up?**

Not really no. As long as you did the right thing,

37:00 Dad always said that children know their limits. I recall when my eldest son was climbing a tree at the house one day and I said, "No, no get down from there you'll hurt yourself." And Dad said, "Leave them alone." And I said, "What?" He said, "Leave them alone. Children know their limitations." He let us learn our own limitations. Now my son loves

37:30 going on cross country trips and all this sort of thing. He's the Qantas pilot one. He's going back and doing his first officer on 747s. He had 6 years on them before. He was first officer on 767, now he's going on the big stuff. My grand daughter who I was talking to last night, she just obtained her commercial pilots licence last week. She's a Qantas Cadet.

**That's pretty good.**

Last year

38:00 she did the High School Certificate, 98.95%. She put in for medicine or a Qantas Cadetship and she was offered both and settled for a cadetship. Brighter than I was. If I got 60% I used to ease off. I reckoned I had been overworking.

00:32 **This is character Mr Tancread...was it Mr Tancread?**

Tancread.

**He seemed like a father figure to you, is that right?**

Yes I think so. He must have thought I was a good kid. He wasn't a paedophile, put it that way.

**I wasn't insinuating that.**

No, and I would be in that either. No, he and Mrs Tancread and his kids, Barry, Geoff and Ann the three kids.

01:00 They were a few years younger than I was and I got along with them very well.

**Were you angry at him when he man-powered you?**

Not angry, but disappointed to blazes. I thought, oh no. I told him I wanted to go and he said, "Glen you've got plenty of time yet. You don't want to go yet. I was in the last show."

01:30 I asked him about what he had done and so on. He said that he had been a corporal PT instructor in the New Zealand army. I don't think he went overseas or anything.

**But that showed a lot of affection for you didn't it?**

Yes apparently it did. I think he probably knew my father and he knew Dad had been a manager and they were pioneers around the area.

02:00 Dad's father and his two brothers were the first white settlers on the Warrego in 1858. They were there in 1850 when Stuart came through doing surveys. And he mentioned in his diary that the Williams' brothers were already established on the Warrego and they got title to 650,000 acres as a grant you see because they were settled. They were running cattle and 650,000 acres wasn't a bad slice of land.

02:30 The township of Wyandra is called after Grandfather's horse paddock. Wyandra Paddock and Dad's grandfather, my great grandfather, he settled on the lower Murray. My great grandmother was the first white woman on the lower Murray. He established there as a pioneer and Dad's sister...

03:00 I remember Grandmother Williams at one stage had a sword and I used to play with it as a kid. It had been given to my grandparents. They also at one stage when they were at Gol Gol, they had Stuart's sword and they had his little canon. The canon was given to one of the river boat captains and when the grandparents died my Aunt Grace, Dad's sister had Stuart's sword and some how or other the people in South

03:30 Australia with Stuart's cottage contacted...they knew that the Williams family had these things, they contacted Aunt Grace and she gave the sword back to the Stuart Cottage museum on permanent loan. She told them where the canon had gone to and they managed to get that back too. So the little canon, one of those small ones and the sword are now in Stuart's Cottage in Adelaide.

04:00 But I don't know how and when my grandparents got this sword. They must have had some contact way back and he gave them his sword and little canon.

**Maybe during the convict...**

I don't know. It must have been well back because my grandparents went down the Murray area in 1834. They were married in Berrima in 1832 and they went by horse and dray of course in '34 and they settled down that way.

04:30 **They still had convicts coming out until 1850.**

Yes I believe so. I don't know how they managed to link up with Stuart somewhere or other. They must have on his one expeditions. I don't know. Gol Gol Station is still there. It's still shown on the map as Gol Gol.

05:00 **Can you tell us about what you knew of the First World War? You said your uncles...was it your uncles?**

Yes. Dad was in the Light Horse but he didn't get overseas. Uncle Phil was an Anzac at Gallipoli and fought in France. Uncle Lin and Uncle Gordon were in the Light Horse in Palestine and Jordan and that area. Uncle Gordon died in Brisbane in 1988. He was 108 and two and a half months.

05:30 **That was the Gallipoli fella?**

No the Gallipoli one died riding gentleman jockey at the picnic races at Charleville in 1920. Dad was riding in the same race but he didn't know Phil had gone down until the race was over. The horse went down with him and he was unconscious for a couple of days. He died in 1920 and was buried in Charleville. That was the one in Gallipoli. Uncle Gordon was the last surviving Boer War veteran at the

06:00 time of his death. He was the last survivor, and he was World War I. He applied to join World War II but

they said he was too old. The last time I was talking to him when he was about 107, he said, "All those old pots who told me I was too old, they're all long gone." He lived until he was 108 and died in Greenslopes of golden staph mind you.

06:30 He used to get up in the morning early, light his pipe, walk around his garden a little bit, have a cup of tea and a piece of toast and walk around his garden for a little while and then settle down and watch TV all day nearly. He would go to bed at 7 o'clock at night. Anyway he dropped his pipe. He reached down to try and get his pipe and fell out of his chair and broke his hip. They wheeled him off to hospital at Greenslopes and they put a pin in his hip and he was getting over that and he got pneumonia.

07:00 Anyway he was getting over pneumonia and he got golden staph. They gave him a big boots reversed Light Horse funeral in Brisbane in 1988. He was the oldest Australian at the time of his death.

**You've got good genes in your family then.**

Hopefully. Dad was just on 99 and both grandmothers were 93. Great grandfather was 88.

07:30 Great grandfather was 88. Great, great, great grandfather on one side of the family was 85. He was a convict in the second fleet, Huxley. His wife Annie Forbes was the last survivor of the First Fleet. She died at Saxville Reach at the age of 80 which was not bad in those days.

08:00 **Do you think this history of your relatives being involved in these conflicts had any influence on you signing up?**

Possibly I don't know. I can remember Uncle Bob, that was Mum's brother. He had his 18th birthday on Gallipoli and then he was in France in the trenches. He was a sergeant on a Lewis gun at some big battle.

08:30 Lieutenant Towner then was his commanding officer. He got the VC [Victoria Cross] and my uncle got Mentioned in Dispatches and commissioned in the field. I met Towner years after. He was Major Towner VC and he was staying with my grandmother at Toowoomba and Uncle Bob was there. I can remember being a kid of about 12 and I asked him about the war and I said to this VC winner, "What was the biggest fright you got?"

09:00 He laughed a bit and he said, "We had just captured Hill 60, a big German place and they had all these trenches going right down underground, tunnels and stuff. The day after we captured it I went around looking for souvenirs and I was down one of these long dark tunnels and a German fella jumped up, put his hands in the air and was yelling out, "Kamaraderie! Kamaraderie!" I didn't have a gun. That was my big fright, the bloke was trying to surrender."

09:30 Major Towner I think he finished up as. My uncle finished up as a captain I think.

**What about the Second World War then. You said you were born in '24. So you were only 20 when you had your birthday in San Francisco?**

Yes, the day I arrived in San Francisco. And my 21st birthday the day I arrived in Ireland.

10:00 **So did a lot of bush people join up?**

Oh yes, I think it was the same right throughout the area. I don't know if there was any difference. I think it was the same everywhere.

**Can you remember a lot of country families with their men going off to war**

10:30 **and what it was like...the call to enlist?**

Yes to a certain degree. Not so many of the landed families at that stage of the game because they were a reserved occupation. They didn't have to go, but quite a few who didn't have to go, went. But some family's sons didn't go at all. Some of the families I know.

11:00 **And the men who did actually have a reserved occupation, were they given a hard time?**

No I don't think so. I was away anyway. But I don't think so. It was just one of those things. Those who wanted to go went. And to a lot, and to myself as well, I think it was probably thought of as a bit of an adventure. There were one or two times I got a bit of a fright and it wasn't too funny then.

11:30 But they were just minor things. And you lose a couple of good mates, but the usual thing was you shrugged it off...where's so and so? He's got the chop [killed]. Oh bad luck! Or he's gone to Gowings was an expression we used. That was a shop in Sydney and so a common expression. He's gone to Gowings. When one was a bit close to a friend

12:00 it was a bit hard, but most were just acquaintances. Lord, I couldn't remember them all, but I knew a stack of fellas who didn't make it. But most were just acquaintances.

**Did that make it a lot harder for the men toiling the land and being short of hands?**

Yes to a certain degree it was.

**Is that perhaps part of the reason your father was so keen for you to go?**

12:30 Oh I don't think he wanted me to go because my older brother was in New Guinea at the time and things were a bit touchy, and they thought that he might have got the bullet. I think that's the reason probably.

**But he survived, your older brother?**

Yes. He came back and got married in 1945, the end of '45. Married with 6 kids. He's got about 20 odd great grand children now.

13:00 His wife's a Catholic and they had 6 kids, and all those kids had about 6 kids, so they were prolific.

**And with working the land was it something you wanted to get out of when you were offered that job in Toowoomba at 18 to join the bank?**

I didn't like the idea of going to the bank at the time.

13:30 I wanted to go back home because I had been away for so many years at school. That was the reason.

**At boarding school?**

I was boarding mostly with my grand parents. My grandmother lived in Toowoomba. My mother's mother. She had a big home in Stirling Street Toowoomba where I was born. I boarded for a while but mostly I stayed with my grandmother. I preferred that to the boarding school at the time. I didn't like boarding at Grammar. The Prep I didn't mind.

14:00 Old boss Connell.

**Who was that, sorry?**

Boss Connell the Headmaster at the Prep School.

**Was that a very strict disciplinary school?**

Not in the sense of being really, really strict. You behaved yourself and you had to go to chapel and you had to have good manners and raise your hat to women and call your elders 'sir'.

14:30 Be a good sport. Education is not everything. There's more to life than education. Connell was a wonderful headmaster. Boss Connell and Bob Smith took over afterwards. I would have liked my son to go there but we were living in Bourke and so I sent him to All Saints in Bathurst. Both sons went there and Heather the daughter went to Marsden.

15:00 That was a girls' school there. They all did well. Heather was school captain and a prefect. Ron did well at school. Heather won a diocese scholarship. That's how things started off. My late wife was keen on them going away for an education and I had thought that they could do their schooling in Bourke until the last couple of years. As it turned out, she was on the right track. There was no point on leaving

15:30 it. So as soon as Heather was due to go to high school, my wife got her to sit for the Diocesan scholarship and she won it. So she had a scholarship to Marsden. Then at the Intermediate she won a Commonwealth Scholarship. Then the Leaving Certificate, she won another Commonwealth Scholarship and then she won the Cobar Mine Scholarship

16:00 for the University. So she got the whole thing. So she was paying her way, no problem. Ron won a Diocesan scholarship to go to All Saints and then he won a Commonwealth Scholarship at the end of that. Heather got 6 As in her Leaving Certificate. Ron won a Commonwealth Scholarship and he went to uni [university], and Gavan the younger one got a RSL Scholarship at one stage. So they helped a lot.

**16:30 It made it easier for you?**

Yes. Heather went to university and she was going to do graduate nursing. Her mother had been a triple certificate sister. But after 12 months Heather didn't like the idea of that so she switched to science and psychology and she graduated with two credits and a distinction and a high distinction from Uni.

17:00 Then she started working with the CSIRO up in Rockhampton She had married.

**As a psychologist?**

No no. A lab assistant. She carried on and did some more study and then she did a PhD. She's Doctor Burrow now. She's a geneticist and she's a project leader with the CSIRO. She's the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Cattle Research Centre at Armidale.

**17:30 So a lot of your family's history is very much grounded in country.**

Yes. Heather's mad on cattle and horses. See we were also sheep although we had a lot of cattle on the station. I mean in 1936 I remember looking at the stock returns for Beemery. It was a good year for Bourke that year. I think there was something like 50,000 odd thousand sheep, 1000 cattle and 200 horses on the property. They were listed. It

18:00 was a big property.

**I've always heard that expression, he lives in the back of Burke. So I'm assuming, having never been to Bourke, that it's a vast area?**

Oh yes. One of the cousins sold his property about 18 months ago. He had Avondale Station. The directions to get to his place: you go west on the Wenaring Road for 110 mile. These were his instructions: come out for 110 mile,

18:30 then turn left for 10 mile and that's Avondale. He had 98,000 acres there. The brother-in-law, he died last year, he had about 80,000 odd acres 20 mile from Bourke. My nephew's got it now. My younger sister was married to him. She died a few years ago. My nephew's got the property now. There's another one out towards Wenaring...Mooreland Downs.

19:00 Another cousins. That would be about 100,000 acres. A big property.

**Was it strange for you to go from these vast plains and all this family history to going into the EAT [Empire Air Training] Scheme and then into Rose Bay, inner city? Did that effect you?**

No not really but I still like the bush. It suits me fine.

19:30 I had been in Sydney for a while before I joined up. Then England for a couple of years, nearly two years. Germany and stuff, Rose Bay.

**Can you tell us about actually going down and doing your training?**

It was a bit of a shake up really. We arrived there at this place

20:00 with all these naive youngsters. I remember we were issued with uniforms and I had overalls put up and they were about a foot too long for me. So I thought I'll get these things fixed up and I walked off and this fella said, "Don't you know how to salute officers?" I said, "I didn't know you were an officer." He said, "How long have you been in the air force?" I said, "This morning." Some young sprog [newcomer] officer.

20:30 I think we were 20 odd to unlined huts that they had at Bradfield Park. We had a little iron bed with a straw mattress. Three blankets I think it was. By God it used to get cold in winter time.

**Bradfield Park is New South Wales isn't it?**

Out from Sydney. Lindfield. Yes, up at 6 o'clock in the morning for PT [physical training]

21:00 "Run down to Fuller's Creek. Now right, right back and breakfast." And then the bull ring. "Left right left right...", teaching you the discipline of how to march. I can remember this corporal, Screaming Skull they used to call him, Corporal Watson. "Just because you're a half pint doesn't mean..." That was me, I was a half pint. He was going crook. It gave me quite a bit of pleasure when I went back...

21:30 it must have been 12 months later and I was a sergeant and he was still a corporal.

**Did you meet your mates there at Bradfield Park?**

I met a couple of mates there, yes.

**Ones that you kept through the service?**

One of them, one yes. Johnny Wright. Oh yes.

22:00 I meet up with some on the odd occasion. I was talking to an old mate from Melbourne the other day. Unfortunately he's got cancer. That's a nasty business this cancer. Too many of them are dropping off the perch [dying]. I've still got a couple of good cobblers I keep in touch with. Most of them are starting to die. They're getting old. But Pete over at...the one I gave you the...Hilary Roberts....Pete Johnson.

22:30 He was known as Pete in the air force. But his name is Hilary. I said to him years ago, "How come you've got the name of Pete?" He said, "They used to have a cartoon character called 'Pete the Piddling Pup', they used to call me Pete." So he's still known as Pete.

**His parents used to call him**

23:00 **that?**

No, he got this in the air force.

**What did you think was the hardest part of the training?**

Learning Morse code. You start off by singing it you see. D-dar A, D-dar A, Dar-d-d B, Dar-d-d B. Dar-d-dar dar C and you do it until it's a

23:30 second language and then you practice on the key. I used to go back and do extra at night and on Saturday morning's I would go to the AWA [Amalgamated Wireless Australasia] building in Sydney and

do it down there too. I got up to 24 words a minute and passed out for my final exams. It took me a long time to get into it.

**Twenty four words a minute, is that a standard?**

Well that was the top at that stage. When they say words, four letters

24:00 is a word. So you have 24 four letter words. Twenty four four's what's that...about 100 letters a minute. You had to be able to do it for 5 minutes without any mistakes to pass out. I did it eventually. But it took a long time, months and months of practice. In the end it became second nature.

24:30 I'd go to sleep....you'd be flying on with the radio on and you'd instantly wake up if you heard your own call sign.

**What do you mean. You'd sort of soak it in unconsciously?**

Yes you'd be half asleep. You'd hear your own call sign come up and you'd be dozing off. You know, these long hauls.

**Would this be for your practicing**

25:00 **for the exam?**

Oh no this is after you had qualified, I'm talking about. One time we were going up to [Port] Moresby I remember in a Catalina. We were floating along and I'm off watch. We had two watches, double. So I'm sitting down in the port blister having a quiet smoke. I've got the radio on listening to a bit of music. I see the lights of a town over on the coast there and I picked up the mike and said, "Hey navigator, what's that place over there?"

25:30 He said, "Gladstone." And I swear I could still see the lights of Gladstone half an hour later, that's how fast we were going. It took us nearly 14 hours to go to Moresby. From Rathmine to Moresby in an old Catalina. So you doze off a little bit, listening to music and then someone takes over for a while. But they're a wonderful old plane.

**It's amazing that you can remember...even now you**

26:00 **just gave us a bit of an example.**

Oh I could go straight through it. But I probably couldn't do more than 7 or 8 words a minute now. You could quote any letter and I could...give me a letter.

**H.**

Did-did-did-dit. Four dits.

**Did the kids ask you to do their names for them?**

Yes sometimes. When they were younger.

26:30 Yes, it's like a second language. They don't even use it nowadays. The whole thing is with keys and email and whatnot. You never forget it really. I did it for too long.

**Oh yes. Is learning Morse code mandatory in the air force?**

To be a wireless operator.

**To be a wireless operator only?**

27:00 Oh no. Most of them would learn a little bit of it because you had localised beacons and so on. You'd tune in. The pilot or navigator would tune in on a station and you have to identify a station so you can get the bearings to it. No good taking the bearings on an unknown station. Sometimes you'd get weird effects. I remember one time we were doing a test flight with a Lincoln up in

27:30 Townsville prior to taking the Minister for Air up to the Admiralty Islands, and we were about 3000 feet over Townsville. I picked up the mike [microphone] and said, "Townsville this is Able Baker Charlie how do you read?" I got no reply. I called a couple more times, got no reply and then I called up Cairns and got no reply. It must have been a blank spot somewhere. So I used the key. VZTV, VZTV,

28:00 no reply. So I put out an all stations call, "CQ C

**" Mildura answered me. "Reading you loud and clear, can we assist?" "Please advise Townsville we're overhead at 3000 feet on a test flight." So Mildura relayed the message back there. It was just a blank spot. Another time we were over Truscott in the north west of Western Australia. On the way over from Darwin I had been working the control on voice.**

28:30 **I remember Charlie Dog. He was an ex-Burke pilot. He got killed in a Tiger Moth later. But he joined up from Burke. But I was just working the voice," Charlie Dog this is so-and-so, we're landing in five minutes at Truscott." And we stayed there for 2 or 3 hours. Normally I would have been up with the pilot at take off, but I was just sitting back with the wireless,**

29:00 **I picked up the microphone, "Darwin this is Charlie Dog how do you read?" No reply. I called again and no reply. So I used the key, no reply. Up came Jakarta. "Jakarta reading loud and clear can we assist?" They were on key. So I had to ask Jakarta to relay a message back to Darwin that we were airborne at Truscott on our way back to Darwin. You get blank spots and you get some queer things.**

29:30 **It must have been frustrating during war time hitting blank spots?**

Well during war time you didn't use it much. There was radio silence.

**And when you say the key?**

The Morse key. You get some funny things. When we were on the Berlin Airlift, at certain times of the day you could tune in and hear Mike Connors on the Breakfast Session on ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] Australia, and of course that was a big thing. We would listen in to Australia while we're flying into Berlin.

30:00 We'd be listening in on the breakfast session. Anyhow we landed at Gattow one time and Merv Piggler, one of our wireless ops [operators], he was a bit naive. He said, "Good reception today." I said, "Yes amazing. I was fiddling around with the dial and I heard the Darwin Direction Finding Station so I zeroed in and I called them and I had a yarn with them." He said, "You didn't!"

30:30 I said, "Yes good reception." We found out afterwards, he spent nearly all the time on the way back from Berlin trying to call Darwin on the key. He had no hope but he was trying. Pulled his leg a bit. They called him Radar, he would pick up anything.

**I suppose the Australians tend to get a bit of a name for being larrikins. Do you think you were part of that then?**

31:00 Yes I think I was a little bit quieter than most of them but a few there were good mates and pretty lively. We used to have a lot of fun.

**You were telling Chris [interviewer] before on the tape before mine about becoming a wireless operator because you could shoot back.**

Well a navigator's got a pencil, he hasn't got a gun.

31:30 An old machine gun was a bit different.

**Did you find it was what you wanted after you had started doing the training for it?**

I still wanted to be a pilot. I applied a couple of times for transfer after the war. I've got some records there where I was recommended but I got, 'more useful in present category' or something like that.

32:00 My brother had a plane and I used to fly a little bit with him but I never qualified. My elder brother had an Auster and we used to flog around the bush a bit. My daughter Heather is a pilot, qualified. When she finished university we gave her a belated 21st Birthday present and she did her pilot's course at Bankstown. She got her pilot's licence but she doesn't fly much now.

32:30 Too busy I suppose. I've got no regrets, I had a lot of fun.

**Can you tell us about how difficult it is to become a wireless operator ?**

You need a lot of application. You had to learn Morse and the procedures of Morse. We also had to physics and meteorology and we had

33:00 quite a few subjects. We had to use the lights and it was Morse using lights. A long dash, short dash.

**What kind of lights?**

Aldus Lights. Ship to shore and ship to ship and all that sort of thing. You're sending Morse by light. Long light short light long light short light. D-Dar A was a long flash and a short flash.

33:30 That was harder than Morse. We didn't do much of it anyway. But we could do it.

**You went through...**

How to work a radio and how a radio was constructed.

**Did you feel confident enough to build your own radio if needs be?**

No, I never got to that stage. I could make a crystal set. I could do that when I was a kid at school.

34:00 Some of the blokes they used to hide them in their desks. Instead of doing homework at night they would have little ear pieces and listen to Dad and Dave [radio serial] by Wrigleys.

**That's pretty clever.**

You would get into trouble doing things like that. I don't recall getting into any severe trouble.

**But you went through the EAT Scheme didn't you?**

The Empire Air Training Scheme, yes.

**And then you specialised**

34:30 Well the whole thing was the Empire Air Training Scheme, wireless operators, gunners.

**So what was the course in Rose Bay specifically?**

That was after I was qualified and I was in charge of the controls...we had crash boats there for the flying boats to come in. In those days Qantas used to have Empire Flying Boats, and the Catalina

35:00 used to come in. So we had sea planes landing and we had crash launches and we would act as control tower.

**So they called them the Empire Flying Boats?**

Yes that it was a four engine flying boat. The air force had Sunderlands in 10 Squadron, they were flying the Coastal Command in England during the war, as were Catalinas. But we had the Sea Cats and we called them. They were just a

35:30 flying boat. And we had the amphibious ones so you could lower the undercarriage. You could land on water or land on the ground. We used the amphibious one mostly up in New Guinea. We would go up to Rebaul and land on the strip there, then you'd go over to Lord Howe Island and you'd land...before they had the strip at Land Howe. You'd just land on the sea near Rabbit Island

36:00 there. We took the dentist over there one day and we flew the election papers over. It was in the eastern election of Sydney, Lord Howe Island, and we flew the election papers over there for the elections. We stayed there for the weekend and that was before they had a strip on the island. We just took a sea plane over.

36:30 Then we lost about 5 of our blokes. They pranged and hit the mountain there one night while we were over in Germany. It killed all of them. They were doing a night flying exercise over that way somewhere and they started to get a fuel leak. So they were going to try and land on the sea at night time there. They came in and they went too low and they hit the top of the mountain. Knocked all of them. That would have been in 1948.

37:00 Then my old mate, the one I used to fly with, Rob McKay. We used to fly in a Dakota. He had been a Wing Commander of a Wellington Squadron in Italy in the Mediterranean area during the war. I was flying with him on Dakotas. He and a Battle of Britain fighter pilot were playing around with a Tiger Moth down near Scofield one day. They did some manoeuvre that didn't work out and they went in and killed them both. That

37:30 would have been 1949 I think.

**Did these kind of accidents happen quite frequently in the air force?**

Yes, over a period of time. These things happen the same as road accidents happen. You might go for a spell of 12 months or 2 years without any accidents and then you get a couple. It was just one of those things.

**Was it frustrating during the training of becoming a wireless operator knowing that the Second World War was still on**

38:00 **and you were trying to get out there? Was there a sort of impatience?**

You were keen to go. I don't know why, it was foolish. But you were keen to get on to operations. Looking in retrospect it was a foolish bloody idea in a way, you get shot at that way. But young and eager and foolish.

**And you said before you mentioned with fondness about Catalinas?**

38:30 Yes a lovely plane.

**What was lovely about them?**

Well they were so stable. You could go for hours and hours and hours. They had 3 bunks on board. You usually had double crews you see. There was a coffee pot always percolating there down near the engine's power. Every now and again you'd have bacon and eggs. If you got tired you could have a little kip [sleep] for a while. Wonderful old plane.

39:00 **How big were they?**

One hundred and twenty four foot wing span I think it was. From tip to tip I think it was 124. Ugly looking thing. Horrible in some respects especially the amphibious ones. You'd land...I can remember landing at Townsville one time when we came back from Port Moresby. We had Group Captain Townsend on board. We landed and taxied in and before you cut the motor

39:30 you lowered the wing floats down and you were standing on the undercarriage there. So you lower that, cut the motors, open the port blister, put the ladder out and I was getting down I heard one of ground staff blokes say, "Christ I always expect to see Mickey Mouse get out of one of these things." It wasn't Mickey Mouse but some cartoon character.

40:00 He said he always expected a Disney character to get out of it. But they were so stable and they were good.

**Did they look like a joke plane?**

Oh yes. Have you ever seen a Catalina?

**Well I may have but I can't remember what they looked like?**

We'll look later on. I've got a photograph of one there. They're good looking planes in a way, but unusual.

## Tape 4

00:33 **What made you want to actively pursue the air force and not the army or the navy?**

Well as a kid at Prep School I always wanted to fly and a couple of friends and I were going to be pilots. We were going to fly airlines and all the rest, until one day a Gipsy Moth crashed not far from the school and we took off on our bikes to have a look just in time to see a bloke being pulled out. That put us off for quite a while.

01:00 But then it came back on again and I wanted to be a pilot and I wanted to be airlines. My parents booked me on a plane to fly from Burke to Charleville to catch the plane back to Toowoomba. I was about 14, I think and I remember it cost 27 shillings to fly from Bourke to Charleville on an old De Havilland twin engine by-plane.

01:30 Then I caught the plane from Charleville to Toowoomba to go back to school. Twenty seven shillings and of course 27 shillings was 27 shillings wasn't it.

**Yes, very different now. When the war broke out and you were wanting to join the air force...**

I was still at school when the war broke out and that was the first day we went shooting actually. The .303's and they were hesitate to let

02:00 me use it because I was a bit small. I told them that I had shot before and I could shoot, and I topped the score. So they didn't say anything more than.

**Where were you shooting?**

Toowoomba Grammar in the Cadet Corps. We had a rifle team.

**Did you consider yourself at the time a British subject?**

Well we were classified as an Australian citizen

02:30 but a British subject. That's how we were classified in those days. When you filled the form in to join up, you were British Subject, Australian Citizen.

**And when you signed up for the air force were you going to fight for Australia or the mother country?**

I guess it was a bit of both actually. It was one thing or the other, the same thing. It was the British Empire. That's the same things were. I

03:00 didn't give it any thought actually. It was just the way it was.

**Or did you just want to get your hands on a plane?**

That's basically what it was. To be a Spitfire pilot. I had no rank. I thought the squadron leader was the bloke who was at the top of the V. He was the front but I learned later on that it was a rank anyway.

**I was wandering if you could walk us through how you were trained up as a gunner?**

Well first of all we had to learn to strip the Browning .303. How to strip them and name them and reassemble them, and then they would teach you how to shoot. That was no problem because I had been shooting on and off since the age of 14.

04:00 I had been shooting shotguns and stuff and by the time I joined the air force I had been using Dad's Greener rifle. I had a 22 Repeater. I was quite familiar with them whereas the city boys probably weren't. But we had no trouble with that. And then they put us in the Anson turret,

04:30 and we'd be flying along and an aircraft would come flying along towing a drogue and you would try and hit the drogue with bullets which had been painted. The bullet marks would show up on the drogue. Half the time you didn't hit it anyway. You just had a bit of training.

**And you were at Bradfield Park and Parkes and also West Sale, so which parts of the training did you do at each place?**

05:00 The initial training was done at Bradfield Park. We had 10 subjects. I don't remember them all now but there was Meteorology; Aircraft Recognition; Physics; Morse Code; Maths...and all ten subjects had to be passed with a minimum of 60%, otherwise you could finish up being passed out as an Air Crew guard or

05:30 cook's offsider and of course none of us wanted that, we wanted to be air crew. I did more work and harder work then in that period than I ever did at school.

**And so did you do any gunnery training at Parkes?**

No not at Parkes. Just radio, radio, radio. On the ground in the mobile vans and then flying. And the first aircraft we flew in at Parkes was an old DH84

06:00 which was the same as the one I had flown in from Bourke to Charleville. They had 3 or 4 trainees set up in there with the equipment and we would fly around for a while doing exercises. Then later on we were flying in 'Wackets'. CAC they call them, Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, Wackets. They weren't a very effective little plane. Two seats, one for the pilot and one for the trainee.

06:30 You'd do your wireless work in that, muck about.

**A technical question: what would you actually do with your gear during training?**

Well you would have to have your code books; know your frequencies; what frequency you were going to work on - the emergency frequency. You would have all these things available for any

07:00 eventualities really. You'd have your emergency frequencies, you'd have the normal frequencies. You'd have watches when you were supposed to report in. It depended on the circumstances. Normal post war stuff, if you were on your way to Japan you'd call up every half hour. Even if there was no information you would call up to make contact. On course such and such and give a time. You would give position reports in case anything

07:30 went wrong and then they would have an idea of where to locate you or a rough idea of where to start searching. They were good trips those ones. I enjoyed them. You got some unusual things at times. We were up there north of Morotai I think it was. We were going along on our way to the Philippines and we saw a water spout and I guarantee it went up 2000 feet. It was huge. We gave it a wide berth because it would have torn us apart.

08:00 A big water spout out of the sea.

**Like a small tornado?**

Yes. Going up. On another occasion we were going along and we saw a small island coming out of the sea, steam and water and stuff. Apparently it only lasted a day or two and it sank again. It disappeared. A volcanic eruption I suppose caused it. Unusual. And flying over Rabaul. You could be coming

08:30 in over about 2 or 3000 feet and boy could you smell the sulphur from the volcano. I remember we brought two war criminals back from Japan. One was the Japanese naval captain and the other one must have been in the army. They were brought back to the War Crimes trial at Rabaul. We flew them back under escort of course.

09:00 We got to Sydney and the CO said we had brought them this far so we might as well take them to Rabaul. So the next day we took them off to Rabaul. We got up there and handed them over to the authorities. We were having a few drinks in the mess that night and one bloke said, "There's a couple of hangings on tomorrow. Do you want to be in it?" "Oh bloody oath we'll be in it." A few more drinks...the next morning, I didn't go.

09:30 **Was that only because you had a hangover?**

No. I wouldn't have gone but because I had had a few drinks I was going to go, but I didn't want to go and see anyone hung. That wasn't my cup of tea. Poor buggers. But still, they deserved it, there was no question of that. From what my brother told me he saw in the army in New Guinea, but then again some of our blokes probably did things too that they shouldn't have. I'm sure they did.

**War is war.**

Oh yes.

**You mentioned the frequencies before. I was just curious**

10:00 **within a given area over a range of options, would those frequencies vary from flight to flight?**

Well I suppose for security purposes they probably would have. It depended on where you were. Some were low frequency operations and some were high frequency ones. Whether it was day light or night time and things like that. I've forgotten some of the terms now but you would get...

10:30 twilight effect on frequencies where it would skip distances and what not. Normally a radio signal goes out like an expanding ring and it goes up and hits the ionosphere layer and is reflected back to the ground. That's how it travels. And the low frequency travels along the ground. So it depends on what distances you're operating on.

**So what's the twilight effect?**

You get the ionosphere layer which raises and lowers.

11:00 And it doesn't go up evenly. At night time it starts to lower but as it lowers it tilts, so your waves are going all over the bloody place you see. And you get that effect so you go onto a low frequency and try and work with a ground wave. The ionosphere is like a ceiling and instead of lowering steadily it might be lowering like that. So refractions and reflections are going all over the place.

11:30 EMF [electro-magnetic field] layers they used to call them.

**Just going back to the gunnery training that you were doing. That was in West Sale Victoria. Do you reckon you could walk us through stripping down a Browning?**

Yes I could do it. I wouldn't be able to strip it down without thinking but I could do it yes.

12:00 You get to learn these things. I used to have a Luger that I bought back from Germany. I just brought it back home with me. So I had this Luger and I used to strip it down and fire it. Mother used to worry about it so in the end I stripped it down and walked along the river behind our place and threw pieces in and got rid of it that way. Some years afterwards Ken Anderson who was the plain clothed detective in Burke

12:30 He came over to the garage...we had the garage opposite the police station there...he came over this day with a 9ml German luger. And he said, "Inspector Bell..." Charlie Bell the Inspector, I knew him pretty well. He said, "The Inspector says check this and test fire it for him" And he bought over two bullets. So I looked at it and the next thing I had it in pieces. He said, "How did you do that?" He was the worst shot I ever saw that bloke. It turned out afterwards...I was captain of the pistol club.

13:00 I said, "I used to have one once." Anyway I put it back together again and went outside. I had a 44 gallon drum full of water and put it on the concrete. And then I got a 12 gallon drum and stood on it and went bang, bang. And the water would have been that high I suppose, but if it hadn't have been for the concrete on which it was based it would have gone straight through the drum. There were two pimples on the bottom of the drum about that far apart where the bullets had hit.

13:30 They're powerful things those 9 mils. And of course they're sighted at 800 metres. You could rest it on a log and shoot a rabbit at 100 yards just like rifle. It was a powerful thing. I said to Ken, "Can you get any more ammo?" He said that was all he had. So I said, "Do you know anyone in Dubbo?" And I said that if he could get some ammo we could try it out at the range one day. They used to shoot the bank team against the police team, and I

14:00 used to shoot for the police. I used to marshal the shoot. So he got some of this ammo but he couldn't hit the mound at 15 paces. And he was the plain clothed detective. He didn't have a clue. He was the worst shot I ever saw.

**What did you think of the Browning that you had?**

It was a good machine gun. But looking

14:30 back at it now we were under powered. It had a point blank range of 300 yards whereas the American .5 machine gun was about 500 yards. So you could open up and the Germans were using heavier equipment too. And they were opening up out of our range. You could wait until they got in before you could get into them.

15:00 Not that I ever shot any Germans down. I had a cousin who was the top gunner in the whole thing, Norm Williams from down Leeton way. He was about a third cousin. He was the highest decorated Non-Commissioned Officer in the British Empire, an NCO, at that stage. He had the CGM [Conspicuous Gallantry Medal] and the DFM [Distinguished Flying Medal] and the bar to that. He had four confirmed and one probable ['kills'] before he got his commission. The last time

15:30 I saw him he was a squadron leader coming back from the occupation in Japan. But he used to flash his torch. On a night raid, he was in the tail turret of a Lanc [Lancaster]. He would flash his torch and the Germans would think, "Hello here's an easy target." He would wait until they were in range and then he'd blast them. And he got four confirmed and one probable. He got a canon shell go through his gut and paralysed him from the waist down.

16:00 It put his hydraulics out of action but he was still able to use the guns manually and he directed his captain, "Nose up nose down" and he shot the bloke down who shot him. And in hospital they presented him with the turret doors with 13 holes where the bullets had exploded behind him. They presented him

with these turret doors and he got the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal. He's living down Leeton way now. He was a gunner. They reckoned he was a fantastic rifle shot too. I only ever saw him once.

16:30 I saw him the night before he went over to the Victory Parade in London after the war. I saw this bloke in the shower and he had these massive scars on him, and I thought, "I wonder who that is?" And I glanced up and saw his uniform and I realised who he was. I didn't know it at the time but it turned out he was a third cousin. Same as R.M Williams. I had contact with him some years ago. I was a member of the Stockman's Hall

17:00 of Fame. I had submitted an article about a Great Uncle Ridley Williams who went overland with 2000 head of cattle to Alice Springs to deliver to the Overland Telegraph people in 1882 because the Melbourne Markets had dried up and things were pretty bad in those Depression years. He asked me to put something else in. He wrote to me over something...I think it was about the uncle who was over 100.

17:30 He had been a stockman too. And in the correspondence he asked whether we were related? I wrote back and said I didn't think we were but I found out about 3 or 4 years ago that he was my third cousin. I have nephews in Dubbo doing research. And apparently he's a descendent of my Great Grandfather. But he didn't leave me any boots.

18:00 He was a great force behind that Stockman's Hall of Fame. He had a lot to do with it.

**If I can just bring you back to the Browning because I'm really curious. As a machine gun it doesn't sound like they were very effective?**

Put it this way, with 1250 rounds a minute you could blast away with four guns but you would never fire for a minute because you would burn them out.

18:30 There would be four guns synchronised to 300 yards point blank to about a 40 foot target. It would be a cone of fire going out. And if you fired at intervals of about 2 or 3 seconds...it would put out a wave of bullets, 1250 a minute. That was 4 guns; and if you fired for 3 or 4 seconds then there would be a fair bit of lead going out.

19:00 If you got the bloke within range and you fired quick enough and accurate enough then you would get him. Whereas the Yanks with the point five...they had the point five on the Lincolns, and they were much more heavier equipment. They weren't as fast firing but they fired about 900 rounds a minute. So you could hammer away with those too. And the Lincolns of course with the mid upper turret had 20ml canons.

19:30 What did they call them, gyro stabilised. But I never shot anyone. And thank Christ no one shot me.

**So obviously with the Brownings when they're teaching you to strip them down and put them back together, they're wanting you to do it so you don't have to think about it, so how would they get you to that level?**

Full finding. If it jammed then you would cock and fire, that's the first thing. If it jammed,

20:00 as a rule there would be an empty shell caught in the breech. The thing is they wanted you to become familiar with them so you could take action quickly if something went wrong. You would get stoppages and so on.

**What would cause a stoppage?**

Well a twisted belt. A faulty cartridge.

20:30 Pulling the empty one out. Odd things can happen but mostly it's just routine things like a normal rifle.

**How many pieces would it strip down into?**

You've got me there but there was the breech block and little bits and pieces...12 or 15 or something like that. You've got the firing pin and you've got the springs.

21:00 I don't know really off hand but I would say about 12 or 15 all up counting the main frame and things. You've got your belt feeds and you've got your block with firing pin and the spring and the plunger, extractors.

**Can you recall the sequence that you'd go through to pull it apart?**

No.

21:30 As a rough idea, you remove the breech block...but no I couldn't...I could do it but I couldn't do it by rote.

**What would you have to do to maintain the thing?**

Regular cleaning. Cleaning and oiled. That would be the main thing and that was usually done by the ground staff, the armourers.

22:00 They did all that and they synchronised your guns for you and stuff. You would do a test firing before you went on ops. I never went on those things, but if you were going out on an exercise you would give it a burst to make sure everything was right and that was it.

22:30 **Could give a catalogue of some of the first planes that you trained on?**

Well the first one was a DH84. The De Havilland 84 Biplane; then the CAC Wacket; Avro Anson; Airspeed Oxford; Wellington; Liberator;

23:00 Beaufighter; Beaufort; Catalina, Seaplane and the Amphib [amphibious aircraft]; Dakota; Lincolns, the long nose ones. That's about it.

**You mentioned that you had a preference for the Dakota?**

Well yes. It was a lovely plane.

23:30 Docile, comfortable, good equipment on it. It would go along for a few hours and you could take a cut lunch with you. It was quite good. Very reliable plane. We had three planes a week back and forth from Japan for 3 months without a failure. They were always on time and things like that. No problem. Very seldom did we have a problem with the Dakotas. They're

24:00 still flying today a few of them. The original DC3 I think the first one was flying in the 1934 Centennial Air Race. It came out with the Dutch in 1934. That was the DC2 which is virtually the DC3 anyway and they've been flying ever since. God knows how many thousands were built.

**I guess when you've got a good design.....**

24:30 A beauty. It was the first real good transport passenger plane really. The Dutch flew on that particular race. They just flew a normal schedule and they still ran second I think. Scott Black and the Comet, the De Havilland Comet. They flew over Beemery actually. We didn't know which ones they were but several of the planes flew over the homestead on the way to Melbourne on that particular one because I was home on holidays at the time.

25:00 **Did it concern you at all to be heading off overseas after the Japanese had entered the war and were close to home?**

Before I left Bourke and before I joined up, I went out the back of the house and for several days, I dug an air raid trench. Silly, but people were building air raid trenches in Bourke.

25:30 The reason I think I joined up was because I thought we had to stop the Japanese from getting to us. I think we all had to do that. I was worried about the family naturally.

**Do you remember much of the talk in the town. Was there a fear of invasion?**

Yes I think there was. I think they expected it and that's why they were building air raid shelters. They expected bombing

26:00 anyway. My father was an air raid warden in Bourke. He was ready for it. Crazy isn't it?. I was in the Volunteer Defence Corps before I joined the air force. They called it the VD Corps at the time. And all we had was a black band, no uniform. We had no rifles.

26:30 We used to parade. The local solicitor was the officer in charge and he didn't have a uniform and he had no military experience. A World War I bloke, Harry Webster, he had the Central Hotel, he was taking us out in the bush and teaching us how to make pipe bombs. A bit of pipe with a bit of gelignite down and a piece of fuse and we were blowing up trees and then we'd go out to the rifle range where they had a few 303's and we'd do a bit of shooting. The only time we ever did anything was when a Beaufighter came in one night

27:00 and landed on what's the aerodrome now but what was the old golf course. My mate and I had to take our turn guarding it all night. They had shifts and we were guarding it. We didn't have any guns but we were guarding this. We thought the Japs were going to come in and we were watching the plane. Then he took off and went to Darwin or somewhere. Crazy looking back on it. Yes, Volunteer Defence Corp.

27:30 Out at the rifle range Harry Webster said I was too young to shoot. And Max Brown was a friend of the family, he said, "Give him a go, give him a go." And I outshot Harry Webster and nothing more was said. I had been using rifles for years. But I thought I was too young to use a 303.

28:00 **And you heard anything of the bombings that had happened in Darwin?**

No not really other than what we read in the paper. But at the time I was at school and when they talked about the air raids in Darwin, they said there were 12 people killed. And in actual fact they reckon there were over 200 killed. But the papers said 12 people. And things were kept quiet. There was a bit of panic apparently. They reckon one bloke took off on his bike. He was five miles down the road heading south to Alice Springs before he

28:30 realised there was no chain on the bike. He was a hurry to get away. He must have panicked quite a bit.

**The wireless sets that you would operate from plane to plane, were they different?**

Yes.

29:00 Not from plane to plane but there were different ones at different times. We trained on what they called the AWA G Sets. GP General Purpose.

**What were they like?**

Oh you had to make up coils and what not and adjust and put them in. Looking back they were pretty basic probably. Then we started learning the Marconi, the British one. That was a bit more sophisticated. Then there was the liaison equipment on the Dakota, that was very good.

29:30 And the GO9 stuff on the Catalina, that was excellent. On the amphib Catalina we had a small ships' transmitter and you could get very long range stuff and powerful. You had 9 receivers at various stages and 2 or 3 transmitters of different sorts. So you had plenty of communication. The Lincolns were back to the English equipment, the Marconi.

30:00 I didn't like the Lincoln equipment very much. The American Liaison stuff in the Catalina was excellent. The Marconi was effective but you would get some skip distances but you would get that with any equipment. I remember we were going back to Townsville...it was nothing to do with the equipment, but we were going back to Townsville. Air Commodore Paddy Hefferan was skippering, and I was

30:30 the only wireless op in town at the time who was qualified to fly for VIP crews on the Lincoln. You had to have so many hours up and all the rest. The Air Commodore was the VIP so I was flying with him. We went down to Brisbane for the Queen's Investiture and on the way back it was around 6 or 7 o'clock at night, up near Rockhampton and suddenly there was an explosion and the number three motor caught fire.

31:00 There was a hole. You could see it was that big in the top of the wing. Paddy said, "Stand by to bail out." Well, I glanced down the fuselage because our parachutes were down there and mine was too and we had a few passengers down the fuselage and there was this big fella and he was juggling ports and parachute pack like tennis balls looking for his parachute.

31:30 I was trying to grab mine and the next thing they were able to put the fire out. But we had a worry as to whether the fire in the number 3 wheel well had burned the rubber on the tyres and we thought, "What's going to happen?" It was March 1954. When we were approaching Townsville, Paddy said, "I believe you're a new father." Heather my daughter was still

32:00 in hospital having been born a few days before. I said, "Yes she's 3 days old." He said, "Why are you on this trip you should have stayed in Townsville?" I said, "Well my wife's in hospital." He said, "Have you got a car?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Where is it?" And I said, "Over in the igloo hangar." He said, "Where's the key?" I said, "Under the mat." He got on the radio and got onto the control tower

32:30 We were 100 odd mile out of Townsville and told them to bring my car over, have it waiting for me, and then he said, "Bugger off and go and see your wife." It was very good of him. He told me not to worry about the debriefing. The plane didn't burn the tyre, but what had happened: the elbow in the fuel line had fractured and it was sucking fuel up in the wheel well. It was lucky it didn't blow us up.

33:00 It was rather frightening for a few seconds when he said, "Stand by to bail out." Good bloke Paddy.

**Get the adrenaline pumping.**

There would have been no hesitating getting out though. Not in a case like that.

**When you went to**

33:30 **the US [United States] did you do any training there?**

No, we were in transit. San Francisco out to Angel Island. A couple or three days there and then they let us loose in San Francisco. Then onto a troop train and it was the first time I ever saw snow. We went up through the Rockies [Rocky Mountains] and at one stage they had 3 steam engines pulling us. I've got the photograph somewhere where I leant out the window when we were going around a bend up in the Rockies and

34:00 here's 3 trains pulling us.

**Because of all the troops?**

Yes, I don't know how many but there must have been a few hundred on the troop train. They were Pullman cars and I don't know how many in each one. But to get across the Rockies they had 3 engines pulling us. We had about 3 or 4 days there. I always remember, we pulled into a place called Marion. I don't know where it was

34:30 somewhere on the way across. It was called Marion and it was in the daylight and all these American Red Cross girls came down and they were giving us writing material and books and what not and we were talking away. And I remember I was leaning out the window talking to these girls and one said, "How long since you left Australia?" I said, "About 3 weeks," "My you've learned English quickly."

Another one said, "Say something in Australian."

35:00 One of the other silly buggers said, "Wollamakanka Woolloomooloo..." Yeah, this girl said to say something in English. They knew nothing about Australia, really. And of course we knew nothing much about America except what we had learned in the movies.

35:30 **One fella was running a two-up school on board the ship?**

Yeah, John White and his two mates.

**I mean, two-up's a fairly basic game. I was wondering how the hell a school worked?**

Well he was acting as boxer you see. He and a couple of his mates. And all the Yanks on board too wanted to learn the game. Backing heads and backing tails. He took \$2000 he told me. That

36:00 was big money in those days. He did well.

**Do you think he was taking advantage of the Yanks that were on board?**

Well he was running the game and he was getting a cut. The winner pays so much. Thank goodness I didn't play that. I remember I started to play coming home on the Aquitania. The night before we got to Cape Town there were different ones running a Crown and Anchor school.

36:30 Most of them had a limit of five pound on it. I struck one school there which had no limit. And me being cunning though ahhh...there's no limit and I keep doubling up, I'm bound to win. So I'm backing heads. Tails come up and I lose. I back heads and tails come up and I lose. But I doubled up and tripled up and when heads came up I was back to square one you see. Then I started a small bet again. I got to a stage I was winning 27 shillings.

37:00 I remember that much. And then for 14 throws no heads came up and I was stone broke, I did the lot. So I raffled some of the stuff I had bought in England in order to get some money to go ashore in Cape Town. So I raffled a couple of things. I can't remember what they were but I got a few quid out of it. But I remember this Crown and Anchor, she broke me.

37:30 **That's a bad run.**

Yes 14 throws. Three nice and no heads.

**So you've got dice and coin in Crown and Anchor?**

No just the 3 dice. You get Anchor and heads or tail and so on. But you've got to get 2 out of the 3 up. And in 14 throws no 2 heads turned up. Oh dear.

38:00 **So what are the heads versus the tails then?**

Oh that's with a coin. The throw up of the coin and just heads or tails. I played that a couple of times and I'm pretty canny. I don't gamble much.

**What other games were popular?**

Well there was no real games. You didn't see many Crown and Anchor schools ...that was on the boats. On the old Queen Elizabeth there were a few of them going on the way across. Oh Shiner, Shiner ran another one on that one too.

38:30 He won a few more quid. He was a good bloke. He had the Military Medal from Tobruk, and I mean not too many got those in the army before joining the air force. I told you what happened to him. He was on a training flight in a Lancaster. They hit the hill on the Isle of Man and killed the six of them. Nasty way to go, but quick.

## Tape 5

00:32 **You were saying that you got the posting to go to Japan when you were at Rose Bay...**

Yes, I was at Rose Bay at the Marine Section and I got a friend of mine to pull some strings to get me transferred to the Transport Command on the Catalinas and that's when I went to Scofield which was then operating as 37 Squadron for a few weeks. Then I

01:00 went from 37 to 38 which at that time had the Japan run.

**Did you want to go to Japan?**

Oh yes.

**You wanted to go overseas?**

Yes I wanted the trips back and forth to Japan.

**Can you tell us what the feeling was like in Sydney and Australia at the time about the Japanese post war?**

- 01:30 I don't really know. I think we were just really pleased that they had dropped the big bomb and caused the surrender. I think we were probably wondering how it would go and what the feeling would be if you went up there and so on, but as it turned out, they had accepted the surrender and done what they were told and they were quite subservient really in a way.
- 02:00 There was no arrogance on their part at all. They just did what they were told. Not that we had much to do with other than the Japanese girls looking after our rooms in Japan when we were staying there. The crew, irrespective of rank stayed together on those trips. There would be the 1st and 2nd pilot, the captain and 2nd pilot, navigator, wireless operator and
- 02:30 crew chief which was the maintenance engineer type thing. So the ranks could be from a leading aircraftsman up to a squadron leader. We had three room girls to look after us. One would make sure your clothes were clean. The other one did the laundry and made the beds and the other one would look after drinks and things like that. Basically those and the Japanese girls in the mess hall and stuff were the only ones we really had much to do with
- 03:00 until we went up to Hiroshima and places like that when we were trying to do a bit of bartering and some black market stuff too at times.

**Was there a hatred do you think in Australia towards the Japanese after the war? Did you pick up on the racism there?**

From the army blokes coming back from New Guinea, most certainly yes.

- 03:30 Including my brother. They did. Whereas we hadn't had contact with them insofar as we had been in the European side of things. And frankly I didn't have much contact with any of the enemy. Once we got to Japan I can recall our navigator remarking one time that he couldn't understand why there was a large population in Japan because
- 04:00 he couldn't understand how the bandy legged little bastards would be taken on by the girls. That was the sort of comments. But we were fortunate on one particular trip we had...I've forgotten the term they used. It was either an American born Japanese or a Japanese who had lived in America. He
- 04:30 spoke English and I think he might have been Japanese born but had lived in America for a long time. He hadn't served with the Japanese troops. He had been out of the war virtually. So we had an interpreter when we were going around doing our shopping or what ever it was. He would negotiate for us and it made a big difference. In so far as we all took a bit of saccharine with us to Japan
- 05:00 which we weren't supposed to, no black marketing. The official exchange at that stage was 180 yen to the pound Australian. But a pound of saccharine, a pound weight of saccharine cost one pound Australian for which you could get 6500 yen. So I had the odd yen to spend getting the odd cultured pearls and things.
- 05:30 As a matter of fact the first trip I did I took 40 pound of saccharine with me. Now, you multiply that with 6500. That's a lot of money to spend in a few days.

**Were you married at that time?**

No. No I didn't get married until 1953. That would have been 1947, early '48.

**Were the Australians, and the British and the Americans, were they all in on the black market?**

- 06:00 To a degree yes. I didn't but I know of some who would flog a cake of soap which was equivalent to a couple of quid. Things like that. I suppose it was the same thing to a certain degree in Germany. Cigarettes were a big thing in Germany. You could get 9 marks for a packet of cigarettes. We
- 06:30 could buy a packet of Craven A in Canberra House in Germany at our canteen there, 10 pence for a packet, and we could sell it for 9 marks which was 9/13th of a pound Sterling. You could buy a camera. You could pick up good cameras at the right price in Berlin.

**So the black market wasn't really selling illegal or dangerous substances. It was just every day stuff?**

Well it could have been.

- 07:00 The only time I ever heard any mention of that was when we were in Darwin. We used to go once a week up to Morotai when the Dutch were still in charge and before they handed over to Indonesia. I remember we used to get these thongs...you could buy these thongs up in Morotai before they became fashionable in Australia. They were referred to as Japanese riding boots. You could buy those
- 07:30 and one of the Custom fellows in Darwin said to me one day, a navy chap. He said, "Are you going up to Morotai tomorrow?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Would you get me a couple of pairs of those thongs, one for the wife and one for myself." I said, "Will you be on duty when we get back?" So I bought quite a lot of

Japanese filigree back

08:00 and I could sell it for double the price in Darwin, and of course you weren't supposed to bring it in illegally but...this is all recorded but still. So I bought some in, no trouble, he just looked me over very quickly. Then I contacted the fellow I knew and he used to give me double what ever I paid. He used to make more profit again I suppose.

08:30 If I had 20 pound worth of filigree he would give me 40.

**Now filigree is a jewel isn't it?**

It's silver. They used to get it made in Macassar up there. Portuguese stuff.

**I've got a filigree ring.**

Yes you could get filigree brooches and bangles and he used to flog it around Darwin or somewhere. He had good contacts.

**What exactly did it look like. A piece of bark or something?**

No, you'd buy a filigree bangle or ring.

09:00 A filigree brooch. Those sorts of things. You'd just bring them back. You'd buy them cheap up there and he'd flog them again.

**It's too bad you weren't married at the time, she would have appreciated it.**

Yes. But I was too busy chasing nurses up at Darwin Hospital at the time.

**Oh were you. So this was when you got back from doing the Japan run?**

Let me try and think. Yes it must have been.

09:30 No, it would have been before when we were doing the runs and we used to go up to Darwin a lot. I was up there on a 4 month detachment with the Officer Commanding crew. We would go out to Morotai about once a week. Then down to Truscott occasionally, down on the west coast and we took him back to Melbourne for a trip once. He was

10:00 the Air Officer Commanding and we were his crew. We had a house on the base and a jeep and we didn't go on parade or anything. We just lived it up a bit. Chasing crocodiles a couple of times with 303. Couldn't find any crocodiles and we finished up trying to shoot pigeons with 303 rifles. We chased a buffalo one day.

**Can I bring you back to when you first went over to Japan, what was the briefing that you were given? What exactly were you told you had to do?**

Nothing. No briefing. We were just told we were doing the courier run to Japan and take any military passengers or freight or whatever it may be. We just went on a normal trip.

**But you were still a wireless operator?**

Yes.

**So you'd be taking civilians?**

11:00 Mostly military personnel on military duty. But mostly air force personnel going up or coming home after being up there.

**So it was for the occupied forces?**

Yes for the occupation.

**So what planes were you flying?**

Dakotas. The DC3's.

**And you liked those too because they were kind of like the Catalinas?**

No, the Catalina is a completely different plane. One's a sea plane

11:30 and the other a land plane. But yes they were a good reliable aircraft, very reliable. At that stage in the game we were doing the longest twin engine run in the world.

**Which was Sydney to...**

Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Alice Springs, Darwin, Morotai, Clark Field in the Philippines, Okinawa and Uakiny. It was a pretty long run and we did it in stages. We would normally leave Sydney, go to Laverton in Melbourne,

12:00 stay overnight, leave there at 5 o'clock in the morning, fly to Parafield. Later on we would go to Malalar.

Sleep crew, stay 2 days and pick up any saccharine. I had a contact in Adelaide. Pick up the incoming plane, they had sleep crews and we'd take over their plane. Go on to Alice Springs for lunch, Darwin overnight, Morotai overnight.

12:30 Clark Field, Okinawa for lunch and get into Iwakuni about dusk. They had a big transit mess there for the personnel. By then you would have a couple of days there and you would slip up to west Iwakuni Go up to Hiroshima and have a look around there.

**Where did you stay when you first in Japan?**

We

13:00 had air force messes on the base. It was an air force base at Iwakuni

**And if you went into West Iwakuni that's where you could haggle and ...**

Yes that was the town. You could go in a haggle and get cultured pearls or prints or whatever it was.

**Did you get any of that stuff for your sisters?**

Oh yes I bought quite a few home. I had a contact down in a lane beside the old hotel in Sydney. He would take them.

13:30 **You were doing pretty well?**

Yes we lived quite well on it.

**What about for your mum. Could you get things for her?**

Oh yes I got a string of pearls for both my sisters and a string of pearls for my mother, and I gave one to a girlfriend. And a bloke in Darwin said it was his anniversary and could I sell him one of my strings. I gave it to him at cost price, I remember that. He had conned me, but still.

14:00 **And would you get to know what was going on with the occupying forces because of the job you were doing?**

Yes and no because you were only there for a short time. You did your shopping, had a few drinks, told a few yarns and the next thing you were on the way home. You would pick up your Yank cigarettes at Okinawa and you could flog those.

14:30 **Were you still smoking at this time?**

Oh yes. I started to smoke when they gave them away on the troop ship going to America. That's when I started. There was nothing else to do except play Housie and smoke and read comics. The Yanks used to have all these comics. Oh yes there was nothing else to do and the cigarettes were free and I thought I would give it up after the war.

15:00 But I didn't for a long, long time. I'm glad I gave them up though, the price they are these days.

**Eight bucks, nine bucks a pack.**

Fourteen dollars some of these packs of 40. Frightening.

**Can you tell us if you got to meet any of the Japanese people?**

Not socially at all. Only in shops and doing a bit of haggling and that type of thing.

**How was the treatment**

15:30 **towards the Japanese people after the war by the Australians, do you remember?**

They got along quite well to be honest. I think...they wouldn't be mixing socially I don't think...this is supposition but I think they treated them as normal people. The war's over

16:00 **As a bushman and the way you grew up, did you find going up in a plane difficult...**

No I took to it like

16:30 a duck to water for some reason. I was about 14 when I did my first flight up to Charleville whatsoever.

**And what about now? Are you afraid of heights?**

No it never worried me. I think we learned that with bird nesting. We used to go around bird nesting as kids, climbing trees. My elder brother used to say, "Go on, get up higher I can't stand the height." And he would have me up the top of a tree trying to get eggs.

17:00 Ride the pony out with a cotton flour bag and a blunt tomahawk and we'd go bird nesting for hours on end getting little budgerigars and getting eggs. We used to ride miles.

**What did he call you, Tubby? Did he have a nickname for you?**

No. He didn't. When I was in the air force a couple of them called me Titch.

17:30 Because I was little. A building inspector called me a half pint once and that upset me. I was about five foot three or five foot four when I first joined the air force...and looked young.

**You look really young in your photographs.**

Looking back I realise that, yes.

**That's genes in your favour though?**

Yes in the long term yes. I'm planning to outlive Uncle Gordon at 108.

18:00 **You'll have to let me know.**

I hope you're around when I'm 108.

**What about that time in between the end of the war and 1947 when you got your first overseas operational posting which was Japan. What did you do...?**

It wasn't a posting. Our home base was still Sydney, Scofield. But we used to operate from there to where ever.

18:30 All around Darwin and Perth. Up around Port Moresby. All around New Guinea. Over to Rabaul. We did that in the Catalinas and also in the Dakotas.

**But that time between the end of the war and the time you were doing the couriering in 1948, was that based in Sydney?**

First of all down at Tocumwal.

19:00 Then at Richmond out of Sydney. Then at Catalinas at Rathmines up near Newcastle. Then to Scofield out near Richmond again.

**So you must have been busting to get overseas?**

I used to like it but we used to lots of trips with the transport command too. We went up to Ambon, and all around the Helmahera's.

**When did you go there, to Ambon?**

When I was based in Darwin for four months. We would take diplomatic mail across to

19:30 Timor, Dili. We would go there once a fortnight and take the mail across. Went to Ambon a couple of times with the Catalinas and also with the Dakotas. Around the Helmahera's and Admiralty Island and most of New Guinea. A lot of it anyway, particularly when we were flying the Disposal Commission people around, we went to nearly all the bases.

20:00 There's some beautiful spots there, the little islands and stuff. Yes that's about it. The overseas stuff was just short term. Over to New Guinea, up to Timor and things like that and back.

**Were there many Australians living in New Guinea?**

Yes quite a lot. There were still Australians in most of the places. A lot of servicemen around too.

20:30 Milne Bay and so on. We blew a tyre at Goroka one time. We were ferrying 44 gallon drums of petrol from Lae up to Goroka up in the Markham Valley. Back and forth. On our third trip we were coming in to land and we blew a tyre. Spun around. So we were stuck there for a couple of days until they flew a new wheel assembly up. Colonel Murray was the Administrator for Papua New Guinea, and he ...

21:00 Next day one patrol officer...they were the only white people in the whole area. Hundreds of natives. He kept us up nearly all night because it was the first time he had had a bit of company for a while. He also had gin to drink also, and I wasn't a drinker of gin but we got to bed about 3 o'clock and I was feeling a bit fuzzy. I had an open hut and when I woke up in the morning, I heard someone coming in

21:30 and I nearly went out the open window. There was a native there with a bone stuck through his nose. He was the house boy with his lap lap on bringing my cup of tea in the morning. He scared the hell out of me. I had made the remark that I was trying to get onto a Mount Hagen axe. The headhunter's axes. There's one hanging up in the garage. Anyway the day we were leaving Colonel Murray gave me one.

22:00 **So that's the axe you've got hanging in your garage?**

Yes.

**A head hunter's axe. I had better not say anything to insult you today then.**

Yes he gave me that. And the Ghurka kukri [knife], a friend of mine Wal, he had been an officer with a Ghurka regiment during the war, and at the war whilst I was in London, he was studying medicine in St Thomas' Hospital in London and I

22:30 used to see him pretty regularly there or at his home when I used to visit. He had a Leica camera. He asked when I was in Berlin could I pick him up a rangefinder. I got him one in Berlin and I gave it to him. He wanted to pay me. I said, "No no, it's only a couple of packets of cigarettes." And he gave me that kukri. I've had that since too. He's now a doctor in

23:00 North Wales and has been for years.

**How long Glen did you do the ferry route?**

In Germany?

**No to Japan to the occupied forces?**

Only three trips. My friend, who I gave you his name and address, he did seven. But he was on them before I got posted to that unit.

**And then what happened after that?**

23:30 I was just doing the routine stuff flying over to Darwin, over to Perth and that stuff and the next thing they said they were going to form 10 crews to go to Operation Pelican which apparently is what they were going to call it. So it started up and I got onto that and it became Operation Plainfare. That's what it was in Britain.

24:00 The Americans called it Operation Vittles I think.

**Vittles, that's food?**

See initially we started off flying dehydrated food and that sort of stuff into Berlin because they were isolated and we were flying coal and in the end anything needed at all, and we were bringing passengers back out. I remember one trip we were flying...we had a load of

24:30 newsprint. Those great big rolls of newsprint and they were chained down into the aircraft. There was about 9000 pounds of weight. We got airborne about 1000 feet over the base when we started to lose our starboard motor. I was flying 2nd pilot to Dave Evans at the time and he said to call up and get an emergency clearance which we did. I told them we were losing power from one motor and

25:00 needed an emergency clearance to get in. They gave us that. I'm thinking, "There's no worries" until I suddenly saw this perspiration dripping off Dave's face and it started to drip off his hands and I said, "Hello things are a bit tense." Anyway, we couldn't jettison anything. We were overloaded with one motor and we couldn't jettison because we would have torn the side out of the plane. They were big rolls that high and probably 10 feet long.

**I don't understand what it is, is it like a newspaper?**

News print.

25:30 Rolls of news print for the printing of papers and that sort of thing. They were great rolls, probably 6 feet long and that high.

**Oh ready to be cut, for newspapers?**

Yes, it was going into Berlin for the newspapers. So we landed all right and the control tower called up and said,

26:00 "Go to dispersal number 40 or what ever it was and if you hurry you'll be able to catch the rest of the wave." They were going at 3 minute intervals. I remember Dave said a couple of short words and said that we'd go slow and miss this wave. We missed that wave. They used to off on 3 minute intervals. The way to work it out, say tonight the Australian 10 crews would be due off

26:30 at midnight, and the next one would be off at 3 minutes passed midnight and then 6 minutes, 9 minutes and so on. So you had to maintain your times. You got to the final beacon, the 'Fronhau Beacon' I think it was, we had to report in. We had to be there give or take one minute. If we arrived late or early you were allowed to continue your approach and

27:00 do a dummy approach to the thing but you didn't land. You just took off and kept going otherwise you would upset the wave of aircraft coming because you were too early or too late. So you had to be on time regularly. We did all right. Sometimes there in the very bad weather they eased off and you would have to come in on GCA, Ground Control Approach. About every 5 minutes they would talk you down. The first time was rather

27:30 eerie. You had blokes telling you that you are "Now at such and such a height continue your descent; you are now 1500 metres from touchdowns; you are now at such and such a height continue your descent; you are now over the touchdown point, look up and land visually." You might be 50 feet up and you'd look up and you would break through the rain. The radar would bring you down. The Americans,

28:00 I don't know if it was correct but they always used to say that if the Americans did 3 ground control approaches then they were given a GCA medal. I don't know about that. All our chaps did about 5 or 6

but they didn't get a medal for that. They used to always say too that if the Americans did 100 trips to Berlin, they could opt to go back home. Or if they opted to carry on

28:30 they were given a DFC and carried on. I don't know if that's right or not, I doubt it. The Americans used to hand out medal a lot to their people for all sorts of things.

**I know we've been told that particular bit of information a lot.**

Well it was generally acknowledged that they got a gong [medal] for going overseas whether they did anything or not. And if they went to a foreign country that was another gong.

**Before you did the German runs though,**

29:00 **and we'll talk about that in a lot of detail later on, but you were up in Darwin...**

Yes it had a few detachments up there.

**Now you said something before that I picked up on about chasing girls and what have you. Was that in Darwin?**

Yes we used to chase the nurses in Darwin.

**Or was that anywhere?**

Yes quite often. But mostly in Darwin because if you went to other places you were only there overnight anyway.

29:30 Although I do recall a cousin of mine, the one who had been on Lancasters. He was on Liberators at the time and he and Jimmy Wilson, he's retired now and living up on the Gold Coast now. They used to call him the Gremlin, a little short bloke. My cousin was going a 2nd pilot with him taking a Liberator to Japan. They went up from Tocumwal to Sydney and refuelled and got

30:00 ready. They took off from Mascot and one of their motors caught fire. They had to do an emergency landing and they got into Mascot and that was as far as they ever went. The trip was cancelled. But they had an officers mess and sergeants mess and what not at Mascot, so they were in the officers mess and this was just after. And the navigator, a young officer said, "I'll ring up the hospital and get a few of the nurses around and we can have a little party."

30:30 So he got onto the hospital and asked to speak to the Head Nurse, the Head Sister and suggested we would send the staff car around if a few nurses would like to come to a party at the officers' mess at Mascot. He got rebuffed rather badly because he was speaking to the Head Sister at St Vincent's Hospital. They never let him forget that one.

31:00 She knocked him back. But that was the usual procedure. If you wanted to develop a party then you'd ring the nurses.

**I guess it would be hard to maintain a relationship if you're only at a place for one or two nights?**

A bit hard. And I wasn't married in those days either. I didn't get married until 1953 when I was up in Townsville.

31:30 **So you were 29 when you got married?**

Yes I always swore I wouldn't get married until I was 29 and had a 1000 pounds in the bank, and I did it. But by gee, the 1000 pounds went quickly.

**If only I had done that.**

But the 1000 pounds went quickly. You had to buy a fridge and things like that. It doesn't last long.

**So when you went up to Darwin you had more time to cultivate a relationship I suppose if you wanted to. Did you have a girlfriend there in Darwin?**

Not

32:00 special. I knew a few of the nurses and we used to go into there for parties and a bit of socialising. We were a bit fortunate in this respect. There was no brewery in Darwin and we used to be rationed to 6 bottles of beer a week. So on the 7th day you drank Rheingold or something else. Rheingold is a bottle of wine. But being on Transport Command we used to get the Mess to send up a keg a week.

32:30 So we would have an 18 gallon keg sent up every week with the planes coming and going. So we had plenty of offers to come and use our coolroom...we used to always leave it at the hospital's cool room and then we'd have parties in the Mess. Down Mendel Beach or at the hospital with the doctors and nurses. They all made us very welcome with our keg of beer.

**I think they were after your keg of beer.**

I think

33:00 they probably were, but we kidded ourselves that they didn't. But that's what we used to do, get a keg up once a week or once a fortnight. We also had plenty of contacts.

**So who was this girlfriend that you mentioned before you got married. Was she the one in the Northern Territory?**

No I knew a lass when I was over in Germany. Deila Thompson. She was a WAAF [Women's Auxiliary Air Force] in the Operations Room in Lubeck.

33:30 She was an attractive girl and I was taking her out and teaching her to ride a horse. They had stables there. Then the Berlin Airlift finished and that was it. I just came home and lost contact and never thought anything more about it until 50 years later when I'm back in Berlin and this woman came up to my friend at Rebina and his wife and asked if they were Australian

34:00 and she must have recognised...we had our Berlin Airlift things on anyway. She asked if they knew Glen Williams and they said I was here. I couldn't believe it. She came up to me and said, "Hello do you remember me?" And I looked at her for a second and said, "You were a WAAF at Lubeck weren't you?" She had married a RAF navigator who was in the Airlift too, so they were also guests at the 50th Anniversary.

34:30 But meeting up 50 years later. I've got some photographs of her. I'll show you in a minute if you like. I put them in my album and I thought a bit and I went and look up the old old albums I had and there was Delia out on the ice skating. So I've got photographs taken 50 years ago and 50 years later.

**How come you didn't pursue Delia after...**

35:00 I don't know. Suddenly it was abruptly finished and we were off. One of those things, just passing ships in the night I guess. We weren't having a serious relationship and I was a bit of a naive kid too at the time. She reminded me, "You were teaching me to ride and I had never ridden a horse."

**35:30 Where were you when you found out you would be going to Germany and doing the air lifts?**

I was at Scofield at the time. We had just come back from a trip to Perth. The next morning this bloke said to me, we had had a bit of a rough trip, and he said to me that he was going on this Operation Pelican, and suggested I go with him. He was the Flight Commander. As I said early, his wife had twins so he couldn't go. He had to withdraw.

36:00 I'm into already by this time. So I was paired off with Dave Evans and Dave Benson and Dave Harn, three Daves.

**What happened to your family during this time, did you keep in touch with them out at Burke?**

Yes, once a week. Well from the time I was about 9, I would write to Mum about once a week. I'd tell her about school and then

36:30 when I joined up I still wrote home once a week. And the mail was very good. We could write a letter from England or Germany and get a reply within a fortnight and it was very good.

**You can't do that now.**

No. We were getting good service there. Even during the war we used to have good communications.

**37:00 Were your mum and dad well and healthy during this time?**

Oh yes.

**When did your parents die?**

My mother died early. She was only 66. She had an operation and a blood clot killed her. She was only 66. Dad died in 1984. He was just on 99. He was a bit older than Mum. They were both long livers, yes.

37:30 Even going right back on one side of the Huxley family, one of my great, great grandparents was 89 and the other was 85. One of the uncles died at 77 and everyone considered that he died young.

**That's about the average now for men?**

Yes, 75.

**What about the night life and all that sort of jazz that you had up in the Territory and Perth.**

There wasn't a great lot of it. There was a bit.

38:00 Once a twice a week you might go out to a bit of a party otherwise you might play poker. I used to play a lot of poker up there. We'd sit around and have a game of poker, two bob [shillings] blind or something.

**Did you win any?**

Yes touch wood, I was always lucky at poker. I won quite a bit actually. Then I would buy a pressure

cooker or something to take home. I was married at that stage. I would convert it to things to take home.

**That's handy thinking.**

38:30 **I loved my poker. We had a school going while I was in Burke before I retired. They're all dead now the whole darn lot. There was one of the doctors, the Shire Clerk, the Council Pay Master, a Greek bloke who owned a couple of shops, a Manager...he killed himself in a plane. There were about**

39:00 **6 of us and we'd all play regularly. It was a good school. I remember we decided we were going to play 50 cents blind when decimal currency came in. Fifty cent blind and a dollar for cards and so on. It was a good night. One bloke brought along a bottle of Napoleon Brandy, 100 years old or something, and we had a big dinner and then we played cards all night. I remember I lost \$120 dollars that night.**

39:30 **That was a lot of money in those days.**

**It's a lot of money now still.**

But even more in those days, that was 1966. But then later on I won again. We used to have some good games.

## Tape 6

00:34 **You were flying the War Graves Commission people around for awhile...**

Only for a couple of trips.

**And you got to visit Ambon. Can you tell us what that was like?**

That was controlled at the time. We only went to the airport anyway. I remember one of the controllers there was telling me...he pointed down to the end of the airstrip and he said there were 300 Australians buried there.

01:00 He said they had been massacred and the Japs built the strip over where they had buried them. I'm only saying what I was told but I believe it was right. These things did happen. But apart from that I didn't know much about Ambon. We used to just land and I don't even know why we went there to be honest.

01:30 I can understand going into Timor. We used to take the diplomatic mail across, but we must have done something. Poking around.

**Did you have much of a sense of what the War Graves people were up to?**

They told us they were body snatchers and that's what they were referred to. They were going around recovering bodies that were lost during the war. That type of thing and they would recover the bodies and give them a proper burial.

02:00 There was a Flight Lieutenant and two or three fellas with him. It was a job, but not one I would like.

**A grizzly detail?**

Yes, well they were doing the job to get things cleaned away. Apparently they would go to war time crash sites or where they knew fellas had died, and they would recover them that way. I suppose it was standard procedure all over the place.

02:30 **Somebody has to do it.**

Yes, but not me though. Not my style.

**Can you tell us then what you knew of Operation Pelican/Plainfare before you actually got to Germany?**

Not a thing other than the Russians had blockaded all entrances to Berlin other than by air because under the Yalta Conference or one of those

03:00 they had at the end of the war, they divided Berlin into four parts. The eastern part was Russia, French, American, and British zones. Up until then of course there were barges going in, there was rail, road and so on, and the Russians blocked it all off. Obviously they were going to try and force the Allies out of Berlin so they could take over the

03:30 rest of Germany. That was what it boiled down to there was no question of that. And they tried to hinder us even in the air corridor to a certain extent.

**How did they do that?**

Well at one stage they carried out anti aircraft firing in the corridor. Not actually aiming at the aircraft but they were carrying firing in our corridor, or what we called our corridor, 20 mile wide. You went in one corridor and came out a different one.

04:00 On one occasion there we had a journalist from the Readers Digest with us. So Dave had him sitting in the 2nd pilot's seat and he was seeing what was going on. And three Russians Yaks buzzed us. That all happened. They didn't actually attack us but they buzzed us a bit.

04:30 I don't for a moment think that Dave ever said this but when the 'Readers Digest' was published with this fellow's report, he said that Dave had made the remark that he still had an itchy trigger finger. Dave had never been on fighters or anything. He had been on transport planes. But after that Dave had the nickname for a while of 'Yak Evans'. And they gave him hell over that.

05:00 But I think it was a false report, one of these things. I was reported as being Richard Williams from Melbourne instead of ...but I was Richard Williams from Melbourne and Dave Benson was from Newcastle, and Yak Evans. Yes on one occasion...they told us, trying to hinder us more that if our aircraft strayed outside the corridor we would be forced down.

05:30 They issued us parachutes then and we were told that if we were directed to do so we were to obey the Russians and land and they would use diplomatic sources to get us out. Nothing ever happened anyway but one night we were flying in bad weather and the radar had been playing up and when it came on we were about 50 mile outside our corridor. So we

06:00 made a quick turn and got back into the corridor. We were lucky. In the bad weather they probably couldn't pick us up on the radar, who knows. So we hurried back into our corridor.

#### **Yes 20 mile isn't too wide?**

No it's not that wide at all really when you're poking along at about 120. Anyway half the time we were carrying passengers so we couldn't have used the chutes anyway.

06:30 That particular night when they said that Berlin was closed to all traffic and all that, Mal Quinn who was an Aussie pilot on exchange duties with the RAF. He was flying with an RAF crew. He went in that night and got killed. He was trying to land and couldn't make it. He had a...he had married an English lass while he was over in England, before the Airlift started.

07:00 His wife gave birth to a boy just a few weeks after he got killed, and when we were over in Berlin in 1999, we met up with Mal's son. A middle aged man and he met all the blokes who knew his father. They had invited him along. And his father, Mal Quinn's name is on the Berlin Memorial along with all the others. So it was quite an unusual sort of meeting. He had arrived after his father got killed.

07:30 They had a big memorial there. I've got some photographs of that too. They opened this big memorial for the air lift and there were 80 odd people who died on the air lift.

#### **Did you have any kind of expectations of flying into Germany?**

No not really. It became a routine thing but after a while in fine weather you would look down and you knew where you were virtually.

08:00 It would take you about an hour and a half or quarter to get into Berlin and about the same to come out a different way. In the fine weather, after we had our 3 man crews, I would fly as 2nd pilot and wireless operator on the way in. And on the way out of Berlin I would fly as a navigator and wireless operator and the navigator would sit in the 2nd pilot. Then in bad weather I stuck with signals and wireless and 2nd pilot and the navigator stuck to his navigation.

08:30 We had radar chains, 'G chains' they called them.

#### **What are they?**

I couldn't explain them exactly. By using the radar you could get a line on your map and then you got a cross and where they crossed is where you were sort of thing. They called them G Chains. They used that as a navigation aide and you could pin yourself down pretty closely and it worked. So in fine weather I would be operating the radar and signals, and generally mucking about.

09:00 We locked Davey in the toilets once and left him in there. We let him out about a couple of hundred feet off landing. He came rushing out to grab the stick. We were poking along quietly. We had no passengers. And Dave Evans, he's the retired Marshall now. He said, "I'm going to the toilet." We had a toilet down the back. So

09:30 we gave him a couple of minutes to go and as soon as he went Dave the navigator rushed up and locked him in. We gave him a couple of minutes to settle down and we pulled the stick back and forward. We gave him hell. And the next thing we're all over the air. The bloody plane was going this way and that because the cables for the aileron

10:00 went right along the fuselage, down past the toilets and into the tail. Here's Dave with his foot up on the wall and he's pulling the cables. Anyway we left him in there. We left him there for the best part of

three quarters of an hour.

**Was he the second pilot on the crew?**

He was the skipper. We didn't have a 2nd pilot then. We waited and waited and we did the final beacon and we were a few hundred yards from touchdown point and Dave goes and lets him out and he comes roaring down and hops in his seat.

10:30 That's what I say, the old Dakotas were a good docile aircraft.

**You were lucky.**

Yes we had some fun.

**So what were your first impressions of Germany?**

Berlin was devastated. You would fly over in daylight and you'd see very few roofs on the houses. They were virtually all shells.

11:00 I only got into Berlin myself to do a bit of shopping. Mostly we would just land, had time for a cup of coffee and back. And Hamburg. Hamburg was devastated too. But Berlin was shocking. We went down to Hamburg once or twice for a few days off.

**What did it look like on the ground walking around?**

11:30 You'd see brick buildings half crumbled. Middle aged and old women in rough clothes trying to do manual labour, clearing away. It was pretty terrible that way. They were all trying to clear it up. They looked pretty down trodden I must say. But to see these women doing hard manual work, shovelling bricks and cleaning and working with the men folk.

12:00 But they took very kindly to the members of the airlift because the options were either that or the Russians so they gook to us pretty kindly in that respect.

**No hostilities between...**

No not at that stage. Oh you'd get one or two remarks but not really. I remember one bloke one time, he spoke English pretty well. I said, "Germany was a beautiful country

12:30 I don't know why they went to the extremes of having a war." He took umbrage a bit and said they needed to expand. They needed more room. But it is a beautiful country. I've been back a couple of times since. There's no doubt about it. The people are very similar to us except they have different ideas...particularly of the poor old Jews and things. The Nazis were pretty rough.

13:00 The women you'd meet, some would say, "My husband was shot down by the Spitfire." Or "My husband was on U-Boats and he did not come home." I remember the first day we arrived in Lubeck the Commanding Officer welcomed the Australian troops then he introduced the medical officer who gave us a talk about there being 6 women to every man in Germany, and watch your foot

13:30 work boys. So what happened. The first day and night, the first 24 hours off, Dave Benson said, "Let's go to Hamburg." So Wally Paterson from Canberra, Dave Benson, Pete Johnson, my mate over at Rebina and myself off we go to Hamburg. "Oh yeah, yeah, we're going to behave ourselves." But we find ourselves walking along the red light district

14:00 in Hamburg. No, no we're not going to talk to the girls, but in no time at all Dave our navigator was talking to this German girl who spoke English with a marked American accent, and she told us she was an entertainer in a nightclub and why don't we go to this nightclub?. So anyway

14:30 the four of us and this girl we went to this place where she said she was an entertainer. La Femme Nightclub. We go in and sit at the table and our waiter was Herr Schmidt. We didn't have any money. We had used cigarettes to get a taxi from the Hotel Atlantic where we were staying, which turned out later to be for senior officers and the Control Commissioner of German personnel only. But we didn't know that at the time and we stayed there anyway.

15:00 We get to this nightclub and Dave sends for the Manager. So we negotiated the cigarettes and we got 9 marks a packet. So we shovelled out our cigarettes. We had gaberdine coats on. Off he goes and he comes back with a heap of marks. So he organised the grog and there was dancing going on. Eventually the four of us were dancing with these girls

15:30 and one of fellas said to this first girl we had met, "What do you do?" She said, "At 1 o'clock I come on and I play the accordion and I sing and dance." Dave said, "Do you know the 'Maori Farewell'?" No, she didn't know it. So Dave hummed it. And oh yes, she knew that one so Dave said, "You sing that one first." And the party went on, dancing and a few grogs and about 1 o'clock she came on and there was a fanfare and

16:00 she came on with a little short skirt and was playing the accordion and singing "Now is the hour..." There was a bit of uproar from the other side of the nightclub and when she finished her performance and what not she came back and we said, "What happened, what was all the noise about?" She said,

"He was screaming out – German songs in a German nightclub! But you were spending more money than he was so they threw him out."

16:30 Crazy. Then about 4 o'clock in the morning when the nightclub was closing, Pete and I thought we'd do the right thing and see these girls home in a taxi which we did. We got a taxi and saw them home. It was a nice little girl I was dancing with and I saw her to the doorway and out of the blue she said to me, "Would you like to sleep with me?" And I was so stunned I said, "No, no, I'm not tired."

17:00 She said, "You come back to Hamburg?" But I never did. She was a bit stunned when I said I wasn't tired. Crazy isn't it?.

**Were there any illicit acts in the club?**

No no.

17:30 It was quite well conducted. Plenty of dancing and singing.

**What did you observe of the red light district?**

Well I didn't much of it I just landed there and we got a taxi from the hotel. The bloke was saying "Which hotel?" We told him the Atlantic. So he took us there and I think it cost us a couple

18:00 of packets of cigarettes. We went in in our gaberdine jacket with no rank showing and all the rest. We went to book in and bloke was saying "CGC?" And we said, "No, no, RAAF Lubeck." Then he said, "CGC Lubeck?" and it turned out that our uniform was the same colour as the Control Commissioner of Germany personnel. And the hotel was for Control Commission personnel and

18:30 senior officers. The next morning we were wondering why so many blokes were looking at us at breakfast. There were a couple of colonels peering over at us. We left and we didn't get into trouble. I think they charged us five bob for the night. Equivalent to five bob. They had BAFO currency [British Armed Forces Occupation]... threepenny notes, sixpenny notes, shilling notes, two bob, ten bob. Pennies and halfpennies were little

19:00 plastic discs. A pint of beer, sixpence. Good German beer, a pint, sixpence. A shilling for a double Scotch, not bad. Not bad at all. This friend of ours, one of the navigators. He was a pilot officer at the time. No, he was a flying officer. He's a retired group captain now. Ray Barber. We were having

19:30 a bit of a session there one night. It was the birthday of the Airlift, we had been going 12 months for 24 hours. So we were all having a bit of a party, no flying tomorrow. Half way through the night they announced that two crews, including mine, were going to England the next day. Hell that put the 'wazzer' on it a bit [ended the fun]. They were trying to break it up and Ray had a skinful [drunk]. So he was taken back to bed. He had his arms around one bloke on each side.

20:00 He's walking with his feet off the ground and he said, "Gee I'm light on my pins tonight." His feet weren't even touching the ground. "I'm light on my pins tonight." I wonder we didn't get ourselves into trouble at times. One of the RAF blokes...they had these lights around the Mess, on off, on off. Fortunately they only had 120 volts over there. "These bloody lights are a bloody nuisance." So he got a pocket knife and cut the wire.

20:30 If it had been 240 volts he would have gone. But it wasn't one of our blokes. It gave him a jolt.

**You told us about the devastation, but how were the local people living?**

Well they were existing at that stage of the game. With the Russians blocking things off,

21:00 they were short of fuel for their fires and that's why we were carrying coal in for winter. It was pretty devastating and they were living on short rations for quite a while until the airlift got going properly. We had an all effort there on one occasion. It must have been getting towards the last of the Airlift, where they had an all out effort to see what they could do in 24 hours. And they got enough stuff into Berlin by

21:30 air as had ever gone in by road, rail...that's how much they got in. At that stage of the game the Russians realised that they couldn't stop us. That's when they decided to give up as far as that was concerned. Then the roads were open and the canals opened and the thing carried on. Then they whacked up the iron wall, the concrete wall.

22:00 That was the next effort, but that didn't concern us, we'd left by that stage.

**So what was the span of your cargo?**

We started off carrying dehydrated food. Then we were carrying a lot of coal, bagged coal, and then anything that was required. It was mostly food, food and coal, food and coal.

22:30 The Yanks flew in heavy equipment in order to build the airstrip in the French zone at Tengah. They had the four engine stuff, those Skymasters. They cut bulldozers into sections and then rewelded them because they couldn't fly a bulldozer in intact. So they dismantled them, cut them and welded them back.

23:00 But that's about it really. At one stage we were flying in anything that was needed. They had a couple of big Globemasters flying in. They tore up the strip on one occasion. At Berlin we had the main concrete strip and along side that they had a PSP running parallel which was pierced steel preparation. A big Globemaster came in one day and he was so heavy he just rolled up the

23:30 steel matting. After that they confined it to the lighter aircraft, like the Skymasters. You'd have them landing on the concrete and taking off from the PSP which was a bit dicey but it worked.

**There were British forces there as well...**

Yes the RAF

24:00 and we had 3 New Zealand crews and I think there were 4 or 5 South African crews. One day we were coming in behind...having returned to Lubeck empty, we landed and this Kiwi, he was the Wing Commander. They called him the Red Knight. I've forgotten his name now. They were taxiing along and they came to the dispersal area. You would

24:30 clear the motors, and instead of having the stick back, he roared the motor and the Dakota just stood up on its nose, right over. We were right behind. I've still got a photo out there. One of the crewmen raced up to open the door at the back to get out. Of course he's about 20 feet up in the air so he raced back down the front to get out through the cockpit. But they stood it on its nose.

**And it just stopped there?**

Yes. It was there until they got a crane and were able to lower in down slowly.

25:00 It didn't do much harm to it. It just bent the nose a bit. That was one of the Kiwi crews. Yes I think there were 4 or 5 South African crews, Air New Zealand, Australian and the rest were RAF.

**I'm curious about whether there was any tension between I guess some of the RAF crews and the German people?**

No not really.

25:30 I think the fact that we were helping them keep the Russians out, I think they were pretty friendly towards us by that stage of the game. They weren't hostile and some of the boys were taking some of the girls out. They were fraternising a bit.

**26:00 Was there much interaction with German people who had been in the German forces?**

I struck a couple of them years after. One had been in a Tiger tank. I used to beat him at gun shoots....Wolf Reesler. He had the Ford Dealership in Brewarrina We've had many talks about it. "Yes" he said, "I was helping with the Berlin Air Lift too,

26:30 I was carrying supplies to load them at Frankfurt. So I was doing my share of it too." But he had been in a Tiger Tank in the years past. But I didn't have much contact at that particular period. I never really struck any. I think we probably avoided any conversation in case it caused problems.

27:00 I had no occasion anyway. Anyway most of our life had been spent amongst ourselves. If you came back from a trip you were a bit knocked up after two trips and you'd go and start playing poker or some of the blokes would play Bridge. They'd play Bridge from one end of Germany to the other. But we were doing poker. The Bridge group would be playing while they had a cup of coffee. They would only have 20 minutes to go and then they'd carry on with their Bridge.

27:30 Whereas we used to have our poker school.

**It's a quicker game so you can probably get more in.**

Yes.

**What about hygiene with all the damage that had been done to the city?**

We were all right. We were in Luftwaffe [German Air Force] quarters at Lubeck. I had a very nice room, double glazed windows and we all had single rooms and we were all looked after.

28:00 A good mess. They were excellent quarters really but they were peace time quarters for the Luftwaffe. So they were pretty well organised. We even had a pet poodle, no, a little dachshund. The hut had it.

**Given that you got to experience some of the peace time quarters, how**

**28:30 did they rate to say Australian peace time quarters?**

Well Scofields was probably one of the happiest units I had been on in Australia but the quarters weren't particularly good. But it was a really happy...and good meals. But the quarters weren't particularly good. You could get some of the others like Richmond or those places where they had peace time ones, they were excellent. Darwin all right. A tropical type of building.

29:00 Louvred windows...fibreglass louvres in the windows and that sort of thing. You opened the place out.

No complaints on those things. They were pretty good.

**What kind of meals were they serving up in Berlin?**

A lot of potatoes. Lots of potatoes. I remember one of the first phrases I learned was "Neine kartoffeln danken ihnen" ("no potatoes thank you").

29:30 They whacked the potatoes on. The meals were pretty good, not bad. But they used to whack the potatoes on.

**Was it a German menu?**

Well no I don't think it was. It was probably British under German control. Of course you got a lot of vegetables, particularly potatoes.

30:00 The food wasn't bad. And they had a mess going 24 hours a day down at the Ops Room because there were flying around the clock. So if you came back from the trip, you had a meal and then you did another trip or you went home. But the meals were there all the time. So you could come and go as you like without going to your own mess. I remember that phrase "Neine kartoffeln danken ihnen."

30:30 One of our Skippers was a Keith Mueller with the dots over the U. Well they used to look after him... Herr Mueller...they would want to carry his bags for him. He bought one of the Bristol Freighters home. At one stage of the game they decided to send two crews home, do a conversion in England on the Bristol Freighters and fly them out to the rocket range at Woomera. And our 2nd pilots went home with them.

31:00 Keith Mueller and Freddie Hudson. They took the Freighters home. It would have been a good trip too. Then we had a couple of other crews came in. Eight of our crews stayed there for the whole period.

**And how did the local German people take to these Australians?**

I think

31:30 they liked us, I'm not sure. I think they thought we were a bit of a novelty I suppose.

**What gave you that impression?**

I don't know. The blokes seemed to be pretty friendly with a few of them. Mostly if we went into town, we'd got to the Victory Club and some of the blokes got to know different ones.

32:00 Some of the blokes did.

**Did some of them get into a bit of mischief?**

Yes, I can recall one bloke now living up in Tugan up in the Gold Coast, and another bloke, the Whispering Baritone they used to call him. Roy Rose, he's now dead. Paddy Grant now in Newcastle, he's now deceased and he was a good cobbler of mine.

32:30 The three of them managed to make up a party of six one time and they went to a German place and one of the girls apparently started to do a bit of a fan dance, lights went out and people adjourned to their respective quarters until at one stage in the evening there was a hell of a crash, and this fella from Tugan, he switched the lights on and he saw Roy wearing a pair of air force black socks.

33:00 He said, "Christ Roy what are you doing?" He said, "I was going to the toilet." He had had a few drinks "And I knocked the lamp over." He said, "Why have you got your black socks on?" He said, "You don't want to get tinea." They gave him hell for a long time.

**33:30 Did they call him Tinea for a while after then?**

I don't know. He was the 'Whispering Baritone'. The more he drank the more whispery his voice got. All good fun.

**How did...this might sound like an obvious question but it's really good for the archive,**

34:00 **but how...**

I'll tell a few jokes will I?

**I was just wondering how your day to day duties as a wireless operator differed...after the war. obviously you weren't able to man guns any more...**

Well half the time you would be on voice, RT [radio transmission]. You just picked up the phone..."Mascot this is so and so."

34:30 You used the key occasionally on long distances but half the time flying around Australia it was on voice. If you went to Canberra or Darwin...well Darwin you would have to use the key a little bit. Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth. It was a very good life for a young bloke. A single bloke.

35:00 Not so good for the married.

**So it was just a matter of dropping the Morse and using the voice?**

Yes, you would use the Morse if you needed it otherwise you just picked up the phone and tune in and talk. Listen to the radio at times. You would have them both tuned in so you could pick up some music but you just hear the other in the background.

35:30 I remember my mother, she wouldn't know a race horse from one end to the other. She wrote one time in 1947. She had had a vivid dream that Haragi won the Melbourne Cup and Red Fury got a place. I remember this clearly in writing. This is about 2 or 3 weeks before the race. A couple of weeks before the race.

36:00 Anyway we had just had lunch in Alice Springs and we were due to take off just as the Melbourne Cup was due to start. And Skip said, "Bugger the take off, let's get the Melbourne Cup." So I tuned in and all the crew is listening. Haragi wins the Melbourne Cup, Red Fury comes third. I pulled the letter out of my pocket and I said, "Hey Blue look at this." He said, "How much did you have on it?" I said, "Not a cent."

36:30 When I was home on leave the next time I was talking to Mum and said, "How much did you put on it?" She said she had got Phil, the younger brother to go into the bookie [bookmaker] and put five pound on it but he wouldn't accept the bet because the acceptances hadn't been in at that stage and by the time the race came round I was having my doubts so I didn't put anything on it. She would know one horse from another but he had this darn dream.

**How extraordinary.**

I vividly remember Haragi and Red Fury.

37:00 I wouldn't know one horse from another as far as a race horse was concerned. Although Grandfather used to have a racing stud and after he sold his properties out around Cunnamulla way, he bought Tent Hill Station down near Gatton and he had a racing stud there. He raced all around Queensland. Glifford Park and Toowoomba were going broke and he went and paid the bloody mortgage out for them. I remember, big deal. His photograph's in the Committee Room now, life member.

37:30 He did a lot of money on his race horses. A lot of money. He had a firm favourite for the Melbourne Cup one year and it had to be scratched two days before because it got diabetes.

**You just never know.**

A touching game, race horses.

**You said this morning Glen that your dad wasn't too keen on signing the papers for you to join the air force...**

38:00 I think he feared I might get a bullet.

**Did he say anything else to you once you were in?**

The day I was leaving to go overseas after embarkation leave, he saw me on the train and just before the train pulled out he said, "Good luck son. I wish I was young enough to go with you. And remember, you don't have to get married if you don't want to and never go out with a girl you wouldn't be prepared to marry." I remember that word for word. That was good advice wasn't it?.

38:30 Of course in those days if you got a girl into trouble you were expected to marry her. Nowadays those things go by the board, but I always remember him saying that. "I wish I was young enough to go with you and remember you don't have to get married if you don't want to and don't go out with a girl you wouldn't be prepared to marry." Good advice.

## Tape 7

00:32 **Did you go to Hiroshima and have a look?**

Yes.

**Can you tell us about your impressions of that please?**

I was a bit overawed I think when I first arrived. One of the things that stuck in my mind were these concrete steps, it must have been a brick building or something or other. On the concrete

01:00 there were black marks all around where a body had been lying on that. The concrete had been blackened around the body. Where the body had been the concrete was clear. So the body just got burned into the concrete. I remember that. Someone must have collapsed on the concrete and the heat or whatever it was just burned around him leaving the shape.

01:30 I also remember thinking, "Thank goodness they used the bomb because it stopped the war." It did too of course. But it was complete devastation the whole thing. Very little left standing. A bit of a mess.

**So you went into the city where the bomb actually dropped?**

The bomb didn't actually drop on the city. It exploded in the atmosphere and

02:00 fire burned everything around them. It exploded over the Hiroshima area. All the buildings were burned and wrecked and the cyclonic winds from the bomb blew things to pieces. The only things that were really left standing were any solid brick places. But there would be walls and half a building and something like that. It was pretty messy.

**So it was still like that in 1947?**

02:30 Yes that's right. There was no building going on at that stage of the game. I suppose the radiation was still effective too. We were probably foolish to go wandering around the place, but ignorance is bliss.

**I've heard of some World War II vets going to Hiroshima and a lot of them picking up pieces that they were told was part of the debris and coming back to Australia and showing them these pieces and**

03:00 **later on they found out it was just a bit of steel or something.**

Yes. A bit like the Berlin Wall when it was demolished. They were selling parts of the wall and half the time the concrete was from somewhere else.

**A brick from the wall.**

Yes. This friend of mine Garry, he visited the wall came down, shortly after, and he brought a piece of the wall back. He said he had got it out of the wall.

03:30 But he said people were selling pieces of the Berlin Wall and half the time it wasn't the wall at all. Just bits of brick and concrete. They were flogging it off to tourists and con merchants, typical.

**Now you said your brother was in New Guinea during the Second World War. What did he tell you about the Japanese that confirmed for you that they needed to have the bomb dropped?**

He said he saw the bodies of a couple of our own soldiers with the buttocks cut off. Obviously they had been cannibalised. He said it was known by the troops up there that some Japs in certain areas were starving and they were cannibalising. That was the main thing I think. And apparently it did happen. There's no question

04:30 it happened in parts.

**I've heard that before.**

I suppose if a person is starving. A bit like that aircraft that went down in the Andes years ago. Some of the passengers ate the bodies.

**To survive?**

Yes, a case of survival. It wouldn't suit me but if you're hungry enough.

**I think if you're hungry enough you'll eat anything?**

The body was dead.

05:00 **It's a horrible thought for us to try and comprehend that though isn't it?**

Yes you can't judge unless you're involved in the circumstances. But it is a horrible thought.

**When you were doing the German Airlift, what did you know about communism in Russia and the politics there?**

Nothing much other than we were all very much anti communism.

05:30 But I don't know why. I suppose the way I was brought up for a start. I can remember one of my uncles saying they should be put up against a wall and shot. That was his expression. He didn't muck about either.

**What was your faith growing up? Catholic?**

No we were Protestants, Anglican, Church of England. Church of England in those days. They call them Anglican now. I suppose

06:00 we were all Church of England for several generations. Always Country Party voters in those days. They call them National Party now. I switched to Liberal when I saw that the Country Party bloke couldn't get the numbers in Bourke. I became Secretary Treasurer of the Liberal Party. Another thing...I must have been mixed up in a lot of stuff ,wasn't I?

**I started writing a list of all your associations and I got to about five.**

06:30 To repeat some of them...let me think: Secretary of the Masonic Lodge, I was Principal of the Royal Arch Chapter; President of the RSL; President of the Oxy Club; Chairman of the Ambulance Board; President of the Chamber of Commerce. Not all at the one time. I was also President of the First Scouts for a couple of years. I was Secretary Treasurer of Rotary. I was Vice President and offered Presidency but I refused because I had lost my

07:00 wife at that stage. I was captain of the pistol club. I was secretary of the gun club. You get mixed up in everything.

**What about now?**

I'm still a member of the RSL and Legacy here for a few years, but I was doing a lot of travelling so I dropped that. Now I just play bowls a couple of times a week and that's it.

**And you don't have a position at the bowls club?**

No.

07:30 I was Treasurer at Woy Woy Bowls Club before I came up here, but no...I reckon it's time I just pleased myself nowadays. And I've given up the gun shooting now. I gave my gun to my son. He still shoots. He won the West Australian Championship when he was over there. He still shoots down at Goulburn. He's got his Grandfather's gun and he's got my gun now. And he's got my grandmother's little

08:00 revolver. It wasn't a revolver...not revolver, pistol.

**Why would she have that? For safety?**

Her husband at that stage was the Manager of the Bank of New South Wales at Croydon during the gold mining days.

08:30 He gave it to her when they got married and told her to keep it in her handbag. And if you have to use it keep it close and point it at the stomach. So she gave me that eventually and then I gave it to my son along with a few other things.

**Does it still work?**

It could. He's got a collector's license now and I think he's had it immobilised or whatever you call it.

**So it's safe around the kids?**

09:00 He's got a steel safe where he keeps his guns. Three shotguns and rifles and things.

**You were talking about the base in Lubeck where you were given a lot of potatoes. What other things did they have at the base for the Australians? Did they have bars and tennis courts?**

We had a Victory Club in town. There was a stable there for horse riding but it didn't belong to

09:30 the base or anything. But you could go...we went there a few times. Some of the blokes played tennis and football. One of the blokes played with the football team and my friend from Rebina, he was a pretty good tennis player and he was playing in the Service Comp or something or other, and he met Kathy. She was the Secretary or typist for the Control Commission of Germany.

10:00 She was an English lass. He got engaged and I went to his wedding in London. They came home in 1949. I think he met her there, proposed in Holland and got married in London. She's got about 4 kids now. One's a doctor up in Gympie. Another one is over in Perth and she has a daughter in America.

**Did you get to meet**

10:30 **any other German girls other than Delia?**

Delia was an English girl. I met her in Germany. She was with the RAF. No actually, I met a couple but only just met them sort of thing. No nonsense.

**Was there a non fraternisation rule?**

No. Not at that stage of the game. They didn't encourage things, I don't think. But there was no restrictions really.

11:00 **What were the German people like in civvy street?**

I think they would probably have resented the girls going out with our fellas. I think the parents might have. I don't know. I don't think they were all for fraternisation really. Whereas a lot of the girls...young women too, were obviously widows. So I suppose they were fraternising a bit.

11:30 I didn't mix much socially. I didn't have time anyway. You were either flying or playing poker or sleeping. And we used to get back to England every fortnight you see. When we started off we were doing 3 trips a day for 3 days and then a day off. Fellas were falling asleep. It was too much.

- 12:00 So they changed the whole system then and we started to fly 2 trips a day for a fortnight and then have 3 days off. We'd take a plane to England have 3 days in England and then pick up another plane and do another fortnight. And we were doing it that way. Two trips a day for 3 days and then a day off, then 2 trips a day for another 3 days and then every fortnight we'd go back to England.
- 12:30 So I used to slip down to Wales for a couple of days and go fishing with my friends. They had this beautiful home on 75 acres down there. They were millionaires. He told me one time, we were having our little nightcap [drink]. He would give me a big cigar. He said, "Are you going to stay in the permanent air force, Glen?" I had known them during the war years and I used
- 13:00 to stay with them. I said, "Well I'm thinking of it but my brother wants me to get out and buy a garage." He said, "But you're not a mechanic?" I said, "No but I'll look after the office." He said, "Hang on." And he went off and came back with a briefcase and he pulled out a statement of receipts and expenditure for the Nissan Hut Company. I said, "What's this?" He said, "I've bought this." He owned two steel works.
- 13:30 And had shares in a brewery, and paid 19 and 6 in the pound tax he told me. He had two liveried chauffeurs and the Daimler and an Austin. So the companies must have been providing all those things. Anyway he said, "What do you make of it?" I looked at it and said, "You've lost a bit of money." Yes, he said, "We lost 77,000 pounds last year." I said
- 14:00 "What happened?" He said, "There was no rise and fall clause in our contracts." And they were building houses for the Housing Commission people. And he said there was no rise and fall clause in it. And I said, "Why didn't you drop the contract?" He said, "It would have cost more to drop the contract than to complete it. We've completed the contract and I'm going to sell the business now and get rid of that." Obviously he did but he still had the two steel works.
- 14:30 When I went back there in 1985, I was staying with the daughter. She's married and the parents are dead now. She was saying, "Dad said the best thing that ever happened was they nationalised him." In other words they took him over and bought him out. They must have paid them millions I suppose.
- 15:00 So they could sit back and ride to hounds and the fox hunt balls. He wanted to give me a Land Rover to give to Dad. That's fair dinkum. This would have been 1948. He said your father should have a Land Rover. He had one himself. We used to go fishing. I said, "Yes, that would be nice." So he said he would get one for my father and send it out.
- 15:30 I knocked it back. I couldn't accept a thing like that. But fancy that.

**Well they're still expensive now.**

They were 700 pounds sterling in those days. And even that was a lot of money. Of course he told me in 1945 before I came home that

- 16:00 only 10% of the British people earned 1000 pound a year. You had to be in the top ten to get 1000 pounds in those days. And the British Private during the war was getting one and sixpence a day. Fifteen cents to get shot at. And as a Sergeant Air Gunner, Wireless Air Gunner I was getting more than a British Army captain. So we lived well and under the schemes
- 16:30 we were able to buy 3 cartons of American cigarettes every month for 3 shillings a carton which is nothing.

**Had you been back to London before you did the German Airlift?**

Yes.

**When did you go there the first time?**

It was the end of the war.

**At the end of the war and when you were doing the German Airlift you'd take leave there?**

Yes I used to go back to London and I would go down to Wales and

- 17:00 several times I would stay in London for a couple of days and other times I'd go down to Wales for a couple of days.

**So did you see the bombing when you were there? I know it was after the war but had you seen the devastation?**

Well I saw it during the war because we got bombed a few times when I was in London. We got 3 air raids one night. I was down in Gloucester one time and a mate of mine, Johnny White, he used to work for the Daily Telegraph in Sydney. He knew his way around a bit and we were hearing about these Doodle Bugs, the Flying Bombs and

- 17:30 we had heard about the rockets, the V2's. So we were curious. We had leave and Johnny said, "Let's go down to London and have a look at these things." The first night we were in London we were staying at the Gloucester Road. I remember that. We went into the Victoria Club or somewhere or other and there

were 3 air raids that night and we got back to our quarters and half the ceiling was in. There was glass in the inside of the room but the window frame had been sucked out.

18:00 A V1 and a Doodle Bug had gone off not far from the house. Breakfast next morning there was a London fog on and we were just finishing breakfast and we heard the sound like a motor bike. And so long as you could hear it, it was ok. We were listening and

18:30 the next thing, silence. We knew it was going to drop any moment and the fellas were getting under the staircase and table. It landed about a quarter of a mile from us. Johnny said to me, "Bugger this, let's get out of London." So we went down to Plymouth then for a few days and had a look around there with some of the boys from 10 Squadron.

**Plymouth was bombed too wasn't it?**

Oh it had been lots of time but this was further down. We went down to Torquay and Plymouth and had a few days down there.

19:00 **When you were doing the German Airlift and had gone over to England for leave, had you seen London back on its feet?**

Well I never flew over London. I had been too London and I had seen down on the dock areas where it was badly knocked about. No, I didn't see it from the air so I can't really compare to what I saw of Germany. But London was devastated. There was no doubt about that.

19:30 It was really k nocked about. The people living in the Underground at night. They were just so matter of fact with their blankets and pillows. They camped there.

**During the leave you had seen what it was like during the war, and then go back on leave. Or did you just go straight down to Wales?**

20:00 Mostly I did yes. We used to land near Cambridge at Basingbourne and we might stay overnight there and catch the first train down to London and then straight down to Wales. It was only a few hours. Often the chauffeur would meet me with the Daimler at Swansea.

**He'd meet you...sorry?**

He'd pick me up at Swansea.

**Oh Swansea, right.**

20:30 **That sounds very nice. Could you drink champagne on the back seat?**

No. The first time he picked me up there he took me back to Binya where the steel works were and there was a Board Meeting on. He ushered me into the Board Room. He met me after the chauffer had delivered me and takes me into the Board Room and introduces me to some of the Board Directors. I wouldn't know who they were, handed me a packet of cigarettes and said he wouldn't be that long. Then carried on.

21:00 He was a wonderful man. He had been a captain in World War I and a friend of this colonel I used to stay with, this retired colonel. And the colonel passed me on to the captain and so I had contacts.

**Now you mentioned before something about the planes doing 3 minutes apart on the Air Lift.**

21:30 Yes they would operate from Lubeck and a wave of our mob was ten. The first one would take off say at midnight, then 3 minutes past, then 6 minutes past and so on.

**And why did they do that?**

Spacing. Because we were all flying at 6000 feet I think it was. So we were spaced. In bad weather or night time there would be gap and hopefully you wouldn't run into each other. Then we had to arrive at a

22:00 certain point towards Berlin on our beacon at a given time. I think from memory we had to be one minute early or one minute, late otherwise we weren't allowed to land. You just came in as you were going to land, didn't lower your undercarriage, went along the strip and went back to base. That way you wouldn't upset the incoming aircraft. That's how they worked it but we never had to go back with our load. We always managed to get in.

22:30 **Were there many accidents?**

Yes there were a few. One night it was about 2 or 3 in the morning, we had landed and had got to the end of the strip and were just turning off and we saw the lights of an aircraft about to land. The lights were on and suddenly the lights went like that. Boom! and there was a fire. That turned out to be an RAF York coming in and just about to land

23:00 and suddenly the next thing it turned over and we think he went to put the flaps down and one flap may have come down on one side and not the other. So it just turned it over like that. It had a load of coal on board and the crash killed the lot. The next aircraft two minutes behind just landed over the fire and

- everyone carried on. A Yankee Skymaster had trouble with his engines and he tried to land on
- 23:30 the autobahn. He had landed all right and he was going along too fast and he came to a bend and he couldn't turn. So he overshot and it burst into flame but they got them out. I think one was killed. Yes there were a few accidents. One of our blokes got killed, Mal Quinn but he was flying with a RAF crew. He had been in Germany and he had been in England before we went because
- 24:00 he was attached to the RAF in the Commonwealth Squadron over there. But he was at Lubeck when he got killed.
- How did he die?**
- There was particularly bad weather at the time and we had to go up to Denmark. They closed Berlin and they closed Lubeck and we headed towards Denmark. He tried to get into Lubeck and didn't make it.
- 24:30 I suppose he was trying to come in by the seat of his pants [without traffic control]. Anyway he went in and killed them. I think he killed about five including a few kids. He had a load of kids on board coming back from Berlin.
- Why would they have kids on board?**
- Red Cross evacuees.
- Did you deal with evacuees as well?**
- We used to have a lot of them. We carried nearly 7000 out of Berlin.
- 25:00 Evacuees, not all kids.
- Now these are the people who obviously didn't want to be taken by the communists by staying in the East.**
- They wanted to get out of Berlin. They might have had relations in West Berlin, who knows. Anyway they were evacuated from Berlin and of course at that stage of the game the less people in Berlin there were, the less to feed so they were trying to get them out. Anyway our mob, the Australians, took out just on 7000.
- 25:30 Not a bad swag, but we carried an awful lot of freight into Berlin.
- It must have been quite difficult for you seeing the refugees that you were carrying, the misplaced people feeling frustrated?**
- They were just like normal people, big smiles and stuff and they would want to give you a cigarette. That was a currency, and for them to offer us a cigarette that was something. Instead of which we'd give them lollies or something
- 26:00 like that. If we had any lollies or give them cigarettes if we had any cigarettes. They were just like normal kids most of them, big smiles and they would want to shake hands sometimes after they landed.
- Where would these people go? Where would they be taken to when you landed?**
- I don't know. We would take them to Lubeck and then they would be dispersed to where ever they wanted to go. They
- 26:30 might go and live in the West or down to Hamburg or who knows. The rest of Germany. They might have had relations all over the British occupation. There was an awful lot of Germany not under Russian control. It was only the eastern part. The rest was occupied by the British and the Americans and so on.
- I'm wondering how they got to you in the first place because I remember seeing some video and documentary about the Russians**
- 27:00 **coming in and taking this section of Berlin, this part of Germany?**
- In the fighting, apparently Roosevelt and Churchill had a meeting with Stalin and all the rest and they agreed amongst themselves that they would let the Russians take Berlin, and the British and American troops held back so the Russians could take Berlin.
- 27:30 And then they divided Berlin City itself into four zones. But the Russians of course had been there first and so they got the biggest slice of Berlin, but then they tried to get more. They wanted to take over the lot. Had they been able to take over the lot they would have taken the whole of Germany then. Fortunately at that stage of the game Britain and America balked and they said no. By booking the blockade in they thought
- 28:00 they would starve the allied troops out of Berlin. That's what it amounted to. And in the process they were saying to the Berliners, if you need food come to us. They were trying to get the West Berliners to go towards Russia. And the one thing the Germans did hate was they hated communism. So therefore we were the lesser of two evils.

28:30 They didn't mind us and as it turned out they expressed their gratitude by this Berlin Gratitude Foundation and invited so many of us back, not only Australians and they made a big thing of it, and made speeches. I've got some of them there of what was said. They thanked us so much and they really looked after us for a week, including the night before we left there we marched into the

29:00 Olympic Stadium and the girls were giving us flowers and ushered us to our seats and then they put on a military display, parachutists and God knows, fire works and Lord Harry they bunged that on. There was music. They really did it properly.

**Because you helped keep them afloat?**

That's exactly what they said. Without the Airlift they would have been under communism. No question they would have been. That's what they were scared of.

29:30 We were the lesser of two evils.

**You feel sorry for the poor people who got stuck on the other side of the blockade and couldn't get out. That was part of this documentary.**

That's right. Russia thought in the initial stages that there was no way in the world that the Airlift would work. They could envisage that. They even apparently had people monitoring the planes coming in trying to get the numbers, the registration numbers to see

30:00 if they were coming 3 or 4 times and they started to realise after a while that there were more and more aircraft coming. I don't know how many were operating. They had Sunderland Flying Boats coming in; they had Hastings flying in from Britain. They were operating out of Hamburg mostly. Yorks from RAF in Hamburg. Dakotas from Lubeck. The Yanks with the Skymasters operating out of Frankfurt.

30:30 Lord knows how many planes involved over all but there must have been 1000 more planes overall.

**When you say this was 3 minutes apart, twice a day for a fortnight with 3 days off.**

31:00 **Now how long was the flight from Lubeck to Berlin?**

About an hour and a half or hour forty from memory. I haven't got my log book. My son's got that now. But I think an hour forty going in and an hour twenty five going out I think. But each one flew at different heights. The Sunderlands flew low. I think they went in at 2000 I think. We were operating at 6000. The

31:30 Yanks were operating at a different height again. So we weren't clashing that way you see. So our fellas could be 3 minutes apart flying at 6000 feet. They weren't going to run into the Skymaster because he was flying at 8000 or something like that. It was very, very well organised. I mean we used to make the remark that Mascot would have pups if they saw what was happening here. Planes taking off and landing all over the place. But it was very coordinated and well thought out.

32:00 **Who exactly was the person in charge of the coordinating?**

Well I don't know. General Clay was in charge of the American troops in Berlin. But they had...on control towers they had English speaking Germans helping, but they had RAF English personnel and German personnel in the control tower. There must have been an overall set up somewhere down the line.

32:30 I remember one time one Yank called up and said, "The man in the ship to the man in the tower, give me the word and I'll pull on the tower." And this English voice came back, "The man in the tower to the man in the ship, pull on the power you give me the pip."

**I was going to say that doesn't rhyme as well as the other one.**

33:00 Little things like that would relieve the monotony I suppose. The night of the elections we were lining up to take off ...there were a lot of Yank planes there and someone said, "There's a lot of Truman boys around tonight." Someone said, "Ha, ha." And the next minute a Yank gets permission to take off. "Well here goes one of Dewey's boys" he said. Someone said, "Truman." He said, "Dewey."

33:30 Dewey was the challenger. Truman and Dewey.

**This was the election for 1950 was it?**

The 1949 American elections. Truman was President at the time.

**So how long did you do the airlifts for?**

We left Australia in August 1948, flew over with Qantas. We were going to take our own planes but

34:00 they said they didn't want the planes they wanted crews. So then they flew us over with Qantas on a Constellation. We got over there in August and we did a quick conversion green card check on the RAF equipment and went to Lubeck. We left Lubeck at about the end of September the following year. Then we left England in November.

**Did the American and British troops pull out at the same time?**

34:30 Not everyone pulled out I don't think. They scaled it down I think. The Airlift had stopped at that stage. They didn't have to fly any more in because they could go in by rail or road once the Russians gave it in. The Airlift itself stopped in September.

**When you say airlift today Glen, does it mean the same as what it did 50 years ago in the sense that you could see on the news tonight for instance, air lifting food to Afghanistan?**

35:00 Yes it would be a similar thing. Flying in food, flying in supplies. The Berlin Airlift was a necessity to keep Berlin going itself otherwise they would have been starved out by the Russians.

**It's crazy to think that the Russians at the end, fighting the Germans on the Eastern front then wanted Germany?**

Well they took over so many places, didn't they?.

35:30 They took over Poland, they took over Hungary, they took over half of Germany. They wanted to dominate the whole of Europe. And communise the whole of Europe.

**So now, after the airlifts and you went back to England and this is now September '40. You came back to Australia,**

36:00 **can you tell us what happened then?**

Well we arrived home in Sydney. We were going to come home by ship. I think I mentioned this before, then the RAF decided they would fly us home by York. So we had a leisurely trip coming back. We went to Malta and Port Said and Iraq. We had a party at Karachi in Pakistan. And we had a party in Ceylon. And

36:30 we had a party in Singapore.

**So did you sleep all the way home?**

Most of the time. We had little parties here and there. A day or two here and a day or two there. So it was a leisurely trip. We arrived in Sydney the morning of the Melbourne Cup and the skipper offered to any of the blokes who wanted to go down to the Melbourne Cup that he would fly them back tomorrow. But I said, "No, I'll catch the plane back to Bourke." So I went to the back of Bourke

37:00 instead of going to the Melbourne Cup.

**I suppose there's no accounting for taste.**

I wasn't that keen on the Melbourne Cup.

**So did your family know you were coming back to Bourke?**

Oh yes I had telegraphed ahead. They knew I was on the way home. I think I might have sent them a telegram from Singapore too. Yes they knew.

**Had you made any decisions at that point Glen whether you would stay in the air force?**

37:30 Yes I was still going to stay in at that stage. The only reason I got out of the air force was because I had married an English lass and we had a daughter Heather and Ron was on the way, and I looked like going to Malaya for 12 months and the family couldn't go with me. With a 12 month posting for air crew the family couldn't go. The ground staff used to have a two year posting and they could take their family with them.

38:00 My wife was English. She had no relations in Australia, one child and another on the way, and my brother wanted me to get out and go in partnership with him anyway. I weighed things up and thought I had to get out, so I did.

## Tape 8

00:31 **I've just got a question on training in the Empire Training Scheme. Did you do training in Australia?**

No I did all my training in Australia. I graduated as a sergeant from West Sale and then went over to America and then to England. So I did all my training in Australia.

**Right. Weren't you doing conversion courses and gunnery courses?**

That was when

01:00 I volunteered to go on the Burma business before the Japs had surrendered. Instead of sending me... they were forming it up and so they sent me to do a refresher on advanced gunnery training in Ireland

and of course by the time I had finished that the war was all over.

**But was that gunnery course in Ireland still part of the EAT Scheme?**

Well, I don't think so. I don't know.

01:30 It was a gunnery school operating with Wellingtons. I don't know...I don't think it would have been part of the Empire Scheme. It could have been. The only ones I know...South Africa was involved and New Zealand and Australia and Canada. Canada was the main one. A lot of our blokes went from Australia to Canada to be trained.

I suppose it would have been a part of it.

02:00 **I was wondering how the training from country to country shaped up, considering it was such a hugely international programme?**

There was only one thing to do. They had to teach a bloke how to use a gun and a machine gun and whether it's in Germany or Australia. A different type of gun perhaps. No I never thought of it actually. We used camera guns a lot down there on the training.

02:30 **Camera guns, what were they?**

Well like cine-camera. You were in the turret and you lined it up on the planes coming down and you pressed the button and then you develop it afterwards and you can see if you had been on target or not. And the Poms were using cine-guns a bit whereas we used the live ammunition in our training.

**Do you think it made a difference?**

No not really.

03:00 With the cameras you could see if you were shooting behind or too far, so you could point out the errors. So perhaps from a training point of view it would have been advantageous. I hadn't thought of it until you asked that question, but it would have been an advance in training. But we didn't have that.

**But with the cine-gun were you actually still firing any ammunition?**

No, you were in the turret and you lined up the plane and then you pressed the trigger, and all you were doing was filming.

03:30 As the approaching training fighter was coming in, you were using the camera as though it was a gun, and then of course it showed up in the film, whether you were behind.

**But I guess you wouldn't have the kick of the machine gun?**

Yes but in a turret there's not a great deal of kick because it's mounted. You get a bit of shuddering.

04:00 It's not a direct kick. It's a vibration more or less.

**You're mixing with different people from different nations all the time. Was there any**

04:30 **peculiarities...say the Americans versus the Brits?**

Well, we didn't have much to do with the Americans. They flew separately. Really, the only time you would meet the Americans was when they were off duty probably. They had their own bases. Although the cousin of mine, the one I mentioned who shot down four and one probably....until the RAF stopped him he used to slip off onto one of the American

05:00 bases and did a couple of trips as a ball [turret] gunner in the Yank's Fortress. Until the RAF stopped him. He loved his flying and shooting. He could have it. I wouldn't want to be in a ball turret for a start. That's the one down below in the middle of the fuselage.

**A prime target there.**

Well it was a good shooting position but it's also as you say a prime target. The worst was the

05:30 tail turret. He usually copped it. If you're shooting a moving target, if you're going to miss you'll miss invariably behind. So if the aircraft's hit, it's usually hit at the back. So the tail turret fella cops it.

**I've heard a few horror stories about tail gunners.**

I saw one near Catfos near Hull. We landed there one time and an American Liberator came in, and oh boy the tail turrets were hit and were they a mess.

06:00 He had copped it good and properly, and of course the gunner was dead. He really copped the whole lot. It had shattered the whole tail area. It was a mess poor bugger. And they had to wash him out.

**You hear that expression a lot.**

Yes, virtually.

06:30 **Were scenes like that when you were training, were they unnerving you a bit?**

No strangely enough. It just seemed a matter of fact sort of thing. Bad luck, he copped it. But then I was never in action like that sort of stuff. You would get a little bit of a scare when something went wrong but for some reason I was never actually frightened.

07:00 I reckoned I probably would have been if a few bullets had whistled close by, but it didn't happen that way so I was lucky.

**In your training days were you ever aware of what the odds of Bomber Command were?**

Yes I read about it. 50% of tail gunners got the chop, or 60% of the tail gunners and 50% of Bomber Command. And things like that. But of course that happens to the other people. It's bad luck.

07:30 It doesn't happen to you. I think that's the way we felt anyway. It was bad luck losing your mates.

**I think you mentioned this this morning that there were occasions throughout your experience when you did lose some mates?**

Yes. Different times. Prangs and different things.

08:00 Rob McKay went in on a Tiger Moth. He was a decorated Wing Commander from the Leelite Squadrons in the Mediterranean. He and a Battle of Britain Fighter pilot in 1949 were doing aerobatics and mucking around in a Tiger Moth down near Scofield. They went in and got the chop. He had a good career.

08:30 I could think of quite a few who got the chop. One had a prang, an Aussie bloke. He was flying down in Wales at Pembroke. He was flying a Wellington and overshot. He had 5 trainee gunners on board. He overshot into the marsh and killed the lot of them. We were up to our knees in water and muck trying to get them out. They pulled

09:00 them out and the medical officer...there were about 5 Aussie's there. He gave us a bottle of navy over proof rum and said get back to the quarters and knock it off. That's when we had finished pulling them out. There were a lot of other blokes helping. Anyway we went back to the quarters too exhausted to drink at that stage, but the following day, we swiped some Coke because the Coke was rationed too, and we built a fire in the hut and knocked off the bottle of rum.

09:30 We were still kids and we thought we were so grown up. Drinking rum. I wouldn't do it now except a little bit.

**So did any of those fellas make it?**

Let me think. Albert Emsey got the chop. Another fella called Jones, he got killed.

10:00 He was flying in an Oxford. Shiner White, another mate, but he went in on the Island of Man. There were a few. But some I didn't know that well. I knew them but they weren't close friends.

**And did any of those events give you pause to have second thoughts...**

10:30 **at any time?**

No not really. Looking back I'm glad I was involved. I reckoned I could always look anyone in the eye if needs be and say, "I volunteered and went along." So I always felt that I could stand on my own feet. Even if I'm a little bloke. And ...

11:00 I felt the same way when my son wanted to join the air force. I said, "Go for your life." He wanted to go. He did two years of Engineering at Uni and didn't want to complete Uni. He got four A's in his second year, but he wanted to join the air force. So he joined the air force. And he had trouble getting in too, the first time. He went for his interview and he had every qualification,

11:30 but they knocked him back. I wrote to Sir James Killen at the time, he was Minister for Defence and I said I was not writing the letter as the father of a disappointed son, but one who spent more than 2 years recruiting in Tasmania doing the aptitude testing and I couldn't understand why my son was refused. I said he was medically fit and high qualified. I said I would like this reviewed, not by some junior Lieutenant.

12:00 Anyway, he was an ex air gunner himself. He wrote back, a very nice letter and said, it wasn't that he wasn't qualified, but they only required at that stage 24 applicants and they had more than that number in post graduate students. So I thought this is damn stupid and by this time my son had gone and done a pilots course as well and he applied again, and they offered him a navigator. He didn't want navigator. He wanted a pilot.

12:30 Sir James Rowlands was up here at the time. He was Governor of New South Wales involved in some drought relief thing or what not and I had to entertain him being President of the Oxy Club. So with the Pastoral Protection Board I hosted a luncheon and a dinner for him. And over drinks that night I said to him, "Look you're ex Chief of Air Staff (he was an Air Vice Marshall)..." I explained to him, "I can't understand -

- 13:00 I reckon it's wrong, my son's dead keen on it." He said, "Tell him to apply again. Show determination." So I said to my son that Sir James had said this and he said, "No I'm going to do a commercial pilot's course." Well that cost me a quid I can tell you. And it cost him a lot too. So he did 32 weeks at Bankstown and he qualified second on the course. Applied, was accepted and now he's in the air force. But whilst he was waiting and he hadn't heard from them
- 13:30 and all the rest of it, and he thought he was going to miss out again, he accepted a job at Norfolk Island as a pilot over there. He had his ticket ready to go and the air force advised him he had been accepted so he had to drop the other job. And then he went into the air force. That's how he got away with it. He had to really show his determination. He was a qualified commercial pilot
- 14:00 with a senior commercial certificates before he went into the air force.
- What a tough process.**
- Yes it was a tough process. But as Killen said at the time, they were getting post graduate students. I suppose if they only want a certain number. They only wanted 24 at that stage.
- You mentioned this morning that in the air crew there was a term for fellas who didn't come back, "They had gone to Gowings."**
- 14:30 Yes, gone to Gowings. That's an old expression back in the war time years. About shopping..."Oh he's gone to Gowings." It was a shop in Sydney.
- Yes I remember it.**
- Yes, gone to Gowings. If someone went off on a trip and didn't come back then he had gone to Gowings, or he got the chop. That was another expression. But usually it was he gone to Gowings if he didn't come back.
- 15:00 I suppose it's a way of brushing over what could be unpleasant business. That's what people did.
- I've spoken to a few fellas who have mentioned a few superstitions and things like that...**
- Yes, never wave good bye when you're taxing out. You're sitting up there and someone waves, you nodded but you didn't wave back.
- 15:30 That was our group anyway. You'd nod but you didn't wave. And you didn't take volunteer because that's when things went wrong. You didn't volunteer for something you weren't listed for. That could be bad luck. They had little superstitions. That's natural.
- 16:00 **Were there any personal belongings that you or any of the others would take on board?**
- No, but what used to happen sometimes, a bloke would be going on a trip and you'd say, "If you don't come back can I have your camera?" Things like that people used to say to each other. But I suppose it's like the actor saying, "Break a leg." Something like that.
- 16:30 Can I have your camera, or can I have something or other?. Yeah, you can have that.
- Let's go back to Germany for a little bit. Did you have any brush with any of the concentration camps?**
- No not on that occasion, although on another trip I did, we went to Belsen, or part of it. We just saw a little bit of it, but it wasn't something I wanted to see.
- 17:00 There was nothing there then except the ovens and a few buildings. So really it was not like you saw in the documentaries.
- When did you go to Belsen?**
- It would have been about 1979. I went over to
- 17:30 Holland with Garry and then we went down to Germany. It would have been that one. No wait on that was in 1985, '85 when we were doing the Europe trip. We went to Germany and down to Italy and Switzerland and Austria and down through that area.
- So they had opened it for everyone to see?.**
- It's a tourist thing now.
- 18:00 We had a group of about 18 of us. We were taken there and all these various place. We went down to Munich for the beer festival. Very important. There was a mate of mine, he lives about 3 houses down there now, I met up with him in Switzerland, he and his wife. We were in Munich having a few grogs and we nearly got into an argument with a German on that occasion. And
- 18:30 Geoff was saying, "We're Australians, kangaroos." And we bought him a pint a beer and he settled down then. But he was getting a bit stroppy [aggressive].

**What did he think you were?**

I don't know. But I think he didn't like the idea of English blokes being at his festival. He might have thought we were Poms, I don't know. But Geoff was saying, "Australians, kangaroos." And he didn't know what to make of that. So anyway we slipped him a beer and he was right.

19:00 **Amazing what a beer will do.**

Yeah. In Greece they love Australians. Every where you went in Greece if they heard your accent they would be saying, "Yeah I have an uncle in Brisbane, a cousin in Sydney, do you know him?" They're very hospitable. When you go around on the roads and the islands and stuff and they find out your Australians, they make you

19:30 very, very welcome. So many of our Australian troops of course served in Greece and Crete. They've got a big memorial in Crete for the Australian troops.

**I've heard quite a bit about their hospitality and generosity.**

Very much so in Greece, yes. Italy I didn't take to very much. The northern part...the second trip we did there was all right but

20:00 the first one...it struck me that all the public buildings needed repair. They were neglected and needed painting. A lot of historical stuff admittedly. But I'm not that impressed with Italy. Not that time. The last trip we did about 4 years ago, we went to the mountain lakes and streams area up in Northern Italy. That's quite different to the Southern part.

20:30 Then the last time we went overseas we went to Germany again...Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Austria. But I would rather go back to Alaska.

**A beautiful place.**

Well, Alaska...they call it the last frontier. It is obviously but it's good and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed all my trips but I wouldn't want to go back to where I went in '99. I went to

21:00 Israel, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt. Everywhere you went there were people with guns. It's even worse there at the moment isn't it? But still it was an interesting trip.

**Is there any particular moment that you witnessed during your time across your service, perhaps closer to the war years that stands out defining the bad business of war?**

21:30 I think the nastiness thing of war I saw was the dismembered body of an American soldier down the Marble Arch where a V2 had gone off. No, it might have been a V1. It had virtually stripped him naked and

22:00 he was almost dismembered. That wasn't a very pleasant sight that one. I was on the other side of the street when I walked passed. That wasn't too good.

**Where were you when it went off?**

I was just around the corner. I walked around to see what had happened and there was a bloke lying there. There were a few other dead ones I think but the one that stuck in my mind was almost naked. His uniform had been almost stripped off with the explosion.

22:30 Queer things. The Doodle Bugs[V1 German flying bomb] had that effect apparently. Depression and decompression somehow. Or explosion and a double action, some how. Queer little things those doodle bugs. Like a two stroke motor bike.

**And if you were just around the corner when it went off, what kind of shock would you feel?**

23:00 Oh it would be a hell of a shock. But you heard this doodle bug thing going you see and when the motor stopped then you would get under a doorway or something. I suppose I would have been 4 or 500 yards away from it. So basically I was in no danger. But it gave you an awful fright when it cut out. At the hostel we were staying at in Gloucester Road a similar thing happened, but we weren't there at the time. We got back to our quarters and as I say the windows and ceiling were damaged.

23:30 So bugger London! We went down to Plymouth. Down at Brighton they used to have all the front there covered with barbed wire. They had mined all the front area. Some of the boys were coming back from a pub one night there and they were acting the goat and someone threw his cap over his shoulder and it landed over the barb wire, and like a fool he went into the barb wire to get his cap

24:00 and 'whoom', a mine got him.

**Did he make it?**

He didn't make it. The mine blew him to buggery. Just coming back from a few drinks and someone threw a cap and it lopped over the fence and he lent over and ... Some times the fighter planes would come back from France. They would fly low over the English Channel and as they got to Brighton they would do a Victory Roll or something.

- 24:30 There was an RAF Tempest one day, he came boring along. He came to the first of the piers, up over it and down along the pebbly beach, heading towards the next pier...but he went too low and he skidded along wheels up and came to a belly landing on the beach there. Bent prop and damaged aircraft. I believe he got court martialled. He stepped out and it didn't burn.
- 25:00 One night there, shortly after we had arrived there was a German bombing raid and a German Heinkel got shot down and he crashed into the grave yard at Brighton. My cousin was one of the pall bearers when they buried this German pilot. I said how did it go, and he said, "We got this Jerry and we took him up to the bone orchard and planted him and gave him a military funeral." He was the one who was on Lancs later on
- 25:30 and got shot up over Bertschesgaden and then bailed out over Japan. The first day I arrived in Japan, I was at Iwakuni, so I rang Beaufield where my two cousins were based with the Mustang squadron. I said, "Could I speak to Flight Lieutenant Van Williams please?" They said, "I'm sorry sir he's not available at the moment." So I said, "Could I speak to Flight Lieutenant Cliff Williams please?" There was a short delay and then Cliff came on the blower and said,
- 26:00 "Who's that?" And I said, "Glen, I'm down at Iwakuni, I've just arrived. I'll be here for a couple of days. Where's Van?" He said, "He just passed out. He bailed out today and we've been celebrating and he's just passed out." I asked him later on, "What happened?" And he said they were doing low level sweeps and his throttle control jammed and there he was with two thirds throttle in the fighter plane. "You couldn't land with two thirds throttle", he said, "So I took it
- 26:30 up to 6000, called up and said I was walking home, turned it on its back and jumped out, and I landed in a bamboo patch, the army pulled me out and I got pissed." So we used to have some funny times.

**I guess having a sense of humour is very important?**

Absolutely I think. I think so. Poor bugger, he's 82 now. Nearly blind.

- 27:00 Well to do, never married and living in an aged person's hostel. Damn shame you know. Such a career behind him and plenty of dough. He owned a sheep station at one stage. However.....

**Did you have much contact with your distant relatives and immediate family over the course of your service?**

Yes

- 27:30 we all kept in touch somehow, the whole lot of us. I flew with one, once or twice. The one who finished up as a Lanc pilot. I flew with him on Oxfords on the Advanced Training Course. But he was always a phlegmatic type of person. I was having a drink when I was doing this wool classing course up at Bradfield with a bloke called Allan Rushstein, he was a bomb aimer. He had been on Lancs and we were talking and he said
- 28:00 "What squadron were you?" And I said I had been over in Ireland on a gunner thing. And I asked him what squadron he was in and he said, "463" I think it was. I told him I had a cousin who was there, a skipper on Lancs, Van Williams. And he said he was his bomb aimer. He said, "Did he tell you about the time they got shot up over Bertschesgaden?" He said they had been coming in on the bombing run and the anti aircraft
- 28:30 hit us and blew number 3 motor out the wing. He said there had been an awful hole, you could have driven a jeep through it. That would have been an exaggeration. And all Van said was "Hang on fellas the woodpeckers are getting rough." We dropped the bombs and we flew home on three motors. They used to call him Farmer Williams. Silly isn't it.
- 29:00 All he said was, "Hang on fellas the woodpeckers are getting rough." The old Lancs are a bonzer plane apparently. Van thought the world of them. A four engine fighter.

**Glen given your enthusiasm to join the RAAF, and to get into the fight and help out, were you disappointed**

- 29:30 **that you didn't get to serve in any immediate action?**

Yes I was a little bit. I don't know why. It's a stupid thing to feel I suppose. But yes I was volunteering for it. I wanted to be in it like the rest of the blokes. Looking back it was probably a foolish thing to do, you might have got the chop. But no, I wanted to be one of the boys.

- 30:00 **Given what you saw of the tail gunner...**

I didn't see it really right up close. Fifty feet away, that was enough. But it was just bad luck, he had gone to Gowings.

**I guess they used Gowings because it was a really big store?**

Yes it was a big store in Sydney and they had a lot of people go visiting.

30:30 **Did a lot of business.**

Yes did a lot of business.

**Ok I'll bring you back now to Hobart for those couple of years.**

Where?

**You were down there for a couple of years weren't you?**

Yes 2 years 8 months. I went down in June 1950.

**And at that stage you were committed to staying in the RAAF?**

Oh yes. Well I had come back...done the Catalinas up to Darwin for 4 months. No sooner had I come back...having flogged my car there, I came back and

31:00 bought another one. I bought a little Morris Minor. No sooner had I got my new car than I was posted to Hobart. So down to Melbourne and took the air force ship across to Launceston and then around to Hobart. Of course I didn't know Melbourne and I wasn't used to driving in the city, but I got to Victoria Barracks and I had to report in there and I said

31:30 what am I going to do about the car? And they said take it up to Port Phillip and they will arrange it, and they gave me a ticket to fly to Hobart. And I asked, "How do I get to Port Phillip?" and a bloke started to tell me and I asked him to draw me a mud map. So he drew me a bit of a sketch and there I was trying to drive through Melbourne with a map there and I'd pull up and I was getting

32:00 flustered. I was smoking at the time I think. I pulled up beside a tram and I said, "Are you going to Port Phillip mate?" And he said yes. "I said I'll follow you if I may." So every time he pulled up I pulled up and that's how I got to Port Phillip. I had only had the car a few weeks and after I got down to Hobart, the following weekend I went to Launceston to pick my car up and the wharfies had put a rope mark over the canvas.

32:30 One window was broken and the door was bent in. It was a good little car and I got it fixed up with insurance.

**So how did you meet your wife to be?**

I was at a ball or something or other and all these nurses from the hospital were there too. I think it was a Lodge Ball. So we went out a couple of times

33:00 and we got engaged just before I left Hobart. So after I got a transfer to Townsville she arranged a transfer to Townsville and she was at the Townsville General for a little while and we got married in Townsville in '53. Then the daughter arrived the next year and a year or so after that I got out of the air force and that was it.

33:30 The end of '55.

**So what was it like settling into civvie street [civilian life] after all those years in the service?**

Damn hard. I couldn't for a long time. That was all I new basically. Yeah, it took me a long time to settle down. On one occasion there, shortly after we were back at Bourke, a couple of years after I got out of the air force and after we bought the garage there, a Dakota, an air force Dakota came low over the top

34:00 circled around the town, went out to West Bourke which is 4 miles away and landed. I thought, "I wonder who the hell that is? Probably someone I know." I grabbed the ute and there was no aircraft near the stand but the Dakota was parked up near the end of the strip. I drove up but who should it be but one of my old skippers from the Lincoln days. Wing Commander Nichol...a different Nichol from the one in Hobart. He died 2 years ago in Brisbane.

34:30 Noel Nichol. He was the Wing Commander in charge of the rain maker mob. You know seeding the clouds? They had a magnetometer sticking out the back of the Dakota and all this stuff. I said, "What are you doing here?" And he said, "We just called in to see you, we thought you might come out and say g'day." There was another bloke on the crew, Don Jones, I knew him too and so we yarned for half an hour or so. So they left then and I went back to work.

35:00 I thought it was nice of them to call in.

**That the true meaning of having friends drop in isn't it?**

Yes, they brought the Dakota and dropped it. I don't know where they were going at the time. They must have been on a rain making exercise or something. Seeding clouds. I was the Official Cloud Observer for the Darling Shire Council. You had better put that down too.

**You serious?**

I am. They made me the official cloud observer

35:30 when we had the rain makers operating out of Cobar. If it looked like possible cloud based at about

6000 feet and yes, there's possible water in that, I'd ring up and tell them to get the plane out. They'd come boring over from Cobar and put silver iodine into the cloud and try and get rain. It worked sometimes. But I was appointed the Official Cloud Observer. Crazy isn't it?.

36:00 **What was so hard about settling back into civvie street do you reckon?**

I don't know. It was just so different I guess. Probably a bit...how would you would call it, mundane? I don't know what the word for it would be. But it took me a while I can tell you. Although I must admit I liked my job at the garage.

36:30 I was always first there and last away. We made a quid. I wouldn't want to do it again. But I reckon I've been lucky. I've never woken up Monday morning...before I retired, I never woke up Monday morning and thought, "Oh God I've got to go to work." I only had about 3 jobs all told and I got along with them all all right. That's quite lucky I think in that respect. Now I wake up and wonder what morning it is, what day.

37:00 They're all bloody Mondays or Sundays.

**How do you reckon your time in the air force shaped you as a person?**

I think it probably educated me a bit. It would have to when you were travelling around so much and meeting so many people. That sort of thing would have to educate you a bit. I suppose it matures you a bit too.

37:30 It certainly matures you when you got back to civvie life. You feel you're on an equal with anyone. Kiss my foot. I didn't say anything else.

**Do you reckon it had anything to do with your ongoing travel and your want to be on just about every committee?**

I didn't want to be on them, it just used to happen.

38:00 The only one I really wanted was to be on the committee for the Oxy Club which was the Services Club, and because I was President of the RSL. So when I put my name in for the committee I was elected. I stayed on the committee for 14 and I think I was president for 9 years. And I got a lot of pleasure out of it. I got things

38:30 done and altered. Entertained a lot of people. Being President of the RSL and President of the Services Club, often different ones would turn up. Like Sir Rodan Cutler would come up and I would have to entertain him at the club for lunch. He came up several times. Paul Hasluck, he was a nice bloke. I didn't like his wife. When he was Governor General he came up. Jack Renshaw, I liked him. He was a good bloke.

39:00 He was Labour and I was Liberal but it didn't matter. I got along with him well. And Bill (UNCLEAR) I think he's still the member for Broken Hill. I got to know him very well. What's his name?...Malcolm Fraser. I had a direct line to ring Canberra anytime I wanted to at one stage. I was Secretary of the Liberal Party and we invited him up to Bourke

39:30 for the show, and we entertained him for afternoon tea. My mate Garry I invited him to come along for afternoon tea. We were sitting there and Malcolm Fraser and his wife walked in. Garry had been a builder but he also owned a men's wear shop and he owned the Ladies Shop in the main street. So he was into the clothing business. He looked over and I'm sure Malcolm Fraser heard him and he said, "He's got big feet hasn't he?"

40:00 Anyway that went off all right. And you get into a position where you can get things done. Dudley Dunn, he owned Davie Airways and he owned Australian Airport Services Pty Ltd... a coating service at all the international airports in Australia. He's an ex-captain Qantas pilot. Ex-fighter pilot during the war. He owns Tarall

40:30 Station about 110,000 acres. He owned the one next door and the Royal Hotel in Bourke, so in other words he's a big deal. And I got to know him a little bit. At one stage I was wanting to organise a feral pig eradication programme. Tarall Station is a big property on the Warrego as it comes into the junction of the Darling.

41:00 And there's a lot of feral pig there. I saw his manager one day and said we were going to organise a feral pig poisoning programme on Tarall. I said our pig officer would arrange everything. We would build the poisoning stations and things at no charge to you, but the only thing it will cost you will be for the poison and manual labour and clean up afterwards. "No no don't want it."

41:30 **I thought, "Bugger him!" So I thought I would have to think of something else, and I thought back to when Malcolm Fraser was coming up to Bourke, Dudley Dunn came to me in the office one day and said he believed I was handling the reception for the Prime Minister coming up, "Is there any chance of an invitation?"**

## Tape 9

- 00:31 I got knocked back by the manager of Tarall about putting the poison out and I thought, "What the hell!" and I started to think back to the time that Dudley Dunn had asked for an invitation to Malcolm Fraser's thing. When it was all over, Dudley said to me, 'I owe you one.' Well I thought to myself...I knew he was living in Sydney at the time at Woollahra so I get on the blower and I ring him and told
- 01:00 him I wanted to do a feral pig poisoning on Tarall and I told him that George had knocked me back. He said that would be right and he would let me know shortly. About an hour later I got a phone call from George and he said he had been thinking things over and it would be all right. So knowing somebody helps. So we carried out our programme and I think we had a body count of over 500. That cleaned them up a bit.
- 01:30 **So you made an impression?**
- But he knocked me back and then he changed his mind. These things happen. One time the General Manager for Australia Guarantee Corporation came up to visit when we had the Ford Dealership because we used to do finance through AGC. Anyway there was a gun shoot at that time and I didn't want to go and see the big boss of AGC,
- 02:00 so I get home at tea time and Tommy said that he and somebody else wanted to see me. She told him I was out at the gun club and that I would be home for tea. I came home and said I was going back to the club because there was a shoot on at night time too. I told her that if he rings again and wants to see me to come out to the gun club. Anyway he turned up with his mate. Everyone made him welcome. The
- 02:30 bar was open and he got himself a skinfull by the time the night was over and he said to me before he left the next day that he had really enjoyed himself and he was always available on the phone if there's anything he could do for me. Anyway for some reason a few weeks later, we had a car we had sold to a Frederick Henry Brown, I remember. He had a property out Wenaring way, and he had shot through, with the car and all and
- 03:00 didn't keep up the payments. It was on hire purchase. We were up for about 800 quid to pay it out. We had guaranteed the deal. I thought, "That's a bloody nuisance," because we would have to pay out about 800. But I knew we had a backstop of several hundred because every time we put a car through hire purchase and used the hire purchase finance company and their insurance we got a kick back and it would accumulate. We used to deal with Orange.
- 03:30 And anyway he wanted us to send a cheque for whatever it was and I said to cut it out of our credit. He said he couldn't do that and we would have to send the money. I said there was more than that amount in the credit, take it out of that. He said he couldn't do it and I said well then I will have to ring so and so...I've forgotten his name now. He said he didn't like name droppers. I said, "I'm not dropping names, I'll be back in touch." So I got on the phone and rang this bloke and the girl said he was in a conference.
- 04:00 I told her that when he was in Bourke some time ago I could always contact him at any time and the next thing about five minutes later he came on the blower. "How are you, I really enjoyed the night gun shooting. What can I do for you?" I told him that the fellow at Orange had knocked me back and he said he would see what he could do. About an hour later he phoned to say it had been arranged and it would be all right.
- 04:30 If you get to the top sometimes things can happen. If you've got problems try and get to the top.
- Glen, I've only got two questions for you? One is, when you were in Germany did you start drinking Snapps?**
- Once or twice yes. I started to enjoy a little cognac. I do now but my God they charge like scrub bulls [charge excessively] don't they? I was up at Jupiter's the other day,
- 05:00 I wasn't going to have it but I was looking at the wine list and a Drambui was \$6.50. I thought my God that's pricey. Last night we went to dinner at Tweed Head Bowls Club and out of curiosity when I was getting a beer I asked how much a Drambui was here? He said \$3.40. A big difference. \$3.40 there and \$6.50 the other place.
- 05:30 A bottle is \$56. So the only time I drink that is if someone's passing it around.
- I remember going to a German night once and they were drinking Snapps and they were going one, two, three, Snapps. And after about 5 of those I think, I don't know what happened. You just go so fast and you don't feel drunk and then it hits you.**
- Yes I like a cognac or something...to sip it. But the one I do recall. We were down at Old Town San Diego, the Mexican part there and I had a couple of Margueritas. Boy
- 06:00 oh boy. I would love to have had a third but it would have been dangerous. But it was tasty. What is it, Tequila or something?.
- Why did you become a JP [Justice of the Peace]?**

I don't know. The Shire President said to me, "Are you a JP?" I said I wasn't and he said I should be. It would be handy at times. So the next thing I was on the list and I was sworn in as a JP. But I used

07:00 to get called over to...Harvey Duncan used to be the lock up keeper. He's dead now, he died last year. He was a fella with a good personality. He was a bit shrewd but he had a good personality. He was always calling me out on a Monday for the Possum Parade they called it.

**Why?**

Well they used to pick up the drunks at night and all the rest in trouble, the night patrols and me being handy I would be called out and he used to always have a bit of a dig at me.

07:30 "What ever you say Your Honour." And he'd be going on like this and half the time he'd be trying to tell me what I should give this one and do this to this one. And I would make up my own mind and to annoy him I would go on just the opposite of what he wanted. I would make my own decisions. But he thought I was a bit harsh when I gave this bloke 10 days gaol.

**That was the bloke who was using foul language. I don't know**

08:00 **if we got that on tape before?**

I don't know, but he was using these F words and mother this and so on. The stuff you hear on TV these days. It was unheard of in those days. So people were a bit shocked, including me. So I gave him time to think about it. He was a bit shocked too.

**So you gave him 10 days?**

I gave him 10 days gaol.

**I know that JP stands for Justice of the Peace; in the country does it come with a lot more responsibility?**

08:30 No, it's the same but the city ones don't seem to use it. But you're called upon to adjudicate on minor offences. If it's a major one then you commit a person to be held in gaol. You can refuse bail and all this sort of stuff. I was never involved in much of it. Just little things. Misnomers and so on. But it gave you access to a few things...

09:00 We would draw up the jury list each year, and we JP's would leave ourselves off the jury list.

**So there were perks?**

Yes little perks that went with it.

**Did you wife get used to living in the country after being in Tasmania?**

She didn't like it at all much in Bourke at first. And I can understand that. She said why can't I get a job elsewhere? And I said I couldn't throw things

09:30 away and we had a business and I was on the Pastoral Protection Board. But then eventually I was pretty friendly with Gordon Wood who was the Western Land Commissioner and I used to see him a bit. He rang one time and he said that I had been talking about another job. He said he could give me a job in Sydney. It was worth a couple of thousand dollars more than you're getting now but you'd have to leave Burke and you'd have to re-establish yourself in Sydney.

10:00 But it's yours if you'd like it. I said I would let him know and I said to Tommy...by this time she had gone back nursing. And I said we could relate to Sydney, and we'd get more money, but she decided she didn't want to then. She had gone back nursing and she was right in her niche then. She liked nursing and she was content then. But prior to that she didn't like Bourke at all and

10:30 I could understand it. I suppose she had an interest then. She was a born nurse, there was no doubt about it. She was a senior sister within a short time and then she was Acting Matron about the time we were retiring. She was about to retire when they offered her the job of Matron and she said no and that she was going to retire in the February. She wanted me to take long service leave.

11:00 The kids had finished their education and I said I could afford to send her and Heather to Europe if she liked. But she didn't want to go. Her family were all dead in England. She said she would rather get a caravan and a 4 wheel drive and go for a tour around Australia, and I said if that's what you want. So she was going to retire in February and she died in May. Blood clot. She had

11:30 had a hysterectomy operation.

**She died in the May before February?**

Yes, so that was the end of that sort of thing. Fortunately she saw the kids educated. I would have liked to have seen her see the kids established in life, but it didn't happen that way. It was through her that the kids got the education they did. I couldn't have afforded 3 in boarding school even with their scholarships.

12:00 And then university, even with their scholarships. It's the way things worked out. The kids are scattered

around a bit now. Heather's up in Rockhampton. She's got a top job with the CSIRO and she's always on the go somewhere, South Africa or somewhere. She's there once or twice a year for 3 days. She flew over for 3 days. And young Gavin the youngest son he's got a fairly good job now as Finance Manager with a development company.

12:30 He's only just taken that up recently because his marriage broke up and he wanted to move on a bit.

**So what advice would you give to a young person these days if they came to you and said they wanted to join the air force?**

I would say jump in, jump in. If you can make it, get in but it's hard to get in. I know people who want to and can't. If they can make it...

13:00 it would have to appeal I suppose but it's a good life for young people particularly if they're single. They're clothed, they're fed, they're well paid. Chance of travel, and further more if they go into ground staff they can learn darn good trades too, like the army. They can get an apprenticeship in the services whether it's army, navy or air force. It's a recognised qualification in civilian street.

13:30 **The job as wireless operator though doesn't exist any more?**

No, the same as navigator. They don't have navigators. The pilot does the lot. Some years ago I was down in Canberra when my son was on the VIP [Very Important Person] Squadron there. And I said to him that I would like to have a look at the new Falcons. Three jet jobs, 14 passenger. A beautiful little Jap plane. He said it was all restricted and I said, "Yeah, but you're

14:00 a command pilot, you'd be allowed to take me out and show me?" So he rang the CO and the CO said "Of course, yes." So I went out there and I climbed aboard and I looked aboard. I said, "You've got navigation?" And he looked at me and said, "Dad, we've got laser navigation. It's all computerised. If we're going over to Cocos Island, this will do it

14:30 in 9 hours. I set the flight plan into the computer including alternate airports in case of trouble and then away you go. Up to a maximum of 52,000 if necessary and as you're poking along you press a button and it shows you where you are. If you're in trouble you press another button and it shows you where to divert to a suitable landing spot.

15:00 **What if the computer goes wrong?**

You're in trouble. Then you have to go back to basic navigation.

**So they are taught that?**

Well he's a senior commercial navigator as well. He had that before he went into the air force. He qualified senior commercial, senior navigation and communications. So he was highly qualified before he even got into the air force. And of course he did more training afterwards.

15:30 He did an air safety course and I think he was due to be a squadron leader air safety officer for southern area which would have meant a ground job and that didn't suit him at all. He joined the air force to fly. So then he put in for Qantas.

**So Glen, being deemed an Australian resident but a British citizen...was that right?**

That's what it used to be. But it's an Australian

16:00 citizen now and an Australian subject. In those days it was part of the Commonwealth. I suppose it still applies in that respect. You were a British subject. But we're not a subject now. I don't think so.

**No I don't think so.**

But we were a British subject then and an Australian Citizen.

**Do you think Australia is moving towards becoming a republic? Or do you think we will remain attached to the Monarchy?**

For the foreseeable future I think we will remain as is. But there

16:30 is a move and as time goes by we will grow because basically we have so many people now who were born overseas and not in the British Commonwealth. So they've got no feelings or loyalty to the British Commonwealth, and they become voters and their sons and daughters will follow the trend. The old saying goes, 'As the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined.' Follow what you're taught.

17:00 My father was always a country voter, so I was Country Party. So and so is Labor, so they're Labor. And in most cases you don't change, you follow what you've been taught. So people like myself we would probably still like to go with the present set up. You get other ones who have been born in Samoa or American or Vietnam

17:30 or where ever it is...they're probably a republic. I wouldn't like some jumped up politician suddenly becoming President. Whitlam would've loved to have been president. I would have hated it. ..or Keating.

But that's my personal opinion.

**I want you to be honest?**

Yes that's my personal opinion.

**Tell us what you really think?**

I couldn't stand it.

**Well Glen, you've been fantastic today. Thanks so much for your time and company.**

My pleasure.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**