Australians at War Film Archive

David Morland (Slim) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:44 Well, I was born at a small seaside village in Victoria, about nineteen miles south-east of Melbourne, on the bay. It was mainly,

01:00 at that stage, fishermen, farmers on the other side of the railway line, and commuters who went into the city for working. I grew up virtually swimming and sailing and fishing, from a very young age. Playing footy [football] and cricket on the beach. The beach was mainly our life. I went to school at

01:31 Edithvale State School. I should say here that about six or eight hundred houses would have been the absolute limit at that stage, so you knew everything that went on in the place. If you did anything wrong, your mother knew in about five minutes flat. Everyone else knew, too. I went to secondary school at

02:00 Mordialloc High School, about two and a half miles north of Edithvale, again on the bay. Later on I went to Melbourne University, but that was post war. My first job was in the Commonwealth Public Service. I was recruited as a telephonist.

02:30 And I worked, initially, in Melbourne Central Exchange, which was all manual in those days, and Melbourne country trunks. I was then transferred to Cheltenham, which was not too far from where I was born. I worked there for a little while, and then I was transferred to Malvern, which is well into the city, on what they call the 'UOO' position. It was a complaints job.

03:00 Receiving the telephone calls from people who had a crook phone and wanted it fixed. My main memory from that period is that I had a code developed so that I could put behind the name, PM or GS, or something like that. But PM was Perpetual Moaner, and so on.

03:30 It went on like that, which gave a tip-off to the technicians as to what they might be looking for. I then went to the telephone branch headquarters in Spencer Street, Melbourne, and I worked as a meter reader. This is reading the meters at all the exchanges in the metropolitan area.

04:00 Just reading them over the phone, back to calls who did the actual documentation, manually, in big ledgers. And they were then transferred into telephone accounts and sent out to the people, quarterly in those days. Just before I enlisted, it was transferred to a six monthly account. So they only needed one meter

04:30 reader instead of two, so I was released. I was released conditionally because I was accepted for air crew. Apparently the job was classed as reasonably important that they needed it to keep going, and if I was only going into a sedentary job, or stores or something like that, well, they needed me more at the post office.

05:00 So I went into the air force. Prior to that, of course…I should go back a little. While I was at high school, of course, the war broke out. My memory is of that period, that my colleagues and myself thought that the war would be over before we could get there, dammit.

05:32 The sheer ignorance of youth. As it so happened, then, the Air Training Corps started up. I had been, earlier, in the Australian Air League. Which was a fairly sedate sort of thing. It taught a bit about air things, but there was no

06:00 actual flying. The only flying I did was on a visit to Sydney in 1935, and I had a flight on the old 'Southern Cross', which cost five shillings and lasted half an hour. I liked it, I thought it was wonderful, the only other time I had a close association with flying was, with an

06:30 exhibition of gliders, nearby Edithvale, or about a mile and a half out into the farmlands. I can remember ducking piano practice to go and watch these gliders, which were mainly string and matchsticks. I got back late and tried to go the fast way, and instead of up the road I jumped the creek and I landed it in the middle of it. My mother was very annoyed.

07:03 From an early age I had an interest in the aircraft. I built model aeroplanes and model sailplanes. So by the time the Air Training Course started, which was serious work, I really had a full interest in it. I worked fairly hard at it. I went to special classes at Beam Wireless to get

07:30 Morse qualifications. They were Saturday morning lessons. Then I went through all the period of study with the Air Training Corps. Including camps, annually, at Point Cook, which were quite good. Apart from the route march that we had to do after breakfast to the lecture rooms, which were right

08:00 down on the bay itself. Roughly a mile march, which we had to do, a march there, back for lunch, after lunch back to the seaplane base where the lecture rooms were and then back at night. So we were reasonably fit. We did quite a bit of flying there, in Oxford trainers. There would be an actual trainee pilot in the air force with an instructor,

08:30 and an ATC [Air Training Corps] cadet, sitting on the main spar, in-between, but behind them. We were aware of all the instruction going on. That was quite interesting. I got in quite a few hours on that, mainly from satellite drones, 'Little River' and 'Lara'. Satellite drones were Point Cook. In January of

09:01 1943, I was coming up eighteen years of age, and I applied to the air force and I did a medical. I turned eighteen on the 3rd of February, 1943. Perhaps I should go back and say I was born on 3/2/1925. I passed the medical okay, and I actually was

09:30 called up the 28th of February, 1943. I was transferred to Bradfield Park, in New South Wales, for the initial training. That was a bit of a shock to an eighteen year older. My main qualifications at that stage were a fast mouth, and that didn't help at all, because

10:00 when you made some comment, which you thought was in sotto [quiet] which usually came out fortissimo [very loud] at eighteen, you suddenly realised that the road in the air force was just paved with banana skins and you landed on one every step of the way. I was in a bit of a trouble, at EATS [Empire Air Training Scheme] again. I had been an only son, and

10:30 probably thoroughly spoilt. Well, I know my parents put no hindrance in the way of joining up, they were probably pleased that I was going while I still knew more than they did. I had to really knuckle down in that two months at EATS. I know that discipline is necessary, but to someone without it,

11:00 it was quite a big shock. I'd had some, of course, in the Air Training Corps, but it was nothing like we ran into at EATS, where everything was by the numbers and very smart about it, too. I did get into a bit of bother there, again, one way or another. Mainly the mouth. I had done most of the schoolwork, in the Air Training Corps, and it was just

11:30 repetitive, so it was pretty boring. But I ran into real trouble with Morse. I had gone through to thirty-two words a minute, with Beam Wireless. But the air force insisted I pass at forty words a minute. And I couldn't do it. They had certificates to prove, and they tested me, at twenty-eight, thirty and thirty-two words a minute, but I couldn't pass at four words a minute. And yet,

12:00 that was the air force way. That was one of my problems, which cut out a few nights, because I had to go and do extra work to try and pass this exam. One thing that was good there, I was a good swimmer. I had been in lifesaving clubs and a competitive swimmer with the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] team. I trained under Harry Farrer, and I was selected for the swimming team

12:30 at Bradfield Park, which got me out some nights for training. The officer in charge was very knowledgeable, and after the training would say, "I don't want to see you tonight, but be in by twenty-three fifty-nine." So we'd have a night on the town and it was marvellous. After EATS, where I had the real trouble, I

13:00 went before the selection board…I had made up my mind, of course, I had to be a fighter pilot. There was no other way that I could go into the air force. The selection board had other ideas. I remember one of the questions was, "I see you're a good shot, Morland," because we had been shooting and I had the results. I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you like guns?" I thought,

13:30 "Eight machine guns in a Spitfire?" So I said, "Oh yes, sir." He said, "Good. You'll enjoy gunnery school." So that was that. They selected no pilots at all, because at that stage….For a number of reasons. Bad weather, shortage of spare parts for maintenance of training aircraft and so on. There was a real blockage in the Empire Air Training Scheme. They had pilots boring out their ears. I don't there was anyone selected from our course. There was just

14:00 no possibility of getting a vacancy. Apart from one or two, who were selected as wireless navs [navigators], the rest were selected as wireless air gunners. Well, being a wireless air gunner was out for me, anyway, because I couldn't pass this four words, six words a minute, eight words a minute, Morse. I argued about this, and they pointed out that if I had to contact a Marconi Direction Finding Station, or a Bellini Coastal Direction Finding Station,

14:31 and I could only send at twenty-eight words a minute, they probably wouldn't have operators who could operate at that speed. I would be useless. I accepted this, thought, "Oh well, I might as well fight with a gun if I can't fight with a Spitfire," that sort of flying ideal. I then was transferred to Number Two and Bombing and Gunnery School at Point Pirie.

15:02 The first part of the training there was what happens when a bullet hops out the spout of the end of a gun, what an aircraft looks like if it belongs to the enemy, various aircraft recognition things. Mainly Pacific zone, Japanese aircraft and the Allied aircraft that were used in the Pacific.

15:32 After some days of lectures, and some static firing on the ground, we were introduced to the Vickers gas operated machine gun, a World War I vintage thing. It had a circular magazine that fitted on top of the gun. We were

16:00 taught how to strip and assemble that, clean it. Then we started our flying training. They had Fairey Battle aircraft. These magazines with a hundred rounds in them, to fit the Vickers GO Gas Operated], were dipped in different coloured paints, and four gunners plus the gunnery instructor would get in the rather crowded back end of the Fairey Battle, along

16:30 with the pilot, take off from Point Pirie, and go out to over the gulf and meet another Fairey Battle towing a drogue. Then our Fairey Battle would make passes at the drogue, and one gunner at a time would fire at it. These passes would vary as you got better. Initially it was just flying parallel to it and firing, so you could see what was happening, theoretically.

17:02 As you got on, they were swooping down at it and sideways at it, and so on. I woke up fairly early that with the way the gun was mounted, in a conical tube mounting in the back end of the cockpit, you turned this a hundred and eighty degrees and then pulled the gun up on a hinged bracket.

17:30 And it was very shaky. To fire accurately with this sort of gun was absolutely hopeless. The bullet pattern at two hundred yards would have been thirty feet, at least, around. So to hit a small drogue of seven or eight feet maybe long, and maybe eighteen inches across, you had to be fairly close. So I woke up to the fact that to get a good score, you held your fire until you got in

18:00 really close. This would be above the shouting of the gunnery instructor, “Fire! Fire! Fire!” So you’d fire off one or two, and just before you pulled away, you would let go with a full blast. I got a fairly good score. They would count the different coloured paint holes in the drogue, and that’s how they determined whether you were a gunner or not. In retrospect, it was pretty useless.

18:30 As a gunner you are normally handling people coming in attacking you. The Vickers GO gun was a relic of the past. And the theory really didn’t cover a great deal of the mathematical side of air gunnery. Ultimately, I was able to learn how to predict where my bullet would be,

19:00 so that at the time that a fighter got there, the two would coincide. That meant solving a few simultaneous quadratics. And if you were a good gunner you got there. And if you weren’t, you didn’t. It was as simple as that. At the gunnery school I had missed out on

19:30 getting my clearances. When you left a station, you had to be cleared by all sorts of people. You had to be cleared by the stores that you handed your palliasse back. You had to be cleared by the sports people that you didn’t have a couple of tunnel balls under your arm. You had to be cleared by this person, that person, and so on. All these signatures had to appear before you were, in fact, released.

20:01 On the day before the wings parade I was around, trying to get clearances. And being smart, I went the opposite way to most people, and started at the bottom of the list to work up. I thought I would do it faster. In fact, I finished up not having a couple at the time of the Wings Parade. I advised the sergeant in charge of this that I still had a couple of signatures to get. And after hearing a few odd adjectives he said, “Well, go and get them now,”

20:30 which I did. When I got back, everything quietened down, the parade was over, we had the Wings and the Stripes. They had organised the groups into two bundles. Well, my mates were there, so I went to that particular group. What I found out later was, was that the group who were over nineteen. Who were to go overseas. The others were those who hadn’t

21:00 yet turned nineteen, and they were to be either kept in Australia until….Well, there was a law which said that no-one under nineteen could be sent overseas. In my ignorance I went to the other group and no-one corrected it. So in fact, I had my nineteenth birthday in England. I went back to Bradfield Park after

21:30 final leave. And we left Sydney in a ship called the Mount Vernon, an American ship, to San Francisco. The food on that was magnificent. There were steaks, and ice-cream. Malteds, as they called them. Really wonderful food. We got to San Francisco, under the Golden Gate [Bridge].

22:00 We were transferred by ferry to Angel Island. Which is the next island over in San Francisco Harbour from Alcatraz. In fact you go past Alcatraz. And I remember looking over the ferry side at the swirling cold water, and I knew why no-one could escape from that Alcatraz. I was a good swimmer, and I couldn’t have survived in that water.

22:31 We spent a couple of weeks at Angel Island, then we were transferred to a train, in San Francisco, then we went via Chicago to New York, over the next seven days, on this train, which was an eye opener. Most of us had never seen extensive snow. We’d gone up to Mount Buller or something for a Sunday

afternoon. But seeing it carpeting places,

23:00 two and three feet deep was an eye opener. One thing that comes back to me from the train was that one particular person had a portable gramophone and one record. And he played that record….It was Bing Crosby's 'White Christmas'. And he played that record, not once, but many, many times. And strangely,

23:30 the whole lot vanished, gramophone and record. He searched the train and there was no sign of it. We got to New York and we were transferred to…It was either Fort Slocum or Fort McDowell. One was Angel Island and the other was at New Rochelle. We were

24:00 there for three weeks. We were given leave into New York, which was quite an eye-opener. I had never seen anything as big. The theatres that went in at four o' clock in the morning…It was absolutely an eye-opener. The people there were very good to us. We were coming up to Christmas, '43. They had started egg-nog parties, which was the thing then. In America, not here.

24:32 We involved ourselves fairly well. Finally we boarded the Queen Elizabeth, the big liner. That had been converted for troop carrying. I think they had six thousand beds in the holds, and where the cabins used to be. We were fortunate, the few Australians, we had a cabin.

25:00 There were eight of us in the cabin. I think there was six thousand odd Americans on board, and they were working on the 'hot sack' technique. It was their description. Eight hours in bed, eight hours in the corridors and eight hours on deck. And as one got out of bed, the next one got in. 'Hot sack' technique. But it meant that they transported, I think,

25:30 seventeen or eighteen thousand people, on each of those voyages, which took four days. I can remember my first day, I went down to a meal…There were only two meals a day. At long tables, seat about twenty on either side, a total of forty. The meals were served in big trays, and passed down table,

26:00 I was towards the end, and I virtually got nothing. Finally I stood up and shouted for the duty officer and I finally got a meal. The second day out we ran into heavy weather. I went down for my third meal, actually, and of all things they had on, it was pork chops. And it was marvellous. There were about three people at the table that seated forty. And I can remember pushing the meat

26:30 section of each chop out, and putting four between two slices of buttered bread, then cutting them, and taking a great bundle back to my cabin. I wasn't going to be caught again, with this no food business. As it so happened, the weather remained rough and I had no bother at all. Four days across and we landed at Greenoch in Scotland, and we went down by train to Brighton, in Southern England, to

27:00 11PRDC, Personnel Reception Dispatch Centre, and we were there for a few weeks. Time there was spent on lectures, on all sorts of things, ranging from the dreadful problems of consorting with loose women, to further aircraft recognition. This time, of course, in the European zone.

27:34 All sorts of lectures, which did have some sort of relevance, at least, to life in the air force. I then got a posting to Number 27 OTU. Operational Training Unit. And that was when my real training as a gunner started, with lectures on the bullet patterns. On what happened when a Browning was fired.

28:04 We were taken through the Browning .303, the Browning .5 and the Oerlikon 20mm cannon. We had to learn to strip and assemble them. We were introduced to turrets for the first time, a wide range of turrets.

28:30 And aircraft recognition got to the point where you were given a tenth of a second to recognise a particular aircraft of a photograph that was taken in moonlight conditions. A tenth of a second. It was marvellous training really, because you really had to work at it to get through. I was introduced, for the first time, to

29:00 'The Dome', a huge concrete dome with a turret mounted at one side of it. Behind it were projectors, sound equipment, seats for assessors. This four gun turret had orange Perspex, and shot an orange beam. On the dome wall,

29:30 the internal wall, was projected a fighter attacking, or it could be a plane passing by. It was up to you, firstly, to recognise it, and decide whether to shoot, and if so, how to shoot. It was probably the best training, closest to actual reality, that I've ever had. And I loved it. Like kids these days with computer games

30:01 A lot of people didn't like it, and I volunteered to go in their places. I got a lot of training on it. They could alter the lighting to simulate daylight or moonlight, or moonless conditions, cloudy conditions. You had to go through your search patterns, because you didn't know when

30:30 the plane would appear. It was reality. You had to pick it up, identify it and report it, then handle it. They could see where you were firing, because of the orange beam. You couldn't see it. So you had to be pretty accurate with the whole thing. This went on very well for, oh, some weeks.

31:00 I was confronted one morning by the flight lieutenant in charge of the unit, and he said, "What name

are you under today, Morland?" I'd been rumbled [caught out]. From then on, I was only down for my only times, but I did get a lot of training in, and I think it probably saved our lives, because it was real training. The same time we were doing

31:30 a minimum of twenty clay pigeon shots a day. We were learning to handle hand guns, as well. There was static firing on the range, from a fixed turret into sandpits. You get the noise and the smell of the gun. Reality training. The aircraft recognition continued, both allied and the

32:02 enemy aircraft. We had to learn the wingspans, the speed envelopes, of the enemy aircraft. The wingspan because by that you could assess the range, through your reflector sight, which was a circle of light. Depending on how much wingspan

32:30 occupied in the reflector sight, in the circle, you could tell how far he was, if you knew his wingspan. And you could tell, basically, how fast he was going. How rapidly he was filling up the ring sight, or passing it. That was known as half a 'rad', or two 'rads'. Referring to the radius of the wing sight. The enemy 190 [Focke-Wulf FW 190], which

33:00 was probably the ubiquitous aircraft of German fighters, more than anything else, was thirty three feet. The FW 190 was thirty five feet, the Ju-88 [Junkers Ju-88] was sixty six feet, the Ju-188 [Junkers Ju-188] was seventy two feet, and so it went on.

33:31 The other thing was that you learned your search patterns. With the difference in speed between a bomber and a fighter, for every hundred of miles an hour difference, they're probably closing at fifty yards a second, so regardless of these movies that show gunners hanging on the back end of a gun, firing out the side

34:00 of a Fortress, or talking to their mate and chewing a cigar at the same time, it didn't work that way at all. You had a matter of seconds, only, from the time the fighter was sighted until the time he broke away. Your decisions had to be very rapid and right on the ball, or you were dead.

34:30 It became very simple. After some weeks of this, we went on flying with staff pilots attached to OTU for film practice. There was a cine-camera instead of your guns in the turret, and they would call up a fighter, a Mosquito or a Hurricane, or

35:00 something like that, and that would make attacks on you aircraft. You had been taught about your own aircraft's evasion manoeuvres, what was good and what wasn't. You went through a whole series of these film attacks. The films were then assessed to see whether you got away or you got attacked or whatever. I got a fairly good score on that,

35:30 I remember. Probably I was thinking of my skin. Then, we crewed up. The pilots and navigators and wireless operators and bomb aimers, had all been on Operational Training Units learning their jobs to a higher degree, and suddenly we're all put together and told to form up crews.

36:01 Well, I didn't have a clue as to how to go about who was good and who was bad. I held back. I was friendly with one other gunner. We used to play cards and drink together. He and I were standing around, and finally we were approached, after everyone else seemed to be crewed up, we were approached by this chap who looked pretty ancient, but he sounded all right, and so we agreed to fly with him.

36:32 It was probably the best thing that we ever did. Because the six of us that crewed that day were the last six left. We all held back. We, individually, probably were in the top of our class. It was very good for all of us that we got together. From that day on we flew together in Wellingtons,

37:00 and we continued our training, but as a crew. You would have to do a whole series of numbered exercises. They would include things like going on a cross-country to three different points in the UK [United Kingdom], or out over the Irish Sea. And then proceed to the bombing range, over Wainfleet Sands, where you would drop

37:30 six practice bombs, then you would go over to some other aerodrome and pull up a fighter and do some simultaneous fighter attacks and filming, so that they got everything into one. While we were there, we did an Atlantic sea search. There were people missing, in life boats and so on, and we went out to find them.

38:01 A convoy had been attacked and we didn't locate anyone. The weather was dreadful. We were flying at about three hundred feet, just below low cloud and in rain. Visibility was negligible. We couldn't help, but it was our first, well, attempted useful thing in the air force.

We just need to switch tapes.

Tape 2

00:34 The last exercise we did from Operational Training Unit was called a 'nickel', which was dropping

leaflets over occupied enemy territory. We flew from a place called Church Broughton, which was a satellite drome of Lichfield, which was the Operational Training Unit, and we dropped the leaflets between Abbeyville

01:00 and Almion, in France. We had bit of a problem in that the oxygen failed. The minimum height for crossing the coast, that particular night, I think, was fifteen thousand feet, or something of that order. If you didn't cross at that height, you were fired upon. We collected all the portable oxygen bottles

01:31 and gave them to the pilot, and the rest of us quietly went to sleep while he flew back. Again, it was a fairly good training exercise in that we made it. We went, then, from Operational Training Unit to Four Engine Conversion Unit. We went onto Sterling aircraft, which were not a very well liked aircraft.

02:04 They had a number of problems. They had been designed, initially, with the wing span shortened so they would fit into the particular hangars which were RAF [Royal Air Force] standards for quite a long time. So if you lost one engine, they would tend to fall out of the sky very rapidly. They had a number of other problems, but

02:31 they did have reasonable 'turrets'. They were all right for training. They gave the pilots training in four engines. They gave the navigators training, because we had much longer range than the Wellingtons, and therefore we could go on longer training flights. From there we went to Number Five Lancaster Finishing

03:00 School at Syerstone. This was our first introduction to Lancasters, and they were marvellous aeroplanes. The four big Merlin engines, good speed, good bomb carrying capacity, good gun turrets. We had, again, a series of ground lectures and

03:31 a lot of air training. Again, for the gunners, there was a lot of simulated air firing with the films, and with the fighters from the various dromes nearby. We were introduced at that stage to the Rose turret, compared to the Fraser & Ash, and the Bolt & Pull turrets it was like sitting in an armchair.

04:00 They were marvellous. They had .5 guns, but they had room in them, which the other turrets didn't, we were very crowded in them. If you were of my height, as many gunners were, we were semi-crouched all the time, and we couldn't move. Particularly when we got into heavy clothing, which was metered. I will come to that later.

04:32 I did one special course, just after I finished this Lancaster Finishing School, which was an experimental course on the mathematics of handling gunnery on the roll of a 'corkscrew'. Which again was very valuable to me.

05:00 It eventuated that we could get a point blank shot. Everything cancelled out, from deflection, and it was an eye-opener. The boffins at Oxford had apparently worked this out, and it was really marvellous. From there we went to 467 Squadron at Waddington, and when we arrived there, there was a small problem.

05:30 Our other gunner hadn't turned up. I was asked where he was, and I hadn't a clue. I said, "I don't know. He's probably with skipper or something." One day later I was hauled into the gunnery office and told he had been located. He had concussion and was in hospital at Lichfield. It eventuated he had gone back to see a girlfriend there,

06:00 borrowed her bicycle, been knocked over by a truck and had woken up in the Lichfield Hospital. While we were there, we had been given lectures on not to give any information to the enemy, if we were shot down, that the enemy would try and trick you. That if you woke up in a hospital somewhere, they would have English speaking doctors and nurses and so you would think that you were back in England, and they would try and get information from you.

06:31 He woke up with concussion and thought he must have been shot down, and wouldn't tell them anything. So they had to trace through Australia House, and this took time. I was in real trouble because I hadn't told the gunnery leader that he hadn't turned up on the station, so I was in black books right from the word go.

07:02 I was put on the battle order as a spare gunner. I flew, fortunately, with the station commander. Wing Commander Brill, and I did two flights with him. One, just a short daylight over France, and another one a long trip up to Lithuania, the far end of the Baltic. A place called Konigsburg. It's now called Kaliningrad.

07:33 He then turned up about eleven or twelve days later, I think it was, and we then flew as a crew for the first, again back to Konigsburg, the second trip there. From that time on we flew operationally. Until our last trip on the night of the

08:00 16th and 17th of January, 1945, which was to Brucks. Strangely I was talking to one of my neighbours here, lives over the road, a lady. I knew she was from Czechoslovakia, and I said, "Do you know where Brucks is?" And she said, "No." I said, "B-R-U-X."

08:30 She said, "That's not Brucks, it's Brux." I said, "What's Brux?" She said "Yes, but it's 'bridge' in English. But it's pronounced Brux." So, it's just strange that she went to kindergarten there, and we took out an oil refinery on the outskirts of the town. We're now living fifty yards apart. She was in Prague at the

time that we did it, but however, it's just one of those coincidences.

09:00 There's another one which I will talk about later. I finished at Waddington, and I was transferred to a place north of.…Where we were given a series of aptitude tests to see what

09:30 we could be used for, in the rest period after operational service. You were given six months off, while you were still, well, marginally coherent. Most of us I would think would have been in a fair degree of fatigue, battle fatigue. Looking back on it now, at the time you don't

10:00 notice that you are 'flak happy' but you are. You would be doing ridiculous things, just pushing aside what might happen tomorrow. So, as I say, while we were still barely functional, I suppose they decided to see what else they could do. I was assessed as probably being very good for training

10:30 as a radar technician. I had no interest in it at all. I knew what radar was, and we had H2S [airborne radar system] and Glorgen and I had seen Monica, the fighter-warning system that was used. But I had no interest in it, and I made that quite clear. I did do a

11:00 little bit of gunnery instruction at a place called Castle Kennedy, in Southern England. Mainly because it was very close to where I had an aunt living in Strenrah, and I could live with her. At the time I was also swimming for the RAF water polo team. There was a swimming pool at a place a bit north of Castle Kennedy, and I could get a car and go up there and

11:30 do some training. We used to train in various places, and swim in various places, when we'd get together, as a team. I remember, I was virtually out-classed all the time. I was about nine and a half, ten stone. The food ration was not good in England. You would be playing against an OTU group,

12:00 they'd be sixteen stone, burly fellows. They'd just hang on you and you would finally finish up, three feet underwater. I then went on indefinite leave, from Brighton, just waiting for a posting back to Australia. The war was drawing to a close. I actually had VE [Victory in Europe] Day, in London.

12:30 The celebrations at the Palace…There must have been thousands of people there. I remember when the King and Queen came out on the balcony, everyone threw their hats in the air, including me. Mine landed about fifteen feet away, but there must have been a thousand people between me and my hat, and I never saw it again. We left England only two or three days after that

13:01 and came home via the Panama [Canal] on a ship called the Stirling Castle. It was named the 'Starving Castle' by those on board. We came through the Panama to Wellington and New Zealand. We were there four days, and it rained everyday, then back to Sydney. From there,

13:30 I went to Melbourne, and I was at Toorak Road, the headquarters of southern command of the air force. When the atom bombs were dropped, it was proposed that I was to join a Liberator Squadron, somewhere in the Pacific.

14:00 I was waiting for orders to be processed to send me there. One of the senior brass [officers] was there, this day that the atom bomb was dropped, and he said to me, "Well, the war will be over now. What will you do, Morland?" I gulped and said, "Well, I'll go back to my job." He said, "Where were you working?" I said, "In the PMG's [Post Master General's] Department." He said, "Be in my office, Monday."

14:30 And it was as quick as that. I was out. Some people had to wait months and months and years to get out. I was in the right place at the right time. I was in his office on Monday and I was put on leave, and discharged. I went back to the Post Office, and they had about three thousand people away in the Services, from PMG

15:00 Victoria. It was recognised by the seniors that a number of people had received special training while they were away in the Services, and the Post Office wanted to utilise this training if they possibly could. So they set up a rehabilitation section to interview everyone coming back out of the Services. And I was put in as the first interviewer. This

15:31 was a marvellous job, really, because chaps were coming back who had been a postman, enlisted in the army, gone away and received special training in long-line services equipment. They had come back and they were ideal for going into the engineering branch of the Post Master General's Department. A number of them went, after I suggested it and sent some of them to the engineering branch for an interview. Some of them wouldn't,

16:00 strangely enough, one chap, very well qualified, wanted to go back as a postman. I can understand this, he'd had enough. He just wanted to go back to a quiet life. In 1946, I was asked would I apply to go back on the Victory Contingent, to London. There was to be a Victory March in June, in London, 1946,

16:30 and Australia was invited to send a contingent. Two hundred and fifty people were selected, sixty of whom were air force. I was interviewed and selected. We went back there on the HMAS Shropshire, an ex-County class cruiser. We went to England via Perth,

17:00 Capetown, Freetown, up to Portsmouth. We were camped in Kensington Gardens, in tents. At that time, I was invited to a couple of rather good shows. One was the Goldsmith's Guild Hall, where Princess

Elizabeth, our current Queen,

17:31 was the guest of honour. Myself and Pete Swan were the two Australians given the invitation…Well, perhaps I should explain. The Guild Hall was set up, with all their priceless gold plate, around the walls. I had a look at this and wondered how I could stash a gold plaque, about two inches thick, solid gold, under

18:00 my jacket and get out. It was a vain hope. They had one table set up with cutlery, for sit-down, and the rest of the tables, going back along the Guild Hall were all for smorgasbord type. The princess sat with the guild, at the main table. And just about all the rest of the people

18:30 crowded around, all around this table, watching them eat. Pete Swan and myself were up the back of the hall, because the marvellous food that was on, we hadn't seen for…We were living in tents. We were really filling ourselves up. Suddenly the crowd parted, like the waters of the Red Sea, and the princess appeared and here we are both with cheeks full. She walked up to us,

19:00 and we're gulping, getting the last of it down. And she talked to us for twenty minutes. Complete snub of the people who had been so rude, by standing around and watching her trying to eat. We talked about all sorts of things. Finally, she realised she had spent enough time, so she turned around and she beckoned

19:30 the top of the guild, and said her goodbyes and vanished. But it was an eye-opener. Another thing that happened to me, because I had been a lifesaver in the Royal Lifesaving Society…The secretary of the Victorian branch had sent a letter to London, saying that I was on the contingent, and they invited me along to their annual general meeting. I went along and of course the patron was Lord Louis Mountbatten.

20:00 I met he and Lady Edwina, and as a result of that I was invited for drinks and dinner at their place. We came back via Gibraltar, Malta, the Suez Canal and Colombo, then back to Perth.

20:30 So I had been the four ways, by sea, around the world, courtesy of the government, it didn't cost me a cent. I returned to my job in the PMG. By this time I had passed the Commonwealth Clerical Exam. I had passed fairly well in that, so I got an appointment as a clerk, in the personnel branch.

21:00 About that time, someone in the Commonwealth government discovered that because of the First World War Soldier Preference Scheme, there was age-loading problem, occurring in the public service. They had restricted recruitment to ex-Servicemen, so they had an age group that came in, all from the First World War, right

21:30 up until 1937, '38. '39. And suddenly all these people were due for retirement, coming up in the '50s and early '60s. And they would just depart from the service, and they'd be left with few people with all the knowledge and experience that these people had. So some bright spark decided to create a cadetship, for cadets personnel,

22:00 and they would be given four years of university and on-the-job training, to overcome this problem, this loss of experience that would occur through the end result of the Soldier Preference Scheme. So I thought about it. At that stage I was an 'acting 414', as they called it, three stages up.

22:31 But I thought it would be worthwhile to drop back to the base grade and take the cadetship because I would get the university training. So I did that, and four years, from 1948 until '51, I was at the university and being rotated around the various departments, getting on-the-job training. And at the end of that,

23:02 I was fairly well qualified. I was automatically advanced to what they termed the '450', which was about five ranks up. I applied for three jobs, and I was successful in all of them. So then we had to select, my wife and myself, I was married, and at that stage I had two and a half children. One was in New Guinea,

23:30 secondment up there, so we decided that that offered the best opportunity. One was with ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation] and one was with the Department of Supply, at the rocket range in South Australia. With the subsequent knowledge we have about the atomic problems, I'm glad we didn't take that one.

24:01 We went to New Guinea. I went there as an assistant inspector, ONM. An organisation that measured proficiency, examining work procedures and practices and stream-lining them and make them more efficient. I also dealt with, at that stage, the establishments, the creation of new positions and so on.

24:30 Up until 1953, New Guinea had been under the control of ANGAU, the Australian New Guinea Administration Unit. And it was just virtually coming back into civil activity. So really I was involved in the setting up of the public service of Papua New Guinea. I worked there up until

25:01 1974. The last job I did was set up Air New Guinea, as chairman of the task force. By that stage, I was an assistant director in charge of all major projects that were happening in Papua New Guinea. I retired. I went to Darwin,

25:30 because I had one daughter working there, so we spent a fortnight there. We came back to Brisbane and arrived here in the afternoon of the peak of the floods, on the 29th of January, 1974. I had rung the Park Royal from the airport, because we had never stayed there. I said to my wife it would be nice to try it. couldn't get an answer, so we rang the Travelodge and we got in there, where we normally used to stay, at Kangaroo Point.

26:01 We got there, and on about the fourth floor, I looked across the river and here was the canopy of the Park Royal just going under water. I said to my wife, "Have a look at this." We immediately rang the airline and booked on a plane out seven o' clock the following morning. We actually got out at four o' clock the following afternoon. We went to Sydney and

26:30 stayed there for two weeks, then came back to buy a house in Brisbane. There were still mattresses and things and cars in the trees. But we bought a house at the top of a hill, I wonder why, up a seven hundred foot drive at Moggil. It had been house of the week and house of the year and house of this and that, and it was the most uncomfortable house I'd ever lived in. Architectural

27:00 dream and the householders nightmare. It was built on seven different levels. It looked beautiful, but it was dreadful. We stayed there for some years and decided that we would move to the Gold Coast. We moved there, to Mermaid Waters and stayed there for three or four years. The crime started to get so bad. They were knocking

27:30 little old ladies over in Pacific Fair [shopping centre] and snatching their handbags. We decided to move further south. So we went down onto the Tallebudgera Creek, and we spent three years there, or four years. One particular night, thieves came in by boat. We were right on the creek. They knocked over [robbed] a number of houses just own

28:00 from us. My neighbour and myself were the only ones that escaped. So we decided that the time had come to move elsewhere. So in '89 we decided we would move up her to Towonton. We had, at that stage, one daughter living at Majinda. We move to Towonton, and I've lived here

28:30 ever since. My wife died three years ago, so I moved into this retirement village. And that's the story of my life, to today.

29:10 **Now you were born in 1925, did you say?**

Yes.

So to a certain extent you would have witnessed the Depression?

Yes, close hand.

Was your family directly affected?

No, my father was a permanent Commonwealth public servant. He was in the telephone branch

29:30 of the PMG's department. We never had any problem at home. We were always well-fed, well-clothed. At the time of the Depression, there were a number of things happened. I can remember many kids being barefoot, in the winter, and summer. Coming to school in

30:00 a patched overcoat that had belonged to someone, but with bare feet. Me eating an apple and a kid saying to me, "Can I have the core?" With the cruelty of children, we called them 'Susso' [sustenance] kids. There were probably a third of us who were in relatively good circumstances, and the rest of them

30:30 were not. This lasted for some years, while I was at primary school. I can remember men coming around and selling things. A half-case of apples, for example, they'd go and pick up windfalls. A half-case of apples for thruppence. And these men would have walked miles, just humping these cases of apples. Fishermen

31:00 coming around selling fish, at the door, and very cheaply. Apart from that, the kids, we all played together. We played cricket or footie, it didn't matter whether they had shoes on or not, we still all played together. But there was this divide, because of the clothing and footwear.

31:35 There was a chap long in the street we lived in who was an accountant, at a big firm in Flinders Street, in Melbourne, who went bankrupt. I think it was in 1930, it might have been 1931, and he came home and shot himself. And this was in a small village, virtually,

32:00 this was a dreadful thing. And it was talked about for a long time. But he must have been at the end of his tether. The council, as part of the rehabilitation of these unemployed people, were giving sustenance, and people were getting food vouchers.

32:31 But men had to work for it. The council set up various jobs. I can remember a sand street being completed, concreted. There would have been five houses in the street, and this beautiful concrete

33:00 road was put in, with concrete curbing and channelling. As far as I know, the only use for it, other than pedestrians, was us kids in billy carts. Because it gave us about a three hundred and fifty yard run, from

the top to the bottom, this lovely smooth road. They also built at each of the villages, Aspendale, Edithvale,

33:30 Chelsey and Bond Beach, in the city of Chelsea area, what they called ‘diving stands’. They were three level stands built out between the first and second bars, so people could swim to them. Completely useless for anything other than entertainment, but they provided employment for people, and kept men doing something. That was the sort of work that was going on.

34:01 There were some dreadful things. I remember my parents talking about one particular man who went to the wine shop, regularly, and got himself terribly drunk. Probably out of absolute desperation, in retrospect, but at the time it was just a dreadful thing.

34:38 It was there, it happened, and you lived with it. I would have been five at the time of the Depression really hitting, but the effects of it were still evident in 1937. It was just starting to come out of it in 1937.

35:01 Employment was very, very difficult during that period. And there were huge numbers of families on ‘sustenance’ [government aid for the unemployed].

Why did you call the children ‘Sussos’?

The ‘sustenance workers’. They were from ‘sustenance families’, ‘Susso kids’.

Do you think the council was trying to employ men for morale, rather than…

It was a government thing at all levels, the three levels of government. It was to get the

35:30 employment going. To give people some dignity, I think. The employment was funded through the various government levels. The council, itself, couldn’t fund that sort of thing out of rates.

On a humanitarian level, I was thinking, they could have had a soup kitchen…

36:00 Well, they had those as well. But they were in densely populated areas. I don’t think it could work very well in the small villages that we were in, a few hundred houses. But I know there were soup kitchens,

36:30 and things like that operative.

Was your father in the First World War?

No, he wasn’t. At that particular time he was involved in, I suppose you would have called it…He wasn’t allowed to join up. He was a telephone technician, a communications person,

37:00 and they were not allowed to go in. He was in a ‘reserved’ occupation. He was a bit upset about it, but they wouldn’t let him go.

And you one sister?

Yes. One sister, Dorothy.

37:31 Still alive, living in Adelaide. She was a sergeant in the WAAF [Women’s Auxiliary Air Force].

And she’s older than you?

Yes, she’s eighty-four or eighty-five. I think it’s her birthday, today, the 1st of December. I know my father’s was on the 10th and my sister’s was on the 1st. So…

38:06 **And what did you know about the brewing of trouble in Europe, leading up to World War II?**

We’d heard about Hitler. To go back, during this ’30s period, we were the only people in our area who had a radio set. At five o’ clock,

38:30 for example, all the boys of my age, and a year up and a year down, would listen to the ‘Missing Link’, or one of these serials. Then at five thirty we would be kicked out, because my sister’s people would come in because there would be another radio program on. We heard quite a bit about Hitler. Initially, I seem to remember that he and Mussolini were lauded

39:01 as people who had done a great deal of good for their countries. They got trains running on time, they had got full employment going. The autobahns in Germany were held up as a world marvellous thing. I don’t know that we knew a great deal about the

39:30 internal politics, of the takeover of the Sudetenland and all that. We just didn’t know that. We knew history from the British point of view, and nothing else. Because that’s what we were taught in the schools, and that was the way that everything was reported. There were no other points of view.

Was that how it was in Australia, at the time, though, that you felt that you were part of the British Empire?

Oh, yes. Very definitely.

40:00 Well, with my father being born in Scotland. My grandparents were all immigrants. My mother was born in Adelaide, but her parents were English. I don't think we regarded ourselves as anything else but an extension of England, in those days.

40:38 Menzies, of course, always referred to England as 'the home of us all'. The King and Queen, they were sort of the 'top dogs' [in charge]. You didn't think of the parliament as being in control.

41:00 I'm sure that we thought ourselves as merely an extension…Well, part of the British Empire.

We'll change tapes.

Tape 3

00:35 **Can you tell us a little bit about your life, and maybe, if your hometown changed once war was declared?**

Initially, I don't think there was a great deal of change. There were some people immediately enlisted

01:00 in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force], and went away. And there was a fair amount of general support for the families from then on, from other people. There would be gifts given to ladies and families whose husbands had joined up. Then there

01:30 seemed to be a fair sort of period of normality, up until the time of the December bombing in Pearl Harbour, in 1941. At that stage, it was recognised that the war was, or could be, coming close. And

02:00 all sorts of odd things were talked about at that time.

Like what?

Like, if the invasion happened, what would happen to our women? The Japanese can't fly because they can't see because they have slant eyes. Odd things, stupid things, out of touch with reality altogether.

02:31 There was a worry, though, that things could happen, and that got steadily worse as the Japanese advanced down the Asian side, into Malaya and Singapore. Once the fall of Singapore and the loss of the two battleships, I think it was seen, it's on. It's serious. At that point there was a real change in the Australian community. I think that there was a general fear

03:00 that it could happen. I don't think anyone wanted to be part-and-parcel of the Japanese Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Scheme, as they called it. Because we would all be working in paddy fields, and probably fourteen hours a day at that. And that was the sort of general outlook,

03:31 and it spurred a lot of people to become very, very worked up, to work towards winning the war, and do everything possible. There were a few exceptions, but not many.

In what way?

Oh, I think people who had virtually opted out society anyway,

04:00 and just didn't care. These were minimal, the occasional one here and there. Most people, I think, were very concerned, and would do anything to make sure that the Japanese were defeated. Initially, the thought of the Japanese was regarded as a bit of a joke. Everything

04:30 that was tawdry was made in Japan; they couldn't do anything themselves; they had to copy things, but if it was tin plate or something like this, yes, they were good at it. This was so wrong. People just couldn't realise that their technology was as advanced as any other power. In many ways they were in advance. The Zero fighter, for example, was

05:00 in advance of anything we had in the Pacific at that time. Its performance was very good. Engineering was good.

Given that you were living in a fairly small community, was there much talk within the township of the Japanese actually…

Not that I can remember.

05:35 There was a volunteer naval patrol, just to see if there would be any sightings of submarines or things like that. There was no expectation of a land-based invasion, at that stage, in the area I was in, south of Melbourne. It would have been an enormous feat if they could have done it. But, of course, Northern Australia

06:00 was a different matter.

Did your sister join the WAAF before you signed up?

Yes. I think she was a sergeant before I went in. She had a sort of chequered career around the place, but she finished as secretary to Johnny Holden, who was a test pilot, testing the aircraft

06:30 at Fishermen's Bend. Which was ideal, because she could get home and see Mum and Dad. It was an interesting job, and she'd get a bit of flying. He would take her up, occasionally, so it was very good.

Did she bring home much news of air force life?

Initially, no, because she was only home about once a month, and then very briefly.

07:01 Remember I was only the 'kid brother', and I didn't count. She was busy looking up her friends, they were some five or six years older than me, and therefore I didn't count. We only came into our own in the later stages

07:30 where, by about 1942, a number of young men had, in fact, joined up. They were short of fellows at the debutante dances and things like that, so anyone who had uniform, like in the Air Training Corps, and was available, was immediately grabbed. So we all learned to dance, and we all got to dance with reasonable looking birds. That

08:00 was our outlet. There was a different outlook in the town, in that most of the young men were away, and many of the middle-aged men had gone, particularly in the first join up with the AIF. There were three or four, I remember went, Which was quite a number in that little place, on the one day.

08:30 A couple of them survived. They'd gone through Changi, and it wasn't pleasant to see them at the end of the war. I had it easy, along with a lot of others, compared to them.

You mentioned that when you first signed up and got into Bradfield, the discipline in the Forces was a shock. Can you talk about that?

I know now that it's

09:00 absolutely necessary. If it wasn't necessary, Moses would have come down from the Mount with 'Ten Recommendations'. You've just got to have reasonable discipline, if you've got a bunch of people. I think there were thirty of us in this particular, I think they called us a 'Flight', there were probably two or three Flights, I can't remember, in that intake. So you've got all these young men,

09:30 in the main, young men at eighteen, mainly just out of school, or just out of a year's work and knowing everything. Don't see why they've got to make their bed in such a way that the blanket fold and the streak across the blanket has to be exactly there and there. You

10:00 are gradually forced into the rule that everything has to look the same, everyone has to do the same sort of thing. Everyone has to be on time. In retrospect, it's a good thing, but at the time it was shock, absolute shock. As I had been an only son, my mother virtually looked after me

10:30 very well. She made my bed, and suddenly I've got to do my own bed, my own washing, my own mending. Shock horror. It came as a big shock. Probably the best thing that ever happened because I suddenly had to learn how to live with thirty other young fellows. And it was a matter of learning, rapidly, because if anyone didn't, they were 'handled'.

11:03 One chap for example, I remember, decided that he wouldn't bother to get up in the morning until breakfast. Finally I gave him the order of a bath, and he was physically taken to the showers and shoved in under, clothes and all. That was the sort of thing, either you conformed to the group mentality, or you were 'handled', that was it. I was a bit upset about,

11:37 several of the chaps were rather religious, and would kneel down beside their bed. Now that aroused a number of derisive comments around the place. I can remember speaking up against that.

12:08 There were two or three rather uncouth fellows in the hut. I can remember several of us objecting to their comments to these chaps, which brought them back into line. Once again, it was a great leveller,

12:30 that people had to learn to live together. I do believe that National Service would be a good thing, because of this particular aspect of it. People would learn to live together, and there would probably be a lot less crime, and a lot less unrest in the community.

What sort of other things would you have to

13:00 **cope with, or deal with, in living with thirty fellows?**

You were normally called fairly early in the morning. Up into the showers, get dressed, make the bed in this meticulous manner, then get over to breakfast and then to lectures. Things were done very rapidly, 'at the double' virtually. So when a voice came roaring

13:30 through, "Wakey, wakey, rise and shine," you were up and out and into the showers and so on. When this happened at one thirty in the morning, and you suddenly realise it's one thirty in the morning, you get a bit upset. But those things happen. I remember, at the time one of the things I was introduced to

was the hole through the fence, at Bradfield Park. We could get out and down to Lindfield,

14:00 I think it was called, and get on the train to Sydney. There were taxi drivers who would bring you, guaranteed to get you through the fence. It cost seven and sixpence or something, but you got through without any problems. There were a few other things that happened, that stick in my memory. I had been in Bradfield Park two or

14:30 three days, and the mess hall, you would line up, you'd go through in a queue and be served your food on plates, or in bowls, you would sit down and eat, clean your plates off into the bins and place your plate, ready for washing. I think you had to rinse it, too. Sitting at the table there

15:00 were two of the corporal D.I.s, Drill Instructors, and probably about eight of us newcomers, and these two, in a loud voice, starting discussing the new policy of putting some particular material, 'sex potency reduction pill', I've forgotten what it was called now,

15:30 in the custard. Most of us pushed our custard away. I look back from the doorway and here are these two going along through bowl after bowl after bowl. But these were the things that you had to learn to cope with. We were young, we were kids, we didn't know any better. We could be taken for a ride. You learned

16:00 fairly rapidly, or you went hungry. I do remember being upset at being inoculated and injected with all the various bits and pieces. Tetanus, typhoid. typhoid antibiotic, I think it was, and the smallpox

16:30 vaccine, and wearing over them what they called the 'goon skin', the full overall, which hadn't been washed. They were just issued a matter of a day or so before. And being marched, in the February or the March sun, and people were getting into all sorts of difficulty with these things. And I remember, in my innocence,

17:00 pointing this out to one of the corporal D.Is. And he pointed out several things in my disfavour, and I better smarten my footwork. And so I did. I did get into a bit of bother again, through the smart mouth. The fastest mouth in the south.

Can you tell us what happened? What sort of things would get you into trouble?

17:30 Oh, I would suggest he'd handle a problem by anal absorption, in what I thought was a 'sotto' voice, but which would be heard all over the parade ground. And suddenly I was on thirty times around the arena. You learn very rapidly to keep your mouth shut. To push down

18:00 any indignity that you felt. To put a bland face on almost anything that was happening. If it was good, well, you didn't show that you felt it was good, because they might take it away. If it was bad, so what? They couldn't kid you with the taste of vanilla. And you finally got to that point of acceptance stage, which is probably the point where you would do what you were told to do

18:30 without question.

Do you think there were any times when you thought the discipline was over indulged, or were there any particular COs [Commanding Officers] who took it too far?

Well, I don't know about the COs because I never met any. We would get the corporals or the sergeants. Occasionally the WOD [Warrant Officer Discipline], if you were

19:00 really in bad bother. But in the main, with a number of these people, I had the impression that they had the brains of a rocking horse. I couldn't see how what they were doing would make me a person more able to fight the enemy. I do think that some of them,

19:30 possibly, had problems of their own, and they took it out on the recruits. Some was absolutely unnecessary. Some, or it was pretty indicative, if you stepped out of line, at all, you were in real bother. You had to learn to conform, very quickly. How much of this was deliberate, how much of it was just individual

20:01 bastardry, I suppose, I don't know. I got into trouble again. It was with one of these fellows that I mouthed off with, who was in charge of the hut I was in, in making up my bed. I was in real trouble over that. And I really couldn't see how making up my bed would make me a better person to fight.

20:31 I still can't see it, really. I think it was probably to mould us into one. One malleable group that could be told to do anything and we would do it, without exception. Of course, this goes back to the 'Charge of the Light Brigade'. The people that Tennyson so admired. Their attitude was conditioned by the fact that anyone who even thought

21:00 to ask 'why?' was immediately triced up and thrashed into insensibility. And I think it's probably coming down from there. Not as bad, but….there you go.

What about thirty young fellows living together? Were there any incidents where fellows would brawl, or

21:30 **get into trouble that you would sort out in your own…**

I didn't strike that. There was this attitude problem, but they were sorted out very rapidly. Again, merely threat was enough, because in those days, most kids could handle themselves. They always had a fight or two at school, and weren't hesitant in throwing a punch.

22:01 You only had to turn around and say, "Oh, belt up!" And that would be enough, because they realised if they didn't, then something might happen. In the main, it was fairly amiable, as I remember. After the first few days, that was a very difficult period. For me as well, because I was running into this discipline…

22:30 I had had it in the Air Training Corps, but the first serious, twenty-four hour a day, virtual, discipline. It was hard to come to grips. At that particular time, I didn't smoke. But shortly afterwards I did, while I was still at the EATS. I'd developed a wart on my knee, of all things.

23:03 Someone had said, "You'll have to have that burnt off." I thought, "Nobody's going to burn that off me, I'll burn it off myself." So I went and brought a packet of cigarettes and I actually burnt it off. The stupidity of youth. It got fairly bad and finally I had to go and tell the doctor what had happened.

23:33 He just put a dressing on it and that was that. But the wart never came back, but I continued smoking.

What would you do for any kind of social life when you were at the base at that time?

In the main we would go down to Sydney, and they had a ferry that

24:00 went out, and you could go and you could dance on board. Myself and two or three others who grouped together, we had virtual common interests. We would go and dance. We always had to be in at twenty-three fifty-nine. There was no fooling around. So you'd doff the cap and say goodnight to the ladies and push off. Of course, we were all pretty innocent in those days, too.

24:30 When I had a weekend off I went with one bloke to Newcastle and swam with him in the Surf Carnival up there. We might have had two weekends off in those two months. That was the sort of thing that we would do. Mainly up to dances and things like that.

25:00 I was once invited to…It turned out to be an afternoon tea. It was the most boring thing that I had ever been to, in Lindfield. I think it was run by one of the church groups. They were well-meaning people, but gosh, we were eighteen years of age, and a cup of tea and a biscuit being balanced on one knee, and chatting about the weather didn't really grip us.

25:32 **Were their girls there?**

Yes, but very well chaperoned.

No fun at all?

No. EATS was probably the changeover period, from virtual childhood into excepting some responsibility.

26:00 By the time we came out of EATS, I think most of us were pretty sober young men. We recognised there was authority, and when you were told to do something, you did it without questions. So to that extent, the system worked. At the same time we were doing lectures on all sorts of other things. Aircraft recognition, Morse…

26:32 There was some shooting. I can remember the final shoot-off in intake was between me and a chap who had come into the air force, he had been in the AIF. The two of us had to shoot off for the title of the group. And he beat me, by about a millimetre, on the final five shots.

27:01 Anyway, that was that. I was still feted by my group because Vic was regarded as being a professional. He'd been in the AIF for three years, been in the Middle East and come home. I found him a very nice fellow to talk to. He was older than us. He would have been twenty-two or twenty-three. Maybe even an older. But an ancient, you know, compared to an eighteen year old.

27:30 **You did all right then, against someone who had been to the Middle East and back…**

Well, I'd been shooting rabbits on the farms since I was 'knee-high to a grasshopper' [a small child]. I could handle a gun, the normal safety things. My father would trust me and the farmers would trust me. As kids, we used to bring in the cows for the farmers, quite often. Or the horses used to bring in the cows, because all

28:00 they needed was someone on their back. So we'd get up on the back, bareback, just reigns, nothing, no saddles, then we'd go out and bring the cows in of an evening. Well, it meant that the normal bloke who did it, had time to take for a smoke, while we spent the twenty, twenty-five minutes, half an hour, bringing the cows in for bailing. We'd get them into the top paddock and they'd be ready to just go in to the bails [feeding].

28:30 The farmers appreciated it, and would allow us to go out mushrooming over the properties, and shooting over the properties, because they knew us. They'd known us since we were born. They knew that we wouldn't shoot a cow, or shoot near a cow. We'd clear the land of bunnies. And there was

nothing like a roast rabbit, it was beautiful. And if you could shoot two or three, then the families that were in need would get them.

29:02 Incidentally, talking about rabbits, when I was training at the YMCA, I would go in from school, which was about forty-five minutes by train into the city. Then I would train there from about five thirty until about nine o' clock, then I would catch the nine thirty train home. My mother would give me a shilling to buy a night meal, so I would buy a rabbit for ten pence

29:30 and two baked potatoes at a penny each. They were gone by South Yarra, and so was I. I would be sound asleep. And after I walked home from Frankston, which was the end of the line, about six miles, up the Nepean Highway, which no kid would do these days. There wasn't a car, there wasn't anything in those days, of course, in the '30s. Or if anything passed me, it was going the other way. It would take me probably an hour and

30:00 a quarter or an hour and a half to get back home. Because there was no train back, it was too late. And he made an arrangement with the local station master that whoever was on duty, the porter on duty, would….providing I travelled in the second carriage, in the first compartment, they would open the door and pull me out. And that worked very well. It would never happen today.

30:30 As the train came in, the porter would open the door and 'get young Morland out'. I would be sound asleep. Three hours training in the swimming pool, then this huge meal of a rabbit and two half potatoes…

So the roast rabbit was regular tucker [food] you could pick up at…

31:00 Yes. The delicatessen on the top of platforms six and seven at Flinders Street Station. I can still remember going there. And a very nice young lady used to serve it. She used to look at me and wonder what I was doing out at that hour. She always used to have this roast rabbit for me, and beautiful stuffing. God, I still think about it.

31:30 **Now you said that your parents didn't oppose you joining into the air force at all?**

By that time…You see we're talking 1942 and the beginning, or early 1943, when I went in. The war had been going four years in Europe. It had been going two years against Japan. They were down in and around New Guinea. Buena, Ghana, the Kokoda Trail.

32:01 So people realised that there was a problem, and someone had to deal with it, and therefore the young had to go. With the training that had been going on, with the Air Training Corps, I think it was just acceptance. It was something that was happening, it was happening all over. Kids were going from all over. Three of us went in at the same time

32:30 from my particular area and I was the only one that survived. Which was a pity, they were good mates. But these things happen, that was war. As I say the war had been going for four years, so it was a normal thing. I really do think they were probably reconciled to the fact that at eighteen I would go,

33:03 and there was no barrier.

Did mum or dad give you any kind of words of advice?

My mother didn't. The only thing that she said was, "Don't forget to write." My father…

33:33 It was good advice, at the time, for someone going away. I can't recall what it was, but it was just a brief comment. An extension of 'look after yourself', but it was advice. Fairly light-hearted anyway, and as far as my mother

34:00 was concerned, "Don't forget to write," I think that was it.

What were your first impressions of Sydney?

Well, I had been there. I was a member of the Young Australia League, and each year we went to a different state, for I think it was three weeks. I can't remember now.

34:33 On the Sydney one, I can remember, we were billeted under the main grandstand at the Sydney Showgrounds. There would have been probably thirty of us, aged between probably ten and fourteen. This was when I

35:00 did that flight in the old Southern Cross, Smithy's [Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's] old plane. So I had seen Sydney, in 1935. Didn't make much an impression. I knew Melbourne pretty well, because I used to love going into the museum there, in Swanson Street, and I knew the layout of the city. My parents had instructed me on the names of

35:30 the streets and how it was laid out, so if I ever got lost I could find my way home. So I was fairly knowledgeable about that sort of thing. And going to the city was no problem, and they trusted me, I think. But that was misplaced on one occasion. My mother said to me, "While you are in the city I want you to go to Myers and get yourself a Blazer jacket." She gave me the money and

36:01 I went to Myers and there was this glorious Jacobs coat, it must have had fifty colours in it, all stripes, vertical. Talk about rainbows. Anyway, I was smitten, and I bought it. My mother had hysterics. She said, “All right, you can wear it!” which I did. I thought I was marvellous. Looking around at kids today

36:30 and the way they dress, I can understand their feelings. They think that they look good, they look dreadful. Again, another good reason why my parents were glad to see me go. I knew it all, that was my attitude. I knew it all. Most seventeen year olds do. That’s what you’re there for as a kid. Big mouth.

Now, were you aware of the potential

37:00 **that you could be going over to the UK?**

I didn’t know where I would be posted. It was purely fortuitous that I joined this particular group without knowing who they were. Vic was one of them, and a couple of other of my mates were there, so I just went and joined them. I didn’t know that they had been told they were the nineteen year olds, and they were available for posting. Now some of those went up to the Pacific.

37:30 How I was selected to go to the UK, I do not know. That’s lost in the realms of the bureaucracy of the air force. I think it was just ‘shuffle and deal’ [at random] and those went there and those went there. So when we got to Bradfield Park, it was, this lot went to the UK, and that was all there was to it.

Were you concerned at all, considering the war in the Pacific and the proximity

38:00 **of the Japanese, about going to the UK?**

No, I don’t think so. I think again, with the ignorance of youth, I thought that I would probably be better off in Europe, because I would see more, and I’d be further away from home. So therefore, my behaviour wouldn’t be under such close scrutiny, and maybe I could go out on a fling or two.

38:34 I didn’t know much about the Pacific World War II or the European World War II, I must confess. Looking back, I don’t think I knew a great deal about anything. By the time I came out of the bombing and gunnery school, I was a sergeant with a Wing, and I wasn’t a gunner’s bootlace. I’m just so glad that I wasn’t sent up north, because I wouldn’t

39:00 have had the opportunity of further training, that I did get in the UK, which turned me into a gunner. Well, I hope a good gunner.

Tape 4

00:38 **You went up with Kingsford Smith?**

He wasn’t the pilot, I went up in his plane, which was doing joyflights out of the aerodrome there at Sydney.

Is that when you thought ‘I want to fly when I grow up?’

I think it probably happened before that.

01:01 Because I had been building model aeroplanes. I really don’t know. I wanted to be train driver, because I had a very good model railway set. I was rather uncertain about what I wanted to do. Even up to the outbreak of war. Even then, I just thought

01:31 ‘if I go into the navy, I’m a good swimmer’. Then I thought about how long I could tread water. Then I thought, ‘What about the army? No, they have to walk too far’. So the air force was all that was left, really, so I think possibly that’s how it came about. Rather more than…There was a great

02:01 propaganda effort in the beginning of the war with ‘Cobber’ Caine and ‘Bluey’ Truscott and the fighter pilots. That did have an appeal to me. I must confess that I did think that I would make a good fighter pilot. I wasn’t then thinking about using guns, which is what a fighter is for. I was thinking

02:30 of flying, how nice it would be to be in the clouds and so on. As against treading water, or slogging up a road somewhere in big heavy boots. So they were the alternatives and I opted for the quite life in the air force, I thought.

Well, it’s good to know you didn’t choose the army out of personal comfort.

Definitely not.

03:03 **Did you return to swimming after the war?**

Briefly. One year I did patrols [lifesaving] at Edithvale. I suspect I might have been captain again of the club, at that time. But I didn’t go back into competitive swimming. I used to swim in Melbourne, representing the Y against Olympic and so on.

03:30 Gus Frollock, of course, the coach at Olympic had been interned. He was a very nice fellow but because he was German… That was the way, that was wartime. In my case, Harry Farrah was a very nice chap, and taught glide-crawl, which I see Thorpe [Ian Thorpe] uses these days.

04:08 **You mentioned that you were quite interested in building things, and carpentry work. Did you learn that at Mordialloc?**

Yes, the schools in those days, in some areas, particularly the places with widespread populations,

04:30 like Edithvale and so on. I think Mordialloc and Frankston High Schools were the same as a consolidated school, where you had the three areas of education. The first was the professional, where you did French, Latin and general subjects. The second was commercial where you did all the various commercial subjects, the girls did typing and shorthand and the boys did accountancy, and so on

05:00 as well as normal subjects. And the third group was the….Industrial. I'm not certain, but that included woodwork, blacksmithing, sheet metal work, as well as other things. It was compulsory for all the boys

05:30 to do two years, no matter what stream they were, of woodwork and two years of sheet metal. The girls had to do, I think, two years of cookery and two years of dress-making, or something like that, as well. So there was a practicality about education in those days that was very good for later life. I can remember

06:00 in the woodwork class, the final exam test, we had to build a scale model garage. It was about three feet long, stood about eighteen inches high, and we had to do all the studs and rafters and everything else. We had to make the hinges for the doors in the sheet metal room.

06:31 The final test was that the carpentry master climbed onto this garage. If it collapsed, you failed, if it stood up to it, you passed. Mine stood up. I think that that period was very, very good, for just about everyone, because they learned to do things that were practical, and carried on into later life.

07:00 **You mentioned 'consolidated'. What does what mean?**

It had all of these different streams. It had the professional type, the commercial type and the ordinary industrial working type.

Was that a private school?

No, it was a government school. You had to do an entrance exam,

07:30 to get into secondary school, in those days, because you came in after six grade, then you did your six years in secondary school. I don't know if you were selected for that, or if you had options. I went into the professional group and I did four years of French and Latin, which I can't remember anything about, these days. But I also had to do these

08:01 two years of woodwork and sheet metal work, because that was compulsory. Just following on from that, and which will emerge later, I also helped with a boat building. During school holidays, old Herbie Mornmeal had a boat building works at Frankston, and I used to ride down there.

08:30 After pestering him for a while, he allowed me to help him. There was no pay, it was just me interested in these beautiful wooden boats that he built. I think the biggest was about eighteen feet long. But they were beautifully finished, beautiful boats. He taught me how to shape planks, how to steam planks and so on.

09:00 While I was away at the war, I think the thing that kept me sober and sane, was the thought that after the war I was going to go back and work with Herbie Mornmeal, building boats. And I can remember thinking, in moments of deepest depression, "I'll build boats, these

09:30 beautiful boats." It was lovely woodwork. I got back, and I was discharged and I found out that Herbie had died a fortnight before. I contacted the people nearby and they said that the executors were selling the land and the property, I was

10:00 thinking of going it alone, to the Frankston Hotel. In fact they extended it, and knocked everything down and made it their beer garden. So I went back into the public service. That's how odd things can change your life. Ultimately I did build boats, just to make money when I was married and I was on the cadetship, and I was on the base grade.

10:30 To balance the budget, I had to catch three fish meals a week, otherwise we would have been going into debt. Initially I built a twelve foot boat, and it came up so well, and I was able to do it so quickly, I built a fifteen footer and sold the twelve footer, and made quite a bit of money, and I thought this is good. So I built a few others and sold them.

11:00 It worked out quite well, so that we could even afford a box of chocolates from time to time. As I remember, we didn't go to the pictures. We went to three or four balls a year, and they were fairly costly. You had to take your own grog [alcohol] or things. You had to have spare money to be able to do it.

11:31 Other than that we made our entertainment, really. With a growing family, that was not too hard to do. You could take the kids for a walk, things like that.

I'm curious to know how you sold the boats? Did you advertise them in the paper?

No, people would ask me. Strangely enough, I was building a house, my mother gave us a block of land as a wedding present, and

12:01 we were saving money, my future wife and myself, at that time. And we would get to the stage where could almost make a deposit. We had the plans at the State Savings Bank of Victoria, who at that stage were well into housing. The houses were around about seven hundred, eight hundred pounds. Twelve square houses,

12:30 quite nice, up to fourteen squares. We would save and get the deposit and then find the price had gone up, so the deposit had gone up, so we would have to save again. Finally, we came to the conclusion that we just had to build it ourselves. Mother said, "I will help you out from time to time." So I tackled it. I brought a couple of books on house building and brick-laying, and I worked with a book in one hand and a saw in the other.

13:03 I built the house of fourteen and a half squares. I tried to teach myself brick-laying. My mental attitude was that a good brick layer can lay a thousand bricks a day. So I'm not too far off, so I reckon if I can lay five hundred bricks a day, I'll do all right.

13:30 It worked out that I needed, I think it was, sixteen thousand bricks in the house, so I worked out that if I could lay five hundred a day, and I could work on a Saturday and a Sunday, there would be a thousand over the weekend, and so on and so on. Statistics came out beautifully. There were rations on cement, this was in the late '40s, so there were still rations on bags of cement and bricks and things. They were very difficult to get, anyway.

14:00 I finally got the bricks and I got a ration of four bags of cement a month. The first day I think I got down fourteen bricks, and I had no skin left on my fingers. I laid each brick separately with a three foot level. Absolute stupidity. I was at the university at the time, and they were putting a veneer on the new Arts building,

14:31 which had been left because of the war just in plain concrete. So I climbed up onto the scaffolding in chalk-stripe double-breasted blue suit, and my briefcase, and asked to see the boss. "Over there." So I saw the boss, who was the foreman and said, "I've got this problem. I'm building a house and I've started on the brickwork and I'm having difficulty."

15:02 He put back his head and laughed and said. "What did you use for mud?" And I said, "Mud? I didn't use mud, I used cement." He said, "How did you make the mud?" I said, "I made it with four parts of sand and one of cement." Again his head went back and he roared laughing. He said,

15:30 "Why didn't you put in lime?" I said, "I've never heard of lime." He said, "Come over here, get your coat off." So I hung up my coat and my briefcase and he taught me how to make mortar. One of lime, one of cement and four of sand, and it comes out beautifully smooth, like laying cream. I had been laying just cement and sand of course. As soon as I laid a brick on it, it just sucked out the water and went hard, so I

16:00 never had the chance to get it into alignment, hence the long delays. Anyway, over the next few weeks I climbed on the scaffolding of that new Arts building, and finally came the day when he allowed me to lay a line of twenty bricks. So I've got twenty bricks in the new Arts theatre building. At that stage, I was pretty competent. And as an aside, I finally got to the stage

16:30 where I laid a thousand bricks in one day. It was on the neighbour's fence.

I'm glad you learned something at university.

I learned another thing there. I became very competent at snooker.

That's a wonderful insight into your life of doing practical handiwork.

Well, a lot of it was economically forced. I had

17:00 no options. I couldn't afford to pay for it. So the alternative was to do it myself. I knew nothing about chimneys, but I knew that chimneys had to be built properly. So I cast around, and a friend from the Lifesaving Club I knew was a bricklayer at the gas company at Moraben. They built the big gas chimneys and the gas ovens and so on. And they'd know a bit about

17:30 building a fire place. So I said to this chap, "I've got this problem. I've got two chimneys in the house." I said, "Could you advise me on it?" He said, "I'll come up and have a look." So I said, "Okay." He came up and said, "What's that pile of bricks over there?" I said, "They're over from the foundations." He said, "I'll build your chimney for those bricks." I said, "Okay, you're on."

18:00 So he built the chimney. I said, "What about the other one?" He said, "I'd have to charge you for that." So I said, "Well, look, can't you just sort of show me how you did this one?" because I hadn't seen it. I

had been laying bricks along the walls, while he was working on the chimney. He said, “I’ve got a better idea. You build surf-skis, don’t you?” I said, “I’ve built a few.” And I had. He said,

18:31 “Well, my mate up at the gas works wants a surf-ski.” So he said, “You might be able to do a deal.” So he brought the mate down and the mate said yeah, sure, he’d build the chimney, and I’d build a surf-ski. I said, “You provide materials?” “Okay, we’re on.” So I built the surf-ski in a weekend, and he put up the chimney in a weekend. So again, it worked with

19:02 both of them getting something and me getting something. That was the way a lot of stuff was done in those days.

Bartering?

Bartering labour, virtually, learn a skill.

It’s a shame we don’t still do it.

Well, yes, in many ways. A lot of skill is going out of the community, unfortunately. Kids can’t even change the washer in a tap. I was taught as a youngster to change a washer

19:30 in a tap, or a valve as they call them now. I remember being taught how to solder, at about age nine or ten by my father. I don’t think that happens these days. They’d probably be cut in for child slavery or something. It was marvellous. I thoroughly enjoyed it and became reasonably competent with my hands.

Did that help you at all during your war service years?

20:02 Probably. When it came to the technical parts of the guns themselves, then yes, because I could strip and assemble a Browning in less than a minute. That was fairly competent. I trained myself to do it with a blindfold, so that I could feel it in the dark. Again, that became useful clearing stoppages and things of that nature.

20:30 There was a lot of technical stuff there was no previous training for. We you see a retaining spring, a rod and spring, for example…You had to learn these things. You had to learn what they did and why did it, and how to reverse a breach block…It was good training,

21:00 and probably having hands that could handle things…they were a little faster than the normal. I didn’t have five thumbs on each hand, as some of the chaps had. There was also a bit of stupidity. I can remember walking into the gunnery on one occasion, and seeing a lad with a gunner’s punch and a hammer, about to knock in the detonator on a

21:30 .303. He had taken a bullet out and emptied all the material out, but the detonator still could blown his fingers off. I can remember knocking it out of his hands. Again, just absolutely the brains of a rocking horse, up here. Didn’t know much, didn’t even suspect much.

You did a course run by the AWA [Amalgamated Wireless Australasia]?

22:02 Beam wireless, yeah. Beam wireless, AWA, it was all the same thing.

Was that something civilians could do as well?

Anyone could do it. The lessons were run on a Saturday morning, in Morse code, and they had chaps there teaching you the Morse code and how to handle a buzzer or a coder.

22:31 I think it was about two hours. I think it started at about ten o’ clock and finished at twelve, from memory. I don’t know if there was any charge. I can’t remember. There could have been a two shilling charge. If there was, it was minimal, but I suspect it was free. But we used to in on the Saturday mornings and do this training.

Is that the Australian Wireless Association?

23:00 That’s right. It was Beam Wireless in the late ‘30s, then Beam Wireless AWA in the middle ‘40s. Then it became AWA post-war, I think.

And you did that course on a Saturday morning at Parkes?

No, this was in Melbourne. This was before I joined up.

23:30 I would have been sixteen when I was doing that.

So from Bradfield Park where you did your initial training…

I went to Parkes. At Parkes they still tried to get me to pass as a wireless operator. I just couldn’t hear Morse. I don’t know if you know Morse code, but it’s all dots and dashes. One dot is an ‘E’ and one dash is a ‘T’.

24:00 So if you get dot-dot-dash, you can get E-E-T, or you can get a ‘W’, if it’s sent fast, if you think of it as three. But all I could get was Es and Ts, because I’d get each one separately. I just couldn’t hear the

groupings. I could if it was sent fast. The brain was accepting it,

24:30 and I would just write G, A, U or whatever it was that was coming out. But otherwise, if it was coming out forwards, I would write E-E-T-A-E-A-E-E-T. It just went like that. My mind wouldn't accept the slow speed, because I had gone well beyond it, and I couldn't hear anything but Es and Ts. So it didn't matter

25:00 how many hours they made me work at night, and they did, I still couldn't make it. So I was a straight gunner, which pleased me, no end, because….at the time, I was thinking, 'I would rather fight with a gun than a wireless set'. I also had in my mind, that wireless sets using Morse…I thought they were out-moded

25:30 because of the voice communication, as used in the single engine aircraft. As it so happened, our wireless operator on operations, was exceptionally good. He was an ancient, I think he was 27. He was an engraver, in a printing place, a very good one, too, in civil life.

26:00 On one occasion, I can remember sitting at his set, and he went up into my turret, and something was coming in. And it came in at about eighteen words a minute and I got about half of it. So I sent back an answer fairly fast, and there was a series of blanks came back. They couldn't read it. So the air force did the right thing in throwing me out as a straight gunner. But Bill West was a very nice fellow, the wireless operator.

26:34 I was there in an emergency. He was, of course, supposed to be a wireless air gunner, but his gunnery was just a very short period on a Vickers GO. He had no idea of how to operate the 'turrets'. Which was a science in itself, really.

27:04 **I was wondering, actually something I've always wanted to ask, if you did plain language on Morse code, was it just using the same alphabetical letters, or was it a word?**

I sent words. In training, in the main,

27:30 you rarely got words. You got five letter groups, or five number groups, or a mixture of letters or numbers. Because then you couldn't slur over anything. You had to get every individual letter or number, so they could check you every inch of the way. Which was a good way of training.

28:03 PL, as they called it, Plain Language, was very rarely used. Mainly five letter groups.

How long were you in Parkes before you received your orders that you would be going overseas?

Well, I was transferred from Parkes to bombing and gunnery school. I think I was there about three or four months,

28:32 then I went down to Point Pirie, and I was two months at Pirie, at the bombing and gunnery school there. And that's where I started learning. It was the first time I had ever fired a gun in the air, at Point Pirie.

How did you find going up in the air for the first time, as a gunner?

Well, my first impression was…

29:00 I think there were five of us. There was a, I think a corporal armour instructor or he might have been a sergeant, and four trainee EATS air gunners, all of us in this cramped back end of Fairey Battle. I can remember the smell of the aircraft wasn't very nice. What with hydraulic oil and petrol and

29:30 various glycol fumes, and I think others had been sick in the place. The general smell of it was not nice at all. When you're turn came to use the gun, you had to undo the cylinder, in the back end of the cockpit, and pull the gun up onto this wobbly bracket. Put your ammunition canister on,

30:02 and then be ready for firing. The only way you were attached to the aircraft was a single strip of webbing that went from you down to a thing in the side of the aircraft, as I remember. So, it occurred to me at one stage that I could be completely out of the aircraft, if he humped over, but I would still be attached to it, but it might be a bit hard

30:30 around my waist. It wasn't a full harness or anything like that. It was just this, I suspect, a belt and this bit of webbing going down. About the sixth or seventh lesson, there was a bit of a hump over, and you had to grip the sides a bit. The rest of them were hanging on inside this

31:00 closed in part of the rear area of the Fairey Battle. And it wasn't pleasant to be in that position. It was very crowded, very smelly, and it was rather nice to stand up and use the gun, because at least you were in the wind. It was open. But in retrospect, as training it was absolutely useless. I wasn't trained as an air gunner there at all, although I had a Wing,

31:30 I didn't deserve it. I wouldn't have been able to hit a boom in the backside, I mean that. The equipment was terribly faulty, the whole thing was shaking like that. Your bullet pattern would have been forty feet, at two hundred yards. You can't hit anything, although you might get one or two in out of a hundred, but that's not what air gunnery is about. You make every one count.

32:00 **That skinny bit of webbing you had attached to the plane, you didn't have that when you actually flew the bombing operations?**

No, we had a full harness. We were strapped in

They weren't really preparing for what you would be wearing…

At that stage they didn't know where you would be going. You could have been flying in the blister of a Catalina flying boat. Where probably the only had a single webbing strap like that. I don't know. I wouldn't like to be quoted, but

32:30 I would imagine that's all that would be possible. I think that probably the government could have done a lot more, in the training area for gunners, at that time. I've spoken to a number of gunners who have gone through there, and subsequently had gone to England, and every one of them agreed we didn't

33:00 look like being gunners until we got into the training at OTU, with the guns in turrets, they were held firmly. You still had a bullet pattern, even with them bolted in like that, you still had a bullet pattern of thirty feet at four hundred yards. It will give you an idea. There is a vibration, even with something that's held very, very firmly, can you imagine what it is like,

33:30 if it's not held firmly, just on a shaking universal bracket? Just about impossible.

Can I ask you about this bullet pattern that you're talking about? Is that something you're taught in training, which carries on exactly the same when you're flying in the war?

Well, the bullet pattern is where they are in an area, a vertical area away from you.

34:02 If your gunners firing a hundred bullets, and you're pointing at a particular direction, the bullet pattern is that area around that aiming point. It's just where they're landing.

What does it look like?

It looks like little dots all over the place, like that. And that's where

34:30 the individual bullets would be going out, with the vibration of the guns. They would just be varying. They would go out the barrel straight, but the barrel would be jigging, you see, and it would be throwing the bullets all over the place. So if you had a huge sheet out at four hundred yards, the bullet patterns of a Vickers GO would probably be sixty yards across it. There would be little bullet holes, all around, over that sheet.

35:00 That's the bullet pattern. Now, if you've got something that's held very firmly, you're bullet pattern wouldn't be more than twenty or thirty feet. Which means that probably a fighter, with a wingspan of say thirty-two foot six [inches], an enemy 109, if you were aiming properly, you would be drenching him with bullets.

35:30 **So today you might have LEDs [Light Emitting Diodes] coming on, so the bullet pattern would be very clear, do you think?**

Guns aren't used now. They use rockets. The last gunner that was trained, that come out with an air gunners wing, was 1954. So we're a dying race.

36:02 There has been no gunner come out of any British or Australian school in….1954 was the last output. I belong to the Air Gunners Association, so I have that on very firm authority. Air gunners from all over the world belong to that. It's a different world now.

36:32 You're using guided missiles, laser guided things, heat-seeking missiles and so on. A different thing altogether. You also have the speed of aircraft now. The reason there hasn't been a military version of the Concorde is that,

37:00 if they were using guns, the muzzle velocity, the speed that the bullet comes out the end of the gun, is around about the speed of sound. With something flying twice the speed of sound, it would shoot itself down. So they use rockets in the main. Rocket propelled missiles.

You were in Point Pirie in South Australia,

37:30 **and then you went to…**

From there I went overseas. Sorry, I went back to Bradfield Park, and from there I went overseas. I can't remember how long I was at Bradfield Park, but it wasn't long. From Point Pirie, we were given leave. I think seven days from memory. And it was sort of pre-embarkation leave. We were told not

38:00 to tell anyone that we were going away. We didn't know we would be going anyway. Then we went to Bradfield Park, and I suspect it was only a matter of days. It wouldn't have been more than three or four days, and we were on the ship. This Mount Vernon to San Francisco. That took about two weeks, as I remember.

38:33 **When you got sent back to Bradfield Park, where did you hope to go?**

I don't think I had hopes. Once you were in the air force you did as you were 'ruddy' well told. And if you were given options, I think I would have opted at that point, for Europe. But we weren't given options.

39:00 You were told, so you did what you were told.

Did you go and stay on your pre-embarkation leave with your parents?

Yes. The place was still fairly small, and as you walked through, just along the shopping centre, you would say 'g'day' to everyone, because you knew everyone. It was a little place, and

39:30 they would tell you what was happening with other friends of yours, and it was gossip, gossip was what made up the small towns, because things were happening. They knew someone was going somewhere, and did you hear about? And so it went on. It was quite an interesting area to live in.

You would have found out then about the blokes who had signed up to the AIF,

40:00 **who had taken off?**

Well, yes, where they had news it would be circulated. Quite often they hadn't had news, of course, they didn't know. Particularly the older men, the ones who had been taken and were in Changi, the families

40:30 were distressed. That's about the only word I could say, because they just didn't know what was happening. As we know now, it was pretty inhumane.

We'll just switch tapes.

Tape 5

00:34 **We were just talking between the break about your training at OTU at Lichfield, and you were telling me how it was split up into two distinct parts, day and night.**

Night-flying….after we crewed up, we did quite a bit of day flying and then at night, for the night training, we were transferred to a satellite drome called Church Broughton,

01:00 and all our night-flying training was down from there. One bit about Church Broughton I remember, it was the first time that I saw a jet engine. We were prevented from watching a Warrick take off, with its propellers stilled by…Well, we had looked at it, but we were then shooed away by military police. Apparently, we were the enemy.

01:30 I can't remember a great deal about Church Broughton because, mainly, we were sleeping in the day, and flying at night. Again, we went through the same series of exercises, with each member of the crew being trained in one thing. The pilot in circuits and bumps, the navigators on cross-country, the bomb aimers on practice bombing runs out at Wayne Fleet Sands. The gunners on picking up night drogues, or

02:00 picking up night fighters, who were sent up to exercise with us, and certainly exercising corkscrews and other evasive manoeuvres. But generally speaking, learning how to operate as a crew in remote conditions, when you couldn't appeal to the Almighty for help, you had to deal with it yourself. Good training, and you started to work together,

02:30 as, at that particular stage, six men. We, later on of course, picked up the seventh, the flight engineer, when we went on four engine conversion.

You've mentioned the tactic of corkscrewing, which allows you end up getting a point blank shot….

As part of the roll…

Can you talk me through how that would work for you

03:00 **as a gunner, in terms of getting a shot off?**

Well, there were two types of corkscrew. One was used by main force, and the other was called the Five Group Corkscrew. There were a number of separate groups in Bomber Command. There were five or six of us altogether. But Five Group operated, mainly, as diversionary force for the main force.

03:30 We would pull part of the fighters and part of the defences away from main force, so they could get in to their target. We were about a hundred, and they were six hundred, seven hundred. So it was important that they achieve their objectives, even if we suffered losses, because we were a much smaller group. If they were going in to the Rhea, for example, we would possibly be up around the Baltic somewhere, or down around Munich,

04:01 anything to pull away the other defences. If you're talking about the Five Group Corkscrew, which was

the one that I trained on, as the fighter was coming in, he would usually be either to port or starboard of a stern, he would never be directly astern.

04:34 He would attempt to make his shot at you as hard as possible, so he had to aim his whole aeroplane, to get his guns to bear. We on the 'turrets', on the other hand, it didn't matter where the plane was going, we could get our guns to bear. The thing was to make it so that you were turning inside him, and if he opened fire, his cannon shells would go behind you.

05:02 They wouldn't hit you. So if he was coming in from port, you would turn to port, dive to port, and if he was coming in from the starboard side, you would dive to starboard which would make him try and pull his aircraft right around, but he still had to get his deflection shot well ahead of you, and he couldn't do it, because by and large the closing speed was between one hundred and two hundred miles an hour. Well, if

05:30 you work it out, it's about fifty to a hundred yards a second. To pull a fighter aircraft around that fast is just not possible. So in the corkscrew, you would go, say down port side….perhaps I better talk you through it a bit more. There had to be complete

06:00 co-ordination between the driver and the gunners, and this also involved the flight engineer, in our crew. The gunner would give the direction, "Down port" as the fighter hit six hundred yards range, which you would work out through your reflector sight and his wingspan. 'Down port' and the aircraft would fall out of the left hand sky.

06:32 At that point, the pilot would say, "Down port," repeat what he had ordered, and the engineer would give you the air speed, because that was also critical for your firing pattern. You had to know where to aim off so that your bullet and the fighter got there at the same time. There was a point X in space, that had to be determined, and that was dependent on your speed, your height,

07:00 because the density of the air changes the way a bullet falls. Your speed changes the windage on the side of the bullet, so therefore it will finish up in a different place if your speed is two hundred miles an hour or three hundred miles an hour, or somewhere in-between. So, 'down port' would be repeated, and the engineer would say, by that time

07:30 the speed would probably be up to around two-fifty, so he would say, "Two-fifty." I would be, as a gunner, would then be saying, "Closing range, five hundred yards." We'd still be in 'down port'. At that stage the driver would say, "Up port," and we would start pulling up port, still turning to port, but going up. At that particular time, the range might be four hundred,

08:00 which I would say. The engineer in the meantime is saying, "Three hundred." So it was a combination of things, of information coming in, to allow the gunners to get a reasonable shot at the attacker, at the same time, making it terribly hard for him to get a shot in at you. That was the evasion bit, which was probably the gunner's greatest role, even if they never fired a shot.

08:36 The next thing, 'changing' and then 'up starboard'. So you've gone 'down port', 'up port' and now he's 'changing', and you know he's going up start climbing 'up starboard'. So, at this time, possibly and in general speaking the fighter would have broken away. Perhaps

09:00 I could just mention, the ridiculous things you see on film, where these things go on for hours. A fighter attack rarely took longer than eight to ten seconds, then it was all over. By the time you're 'down port', quite often, he would have broken away, knowing he couldn't get a shot. Or if he continued, by the time he was going

09:30 'up port', he would still be trying to get a shot. But he would be past you by then. The speed of, for example, the FW190, was about four hundred and twenty five miles an hour, and in a dive faster than that. Now the normal cruising speed of a Lancaster was two hundred and thirty mile an hour. And in a dive, we would get it well up over three

10:00 hundred, three-fifty, around about there. But at the start of it, you would probably only be moving at about two-fifty and he'd be moving at over four hundred, so you've got a closing rate of about seventy-five yards per second. So, if your corkscrew started at six hundred yards, and it's changing at fifty, or a hundred or two hundred yards a second, depending on the relative speeds, you can see that

10:30 it's a matter of seconds before it's all over, and he's passed you. I would just like to elaborate on that for a minute. If you're coned in searchlights, and generally when that happened there would be thirty or forty lights would come on, after a radar control searchlight picked you up. There was this big ring of light around you, up to three four hundred yards.

11:00 You couldn't see out of it, because of the brightness of the light, why the fighters didn't stick out in the dark and just knock us down, I don't know. But invariably they came in on an attack, invariably. And invariably we got away. It's just, I suppose, the way a fighter pilot works. He's got to keep attacking. But they could have sat out in the dark and throttled

11:30 back a little bit and they could have knocked us out of the sky, time and time again. But they didn't do it. They always came in to attack, so we'd pick them up as soon as they hit the light, not at the six hundred yards which would be desirable for us to start our corkscrew, because that brought us in range of the

.20mm and .37mm cannons. But at four hundred yards it still gave us a fighting chance. And it did work. So the corkscrew was a very effective, evasive manoeuvre.

12:00 **And how effective were the searchlights, once you were coned, and you were taking evasive action against the fighters, would they be able to track you?**

Once you were coned, three things could happen, two of them very bad. The first was with the ack-ack [anti-aircraft gun] firing straight up the searchlights, you were in trouble, because they would barrage their fire. In other words they would put it around about your height, but a tremendous amount of it,

12:30 and you would have to fly through it. Time and time again a plane would be knocked out. If there was a fighter around, he would drop a fighter flare. They had an arrangement, which I think was about fourteen or fifteen thousand feet, but don't quote me on this, but below that the ack-ack would deal with it, and above that the fighter would deal with it, or if he dropped a flare, quite often the ack-ack would stop altogether and allow

13:00 the fighter to deal with it. In these cases, the only way to get out was jinking [changing direction and height] and high-speed. Now that was sort of moving rapidly to try and break out of the searchlight pattern, but if they had enough on you, the area of light was so great that they could usually pick up any manoeuvre. The only to get out of it, really, was speed and changing direction

13:30 and height. To get speed, you had to have the nose down and get out as quickly as possible. Quite often, you could be coned for several minutes and rarely did planes get out of it. Usually, once you were coned, well, that was it. You had to be right on the ball to get out of it. There was one advantage with searchlights, and that is if someone else was coned, you'd

14:00 slide in a few hundred yards to one side and just follow them through. So while they were taking all of the attention, you got through on the side. It sounds rather dreadful, but that's the way it worked. We managed to do that a few time.

Were you ever coned?

Yes.

And you got out of it obviously…

Yes. Well, we had five fighter attacks

14:30 during that coning, so our team work had to be pretty good. But by and large, the German defences were good, the searchlight belts and the

15:00 ack-ack belts stretched from the top of Denmark right through to the bottom of France [Kammhuber Line], virtually. They were mile square boxes with one fighter dealing with each box. They had radar. Long range and short range, twin short range radar. Long range radar would pick up the stream, or a particular plane, hand it

15:30 over to the short range radars. One would pick up the bomber, another one their own fighter, and they would direct the two together. This was the 'Tame Sow' ['Tame Boar', radio-directed interceptors], they called it. But just a directed fighter, in these 'himmel beds', they called them. I define that as 'heavenly bed', but I was corrected

16:00 by Peggy Best, who was a fluent German speaker, and she tells me it just stands for four-poster bed. I stand corrected. It's a four-poster bed. These square areas, covered by fighters, were sometimes five deep, in this huge belt that extended across Europe, and sometimes

16:30 even more. So we had to get through these. Every town, of course, was defended as well. They're not like towns in Australia, where you sort of drive out of one and into the next. If you're unwary, you could stray over very heavy town defences just by being a couple of miles off course. When you're hundreds of miles from base, that's

17:00 not unusual to stray a bit. The thing was to keep an alert eye, all the time, on what was happening in the sky. And if you saw huge amounts of flak somewhere, you were able to say, "Well, that's Cologne. Or that's Stuttgart," or whatever. You could re-direct the attention of the navigator to the fact that it was forty degrees over there. The 'turrets' had

17:31 compass markings all around them. So if you could drop a flare, or pick a up light somewhere, you could put your turret on it, and lock it, and read off the reading, and give the winds to the navigator, which would help him, because you'd have a drift available to him for

18:01 correction of his course, or something like that. The same thing, if you could see what was happening with defences in one particular area, you would know it was a particular place, and you could tell him. And he would be able to check his own navigation from this. When you're getting well away from England, this was rather important, to make sure that you knew where you were,

18:30 pretty accurately. The night training, at the end of the night training, the last exercise was a knickel, where we had to drop leaflets over France. In our particular case, we dropped leaflets just before the

invasion, it was May ’44,

19:00 and we dropped leaflets from Abbeyville to Ameone. These things were just telling the French people to be of assistance if the invasion occurred. I’m sorry that I never kept any of them. At that time I was more concerned with just getting there and back. On that particular

19:30 exercise, anyway, we slept in the main on the way back, because of a failure of oxygen and the pilot had to have all the portable oxygen bottles, and we got back in one piece, after a slight snooze.

You operated in two ‘turrets’, I believe, rear gunner and also

20:00 **mid-upper gunner. What I’d love to know is the detail of the turrets, for you as an air gunner. What was around you?**

The turrets in the Lancaster were Fraser Nash. The rear turret was four .303 Mark Four Brownings. The mid-upper turret with two Sun guns.

20:30 The difference….Well, in both cases you were pretty tight for room. They were very small. You got in the turret and you didn’t move for hours, because there wasn’t room to move. With going on a long operation, in the winter, you would

21:00 be flying in temperatures of forty to sixty below zero. The gunners had no heating, in the back end of a Lancaster. The five up the front did have aircraft heating. In fact, we gunners in the gunnery room use to speculate on when they would open the white wine. They seemed to have it made up there, and we trembled back in the cold. Once we knew we were on an operation,

21:31 a number of things happened, which I will come to. But with the dress, we were issued long johns, three pairs of underwear that went from ankle right to neck. Depending on the length of the flight, which we could usually get an inkling of by the amount of petrol going into the aircraft. Full tanks were

22:00 2,154 gallons. If we knew that it was a full petrol load, we would very smartly don a number of these lower garments. Then went on our normal battle dress. Shirt and a big white woollen….It was termed ‘frocks’. You’ve possibly seen it with submarine crews, the big sweater they use with a roll neck and almost coming down to the knees.

22:32 Over that would go an electrically heated suit, which was brown and had wires all through it. It was quilted, like a normal quilt. There were a number of parts to it. There were a pair of slippers, which went on with two clips, at the bottom of each leg. Then the

23:00 heated suit itself, and then attached to that were a pair of big outer gloves. They weren’t the final outers, but they were very thick and also with the wires in them, and you also had a heated helmet. On top of that again, went an outer flying suit. In the case of when you were flying in the rear turret, you didn’t have the two separate ones. We used to wear what we called the ‘tailor suit’. It was a combination of heated

23:30 suit and a flotation suit. In the mid-upper, I would wear the two, the inner heated, the outer heated, and then also wear a Mae West [lifejacket], on top of that again, along with the parachute harness and everything else. So by the time we got to the aircraft, we looked like Michelin men, with probably two inches of padding all over us. A lot of which was connected to electrical plugs.

24:00 When we got into the turret, you had to connect yourself up to oxygen, the intercom, the helmet heating, the suit heating, so you were reasonably, firmly attached. Then you had your harness on to hold you in place.

24:38 As far as the operation of the turret, the Fraser Nash turrets were concerned, they were pretty well identical. The rear turret had no Perspex at all, in a panel between the guns, which improved night vision.

25:03 You couldn’t do this in the mid-upper because of the immense amounts of wind coming through. They were protected in the rear a bit because it was at the end of the fuselage. We just had to keep the mid-upper turret absolutely clean. On the Perspex, one dot and you would watch it for hours. A gunners job was to be absolutely vigilant, and in order

25:30 to do this, your search pattern, again, because of the speed of a fighter attack, your search pattern had to be fairly fast, but it had to be thorough. You had to cover a big area of sky, from the rear turret in the hemisphere immediately behind the aircraft, that half behind. The mid-upper had the other half, going up vertically…Not so much at the front because night head-on

26:00 attacks were virtually unheard of. And also down each side. The Germans developed, in 1944, a very efficient night-fighter. They were normal night-fighters, but with a technique of using upwards slanting guns. Particularly on the Me-110s and some Ju-88s. They would put in .20mm twin upward firing

26:30 cannons, at about seventy degree attitude. They could be reloaded inside the cabin of an aircraft. They would slide in under a bomber, and open fire. They called it ‘Schrazmusik’, which literally translated means ‘slanting music’. It was German for jazz, so ‘jazz music’ is what they termed this particular

technique.

27:00 They got an enormous number of bombers, in this way. And although it was known about in July of ‘44, as far as I know there wasn’t any general promulgation to bomber crews. I think it was lost in the hierarchy of the headquarters, somewhere at Bomber Command. We were losing large numbers because of it. In our particular crew, we were ‘weaving’,

27:30 as they called it, rolling just a little bit from side to side, fairly periodically. It used to drive the navigator nuts, but it meant the mid-upper gunner could look down, and could take evasive action immediately if anything was near. It had to be, again, fairly quick, because things happen quickly. A gunner had to have two things. Firstly,

28:00 good night vision. Good vision for starters, but good night vision, which you got by, as soon as you were on the battle order, a couple of hours before dark you would don a pair of very dark red glasses. Which came right across the brow, and around the cheeks. Like swimming goggles, but with dark red glass in them, and your eyes would gradually dilate. You wouldn’t take them off until after dark, and the gunner never

28:30 looked at a target or flares or bright lights. Again, that was the ideal, but sometimes there would be a shell burst directly in your line of search, and there was nothing you could do about it except try and jerk your head away, or your eyes away. And of course if you were coned in searchlights, you were gone anyway. But you had to protect your night vision, particularly your

29:00 peripheral vision. You could pick up movement at a thousand yards on a moonless night. That was a normal gunner. You can see an enormous distance, if you train yourself. The thing was to also have a very good memory. Because your search pattern had to cover your area of search, in a matter of seconds, and you had to remember what was there the last time, so that if there was any change at all, you were onto it, straight away. Now,

29:30 it could be virtually nothing. It could be the remains of a shell ack-ack burst. It could be a bomber on a slightly different course to your own, sliding across. Or it could be a fighter. But you had to have the memory going, so you could pick up any change in the pattern of the sky in your search. This went on for hours, and you were pretty fatigued by the time you finished.

30:01 But it was essential. It was the only way to make sure you got the plane to the target and got it home again.

Now would there be any kind of break structured in there, to rest your eyes from doing that kind of….

No, it started when the engines started up, because the Germans would infiltrate intruders

30:30 into the area, and they would try to catch aircraft on the ground. On taking off, they would insert them in the bombers stream, on the way back, they would insert them in the circuit areas, and as they were landing. From engine start up to engine turn off, you had to be eternally vigilant. So for hours, you just stayed ‘on the ball’,

31:00 or you gave the game away.

So if you weren’t ‘on the ball’, you could look to your right, where one of your fellow planes were and now there’s a German fighter…

That’s right. A good gunner didn’t miss, because if he did, the whole crew was in jeopardy. It just was eternal vigilance. And covering the sky in your search

31:30 patterns rapidly, thoroughly, and making sure you held your night vision as long as possible. It was very tempting to look down at a target. Very, very tempting indeed. You couldn’t even look back at it, because of the flares and the bomb explosions and so on would just ruin your vision. So you just had to keep your vision right or you could be jumped. A good

32:00 gunner was never jumped.

Did you have a preference for the rear turret or the mid-upper?

I think I preferred the mid-upper because it gave a greater vision, an all round vision. I thought I was a good gunner, so I thought I could do better there. The rear turret had

32:30 some advantages, in that you could get out quickly. In trouble, you could turn the turret at right angles and jettison the doors and just tumble out backwards, with you wearing a back-type parachute. Whereas in the mid-upper, you had to get out of the turret and down into the aircraft itself, grab your parachute, clip it on, and go out the back door. And that would take anything up to seven or eight seconds, and

33:00 it might be too late by then. That was probably the only advantage. I can’t think of any other.

From what I understand, as a rear gunner, you were perhaps a more prime target? Not in the Lancasters?

Well, if you can think of a range of, let's say,

33:30 six hundred to four hundred yards, a fighter pilot aiming his plane to shoot you, he's not going to try to pick up something like a turret. He's going to go for the junction of the aircraft and the wings, the biggest target that opens up. There was a lot of talk about the mid-upper being a target, because of the big roundel on the side of the plane, it came just by the mid-upper turret.

34:00 They'd say, "Well, they aim at that." In actual fact, of course, at night they weren't aiming at that at all. They were probably aiming between four little bits of light that were the exhausts of the engines. There was a lot of furphies [misconceptions] around. The job of a German fighter pilot was to shoot us down, and the way he could do that would be to

34:31 cripple the aircraft in its most vulnerable parts, which would be probably the wing junctions and the engines and so on.

Were you aware of the high casualty rate before you started flying?

We knew that it was pretty rough, and we knew that when we got on squadron it was pretty rough, because people that

35:00 you said 'g'day' to were just charred remains a thousand miles away at breakfast time. There was a certain pattern developed. If you got through your first four operations, you were usually right until about the fifteenth operation, and there was another little trough there. Probably a bit of complacency, I've done that, I've been there, I can handle it and so on.

35:32 If you got through there, there was another real trough towards the end of your tour. About thirty trips. A number of people went in that last few. Reasons? Frankly I don't know. Sheer luck in some cases, because flying through an ack-ack barrage, again it's sheer luck

36:00 whether you get hit or not, and there's no way you can stop it, nothing you can do about it. You fly through and hope, that's it. Yes, I knew about the casualties. It had a few indirect results, you didn't make friends, because you didn't know if they would be there tomorrow. You tended to close in on your own crew and

36:30 your own ground staff. There were five of them and seven of us, and the twelve of us operated as a group. We used to go drinking at the pub together. When we went on leave, generally speaking, we went to different places. I think probably the only time you got together with people…And we used to do ridiculous things, I think, pushing away reality.

37:01 You'd 'Saddlemanack' in the mess, or build the pyramids and someone would burn their name, with a cigarette lighter, into the ceiling of the mess. Throw a couple of cartridges into the fire. They were silly things, silly things, but again I think it was pushing away reality.

What was the first game you mentioned?

'Saddlemanack'? You'd get

37:31 two teams, say seven or eight fellows in each team and the first lot get down and crouch in a long line, and they run from the back and jump, and the idea is to get them all on, before the collapse. We used to play that quiet a bit. Silly things, dangerous things, in some cases. A number of the games were quite physical,

38:00 and you could break arms and legs. Again, I think it was just escape. You didn't want to think about anything. The same thing that's applicable in drinking alcohol and going out with ladies and so on.

We'll change tapes.

Tape 6

00:32 **David, we were just talking about Waddington, which was south of London, in England, and talk about why, why did the fellows want to go to Waddington?**

Well, there were mainly two reasons. Firstly, it was a pre-war permanent drome, so the people weren't billeted in huts and things like this, they were in permanent brick dwellings.

01:00 There were paved walkways, you didn't have to slosh through mud. That was one advantage. The second advantage was, as an Australian, there were to so-called 'Australian Squadrons' based there. The idea was, under the original arrangements made by Australian with Britain, that we would have a large number of squadrons fully Australian. For various reasons,

01:30 that did not occur, but at Waddington, there were two of the mainly Australian squadrons. There were more Australians in the main I think than others. So, in our crew for example, there were six Australians and one Englishman. In other crews there might have been three or four Englishman and a Canadian,

and a couple of Australians. But in the main there were a lot of Australians there and the commanding officers,

02:00 by and large, of the squadrons were Australians. There was an English group commander in charge of the station. So for those two reasons. One, that it was an Australian Squadron, the second that it was a permanent base. It had a great deal of appeal. You had no choice, you went where you were sent. So it was the luck of the draw.

02:32 **And that's when you crewed up with your pilots?**

No, we crewed up at OTU at Church Broughton. And we flew together at Lichfield, at Church Broughton, at the four engine conversion course, where we picked up our flight engineer, who was an Englishman. An ex-London Bobby [policeman], as it so happened.

03:03 Then onto Lancaster Finishing School at Syasen. And from there, we went to squadron. The training was very, very effective. We're talking now 1944. The war had been going four years and heading into the fifth year, and it was realised that without effective training, bomber crews particularly, were vulnerable. So

03:30 training was given a fairly high priority, and it was good, no doubt about it.

And that squadron was the 467?

The 467, and 463 was also based at Waddington. They were both headed by Australian Wing Commanders, in charge of each squadron.

When you were talking about looking like the Michelin man, what if you had to go to the toilet?

04:00 Well, you didn't. As soon as your name was on the battle order, you didn't drink anything. Well, I didn't drink anything. There was no way you could go to the toilet because you would be going through an outer jacket, an inner heated jacket. You'd have to get, somehow, through this big fox white (UNCLEAR),

04:30 which came down to your knees, and then into your battle dress, and then through two or three sets of these long johns….And at forty below zero, anyway, it would be fruitless. "Major Shrinkage here." It was just a point, during your training at OTU and then in the

05:00 conversion unit and the Lancaster finishing school, you were doing cross countries. Once you knew you were flying and it was going to be six hours, you automatically started to train yourself not to drink. You handled it in some ways. The crew up the front didn't have to wear the same sort of clothing, because they had heating coming into the cabin. It was all right

05:30 for the front seventeen feet of the Lancaster, they could do that. But it was just a technical impossibility to get back to the gunners. Well, it probably could have been solved, but it wasn't a high priority anyway, in view of other things. They used to just carry spare bottles and handle it that way. It did, I notice in some of the writings, where they had to go into corkscrews,

06:00 or other evasive manoeuvres, where that spilled, and it caused a great deal of bother, particularly in the navigator's area, where he had his maps out and so on. Evasive manoeuvres were quite vigorous, if I can put it that way. The aircraft would move through hundreds of feet vertically very rapidly indeed. You were harnessed in okay, but

06:30 other things could just flying everywhere. So everything was virtually chained down.

Something we touched on before was the gun harmonisation?

This was just to make sure that the greatest density of bullets could be put into one place. So, to make sure that the

07:01 bullet patterns were all brought together, the guns were, as they say, harmonised. They were brought together so that the full number of bullets could be in the one pattern at four hundred yards. That meant that when you opened fire, well, as I was saying earlier, it was only a matter of a couple of seconds, but there

07:30 were a number of bullets in a very small area. That's all it means. Putting all those four guns pointing at that little point, at four hundred yards, to make sure that everything was concentrated there. What we haven't talked about was the composition of the ammunition belts. There were a number of different types of bullets used,

08:00 ranging from armour piercing, semi armour piercing, ball, which was just straight lead and anthenamy, incendiaries and tracer. Tracer of two types, day type and night type. And you daren't use daytime at night time because your night vision would be gone with the sheer brightness of it. There were definitions of how make up your belts.

08:30 I made up my own with my armourer, because I felt I knew a little more about what I needed than

perhaps the boffins. At one stage, they even forbade the use of tracer. I think about September, 1944, came out that tracer was not to be used. I thought that was a bit odd. So a case of tracers would 'fall off a truck', nearby our aircraft, and

09:00 one in ten would go into my belt. But I also used incendiaries, at a greater density in the belt than was advisable, according to the boffins. Because if you could get a fighter aflame, he lost interest in his attack. The armour piercing was also very good. The German fighters, by and large, had very good armour

09:30 plating on them. But there were some free spots. And if you could get an armour piercing bullet through a fuel pump, for example, he'd be in bother straightaway. So I worked on the principal of doing the greatest possible damage, and I made up the gun belts in that form. There were….they ranged, from what you were told, they ranged from one or

10:00 two ball, one incendiary, another two ball, then one tracer, or something like that. I don't know how they came to these conclusions, but I thought I can get the most damage out there, as I possibly can, would be better for all of us. As I say, boxes used to 'fall off the backs of trucks' [go missing].

10:31 Which cost me beers down at the Horse and Jockey, but it was well worth it.

The tracer that you used was to let the other planes know?

No, it was to give you a fairly good indication if your calculations were correct. And in fact whether you were hitting him. The tracer let you know where your bullets were going. When they forbade the use of tracer, I thought this was crazy. Because

11:00 when tracer was coming at me, it frightened the hell out of me. So I thought, 'Well, the Germans are very similar people, so if they have tracer hammering around their ears, they're going to be fairly worried about it, too.' It was a fairly personal thing, but you had to dodge the regulations to do what you wanted.

11:32 I thought the regulations were a bit odd, frankly. It may have been there was a shortage of particular types of ammunition, and therefore they were trying to conserve them. I don't know, that's pure speculation on my part. But as I say, I preferred to make up my own and it seemed to work.

You're still here.

I'm vertical.

Now, did you become really close with the

12:00 **other crew members?**

Yes, you virtually lived together. Because of this dreadful attrition rate, you daren't become other than an acquaintance with any one coming onto the squadron, or anyone there, because they just wouldn't be there the following morning. We virtually

12:30 ate and drank and went out together. Apart from on leave, of course when you're flying together like that, and each man is responsible for a particular part of the operation. You're a seven man crew, and your job is get a pile of bombs out there, on a particular target, and get your planes and yourselves back. You must work as a seven man team. Each one must pull his weight. From the driver on. And

13:00 it just seemed to work that way with good crews. You became very, very close. You almost knew what would happen, if something happened, what someone would do. Through your training….remember we started training, I think it was about the April, and we went onto operations in the August, so for months we had been flying together, virtually daily,

13:30 and drinking together, and we knew one another fairly well, and we knew strengths and weaknesses as well. The other gunner and myself, at one stage I know, speculated on shooting off a part of our aeroplane because our pilot could only land a damaged aeroplane. He would breeze them on, beautifully. But if we had an undamaged plane….well, it wasn't very often undamaged, he

14:00 could bounce us up to a hundred feet. We thought about shooting four feet of the wingtip off, or something like that, to make sure that he got us in nice and easy. He could fly like a bird, but landings… He knows this, I've told him many times.

Did he admit he had problems with it?

I don't think he cared. If the plane wasn't damaged, who cared? Bang. If it was damaged,

14:30 he could grease it on beautifully. We had a fin and rudder completely knocked off in a collision in the air, and he brought that plane back and put it down as though it was a Tiger Moth. There wasn't a tremor as we landed, and we were expecting to spin off the runway, or anything to happen. It was beautiful. When he put his mind to it, he was good.

Was he a good bloke?

15:00 Oh yes, he's still alive. DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross], AFC [Australian Flying Corps] Gordon Stewart.

Is there anyone else from crew your still alive?

No, they're all dead. The first pilot I flew with, Wing Commander Brill, who was the squadron commander, he also died, in 1966.

That was from 467 Squadron?

Yeah. I flew with him as a spare, when the other gunner was

15:30 in hospital with the concussion. I think it was probably the gunnery leader's way of getting back at me, making me work. It paid off, because I did get an experience with a very, very sound man. And that helped, too. Because inside there was a thin high-pitched scream, when you don't know what is going to happen.

16:01 But if you're with a very steady man, you are introduced to it very well.

This was your CO Brill you're talking about, who died in '66?

Yes. He stayed in the air force. At one time he was in charge of Sale, the RAAF school in Victoria. Nice bloke.

16:30 **What kind of influence did he have on you, in a mentorship way?**

Yes. I think he was beyond fear. The first trip was in Marjargon, a piece of cake, just over in France. The main trip I did with him was to Konigsberg, in Lithuania, up the far end of the Baltic.

17:01 We were on the way up the North Sea, and we came about opposite the Friesian Islands, off Holland, and I heard him say over the intercom, there was a bit of flak about, he said, "Navigator? We'll get this position. There's a new flak ship there. We'll have a look." Here were are with a full bomb load, full petrol load,

17:30 on our way to a target, and we're only, I suppose, a third of the way there, and he's having a look at the position of a flak ship. I was flying as a rear gunner. Inside I went 'hoick', just 'squinched' up. He circled and plotted the position of this flak ship, then went on. Afterwards I thought, 'Well, he knows

18:00 what he's doing'. We weren't damaged in any way. We had one encounter with a fighter, which I reported, and we took evasive action. He handled it very, very sedately, just like we had in training. And I got confidence out of this. Then when I went back with my main crew, I crewed up with, I carried that confidence over into

18:30 that area. In the meantime Gordon Stuart had done a spare. A 'second dicky' they called it. He was on a flight on somewhere into the Ruhr, as his 'second dicky' trip. So again, he had confidence. So there were at least two of us who had been on operations when we went as a crew. I think it probably paid off. It permeates into the other

19:00 members of the crew. The steadiness comes from that.

Was he much older than you, Brill?

Oh, he would have twenty-seven, twenty-eight at that stage. I was just nineteen. I finished the course, I was still nineteen, I finished as a teenager, a little boy.

19:31 **What about leave? Where did you go on leave?**

Well, that depended. Initially, I used to go to London and lived the high life. On one occasion I went to a place called Yarmouth, only because I knew through the other gunner that his brother was there. He had married an English girl, they were very nice. They had a home at Yarmouth.

20:00 I went and stayed with them. While I was with them, I went out on an air-sea rescue boat. I was conned into it by the cockson of the air-sea rescue boat. I thought I would just go out and I would stand on the bridge beside the cockson and that would be it. But I found out later he was short of a gunner. So I finished up with a gun in my hands for several hours. But anyway, it was quite enjoyable until

20:30 finally he said, "Right, we're just about back in harbour. Drink this." And he gave me a glass. He said, "Straight down" so I put it straight down. It was pure navy rum. It lasted about fourteen seconds, and I was over the side. I've never been able to drink rum since. Then I was mainly in London, where we'd do pub tours and

21:02 look for partners and spend nights out and so on. When I had been on operations and I went on my first leave there, I went to my aunt's place in Scotland. By then I really needed a break, and the high life in London didn't really give you a break. You just made yourself more fatigued, really,

21:30 through various means. Mainly lack of sleep. I went there once before, not long after I got to England, I went there and met her. She was my father's youngest sister and she lived in Stranrar. I was going for walks. I was still

22:00 at Operational Training Unit at that stage, and I saw the Mulberry Harbour, or part of it, being built. The one they towed over to France at the time of the invasion. I was picked up by the military police there, and taken down and interrogated, and they found out I was at Operational Training Unit. But they checked up on me, and found out that I was all right, and they gave me a beer

22:30 and then sent me home to my aunt's. After I got on operations I would go back there. It wasn't big enough to be bombed. It's where the ferry leaves for Larne, in Northern Ireland. If you're going across to Belfast, I could get a train from Lincoln, and get up as far as Dumfries, and get another train over from there.

23:03 It was quite reasonable, and my aunt was always glad to see me. She always seemed to have some very, very smooth whiskey on hand. Which seemed to come down from the hills about once a month. I never inquired about it, but it was beautiful.

Was she unmarried?

No, she was married. Her husband was on the first ship

23:30 torpedoed in the war. He was chief engineer on the ship and he was down below and was killed. Her son, who was about the same age as me, was in the Fleet Air Arm. I met him, post-war, he's still alive.

She looked after you then?

Oh yes. When we were on operations we got nine days leave every six

24:00 weeks. I think it was to restore us at least to some functional state. I think if we had gone on, beyond those periods, we would have been flak happy, completely. There certainly was an effect, of going on operations with noise and fear

24:30 and light, and smells of the cordite from the ack-ack guns, shell bursts and so on, flares and fighters. It certainly did have a physical and mental effect on you. So I would go on leave there just for the break. I found I needed that.

Can you remember if any of the men there

25:00 **suffered from LMF [Lack of Moral Fibre]? Or you knew of men who did?**

No, we heard furphies from time to time, and some people vanished mysteriously. The only incident…It was a fear, I think, amongst every one of us, that we might show LMF because I'm sure every one of us felt that fear. But it had to be inward, it had to be

25:30 contained. You daren't show it outside. Because I think it was just general propaganda, that LMF, you were stripped of your rank and you were given jobs of cleaning latrines and so on. This was the general talk. Whether it was true or not, I have no idea. One friend that I had, and I say friend, he was a Welshman. I was always amused by him because he would raise a glass of beer and say, "Food."

26:00 And then he would let go a Welsh battle cry, in Welsh, and it was blood-curdling. After a few weeks, and I got to know him better, I said, "Taffy? What is this battle cry?" And he explained to me that as a child….In the Welsh churches they have a gallery and after the children's service, the children are put up in the gallery and the main service with the adults takes place below.

26:30 But he used to get bored with this so he would take his comics with him. His battle cry was, "That boy in the gallery will cease reading comics." But it came out in Welsh as something…you would swear it was Genghis Khan. He was quite normal. I say normal, but none of us were normal. But he would only do the same ridiculous things as the rest of us.

27:00 But he went home on leave and I was called into the adjutant's office and introduced to men who were detectives. And told to answer their questions, and what did I know about him and so on. I said, "Why? Has he been hurt?" They said, "Just answer the questions." I said, "Yeah, he's all right. I like him. He's a nice fellow." Apparently he had gone home and he'd shot his wife and his two kids, and then shot himself.

27:30 So this is a product of war. Your LMF is probably a man with more courage than the rest of us, because none of us would dare show it. In retrospect, I think quite a lot of that was it.

28:02 But again, that's about the only aberration of that sort. I know that every effort was made, by every one of us, to avoid facing the reality. The jargon that we used. We didn't say we were going on a bombing operation, we went 'on a trip'. We didn't carry

28:30 a four thousand pound bomb and incendiaries, we carried 'a cookie and clusters'. There were all these little euphemisms used just to avoid the reality of saying whatever it was. If a 'trip', if an operation was relatively easy, there wasn't a great deal of flak and there were only a few fighters, it was

29:00 'a piece of cake'. If the operation was successful and plenty of bombs on target and so on, 'a wizard prang'. Not a good operation, 'a wizard prang'. If there was a lot of flak and a lot of fighters and a lot of

damage done to aircraft and a lot of losses it was ‘a shakey-do’.

29:30 It was an escape into non-reality, and looking back on it now, that’s all it was, an escape, it was matched up with the ridiculous behaviour. Living for today, because we didn’t want to face tomorrow. Couldn’t face tomorrow.

Well, how would you switch off at night-time?

Alcohol, probably. That and…

30:01 some people played cards. I didn’t like playing poker much. I used to play what they called ‘galloping dominoes’, with the dice, introduced by a Canadian to it, and I became reasonably effective at it. Just before Von Ronstead breakthrough, Frank our other gunner, had taken the poker school for about seventy pounds, and I had taken the ‘galloping domino’ school for about fifty pounds.

30:30 And we played draw poker on the train, when we were going on leave, for five pound notes. I don’t know if you’ve seen it, an English five pound note at that time, was like a big piece of toilet paper, white with black printing on it. Here we are in a crowded train with these piles of English pounds, playing draw poker. Well the eyes of the English were out like organ stops,

31:00 because five pounds in those days was an enormous amount of money. I only paid six pounds for my first car over there. So that was that. Probably the consumption of alcohol and seeking as many sexual partners as you could was the norm of the young people. There were a number of steady people there, like our wireless operator was married back here. He, I think, used to spend his time doing photography,

31:30 where he could. He wasn’t allowed to photograph a lot of things. And he used to write to his wife a lot. I think I got a letter off home about once every two months, if I was lucky. The younger ones of us, we were tearaway. We were away from home, we escaped into non-reality. It was just as simple as that.

32:08 **That life on the edge, not knowing what is going to happen to them the next day, it would be very hard to remain regular and normal?**

No, you couldn’t be normal. As I say, we did ridiculous things. A pile of us would get on board a car and go across to Nottingham and do a pub crawl over there.

32:30 And then drive back, and we would be legless, no doubt about it. We would get back onto the station, singing and yelling. Absolute hooligans, virtually. But again, it’s non-reality.

What about girls? Did you have a permanent girlfriend?

No. Flower to flower.

33:00 **Where did you meet these women?**

Oh, at dances, the theatre. Wartime in England was a relaxation of a lot of moral standards. Quite often in the pubs we would meet someone. It’s not a period that I’m proud of at all, but it happened. It wasn’t only me, it was most of the young lads.

33:30 And again, we were away from home, away from social morals of our own society. We moved into whatever was available. Again, that…don’t want to think about tomorrow was part of it. As a part of that also, there was no attachments. You didn’t want to get too close to anyone.

But it sounds like the young women, too, wanted that kind of…

34:01 Possibly, I don’t know. It was certainly available.

So you would just go home and have a one-night stand at their place?

Yes.

Because you couldn’t take them back?

That’s right.

What about prostitutes?

No, never interested.

But was that something that was available to the men?

I don’t know. I doubt it because there was so much

34:30 free….If I can put it that way.

Now, did you keep in touch with any of those women so when you came back from operations….

No. One was a titled lady that I did have an affair with, who was getting fairly attached, and I did meet

her a few times.

35:01 But she was really serious, and I finally got our driver to write to her and say that I was killed in action. So that was that. It was the only way I could escape, as it were. Because I thought with her connections, she could have checked up on me on the station. She could have come onto the station. However…that was that.

35:30 **It would be, if you ran into her…**

No, she was two or three years older than me. She would be in her 80s. Nothing could be bad when you're in you 80s.

I was talking about when you came back from an operation?

No, she was at Birmingham, we were over at Lincoln. We used to meet up at Birmingham.

36:03 They were the days. You could handle the truth carelessly in those days.

She would have been heartbroken?

Well, she was getting serious, which was what worried me. But it could have happened anyway. I just didn't want to tie myself down to anyone at all. And that

36:30 included friendships, other than our own crew. If we went, we would probably all go together. What I didn't say earlier was, probably the greatest fear that I ever had in operations, was not of death, I don't think that ever worried me, but it was of being burnt. Because I had seen some burns victims, and they were terribly burnt,

37:01 or mutilation in some way. Loss of my legs, or being blinded. I did have a fear of that, no doubt about it. Fortunately, when I was wounded it was only slight. Shrapnel pieces in my legs, and they were relatively small. The last piece came out in 1953.

37:44 I thought the bulk of it was out by about 1948. Little pieces would just work out. But this piece, I suppose about three sixteenths of an inch long, was a piece of the thread of the outside of a .20mm cannon. And

38:00 that piece of thread was as bright as the day the fighter pilot fired at me, in September of '44, and it came out up here, on my hip virtually.

Did you keep it?

No. I did keep a number of the pieces they took out of me at Waddington, but what happened to them I don't know. They probably were chucked out after I got home.

David, where did you see these

38:31 **horrific burns victims?**

Our bomb aimer was wounded. We were flooding the island of Walkaran, which is just at the mouth of the River Shelt, in Holland. We were on our third raid there. The first time we had taken out the big dykes, at West Cappel, to

39:00 flood the island, but there were still some guns, on the main part of the dykes, which had to be taken out. Our bomb aimer was wounded by anti-aircraft fire, which burst straight under. He got pieces of the Perspex in his eyes. He was taken to hospital…and we went across there to see him.

39:30 That's when I saw the burns victims. I think they had been already treated partially, but it frightened me. It really did. I hadn't thought of it until then, although I had seen burning aircraft going down. It just couldn't happen to me, until then, there is always the residual sort of concern.

We'll just switch tapes.

Tape 7

00:30 **You were just telling us about the lack of seating in the 'turrets'?**

Well, there was seating, but it wasn't a seat. In the case of the rear turret it was a pad about 15 inches wide by I think by about 7 or 8 inches across, and about 1 inch thick. And it became very, very hard indeed. Then

01:00 the mid upper it was sling, it was like a hard canvas sling which had to be dropped off as you got into the turret and then you reached underneath and pulled it up and re-hooked it, then attacked your safety harness which kept you there. But that was about, as I recall only about 6 inches wide. And went across the turret and again, most uncomfortable because you couldn't

01:30 move. I had about an inch clearance, maybe about an inch and a half between my head and the top of the turret. In both cases, so there wasn't any possibility of adjustment, there was no way you could do anything but put up with it. And you put up with it for hours on end.

Did that have any ill effects on your health?

02:00 Oh well it did when on one occasion I had to release the harness and put out a fire of hydraulic oil because the oxygen supply unit had been broken and was feeding oxygen onto the hydraulic oil so it went up in flames. And I had to

02:30 reach down to put it out and at the same time the pilot came to the top of the corkscrew and humped over. And I flew into the top of the turret. So it did occur on that occasion, I telescoped in. And I was given as Aspro [aspirin] for my headache, there were no X-rays or anything like that available. It was just one

03:00 of those things that happened.

Can you detail the operations that you flew?

Yes, these maybe slightly out of order unless I can consult my logbook. The first was a supply depot

03:30 at L'Ile d'Adam near Paris. And that was relatively easy, daylight raid. The second one was to Konigsberg, which was about 9 hours I think. And it wasn't very effective, there was a fair amount of a problem there and the bombing was

04:00 distributed over a wide area and not concentrated, Konigsberg at that stage was being used by the Germans as a supply port for their Russian front. And there was some political manoeuvring to slow the rations that Britain and America I think were in fact on their side, and to aid and abet them. So

04:30 hence the raid there, when I went back with Gordon Stewart, it was very effective raid. But we had a problem in that we got over the target and the markers were having difficulties in finding it amongst all the snow and ice, the actual target areas of the docks and other installations. We were told to orbit and there was one cloud that seemed about a mile across.

05:00 And our driver hopped into it very rapidly and we orbited around until we were told to come out and bomb. And when we came out, the aircraft pouring out of this cloud, so the silver lining in that particular cloud happened to be a whole bunch of Lancasters. If there were any collusion in that I don't know but we were lucky in retrospect. The

05:30 raid was good success although defences were fairly heavy. We then did the, I think it was submarine pens. I think at La Harve and we also did a raid in Brest in France. Again I think it was submarine pens. We did a V1

06:00 site at a place called Rollincourt in France it was a combination raid, there were a number of medium bombers on it at the same time, which was unusual, normally the heavies operated quite separately. But these, this particular raid there was a Marauder I suppose about 70 or 80 feet below us in altitude and across

06:30 to our port side, and he was hit at the wing route with an ack-ack shell and the wing just fell off the and airplane just fell out of the sky. And that really gave me a shock, so close, a matter of a couple of hundred yards and there were 5 or 6 men dead, and in full vision of daylight.

07:00 We then, we went into Damestart, where we had a number of fighter attacks, where I was wounded. That's down in Marua and then following that we went to another Marua target called Stuttgart. Which is not very far away from Damestart. Again

07:30 a fairly rough trip. We went to Munich, which was in retrospect a marvellous scenic trip, we flew down across France around Switzerland on the south side, and across northern Italy and we turned up about 20 miles east of the Brenner Pass. And it was moonlight and here was the moon

08:00 on Switzerland with all the lights on and the glaciers showing the snow, it was absolutely glorious, we were flying at about I think it 15,000 feet. And here is Mont Blanc up at 16,400 above us and so we were sliding along and you could see planes back for miles. It was, just like a sort of cloudy day, it was absolutely beautiful. We turned up and hit Munich from the bottom and of course

08:30 they didn't expect heavy bomber squadrons to come in form the south like that. We came out across northern Switzerland and again looking at the lights straight, a bit across Balle and they got very annoyed with us a fired at us. I'm trying to think where we went from there

09:00 I recall we did one raid up into Norway, we were after shipping there. And that wasn't very bad at all because there was only light flak. Which we didn't worry about anti-aircraft a great deal because it needed a lot of hits of light flak, 20 mil [millimetre] and 40 mil, to really damage us and they were more

09:30 visual offensive weapons than practical. We did worry about the 88 millimetre and anything like that because it really could do heavy damage. I can remember two Lancasters, ours and another one,

virtually side by side after one German U-Boat [Unterseeboot – German submarine] which was zigzagging down the fiord down below us, both of them, the bomb aimers trying to get a shot at this

10:00 and yelling at each other over the intercom, “Get out of it, I saw him first,” which in the middle of war is just absurd, but it happened that one of them got it, he just flipped over. We did, on the oil side we took out

10:30 a number of oil refineries, which was a very good strategic operation in that the whole of the German war industry gradually ground to a halt because of the lack of fuel. And Spear after the war, Spear was the Minister for Production, after the war admitted that this was one of the major losses that, in causing them to lose the war.

11:00 He drew attention to the fact of their huge aircraft production, they couldn’t even get enough to test fly them, in fuel, to test fly them, they were just there in bits. One of the targets was in Czechoslovakia, a place called Brux,

11:30 we did 3 of the canal raids, the Dortman Ends Canal, The Emsvaser Canal and the Mittleland Canal, these canals were used as commercial highways by the Germans. With the bombing of the concentrated factories they dispersed their war production, but they still had to get all the bits together

12:00 for assembly. So for submarines for example, they were made up in about 20 different parts and they were shipped along the canals and so on for assembly at the Kiel and Bremmerhafen, the other main ports. And by draining the canals we cut the Germans off of all of this delivery of these spare parts.

12:30 And bits and pieces for assembly. So the Dortmen Ends was known as ‘the milk run’, because every 6 weeks the RAF would go over and bomb it and drain it , particularly over the River Glane where it went over in a big viaduct and if we could put bombs through the viaduct all the water would let out. And the Germans would work like fury with slave labour and indentured labour from the various other countries

13:00 build it up again and flood it again, and we’d go over and knock it down again, so this went on, it became ‘the milk run’. The same with the other canals. We went to a place called Verdinia, there was a pocket battleship there called the Lutzow, it had been, it was the first pocket battleship that was built. It had originally been named the Deutschland, but Hitler renamed it in 1941 as

13:30 the Lutzow. And I can remember the defences there were fairly solid. Apart from that I don't think there’s, I know I have missed out another, I just can’t remember them at the moment.

14:00 **Did it ever concern you that going on the bombing raids, were civilian casualties ever on your mind?**

In wartime who are civilians? Maybe Mum and the kids at home, but certainly not the man and family who is working as part and parcel of the war machine, it doesn’t matter if he is a tram driver or whether he is

14:30 turning out parts for a Messerschmitt on a lathe. He’s a civilian, but he is still a war worker. It never worried me, we were trying to take down the Nazi regime and that’s the way we saw it. As far as I know none of us had any qualms, most of our targets in 5 Group were specific strategic targets anyway. Either submarine pens or oil refineries or

15:00 we did do some towns, but they were taking out things like the marshalling yards, where they were pushing through trains full of troops or supplies. Ball bearing factories, things like that, aircraft factories, so by and large I had, well I had no qualms at all I can tell you that quite confidently. Post-war I’ve looked at photos of Germans,

15:30 German air force people and they look just like the photos of us on the squadron. It’s so ridiculous really. They were mainly, I don't think they were Nazis in the main, I think they were just defending their country.

16:00 They used to get very angry about it, as far as we were concerned, and I suppose we’d do the same. But that’s the politics of the thing. But again, no qualms whatsoever, and I still have none.

Can you give a sense of what flak felt or sounded like form your position as a gunner?

16:30 In a Lancaster, Alistair McLain said that it sounded like being in a boiler factory and when he got back to the gunners position it sounded like a

17:00 boiler factory on overtime. That was just without anything, that was the sound of 4 Merlins in the air, there was no padding, there was no nothing, you had your helmet on and your earphones. But that was all, the noise came through that and penetrated. With heavy flak bursting, a few hundred yards away, it was like a slamming of

17:30 a door. The light flak of course there was very little sound at all, you could smell the cordite of the burst shells. There were two types of ack-ack, they would get an individual aircraft and fire at it or they would put up a barrage and you would have to fly through the barrage. And

18:00 flying through that, you were flying through the smoke of the burst shells all the time. Certainly that filtered in over the oxygen masks. You could smell it quite clearly. That's about all I can tell you about, the noise and the light of them bursting of course was another thing, trying not to look at them, but occasionally one would burst directly in your line of sight and your night vision was gone.

18:30 **What kind of explosion, I suppose it would depend on how close it was?**

Well one which I think, when we were on Gardinia, the Lutzow had guns that could elevate to about 65 degrees, main armament, and one of the shells from that gun I'm sure which was about 15 inch, whatever the millimetres are

19:00 burst, I would have been 4 or 500 yards away. And our plane moved sideways in the air, quite distinctly. There was suddenly this jerk sideways and this huge flash there and with the shock wave. So they could be very effective. The normal ack-ack, the 88 millimetre, if you got hit with that it could blow a wing off very easily.

19:30 It was luck of the draw, once you had barrage, there was no way you could avoid it, possible put the nose down get up a bit more speed, and that was about it, try and fly through it but you would be flying through miles of it. It would go on for minutes at a time and

20:00 it concerned you a little.

Sounds like an understatement?

Well, nothing you could do about it.

Putting the nose down would get you closer to the source?

Well, in a barrage that didn't matter because they were probably firing over the top, 1,000 foot corridor, and one would burst there and one would burst there and it didn't matter,

20:30 it was just again, luck that you didn't get hit. The thing was to get out of the barrage area as fast as possible, well it was the only remedy. There was nothing else you could do.

Was your first encounter with ack-ack a bit of a shock?

No, I think I felt a bit detached about it

21:00 flak, because it was over there. And interesting, I was a very young man and I didn't muse on things and 'ponderables' and so on. It was just there. It wasn't here, that was the main thing.

21:30 **What about fighters?**

No, I wasn't worried about it, I was trying to get him to make sure he didn't get us. No I don't think I had any concerns about it. Well the concern was to make sure that I stopped him and that was about it.

22:00 **Were there a range of fighters that you had to take on?**

They, the FW190s the 109s, the 109s were there but we didn't worry too much about them because of their speed. At best they got them up to about 315 mile an hour. And so you had time to handle them if they came in

22:30 to you, they had a group called the 'Wild Sow' [Wild Boar, free ranging interceptors] and they had 190s and 109s and they were fairly, fairly numerous on a lot of the raids. I did see an ME163, the rocket propelled plane, we were

23:00 just flying straight and level, we had just been weaving, I had been looking around and suddenly a flare went off down on our starboard side, and I looked up and silhouetted in the flare, probably not more than 60 or 70 above us and slightly to starboard was this funny arrowhead shaped thing. And it had these German crosses on it, the black cross

23:30 and as I swung my turret there were all these sparklers came out the back and it just vanished., as fast as anything, it just looked like a Guy Fawkes rocket. When I came back I reported seeing this thing and I was made to sit down and draw it, which I did. And it was just like an arrowhead.

24:00 I couldn't estimate the wing span which they asked me about, it was, I had nothing to gage it one because I couldn't tell how far away it was, it appeared to be about 60 yards away, just up there. Anyway on, I draw this out and explain what it looked like, and it looked like a Guy Fawkes rocket, and then the next thing I am told to stay there and they bring in other people from group and

24:30 I go through it all again and I draw it all again. By the time they had finished with me and I got up to the mess, the mess was closed and I had missed my egg. I have never forgiven the air force for this, I missed my egg. So I was one of the first to see an ME163 in action. At that stage we didn't know what it was it was just an arrow head with sparklers coming out the back.

25:00 Well they were fairly efficient, if they were lucky. They used two types of fuel and unfortunately when they were filling it with the two types of fuel, if they got any mixture at all the thing would just go up in

flames an it would take out the people that were refuelling as well as the airplane. And the pilots on landing used to have real bother too, form the same affect, they would suddenly burst into flame. They had only about a 10, 12 minute fuel

25:30 ration, but they could get up to 25,000 feet in a matter of a minute, a minute and a half. And they would then shut off their engines and just glide down dropping flares to see what they could pick up. And if they could pick up anything they would start up again and fire and slip out of the stream again. And this was what was happening, this chap was just gliding.

26:00 When I first saw him, he had just dropped a flare and was just pure luck that it happened, he didn't even see us because he would have been looking over ahead somewhere and he was just up here.

Did you know about those planes before you saw it?

No, never heard of them before

Could have been a UFO [Unidentified Flying Object]?

Well that's right, an arrowhead with sparklers coming out of it

26:30 and that was the way I was drawing it and explaining it and its very close incidentally to what the reality was. It did look just like a rocket, it was a rocket. Had a wingspan of, I think it was 29 feet. So it was ultimately determined, I think it was 29 feet. Very small.

27:00 **Got a lot more than I had imagined just from the picture?**

Ha

Can you tell us about the operation that resulted in your DFM [Distinguished Flying Medal]?

This was on Damestart. It was our 7th operation of the crew.

What was the brief for that op [operation]?

27:30 I think it was to take out the main part of the town. It, the raid did create a fire storm and it was a very efficient raid. So we dropped our bombs, as I remember 'a cookie and clusters' and we turned away from the target and suddenly we were picked up by a radar patrol blue light and they had a bluish tinge to them.

28:00 If they were radar controlled as against the standard searchlight. And we were picked up by this and immediately surrounded by a mass of the other searchlights. Then the fighter flares went down so we knew that we were in for fighters, and a JU88 started attacking. The, I was flying mid upper and on the first attack

28:30 the rear gunner tried to fire, but his guns were frozen and jammed so he didn't get off one shot. I had, on the first attack, I had both guns operating, and then I got a stoppage in one gun, so I had one gun left. So that's always bad. He attacked five times and each time we were able to duck away from him

29:00 I'm sorry, on the second raid he got us with two, three shells, three 20 millimetres. One of which was on my turret, on the base of the turret, which put a lot of shrapnel in my legs, and apart from stinging I can't remember much, it was just like being bitten by about a dozen bees, that was the feeling of it. But again I

29:30 had this fire starting which was a bit awkward. When he broke away, I undid the belt and put the fire out and got my head dented. He came in again, again we evaded, and I got a few shots in on him. Forth time again, evaded, and again I got a couple of shots, and the fifth time he came in I really landed a few into him and some of the incendiaries took hold

30:00 and he was really on fire when he broke away. And at that stage, as he went on fire, we were getting, all the searchlights were over at an angle of, probably about 45 degrees and we managed to get out of them. So suddenly we were in that merciful blackness again. With a fighter on fire breaking away and we were ready to get home but we had

30:30 quite a bit of damage. He'd landed three gun shells into us. One of which had taken out a lot of one of the tail panes, about two thirds of it. And one in the wings, and my turret, the fuselage. So again we were fairly lucky, but again we put our training into effect and we evaded.

How were legs by the end of all that?

31:00 They were stinging, but I think the fact that they had been pretty hot when they went in sort of numbed them a bit, it was jut like stinging. The biggest piece would have been, in modern day terms about 3 millimetre by 3 millimetre by about 2 millimetres,

31:30 almost a square piece. And the rest of them were 2 millimetres by 3 millimetre pieces, about oh, one and a half millimetres thick, just casings of the canon shell, which had burst into fragments. So there were a lot of smaller pieces like these pieces of thread, which I was talking about, the final came out in 1953.

32:00 Again I think they were all so hot that it was very clean and I didn't have any problems with them, I all healed up properly.

Were you bleeding?

A little bit, not much. But again we had all this clothing on, which was in effect like bandages. The driver was a bit concerned. I

32:30 said I was all right but he sent the wireless operator down. So I dropped one leg out of the turret because I wanted to stay on the alert because we could have been attacked again. And I knew that the rear guns were all out because its cold and so I had the only available gun. It was up to me in case anything else happened. But I

33:00 wasn't concerned because I just wanted to show him that I was all right. And all he could see was a few holes. Little holes in the outer jacket, so I said to the skipper, well I'm all right, no threat. So he called us all back and that was it. When I got back I was feeling a bit of pain then, but up to the time I got out of the aircraft and starting walking I really didn't know, that I

33:30 had been 'peppered' [wounded]. Well as bad as it was, and it wasn't very bad, I was, a lot of people were very badly wounded and burnt and things. I don't want to make more of this than it was. It was there and I've still got a few scars. We got back okay and he landed the plane beautifully, greased it on.

34:00 As I say, any damage and he was wonderful pilot.

What was it like being in the turret when the cannon actually burst?

Well it was like it always was, I was firing at him and suddenly I had a bee stinging and that was it. Well I had several bees stinging me. Its

34:30 no different to what it is normally except that you are in action and you want to stop him. I think your training comes to the fore in these circumstances and you do anything, a lot of it by second nature. And I was, I know I was firing, after the shell hit 'the turret' I had to operate it

35:00 manually, so I had to use one hand to turn the turret and try and elevate and depress the guns' which made it every awkward physically and at the same time make sure I was getting hits on him, something that he could concern himself with. I thought, 'If we can get him upset, well he might break off', which he did of course finally, he had no options.

35:30 So anyway the plane was probably destroyed.

How long after the event were you awarded the DFM?

It was an immediate.

What happened after that operation?

Well they bunged me into hospital the doctor pulled out a number of

36:00 pieces which were in the main fairly close to the surface, I think the biggest piece was only in about a quarter of an inch, a third of an inch. And as I say gave me an aspirin for the headache. And that was that. There was no anaesthetic. He just probed and pulled out

36:30 pieces of metal. Again, I didn't know any different I thought this was normal. But it didn't inhibit me at all, it didn't cause me any real problems, sure while the metal was there and I started walking it really hurt because the tendons and muscles and so on pulling against the little bits of metal. But once they were out

37:00 I was as right as rain, no problem.

How did it feel receiving the DFM?

Well, it was a shock actually. I had no idea that that would happen. The first I knew I, there is a telegram in there from the

37:30 Air Chief Marshall Harris, "Congratulations on your immediate award of the DFM," and I thought, "Blimey, me?" And then I get one from the station commander. And it was spoiled, I still have it there, 'congratulations on your immediate award of the DFM, please do not acknowledge'. And I thought

38:00 and you…so that was that.

Tape 8

00:31 **Do you think there was sense of going through the motion after awhile, because of fatigue?**

I may have been in some cases, but it think would have been an invitation to disaster completely. It was eternal vigilance as far as we were concerned. Because your survival depended on it, there were no options.

01:00 You either stayed on the ball or you were gone. And that went over the whole crew.

You said that the wireless op was married. Did you get to meet his family?

Yes, he died a little while ago, I went to his funeral in Port Macquarie and was most upset. He was a very good engraver and I saw

01:30 some of his work, and beautiful. He had no children unfortunately, his wife, in fact, kept the crew together after the war by sending cards about what was happening with each one and we would all write back to Mary and she was a lovely lady, she really was.

Is she still alive?

I don't know I, he died, oh

02:00 about 12 years ago now and apart from a couple of Christmas cards after that, I think she in fact became involved with another chap and sort of has other interests. But initially she kept the 6 of us here in Australia together while we were alive. But two died fairly quickly, one, the bomb aimer, who trained as a dentist after he

02:30 came back. Under the Reconstruction Training Scheme [Commonwealth Training Scheme], he died of a heart attack at an age of 42. And the other gunner died of emphysema and he would have been about the same age. So the navigator and the pilot and myself were together in '96

03:00 at, we had a crew reunion, squadron reunion here in Brisbane and we went our with our wives and that was very pleasant. Subsequently the navigator had died, so there is only Gordon and myself left. And we meet, well whenever he is in hospital I visit him daily. But generally speaking we have a luncheon together every 3 months. So and we talk on

03:30 the telephone.

Emphysema seems to be a big sickness, must have been all the smoking?

No idea, it could have been. He lingered for quite a while after he developed it and his wife wrote me a letter and told me about it, there is nothing you can do about it.

04:00 **How many operations all up?**

32. Again this jargon, this non-reality, this was called a 'tour', and so you did the 'trips' for the 'tour'. Again escaping the non-reality, you didn't say outright anything at all because it

04:30 might be real.

Do you think part of that non-reality is Australian?

No I don't think so, it was fairly general, as far as I know. Again I didn't have a great deal to do with any of the English air crew other than George ,our flight engineer. Whom I found quite a nice chap, ex-London Bobby, married. Also died some time ago.

05:00 He seemed to have much the same outlook as we had. All I can say is that because of our behaviour and looking back on it, we had to be escaping, it was to get away from what might happen tomorrow.

Which was your hairiest [most dangerous] operation?

05:30 Well I don't think I could say, there were so many that were fairly hairy. We had so much damage that our ground staff christened our plane the 'flak ship', because we brought home so many holes.

06:00 They, its hard to say what the, some of them were, had lighter moments, like as I said, cruising alongside the southern side of the alps looking up at Mont Blanc and just a moment of elation of this sheer natural beauty. The flying in the Norwegian fiords,

06:30 again, natural beauty, absolutely glorious. And then there'd be night after night after night of pitch black and fighter attacks and flak and searchlights. I couldn't say that there was one hairier than any others, I could say that half were hairy and half weren't, just off the top of my head.

07:00 **When you look back, are you glad you took to the air rather than walking?**

Well I've got nothing really to make that judgement on. I'm here and I might not have been if I'd have gone in the other tour, or if I had gone in the army, by that time the Americans were well into the war and it could be

07:30 that I would have had it easy, I don't know. Again, it's, I've got nothing to make that judgement on.

What did you know about what was going on in Australia regarding the Japanese?

Not a great deal, we would read the Daily Mirror, the first time we'd turn over to page 3 and get Jane. And then look at the headlines. And again,

08:00 not a great deal of interest, for me personally, possibly there was a lot more in the older people, who at least thought about things I think that mainly I was switched off, in retrospect.

Do you think there was a fear on your behalf about your family, and the Japanese invading?

08:30 No, no. It never occurred to me, I knew my Dad was a very competent person, and I knew he would handle anything back here. No I really do think that I was switched off to most things that were happening. I wasn't really concerned about what was going on in the bombing of London

09:00 the V1s the V2s. It was noted but there was nothing I could do about it, so again, I think that just switched off.

After receiving your DFM how many more operations did you have to go?

I think that was the 7th, so it was 20 odd. What I, one that I didn't talk about was Walkeron Island.

09:30 In detail we initially took out the main dykes at West Cappel to flood the island. So this was following a decision or suggestion by the head of the Canadian group, the Simons, and by flooding the island because most of it was under sea level, the Germans would be placed in a pretty difficult

10:00 situation. Their guns on Walkeron were preventing any entry of ships into the shelf to get to Antwerp, and with the British and Canadian advance up north through Belgium and almost into Holland and they get to the shelf, and they want Antwerp opened as a shelf so they can get supplies in. All the supplies were coming in through Normandy, which is

10:30 way down in the bottom of France and coming a long way; trucks which would normally be bringing fighting men forward were being used to bring supplies forward. The shortage of fuel was holding up the tanks and their advance and so on. So as soon as they could get Antwerp open the better. So this Canadian General came up with the idea of flooding the island, 'cause there was no other way for them to have

11:00 huge losses by attacking it directly. So we were called in, we broke through the big dykes. We shifted about 10,000 tonnes of clay in those operations, and it just opened it up to the sea. Flooded all but the outside perimeter dykes on which were still based a number of the heavy guns. It was effective in that it flooded all the munitions stores and all their supplies in general that were in the island.

11:30 It also had a pretty bad effect on the population there, about 40,000 population, it flooded all their farm lands with seawater, apparently this was of some concern, in as much as Churchill even rang Queen Wilhelmina to tell her that this was proposed. And as an aside, by 1947

12:00 they had reclaimed all the land and had bumper crops. So in fact it was the right decision to go ahead and bomb. The next thing was to try and take out the dykes down at Flushing. And which was done, we had a collision in mid air with some character who was weaving around and came right across the top of us and dipped his wing and took off our fin and rudder. Well we got back okay, but we had to jettison our bombs

12:30 in the North Sea. So we went on the third raid to take out the big guns, or one particular battery of the big guns. And this is when our bomb aimer was hit in the eyes. And he was in real trouble, but he insisted on going around and around and around until he could get vision on them before we dropped the bombs. Well, we took a lot of damage, and he was an awarded an immediate DFM out of that, from his persistence after being wounded.

13:00 And the pilot was awarded a DFC again, for continuing on with the operation in those circumstances, with the damaged aircraft. We were fairly efficient on that Walkeron Island. Had a little side effect in that I met here in the village where I am living, a chap who was one of the Canadians at the shelf at the time we were bombing

13:30 Walkeron and we've subsequently had talks. I was on the Australian Victory Contingent in 1946 to London, attending Kensington Gardens and he was on the British Victory Contingent at Kensington Gardens and we were about 60 yards apart, 13,000 miles away and now we are living about 200 yards apart here in this village.

14:00 We also had another close area, when I was down at Yarmouth and going out on this air-sea rescue boat, he was based just outside Yarmouth. So there you go, we were so close and never knew one another, and now we have a drink every Friday night together. So that was an aside story.

Its funny in life how people keep popping up?

Yes, well the

14:30 lady over the road was from Brux in Czechoslovakia, she informed me that my pronunciation of Brux was quite wrong, its actually 'Brix', it stands for bridge in English, and its pronounced 'Brix', so there

you go. Now have I answered your question?

Yes. Can you recall any other operations that stand out in your mind today?

15:00 A number of little bits of the operations stand out. I can remember particular incidents that occurred, the fighter attack which we evaded or a plane being shot down close by or in fact, having no option but to look back at a target as part of the search pattern because I was

15:30 looking down and the target was all flaming and alight and flares going on down there. These things are very clear in my mind. Other things I have got no memory at all about. I can't remember, for example, crossing the sea from France across to England more than about 3 times, and yet I did it 30 odd times.

16:00 Why, I don't know, maybe it was boredom, maybe it was shock, still in shock, I just don't know, I have no memory of parts of the operations, other parts I remember fairly clearly. Some briefings I can remember. Some I have got no recollection of at all. Some debriefings I can remember, I can remember the time I didn't get my egg very clearly. And

16:30 I can't recall some segments, during stand down periods. I was obviously playing dominos or cards, I wasn't writing home, I know that because my mother was very outspoken when I got back.

17:00 I can remember a number of my leaves. Particular incidents of a 9-day leave, but I can possibly remember a maximum of about two days out of 9 days. Now that is just completely lost to my memory. I don't know what I was doing or where I was going or who I was with. So

Have you talked to anybody about that?

I've talked to my doctor about it. He said that your mind can drop it out because of two reasons. One was boredom or the other is shock. And either way

17:30 it can just push it straight out of your mind and you can never remember it. I was worried about it and he said, "Forget it, won't hurt you." It just happens in an interview like this that I can't remember.

Can I ask you how you met your wife, considering you had all these other ladies?

I grew up

18:00 in a small town called Edithvale. And around the corner lived a little girl called Peggy who was a damn nuisance because she was younger than me, a year younger than me. And I can remember I was going away, I think I had been on the final leave, and she was at the station and she put out her hand and said, "Good luck!"

18:30 And I could remember that, and I said, "Oh, thanks" and walked off. And this kid, I came back from the war and I started going out to the local dances, and she was there and suddenly she wasn't a kid any more. And we'd known each other, she was 8 when they moved there and I would have been 9. So we had

19:00 known one another for quite a few years. And I think as a matter of convenience we started going out together because we lived so close and I could see her home and go home myself. Our fathers were good friends, they were both Scots and they used to drink together, both pretty bored. And I can remember a conversation between them, talking about these 'new Australians' coming into the place and I was probably the only

19:30 person in the area who could understand what they were saying. But they were off the planet. But they used to consume a fair bit of whiskey between them. Anyway, we started as a matter of convenience just going around together and suddenly it was permanent. It was as quick as that.

You became good mates?

She was first-class. Lovely lady, and put up with me, initially when I came home

20:00 I was drinking very heavily. I wasn't very close to her at that stage. And it wasn't until probably oh, would have been a year after I got home that I suddenly came too and realised I had to put my life together. We had no things

20:30 like counselling or anything like that when we came home. We were just told to get back on with it. And fortunately I think probably the shock was greater than, certainly, than I realised. I know I was escaping into non-reality as rapidly as I could and I was being foolish about it. I was drinking quite heavily. And I had a bit of a

21:00 start when I almost went under a train and I immediately stopped drinking because I realised that I was beyond the pale. My parents were most concerned, I was still living at home. And they had tried to counsel me and ease my life as much as possible. In fact it probably contributed because I didn't have to worry about anything, they would look after it.

21:30 I was back working, but I think I was probably barely functional. After this, I stopped drinking and I really came out of it I think, and I started taking an interest in life. I went back into the Lifesaving club

and I went back into sailing which I had been doing as a kid. And both things again gave me an outlet, a physical

22:00 outlet and so then I started going around with my future wife and we gradually grew closer and closer together. And we knew one another's foibles anyway, we'd virtually grown up together. Neither of us could stand the sight of the other. So that's how it happened. And we lived very happily for over 50 years. Three good daughters and

22:30 well, very happy life we had.

Was your father happy that you ended up with Peggy?

I don't know, he liked her…

Because of her father?

I don't know, I think he liked her long before then, he used to walk home with her, they used to come home on the same train. And he used to walk her home at night.

23:00 And I think she looked on him as a second father-figure anyway. Regarded me as the end of the world. I was, you know, however these things happen. Anyway she was a great wife and we had a lovely life together.

You said you didn't really make friend with people because they might not be there the next day.

23:30 **What about the locals in the villages?**

No I didn't have a great deal to do with the local people. We would drink in the local pubs but I would talk to them, 'gidday', but it didn't go beyond superficiality.

24:00 Again I was 19 years of age. I think probably my thought processes revolved around the next cigarette or my next girlfriend. And that was about the outer limit, other than my job.

Do you think that would be the same for most blokes?

Well, I don't know, I can only speak for myself. It was again a detachment away from

24:30 home, away from laws, well when I saw laws, the social mores that you grew up with, all the things that were done and not done. They no longer applied. Again I think it was the start of this escape.

Can you tell us about hearing that the war was over?

Ah yes,

25:00 again it was expected for quite a while. And I had the two lots; the VE Day I had in London, and the VP [Victory in the Pacific] Day I had here, in Melbourne. I wasn't particularly concerned about it, my relief came in January of '45, when we finished operations, and I can remember the driver saying,

25:30 Gordon Stewart saying, "Will we go on?" Because we could have gone on with pathfinders, and I can remember I said, "We have done enough" And its probably the only time that I spoke up as a junior, absolute junior of the crew, in years. And I think it was probably the only moment of sanity I had at that time. In retrospect, Gordon and I talked about this since

26:00 and I think he felt that what he would like to do would be for us to get 50 trips in, because that would have been the accolade, the ultimate, 50. In retrospect we couldn't have done more than about another 10. Because Bomber Command operations ceased in April. We finished our last trip on the 16th, the night of the 16th , 17th January, and

26:30 we were going on leave following that, so we would have been away for 9 days which would have taken us well into the end of January. And then we might have got in 3 or 4 trips in February and 3 or 4 in March, because you are right in the middle of winter. That's one thing I didn't talk about was the weather restrictions in Europe, which I should, I think. But so we couldn't have got in more than about another 10.

27:00 So it was the right decision on my part to speak up. The others accepted it and I think by and large they were pleased that someone else had said it. I think they all wanted to, but no one would say, "Yeah, lets give it away." So the junior lad did it. Talking about weather, with the winter over there the conditions were absolutely dreadful. You'd get snow and ice and sleet and the rain

27:30 and you'd get half way to a target and you'd get an 'abort', again, euphemism, you'd be called back because the target would be under intense cloud and they couldn't get the markers in. And it would be down to 300 feet, well we couldn't bomb at 300 feet, we'd blow ourselves into pieces. I didn't talk about that either, minimum safety height. When you are bombing, your own bombs going off affect all sorts of things, so you

28:00 had a minimum safety height, minimum height that you can fly out and still get away unscathed from

what was happening. With big bombs 12,000 pounders, the minimum safety height was about 12,000 feet. Sometimes you were forced below this by fighter attack evasion, you'd drop 2 or 3,000 feet. And you could feel the concussion of the bombs going off underneath. If you were

28:30 dropping 'cookie and clusters', which were blast effect incendiaries, the effect wasn't too bad at all, you get down to probably 5 or 6,000 feet without having much effect. Except if you were a bit late and the fire-storm had taken place and then there is an enormous amount of hot air coming up. I was on about 7 or 8 fire-storm raids. And while they were very effective, they, you know, burnt out a lot of people's homes and left thousands of people homeless. A lot of

29:00 people object to this and say it's civilian and so on, but they were working for the Nazi government and they were producing… so it in fact halted the production of a number of quantities of goods and services. On occasion we would have to shovel our own runways. Clear of snow, then go to briefing, get dressed, take off and in the mean time, the ground staff would be keeping the runways

29:30 clear. So it was hard physical work to shovel snow, its not easy at all, and my heart went out to ground staff who had to work while we were working and then keep it open for us to get back. Occasionally we would be diverted before we left, in other words, our drome would be under fog and there was no chance of us getting back in, so if we were expected in 3 hours or 4 hours or whatever. So we would be diverted to a drome north of Scotland or

30:00 something like that. We took the famous bomber, 'S for Sugar', no enemy planes shall fly over the right territory, on its 117th trip. And we took out an oil refinery just south of Stetton which is way up in the far end of the Baltic, almost onto the Russian border. And before we left

30:30 we were told that the base would be closed and we were diverted to a drome in northern Scotland. We got back to about Denmark and were crossing over the top of Denmark and the radio operator got a signal, "Return to base." So we assumed that everything had opened up. We got down to about 'the wash', which is that big opening bit on the eastern side of England, the big, where the sea goes in a big rectangle. And

31:00 we were again re-diverted. Now if you think about it, we had come down from Denmark, a long trail down to 'the wash' instead of going straight across to Scotland. So suddenly petrol became a bit of a problem. We turned north and went up on the east coat of England and crossed the border into Scotland. We couldn't see anything because the weather was foul. And

31:30 we were getting very, very low on petrol. So Gordon said, "Stand by to bail out." And I can remember the bomb aimer saying, "Mr Harris is going to be very angry with you." The reason for this was that 'S for Sugar' was shown in the papers, English papers about every month, with a few more trips up. And here it was, it had done 117, and if we dropped it in the ocean, or on the land somewhere, there would go all this propaganda, you see.

32:00 So there was silence at the other end. So anyway we were standing by the bail out and suddenly, light came on just ahead of us. And it was a place called Lucas, which is just out of St Andrews, where the golf course is, and just north of Edinburgh. And we got in there, we landed and I think two others got in there too, and then the clamp came on there. We lost

32:30 a lot of aircraft that night, just couldn't land anywhere and they just had to crash and that was it. We landed and at the time the engineer said, "By my calculation we've got 30 gallons left," and I wrote '30 gallons' in my log book. In actual fact it was 5 gallons. As we were coming off the engine stopped and it was as close as that.

33:00 We could have crashed with the glamour airplane and we would have been probably twirling from that day on. We would have been 60 years in the penitentiary. But we got it back. So that's written up in that very a special Lancaster, our trip time was 10 hours 51 minutes. Which was the longest flight of that particular plane. Which incidentally is

33:30 now preserved in the RAF museum at Hendon, and that was its longest wartime trip.

Had you run out of petrol, how long does the aircraft stay in the air? Does it glide for a while?

No, we would have had to get out straight away, with the fuel so low, it would have crashed within minutes. Well as it was we landed and the engines cut out so that shows you how close it was. Would have flown of about another 4 or 5

34:00 minutes after we bailed out. If those lights hadn't have come on, and it would have crashed, he would have turned it out to sea before he bailed out. And it would have probably crashed in the sea, because we landed it at Lucas which is right beside the sea anyway.

And the lights only came on for a few minutes?

Yes, that's right. And it was clamped again.

Were men killed as well?

Many, many. One thing I

34:30 didn't talk about was one of the gunners' problems was the vigilance against our own aircraft. Not against, looking out for our own aircraft to avoid collision. In the Lincolnshire, all of the stations were so closely together that the circuit rings the 'drem' system, the circle of lights overlapped like Olympic rings. So

35:00 doing an anticlockwise circuit on these, you'd have aircraft head in to one another. With these overlapping circuits. And time and time again there would be people coming back from a 6, 8 hour raid, would crash head on into one another on these circuits coming in to land, because they relaxed their guard. They relaxed their look-out , they were tired, fatigued,

35:30 but you had to be alert all the time to stay alive. And on a few occasions, we alerted our pilot near collision, which we took evasive action against and got out of it. So again, very close in some cases, we lost our trailing aerial on, sorry, our general aerials were taken off it was so close. So

36:00 these went up from the plane up to the end of the tail plane, end of the fins and rudders, sorry.

If you had a one in three chance of actually surviving, how did they get so many planes up in the air again? Was there a production turnover that was beyond belief?

Oh yes.

36:30 Producing huge numbers of aircraft. When you look at the aircraft production, it was really marvellous, no doubt about it. And with the Lancaster it, they produced enormous numbers of them. They lost enormous numbers too. But the other 4 engine aircraft were the Halifax and the Sterling, and the Liberator of course. The Americans used the B17,

37:00 the B17 could only lift a small bomb load compared to the Lancaster, which in its final form could lift 22,000 pounds, 10 tonnes. But normal Lancaster could lift 8 tonnes. The B17 that could lift about 2 to 3 tonnes, or did lift about 2 to 3 tonnes, I don't know what it could have done, say less ammunition and less people and so on, but they were

37:30 doing daylights and they had to have heavy protection, so they had a lot of gunners and I think they had 5 gunners. And a lot of armament, lot of armour plate. But as a bombing machine the Lancaster stood out alone for the delivery of high quantity of the bombs to the enemy.

38:00 **Had you not landed at Lucas would you have bailed out in the drink [sea]?**

No we were about following the coast line so we probably would have been able to manipulate it to land on land. And then Gordon would have turned it out to sea and bailed out himself. But it was very close. But its just that the plane, which now resides at Hendon,

38:30 was almost, almost lost by us, Australians, colonials.

That wouldn't have looked good?

No, there is a story about it there, and a book.

Gordon probably would have done a good landing as well?

It wasn't bad, it wasn't bad, yes I remember that. Yeah, we trundled along, might have been one or two bounces. Yeah.

Tape 9

00:32 **Given your training, were there things that you picked up in the field that training didn't prepare you for?**

The one thing that did rile me I think was when I got to the squadron I expected the gunnery leaders to

01:00 tell us really what it was like on operations. And at the time I was a bit upset that we couldn't get that. Although I asked questions, I was in bad odour of course, over the dereliction of our other gunner who was, had the concussion in Lichfield at the hospital and I didn't know where he was. But they

01:30 neither the gunnery leader nor the assistant gunnery leader could tell me specifically what to do in action. In retrospect there was no way that they could because every one is different. At the time though I felt that this was not good. Because I wanted as much information as I could possibly get. Other than that

02:00 we were given continual training. Even while we were on operations we would go out on fighter affiliation with film cameras instead of, we'd dump the master gun and put in a film camera. We'd go out, two gunner crews at a time with one pilot, with both pilots but with only one navigator and one wireless operator. And we would both go through manoeuvres with Hurricanes or Spitfires,

02:30 Mosquitos, Mustangs, we would do practice bombing over at Waynesfield Sands and that was, if ever there was a stand down, well there was training on. Across countries, it kept us on our toes all the time, as to keeping our senses alert as to what we supposed to be doing. We were being assessed on all of these of course. Our films

03:00 were examined, our bombing results were reported. So all the time you were pushing to achieving the ideal of being the best bomber crew. And I don't know if anyone, well I suppose the perfect bomber crew was the one that brought everything home again after delivery. But you were striving after the ideals, and hoping to stay alive.

03:30 Other than that, I found the training exceptionally good in England. Training here, no. I was, I didn't know how little I knew until I got to England and started real training there, with real fighters coming in and attacking you, with real simulated attacks in the simulator in the big drome. I just didn't know what it was like. I didn't know how fast attacks were until

04:00 I was given lessons to calculate relative speeds and put times to these. And suddenly I realised that it would all be over in a matter of seconds. So suddenly you had a different outlook on that. You also know that you had a restricted amount of ammunition, so in our particular case we had about a minute, a little over a minute on the mid upper and about a minute and a half of the rear

04:30 guns, solid firing. You couldn't do that of course, the barrels would have wilted. But in two second bursts, it's not a great number. So if you are attacked several times and it's very dicey as to whether you can continue to fire. In the temperatures we were operating in, guns stoppages

05:00 were often seen. They, you could avoid most of them by very careful activity with your guns, very careful breaching, by being careful in the use of gun oil and other things that might freeze it up. I paid particular attention to this and generally speaking I had guns that were operative.

05:30 Some people didn't I know and possibly that meant their loss. There were some careless people.

Was there oil to combat the temperatures?

Well there was no gun heating. Until they got into the Rose turret which was heated and that was marvellous. They were introduced toward the end of 1944, but we never had them on our squadron. I think they went into 1 Group.

06:00 But I never saw them operational at all, but they were a beautiful turret, they were like sitting in an armchair, you had room to bail out directly between the guns. They had everything for a gunner, they were marvellous and I never got the opportunity to use them. Although I was trained on them at LFS [Lancaster Finishing School]. Which was the first time I had ever seen one and I fell in love with it. And everyone I asked about it said, "Oh no, they are not

06:30 on operations yet." But 1 Group got them somehow. But however, that was that. I can't think of any particular thing in the training that I would alter. I felt in retrospect that it was first-class. Again you had to apply yourself, you had to do all of the exercises that they put to you and some gunners

07:00 were a bit lax in this, they did slacken off. But shooting at clay pigeons for example, I religiously went and shot 30 clays. But you finally got to the point that instead of shooting them from position number 8, you would be shooting them as they came out of the box. Which meant very, very fast coordination of mind and muscle. And it kept you right on your toes, good training, first-class.

07:30 **Can you tell me about the term, getting 'flak happy'?**

Well, it's 'switched off', it was a term used by someone who outwardly had no fear whatsoever. Nothing could touch him, no-one could kill him. And they just call them 'flak happy'. They were barely functional outwardly.

08:00 **In what way?**

Well, they were switched off. They had determined that they just couldn't be killed. That was that.

How would translate into their daily activities?

Oh I, I think they looked normal, in a very abnormal situation.

08:30 That's the fact.

They were too calm in a storm?

Well, that's right, they just didn't panic, they were completely switched off. Nothing could touch them and it may have been some inner conviction, but I suspect it was this withdrawal from reality which I spoke about earlier.

Would that level of confidence be something you prefer to have on operations?

09:00 Well providing that you didn't take risks with it. And that could have been the other corollary, that, "Oh

it won’t touch me so I will go straight through them.” And that could have unnerving results. I don't think I saw it too many times, but there were a few occasions where

09:30 I did see it and some of those people are not with us today. So I think probably because of the carelessness, by thinking, “Well , I’m okay Jack,” and they weren’t.

One pilot told me the worst part on operations was on his way home, because you become reflective.

10:00 **Did this ever affect you?**

You get very fatigued. We were on the alert from the time of take off, well, the time of engine start up

10:30 to the time of engine shut down. And that could be as long as 10 hours 51 minutes. But generally around about 6 to 8 hours. And staying that alert, for all that time required the use of Benzedrine. We took one Benzedrine tablet an hour. But even with that you were

11:00 fatigued because of the I suppose, cramped conditions and the continual quartering of the sky very rapidly, because you only had seconds to cover your search pattern. And the memory working all the time, “Was that there before or wasn’t it, on the last swing?” And that going on hour after hour after hour, it enervates you, you get out of the plane and you just want to collapse on the

11:30 tarmac and go to sleep. Except that the last ‘wakey, wakey’ tablet that you took, Benzedrine wouldn’t let you do it. You were still mentally high, but physically absolutely drained. And it was hard to get to sleep. Some gunners I know would, after leaving the target area with say a couple of hours or 3 hours to go, would not

12:00 take any further tablets because of the sleeping problem. I didn’t and as far as I know other gunners slackened off that way. But it was difficult to get to sleep afterwards. Go to bed and just toss and toss, and finally complete oblivion, after a couple of hours. And the next thing you’d know

12:30 you’d have to get up. On the operational stations there weren’t any parades as you would know them. I was reading a book just recently, and the pilot who had written it said that he could only remember one parade formal parade as we knew through training and so on. And that was when the squadron commander changed. That didn’t happen, oh, it did happen

13:00 when we were there. Billy Brill was the only survivor out of 6 wartime squadron commanders, the others were all killed in action, the other 5. Gain, which the leaders flew. So there was none of this sitting back and, so you had at least a feeling that your boss knew what you were doing. And they

13:30 didn’t pick easy trips either. They took quite hard trips. I can recall being on parade, but it was at a time of stand down and we were lined up in the crews of 7. And I can recall this one

14:00 particularly because the 6 members of the crew, we all had moustaches, the 7 of us, and the 6 others and the pilot all shaved off half our moustache, to match our half wing. Which drew a rather caustic comment from the CO. But that’s about the only parade that I can remember and I can remember we were all in flying boots and just battle dress. So it wasn’t a formal parade by any means. I think

14:30 from memory, it was to announce that there was some difficulty in escaping over the Spanish Pyrenees and we better get ourselves into peak physical shape, instead of lolling around and boozing [drinking]. And that afternoon there was to be a run around the perimeter track, which was about 7 miles, which was received with a very dubious enthusiasm.

15:00 in fact I think I went about 300 yards and ducked behind a petrol tanker. And found about 5 others in there sheltering ready to walk back. But as far as I know that was the only parade that took place while I was at Waddington, formal parade. You were required to report into your gunnery room and so on, and if there was nothing on,

15:30 no lectures or anything like that, you then checked with your driver to find out if there was some exercise on. And if not well, in my particular case, I used to go out to the armoury or out to the aircraft and check everything. And or read TM, which is a training manual, which was very much sort after because of the cartoons in it. And that was generally the life.

16:00 **Was there any moment on operations where you felt you weren't going to make it?**

Several times I felt that would be possible. I can remember, well one particular occasion there was an enormous amount of flak, it seemed to be everywhere and I thought,

16:30 “Well, this is it.” But it wasn’t. The plane was being buffeted by the explosions and fire and noise and light flashes, it was all around us and it, we thought, I don’t even think we got any flak out of it, that particular exercise and yet I , it was the one probably where I thought, “Well this is it.” A couple of other occasions I have been

17:00 pretty nervous. As far as I can recall I didn’t appeal to the Almighty. I think if I had the Almighty would have said, you know, “Look after yourself, mate.” You know, “You bought it, so cop [deal with] the results.” But apart from that no.

What was it on those particular occasions that made you nervous?

Well,

17:30 just the sheer amount of the flak and light and the burst, everything sort of happening at once and I wasn't in control. There was, I'd lost my night vision completely with all these heavy flak bursts. My night vision was probably down to 3 or 400 yards which was very dangerous, whereas normally it would have been 1,000 yards. I think things were beyond

18:00 control and I thought this was it. But again, it wasn't. So there you go.

At the time did you trust your pilot and the crew?

Oh yes, implicitly. There were occasions when there were arguments on the plane.

18:30 But during, that was only during our training. When we became operational, I can only recall one particular altercation which occurred between myself and the bomb aimer. And the bomb aimer was saying, "Left, left, steady" These fellows had a repetitive problem, they always repeated themselves, 'left, left steady', 'right , right, steady, steady'. Anyway,

19:00 Bob was on the run up on the target, "Left, left , steady." And there was another pane sitting almost directly above us. Not more than 60 feet up, with the bomb bay doors open, and here are all the bombs lined up. I remember that particular target, there were 500 pounders. So there would have been whole bay load of them. Probably about 20 of them.

19:30 And he is ready to drop too, with his bomb aimer now doubt saying, "Left, left, steady, left, left, steady." And all I can see is these bombs coming down and taking our wing off. So I am yelling into the intercom, "Get out of here there is a plane immediately above us, he'll drop his bombs on us" And Bob saying, "Right , right" and taking us back in under, and Gordon is obviously trying to look up and look at his

20:00 compass at the same time, and finally the bombs went down between our wing and our tail plane, it was as close as that. But that was the only time there was ever any internal problem. The rest of the time we operated completely as s crew. If over the intercom came, "Down port," without questions the aircraft fell out of the sky to the left. Because you couldn't afford to say, "Why?" It

20:30 just had to happen that fast or you were gone. And that happened with every person. We called our pilot the 'driver' because everyone told him what to do. the bomb aimer would tell him 'left, left, steady', the navigator would tell him to go on a course of 320 degrees, and the wireless operator would tell him that the winds were 20 knots from so and so, and the gunners would tell him , 'down starboard', 'down port'.

21:00 So he had it all, as a problem. But again everyone had to really respect the expertise of the other particular members of the crew. The navigator relied on the bomb aimer for visual map reading and sightings and so on. He relied on the gunners for

21:30 wind readings, for, I say relied, he didn't, he was helped by the gunners and reporting where particular towns might be because of particularly activity there, searchlights, flak. All in all we worked together as a team. I don't think there was any other particular group in wartime as small as that that worked together, maybe the midget submarines

22:00 would be about the closest, with 7 men. It was a real team effort. The only other thing that occurs to me is that at one stage it was reported that, or said, that an operation for Bomber Command was like going on the Charge of the Light Brigade. And one of our

22:30 fairly famous members contemplated on that and said, "Yes, but they only had to do it once."

Speaks for itself doesn't it?

It certainly does.

What about superstitions or rituals with the crew?

Yes, there were,

23:00 I think at least two or three of us had particular things that we would take. I had a little skull with a top hat on it, which I hung from the battle jacket pocket. And I can remember our other gunner getting most upset when one night I didn't have it with me. And he made me go back to the locker room and get it and put it on because he said he wouldn't fly unless I had it on.

23:30 He was more superstitious than me. A couple of the others used to carry different things. I don't know what, but I know it was a pretty regular thing. Again it was a grasp at something that just might be, mightn't be, but, it was like 'never bow to authority, but always tip your hat'.

24:00 **Cover your bets?**

Yeah, that's right, just in case. Who knows?

As a gunner did you prefer the daylight or night time ops?

Oh, I think I preferred the daylight because again you had the vision of miles, you could see what was happening. And again they were generally the easier trips because to put them on in daylight

24:30 it had to be not a hard target. Otherwise they would have shot us out of the sky. The night trips were generally fairly long and fairly hard, but as against that, if we would have done them in daylight we would never have survived, I'm sure. It would have always been on the German side.

25:00 **Was there a particular fighter that you feared?**

Probably the FW 190, which was used in the 'Wild Boar' group, they used to just be directed into bomber stream and operate individually.

25:30 They had very good armour plating and they were very hard to get at, our bullets seemed to just bounce off them. They did have one vulnerable spot just at the starboard wing route, that area in the fuselage, just ahead of the wing route, there was a fuel pump. And if you could get a couple of bullets in there and smash that, they were gone.

26:00 Apart from that, I didn't know about the 262, I think I would have feared that. Hitler of course won the war for us when he wouldn't allow that to be produced as a fighter. He wanted a vengeance weapon, and therefore wanted it produced as a bomber. So Willy Messerschmitt then had to go and redesign it, redesign the floor that would hold

26:30 the weight of a couple of thousand pounds of bombs and so in fact, it delayed it by about a year before they got some fighters off the production line. Eventually they changed their minds. So they didn't come on stream until the point in time when the war was virtually over. We had knocked out most of the oil refineries, their fuel was so short that they had to keep their aircraft on the ground a lot of the time.

27:00 And if they'd been produced as a fighter form the time that they first started production, one rolled off the line in 1943, it would have been a very close thing because they could have knocked down the Americans in daylight and they could have knocked us down at night, they were so fast, they were 530 mile an hour, well armed, 4 cannon and a beautiful

27:30 aeroplane really. So far in advance of anything the allies had, it wasn't even funny. In fact, we were very lucky that the Germans had more stupid people on their side than we had. And that's about the story. Well there were other aircraft that they

28:00 tolled about with in production, Milch and the other German chap, under Gallons, decided that they didn't want anything to do with jets. And there was another aircraft that was probably the best night-fighter that had been produced, and they just wouldn't produce it, he wanted more attention given into the rockets, the V2s and so on, so they put production over into those.

28:30 So, which saved us. If they could have got those aircraft into the air in the numbers that Gallons wanted, and of course Gallons was sacked because he protested over this. And Gallons was a very, very good fighter pilot, he was a marvellous bloke and he stood down as Inspector of Aircraft because he objected to the decision. And it wasn't until, well the war, it was too late, the war was over

29:00 when they gave him I think, finally 3 squadrons of those 262s, it was matter of 30 or 40 aircraft, well of course, he couldn't take it by then. But earlier they could have knocked them down in their hundreds every day. And it would have been beyond, an attrition rate beyond any reproduction that could be made in the UK or in the US [United States].

29:30 So we were very lucky to have those stupid people on that side. We had them as well, but they weren't as stupid as the other side.

Once the war was over, what was it like returning to Australia?

Well, I think I was still a bit 'out of it', as I say, I think I was. The first thing I did was go out drinking. And for the next 12 months I think that was, well

30:00 not 12 months, but certainly the next 6 months that was the pattern in my life. Just oblivion, and when I wasn't working I was senseless.

Were there other things that brought war home for you like particular sounds or?

Yes, I finished up under the seat or half under the seat

30:30 of a Victorian railway carriage with detonators on the line. And I can remember having on a blue double-breasted suit with my brief case, and the next thing I know I had got a very dusty dirty looking shabby coat and trousers and people are staring at me, and it was the detonators going off on the line. And automatically I just

31:00 dived under the seat opposite me. And that would have been, oh, several months after, it was the end of 1947 I think, it would have been two years after the end of the war or more. The winter of '47.

Did you ever have nightmares?

Yes, but not

31:30 the, to the point where it became obvious. I managed to keep it really inside myself as far as I know. My parents were a bit worried, I'd have nightmares and they would hear me. Generally speaking I would be giving evasion orders from what they told me, it would be 'down port', 'down starboard' or something,

32:00 so I'd be reliving something. But again, once I stopped drinking, which gave me a real shock, I almost went under a train and I determined at that time, I suddenly changed my life. I had to or otherwise I was gone. And I'm glad in retrospect that it happened, because it did turn me around and I think

32:30 at that point I started to grab other things, I started sailing and I had other outlets, I had met Peg and again, we were going out to dances together and suddenly I had a whole knew life. And I think I just extracted that one, that Dave Morland, and put him back there. And that was someone else altogether and I was here

33:00 a new person, and sort of rarely looked back. I'm pretty certain that's what happened, I just became a new person.

Did you ever share your experiences with anyone when you came back?

No. No, I didn't talk to anyone about them. This is probably the

33:30 first time I had talked to anyone about them. That's, I've talked about incidents with other people, but not, not general operations or anything like that. I feel all right about talking about it. I might have nightmares tonight, but, I'll worry about that, I don't think so.

I'll apologise in advance?

It was some one else, the 19-year-old who I vaguely remember, and that

34:00 I think that's the truth of it. I just... it was a different person.

You mentioned not making friends because of the fear of losing them, I'm wondering if that 19-year-old did make friend there?

34:30 No, not really, I can remember about one bloke going. But I didn't much care for him anyway. I know uncouth is an odd word, but that was the sort of metal attitude I had towards him and I sort of shrugged and said, "Yeah," you know, that was that. But apart from that I can't remember being

35:00 even concerned about it because mainly I wasn't close enough to anyone. I know I was upset when our own bomb aimer was wounded. I wasn't upset when I was wounded, I was upset when he was wounded. No, I just wasn't close enough to anyone there, I was close enough to a couple of fellows at home, but they were killed in other circumstances, both in the Pacific. And

35:30 it was just when I got home I found that they were no longer there. Again, it was, I was again detached at that stage, I knew about it while I was still drinking fairly heavily. So I went into part of the oblivion. But I do remember being quite upset that my mates had gone. I think I just hoped that they hadn't suffered and that was it.

36:00 **Given your war experiences, would you sign up for it again?**

I think the fascist system had to be dealt with. So the answer would have to be yes, because the alternative for Australia particularly, would have been slaving in the paddy fields. You wouldn't be speaking English to day, neither would I.

36:30 I probably wouldn't have been alive today. So when something like that rears its head, and Hitler was taking over the various countries, taken over Sudetenland and Poland and so on, he had to be stopped. When the Japanese started their invasions came right down through and into Singapore and across to New Guinea, they had to be stopped. There is

37:00 no alternative. Well, there is an alternative, you can bow down and say, "Yes, do what you will." And they would. And suddenly you'd be working 14 hours a day on slave labour. That's the alternative, so you have got to go and fight. I am sorry that we haven't got National Service, I think that we should have. For two reasons, I think that it's a great leveller, in that you learn to live with other people, because

37:30 you've got no options. And secondly, I think we could use them for building bridges or roads, you don't necessarily have military National Service, you can have industrial National Service. And they could do all sorts of things. We could plant trees even. And put in irrigations schemes, that sort of thing would bring people together and learn to live with one another, and I think

38:00 they'd be better Australians for it. I know I was a spoiled kid. And yet when I went into the air force suddenly I had to live with people or go under; they would have dealt with me one way or another. So you very smartly learn to live with people. And I think that carried on into life and I hope it made me a better man. I think it did.

INTERVIEW ENDS