

Australians at War Film Archive

Arthur Gould (Nat) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 28th January 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1431>

Tape 1

00:38 **Can you give us a brief summary of your life from when you were born to the present day?**

I was born in western Queensland, a place called Roma in 1920. My parents were English immigrants and Dad had a wonderful life.

01:00 He'd been a soldier in South Africa and in the Indian army. So I suppose I inherited a bit of a love for this. Because Dad was then an engineer in the Queensland railways, we moved around a bit and finally finished up in Brisbane. As a young boy, all I ever wanted to do was fly. So whatever I did was aimed at getting airborne. My education was very brief. I went to state school and then on to the Brisbane Grammar School and left

01:30 I suppose at 15 or 16, junior standards it was then. Had various jobs. None were very interesting. Only with the sole aim of getting enough money to go fly. I was lucky enough to get a few pounds together and I hopped on my bicycle and went out to Archerfield Aerodrome where I did a bit of flying. In my spare time I joined the Citizens' Army Reserve and was in the artillery. When war

02:00 broke out I was in camp with the artillery. I was fortunate then, I certainly still wanted to fly. They started the Empire Air [Training] Scheme. I received a letter from the Royal Australian Air Force saying would I like to join the air force. The thought of being paid to fly instead of having to pay for it, thrilled me no end. I was pretty keen to go. So in April 1940 I joined the Royal Australian Air Force and went to UK

02:30 in December '40, flew with some Royal Air Force squadrons. Came back when the Japs came into the war in late '41. Went up to Milne Bay in 75 Squadron Kittyhawks [fighters].

Tell us more about your service in the UK.

In December '40 I went to the UK.

03:00 I joined a famous squadron, number 17 Royal Air Force Squadron flying Hurricanes [fighters]. They'd had a pretty terrible time in the Battle of Britain, they'd lost a lot of aeroplanes. They also lost a lot of pilots. So I joined 17 Squadron. Then, through circumstances I joined another squadron called 134 and we went to Russia. Being a young man at 20 at the time, my knowledge of politics and particularly

03:30 international politics wasn't very good. I thought we were at war with the Russians, but to my astonishment I found I was on their side. So I went with 134 Squadron, another 3 Australians and myself, and we flew off an aircraft carrier up near the North Pole. A place called Murmansk. We were there for about 6 months. We shot down a couple of aircraft and went back to UK for Christmas to discover I'd been posted missing in action

04:00 and pinched myself and found I wasn't. Then we re-equipped in Hurricanes and Spitfires. They were great, I loved them very much, still do. The Japs came into the war in December '41 and I came back in 1942. Joined 75 Squadron flying B40 Kittyhawks, went up to Milne Bay. I always get into places where we have a bad time. We lost a lot of fellows

04:30 in Milne Bay, but it was one of the turning points of the war. We shot down quite a few Jap aircraft and lost a lot of our blokes. Came out of Milne Bay and went instructing at a place called Madura at a fighting school. We taught learning pilots the art of fighter pilots and dog fights, air to air gunning sort of thing and dive bombing and all that sort of stuff.

05:00 Then I got a bit, not tired, but I found it quite frightening, so I wanted to get back to the war. I got myself into a Spitfire [fighter] squadron up in Darwin. 457. Was up there for close to 12 months flying Spitfires. Enjoyed that very much. Then it was getting towards the end of the war and they posted me back to Madura. I said "Not again. This damned instructing stuff." About that time, very early 1945,

05:30 the Royal Navy came out with lots and lots of aircraft carriers. People have forgotten how big the Royal

Navy were out here. For instance they had four big aircraft carriers, plus a lot of little ones. Each one of those had 80 odd aeroplanes on it. It was a pretty decent sort of thing. So to cut a long story short, 12 of us, sorry the Royal Navy had lots of aeroplanes, but could do with extra pilots. We had

- 06:00 fighter pilots in the RAAF coming out of Korea. We had lots coming out from all over the place. So there was a deal done with the two governments. So all the extra fighter pilots went to fly for the RN, Royal Navy. 12 of us went across and one day I was a flight lieutenant Royal Australian Air Force and the next morning I was a lieutenant for the Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve on loan to the Royal Navy. So I flew with the
- 06:30 Royal Navy until the end of the war and a little bit after. Then I was out of work, because war was over and the Australian Navy weren't gonna have an aircraft carrier in those days. It was rather interesting how it happened. The admiral in charge of aircraft carriers, a wonderful fellow called Fines [?], he liked us very much. We were very experienced by this time. He said "What are you fellows gonna do? You're out of work." He gave us a little party just for the
- 07:00 Australians in the flagship. He said "What are you gonna do?" I was senior boy, so I got the boys together. We'd lost a few fellows along the way for one reason or another. I said "We'd like to join your navy on one condition." He said "What's your condition?" I said "That we fly" because we could see ourselves going back to UK, poor old, tired old Britain, after 5 years of war and they weren't going to waste any money on us.
- 07:30 We were going to be stuck in an office somewhere. We didn't want that. So if we joined the Royal Navy we wanted to fly. His words were, "I'll fly the arse off you." He was a wonderful bloke and he kept his word. So I now had gone from Royal Australian Navy VR [Volunteer Reserve] to lieutenant Royal Navy. I took a commission with them and went over there for about 3 1/2 years. By this time we're in 1948 and the Australians bought HMAS Sydney, our first aircraft carrier and
- 08:00 wrote to me "Dear Lieutenant, Royal Navy, Gould, would you like to join the Royal Australian Navy?" By this time I wanted to come home, the pay was much better. I was very fond of England, but the climate gets you down after a while. So I said, "Yes." So I came back and did the next 20 years Royal Australian Navy. Retired in 1965 as a commander. Retired exactly on the 4th May 1965.
- 08:30 On the Monday I joined Hawker DeHavilland marketing military aircraft. The reason for that was I had so many friends and colleagues in the services and I knew a little bit about war and defence and aircraft and so on. So I started marketing British aircraft and missilery and all that sort of stuff. I was with Hawker DeHavilland with some success from the company's point of view. I sold
- 09:00 a few aircraft, helicopters and fixed wing aeroplanes. Then about 1977, takeovers back in UK, they formed a big company, still going, called British Aerospace. One of the biggest companies in the world. So they headhunted me. They asked me if I'd like to go to them. I went across and served with British Aerospace, doing a similar job. They
- 09:30 put me on the board of directors, which was very nice. I started looking after their aircraft. They had some wonderful aeroplanes. My favourite one was the [Harrier] Jump Jet. So I actually had just about sold it to the Royal Australian Navy, I shouldn't say I sold it to them, they had just about bought it from us when the change of government here and they cancelled the aircraft carrier fixed wing. So I soldiered on with British Aerospace
- 10:00 and left them and retired completely. Then the bicentennial thing came up and I was asked if I would help put on the first big bicentennial air show at Richmond. The reason they chose me was that by this time I had a number of acquaintances all round the world in the aircraft aerospace business. People like Rolls Royce, Boeing, all those people. So I was able to
- 10:30 not command, but able to interest them in coming to our air show, which was a great success in 1988, bicentennial air show. After that they moved the air shows down to Melbourne and I wanted to play more golf. I was losing fire in my belly and all this stuff. So I quit. They made me an honorary something in the air show business. I'm not sure what it is now.
- 11:00 So then I settled back to playing golf. And that's about the end of the story.

Tell me what your first memories were?.

I'm not quite sure. I do remember going to school in Gladstone. I started school in

- 11:30 Gladstone, a primary school there. Then when we came to Brisbane I went to Ashburn school. Oh yes, I remember I played rugby league there. I was 12 or 13 years old. And cricket. I was on the school team. I can't remember any real, oh yes, I can remember when I was 13. What put me flying was it was the days of [flying pioneers] Kingsford-Smith and Amy Johnson.
- 12:00 I was absolutely going to fly. I was 14 or 15 and I used to do everything. I read everything about World War 1, the famous aces in that war. Cotton and all the rest of them. That was where I wanted to go. So I suppose that's my earliest time.

Do you remember the very first time you saw a plane?

Yes, I do. I was about 14 or 15 and I used to go to Archerfield.

12:30 I'd ride my bicycle out there and peer over the fence and watch them all. I remember they had Gypsy Moths [trainers]. I remember there was a wonderful aeroplane there, I can't remember the name of it now, but it was a rotary engine plane. The cylinders all went round, the whole engine went round, the propeller was fastened onto the cylinders, a most astonishing thing. Yes, I remember that quite clearly.

Can you walk us through your childhood?

13:00 Mum and Dad were immigrants. Dad worked for Queensland Railways. It was in the Depression years when I was growing up. There were 5 children. I had two elder sisters and two younger brothers. We weren't poor, we weren't desperate, but there was no way they could pay money for me to learn to fly.

13:30 One of the things I did to get a few dollars before I started work while I was still at school, I used to go round the paddocks in Ashford where we lived, collecting cow manure, which I used to sell to the local gardeners, one [shilling] and six [pence] a bag, I remember. Also I'd get up early and go and get mushrooms which we'd sell to the local pubs. I can't remember how much we got for those. When I got 10

14:00 shillings or 15 shillings, on my bike out to the airport and got myself a half hour of flying. In fact it was such a success that by the time I was 17 I think I got a pilot's license, just on cow manure and mushrooms. Mind you, it was only a little aeroplane called the [Piper] Taylor Cub. But then I sold it and I got a few more hours up and I think that's one of the reasons the air force wrote to us, we had a license, they knew you could fly, they

14:30 knew you were medically OK and so you were accepted.

What do you remember about the Depression years being difficult or trying for you and your family?

We had no real luxuries. We didn't starve and Dad had a permanent job, he didn't get out of work. Well, we didn't have a car until late '30s,

15:00 it was just before war broke out we had a car. We had bicycles. Dad had a motorcycle and I can't remember anything specific about it. We were well fed, we were well clothed, but no luxuries. Go to the cinema on Saturday afternoons, but that was all.

Do you remember what you were watching?

I remember seeing the very first talkie, as we called, Al Jolson and something [The Jazz Singer]. I can't remember now. I remember seeing that.

15:30 We all thought it was very tricky. We didn't believe it was. I can remember a lot of those. A lot of cowboy movies of course. Tom Mix and all those sort of fellows.

What were you like as a student at school?

I was considered fairly bright. Good at maths. I had an incredible memory too. I could read poetry, I still can, and I can give you a verse

16:00 after verse of it. I guess I would in all modesty say I was above average in most subjects. I liked physics and chemistry at high school. I liked sport like any other young fellow of those days. I played a lot of cricket and rugby league. There's a funny story about rugby league. When I started flying in the air force, I came out as a sergeant pilot. Most of us

16:30 did, 90% of us. After I came back from Russia we were commissioned. It was interesting to be interviewed to be commissioned to become an officer. I went up before a Royal Air Force old school air commodore. Real waffly old bloke. He asked be some questions about what I did and what sports I played. I played cricket. He said, "Good, good, good, good, boy." He said, "Football?" I said, "Yes. I play rugby." "Oh, wonderful. What sort of rugby?" I said, "Rugby league" and he said, "Oh!."

17:00 Rugby league in England was a working man's sport. Union was [private school sport]. So I pointed out to him, "Sorry you feel like that, but in Queensland they don't play anything but that. All the schools play rugby league." He said, "Oh, that's different. OK." So I got my commission.

Where were you placed in your family?

In the middle. Two older sisters and two younger brothers.

Were you a close family?

Yes and no. We enjoyed each other, but we

17:30 separated. When I say separated, I went off to the war at 19 and spent most my life overseas and in various places. But we kept in touch very vaguely. I can't remember people's birthdays or anything. So we weren't really close, no.

What kind of man was your father?

Dad was a wonderful old chap. An Englishman, born in London.

18:00 I don't quite know how this happened, but he joined the army. He joined a famous regiment called the Prince of Wales Lancers. I've got a lovely photograph of him. Wonderful uniform. He went off to the Boer War when he was 16. No, he couldn't have been 16. 17 or 18 when he went to the Boer War. He got in the lead and he got shot and he went back to the UK and back to London. Didn't like it. So somehow he waggled himself and joined the Indian Army and he went off to India and was

18:30 up in the Khyber Pass. Didn't ever talk much about it. I think he had a bad time up there. But what turned him onto Australia was that, he was in a mountain regiment up there and the horses the Indian Army were getting all came from NSW, and they were known as Walers. Dad used to break the horses in, he was obviously a very good horseman. They got to know a lot of Australians. So he decided that was for him. He finished his time in the Indian Army, he went back to England and still didn't like it.

19:00 he joined P&O [Pacific and Orient shipping line] as a deckhand. He was quite a chap. He came out to Australia a few times and met Mum on the way out. Mum was emigrating out here with her parents.

She was British as well?

Yes, she came from Essex. She was a lovely woman. She was soft spoken and absolutely, you'd never get her angry, even with 5 kids around. She was absolutely wonderful. Wonderful woman.

19:30 What happened then?

Your father was a deckhand and he met your mother?

Yes, he met my mother. I'm not quite sure of the details of that, but I hate to say it, but he jumped ship. In those days you signed on in England, Southampton or wherever it was, and you had to go back, you weren't allowed to. But he got to Brisbane and Mum disembarked with her family at Brisbane so he jumped ship. He asked for the afternoon off and went off and never ever went back.

20:00 Mum used to tell this story. He had 5 pounds in his pocket, cos he couldn't get paid. They didn't pay them properly till they got back. So he married Mum and decided they'd build a house. So while he was going to build a house, he bought a tent with 5 pound, went up to a place called Darra, which is outside Brisbane. Borrowed an axe off one of the neighbours and decided he was going to build a cabin. The first tree he chopped down went straight across the tent. Eventually things got better.

20:30 **At school you did odd jobs to be a pilot. Did you have to give some of the money to your mother?**

Most of it went to the family. I think my pocket money was something like 1 and 6 a week. We didn't begrudge it of course. Every little helped. My sisters got jobs.

21:00 One of my sisters was a show lady. She joined the theatre in Brisbane and she was a singer and dancer sort of thing. She made a bit more money than we did. My other sister was a secretary for somebody. I can't remember the details, it was so long ago. We all had to contribute.

What were your other brothers like?

21:30 One of them's still alive. The other one's not. Colin, nothing special about Colin. He was the next one below me. He wanted to join up, but he had a bad arm and he was medically unfit. I can't remember what he did, lots of various things. He bought a pub at one stage. I know, cos I went there.

22:00 The youngest brother, Ernie, he was a bit more successful. He was a cadet, a manager for Woolworth's. Rose up through the ranks and managed his own store somewhere. He died about 7 or 8 years ago.

Were you the favoured one?

Good gracious no. I think my father tended to look after me more because I was in his footsteps.

22:30 I was of the warrior class. He liked the idea of me being in the services. But not especially, I don't think any of us were favoured. Mum of course loved everybody. She was great.

How much did you need to do your initial training and how old you had to be?

In those days,

23:00 I'm not exactly sure, but I think it was about 3 pound 10 [shillings] an hour. That's 7 dollars. About that, in the aeroplane I was flying. But you could get something like about 15 shillings worth, 20 minutes or whatever it was. I think I used to save up till I had about a couple of pounds and then go out. It was a long way to ride my bicycle out there. It was a bit

23:30 intermittent too, which is not the ideal way to learn to fly. I became a flying instructor a few years later and taught everybody how to fly. I reckon I can teach a monkey how to fly. Only going out once a fortnight sometimes to do 20 minutes or half an hour is not ideal. I got my license. I can't remember the exact date. It was 1937 I think. I was 17 when I got it.

How old were you when you first started your training?

About 16.

24:00 **Was that the minimum age?**

I don't really know. I don't think there was a minimum age for you to do dual. I think there might have been, I'm not sure of this, a minimum age to fly on your own. But the license was very restricted. My license had I could fly myself, but not anybody for hire or for reward. So in other words you weren't allowed to take passengers until you got to a certain standard, which I didn't make.

What was your first flight like?

24:30 Everything I expected. The first flight dual was absolutely great. I had no idea where I was or what I was doing, but it was absolutely what I expected of it. I remember taking off on my first flight in the backseat of this Gypsy Moth. The pilot took off and he did a bank to the left and I looked down and there was a little cemetery there, which I thought rather interesting. I remember that quite vividly. All the people

25:00 had been killed flying aeroplanes. Apart from that I don't remember much about it. Just the sheer joy, everything I expected.

How many times did you go out and have flying lessons before they gave you a licence?

I could look at my funny little license, but I think I had about 15 hours up when I got my licence. Something like that. Give or take a few hours.

Was it unusual for a boy like you to be so

25:30 **passionate about flying?**

No, I had one very good friend, neighbour, who did everything that I did. Bobby Adamson. I remember him quite well. No, he was as keen, as enthusiastic. I suppose we were, there weren't a great number. Most of us, the other fellows were going to be doctors and lawyers and all that sort of stuff. Engine drivers.

Was it

26:00 **difficult to get into Brisbane Grammar? You weren't from a wealthy family.**

I don't think I got a scholarship there. Did I? I may have got a scholarship; I think they had them in those days. I think I did, which partially funded me, but I know it didn't fund it all. I only went there for two years or something, to junior standard.

Did your brothers go to Brisbane Grammar?

26:30 Colin didn't, but the youngest one did. He went well passed me. I don't know what school. I don't think he went to Grammar, he must have. I don't know.

The fact that you went to a good school like that, did it change your perspective on life mixing with boys that were ambitious like you were?

No, I would say Brisbane was a pretty, what's the word? There wasn't much of a class distinction of wealth or breeding

27:00 or anything. I can't remember anything. I just don't remember anything special about it. I wasn't uncomfortable at all.

What were your impressions of Brisbane growing up in the Depression years?

Can't think of anything special about it. No,

27:30 I had nothing to compare it with in those days. I hadn't been outside of Queensland I don't think. I'd been north, but no, nothing special.

It was more village-like atmosphere?

My age I don't think I formed any impressions. When I left the place I was only 18 or 19. I've got no specific memories of it at all. It was sprawly, but we didn't have a car, so

28:00 I used to ride my bike around, I knew every nook and cranny in it. Usually certainly out to the airfields, Eagle Farm and Archerfield, they all were my destinations.

What would you do after school and on the weekends?

I was a very keen scout in those days too. I'd forgotten about that. We did a lot of camping. We were a very active scout group. We used to go to the Stradbroke Islands and camp out up

28:30 at Point Look and places, go up to Caloundra, which is now up at the Sunshine Coast up there. Then I joined the Citizens' Military Force and we were horse drawn in those days. Even our guns, we had 18

pounders and they were pulled by horses. Six in the team. I was very lucky, being fairly bright, they made me signal man and I

29:00 finished up running. I think I was about 16 or 17, or 17 or 18, and I was what they call NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] in charge of the sigs [Signal Corps], so I became a bombardier. So I was head of the signal thing in that. That took up a lot of time. Weekends, not every weekend, but I think we had a weekend a month or something. One night a week I think. It's interesting, I was in the army as a bombardier, I was an air force flight lieutenant, Royal Australian Navy as a

29:30 lieutenant RAN VR, a lieutenant RN, Royal Navy and a commander in the Australian Navy. In fact I got three commissions.

Very expansive.

Very interesting. I enjoyed it.

Was it about that time in the civilian military force that you started to get a feel for a military life? Did you get a passion for it?

Yes. Being a son of my father I must have inherited something. Yes, I enjoyed it. I liked it,

30:00 I still do. I like discipline; I like people looking after each other. Certainly when you're flying in the air force, your mates looked after you. If they got shot down you worried about it and you knew that the fellow in number 2 was going to guard you and so on. So I like all the things that go with military. I often roar people these days and say, "That's what's

30:30 wrong with a lot of our youth." I don't really. Yeah, discipline. I'm also old-fashioned like a lot of my generation. We believe in God and King and Country and still do. I know it's old-fashioned now, but we still do.

Being respectful to God, King and Country, that was being developed while you were a child?

I think

31:00 you have to go back to the '20s and '30s, my growing up time. I would say the whole country by and large was like that. We were "British to the bootstraps" as [Prime Minister Robert] Menzies would say. We had no, all our immigrants were British and so we just considered ourselves very British. There was never any hesitation about it. I can't recall anybody who,

31:30 we weren't overly "God Save the King" and all that sort of business, but deep down we were all King and Country, yes.

Did you have a sense growing up there was a war brewing in Europe?

Yes, but not deeply aware of it all. I remember in those days the threat was considered Japan and I'm talking again about

32:00 early '30s and so on. Not exactly 'the yellow peril', but we thought that. I was never deeply conscious of it all. I didn't really see a threat. It's hard to say how I felt in those days. One of my later jobs in the navy was as coordinator of intelligence staff.

32:30 So I became very intelligence oriented. But in those days I don't really remember.

Did you listen to the wireless [radio]?

Yes, but again I wasn't politically aware at all.

What would you be listening to?

In those days? Goodness me. I suppose you'd listen to the news, certainly sport. I was very keen on sport. I'd listen to sport.

33:00 I wasn't a great fan of the radio at all that I can remember.

What values do you think your father instilled in you as a child?

Dad came from a pretty poor family as I understand. He didn't talk much about his pre Australian days. Not very much at all. In fact, when I went to UK the

33:30 first time I dug up some of his brothers. One was a sergeant for the metropolitan police, I remember. They didn't talk much about Dad, because he'd been away since he was 16 years old. I don't know. I think he didn't instil anything specific. He was a decent sort of chap who looked after the family and he wasn't religious. Neither

34:00 was Mum. So I think I had to go to Sunday school and I'd think I was in prison.

What denomination?

Church of England in those days. I grew out of all that. I'm not particularly religious at all. I think the war took most of it out of most of us. We just didn't believe in it anymore, not seriously. Some did, but most of us didn't.

After the Civilian Military Force, where did you go to next?

34:30 I suppose I was in the CMF as they call it from whatever age I was allowed in, 17 to 19, until the war broke out in December 39. Now I must admit I was one of the few people who was absolutely overjoyed, because I knew I was going to get some adventure and I could see myself joining up. I didn't think I'd get into the air force straight away, but I said

35:00 "Hey, this is where I'm gonna get some fun." I was living in Brisbane and there was very little chance of travelling. I was certainly aware of the geography around the world, but not so much politics. History I knew a bit about. This was going to be that opportunity and I had to be very careful. Everybody else was terrified at the fact we were at war and thought we were going to get killed. I was quite happy.

35:30 **Who around you was terrified? Your mother? Your friends?**

Mother of course knew that I was going to go and probably that my brothers would go. Like all mothers she was, I wouldn't say terrified, but she was concerned about it all. I suppose reading the media in those days, I can't remember anything special, but it was pretty frightening. Hitler was marching across Europe and knocking over Czechoslovakia and Poland and Holland on the way and was at the door of Paris. It was quite

36:00 terrifying. It really was. But not to me. My hope was they wouldn't finish the war until I got there.

Were your friends quietly happy like you?

Yes. I had a lot of friends, but I had probably two or three very close ones who I'd been at school with and who'd been in the scouts and in the military with me. In fact, I was a bit of a boss. If I joined the scouts they joined, if I joined the CMF they joined.

36:30 One of those things. In fact they all joined up. The artillery crowd I was in, they went away as a battery. One of my friends were in it and they got caught in Singapore. So I don't know what happened to most of them, but he was killed as POWs [Prisoners of War]. One or two of them joined the air force and I can remember two specifically, they were both shot down and killed. I can hardly remember their names now. You're talking early 1940, '41, that sort of thing.

37:00 They were like me.

Did you listen to Menzies' speech?

Yes, that's right. I can almost remember the words. "It's my melancholy duty." I think was the words. "To inform you that we are at war." Yes. I do. I was out on the veranda at our place at Ashgrove and I was chuckling to myself. I really had quite a laugh. I had to pull a long face when I talked to Mum about it, but I was happy.

What kind of young adult

37:30 **would you describe yourself as at that stage?**

What was I? 18-19 I suppose when the war broke out. What sort of young adult? I was very clean living. I didn't smoke and I didn't drink. Very athletic because wanting to fly you had to be healthy and I really was a health fanatic.

How would you keep healthy?

38:00 I rode a bicycle everywhere and that's one of the best things. Having done scouting, we used to go for enormous hikes. I can't remember how many miles we used to walk. I remember we walked from Amity Point Lookout, which was about 10 miles, spent the weekend there and so on. I didn't go to gymnasiums. I don't think we had them in those days. I didn't get up in the morning and do press-ups or anything. It was just riding a bike, hiking, just that. And clean living

38:30 and good fun and good food. Mum sure knew how to make reasonable food.

Did you have many girlfriends as a teenager?

I think I was a normal sort of fellow. I can only remember one girl when I was about 17 or 18. Winifred was her name. I wasn't madly in love with her. Unless it was an aeroplane, which I really loved. I think I was normal and healthy. I think we had a

39:00 kiss and cuddle somewhere, but really it was a bit. I must be honest, I wasn't really attractive to girls. I wasn't a handsome bloke at all. So I think I had the leftovers from other chaps.

Did you go to many dances?

Yes, we used to have a Saturday night hop [dance] at Ashgrove. I had two elder sisters and they were mad keen. One of them was a professional

39:30 dancer. No, ballroom dancer, she did high kick and all that sort of stuff. Yeah, when I was a fairly small boy I had to partner them around the veranda at home when they were doing shooftees and waltzes and foxtrots and jazz waltzes and pride of erins and all those lovely old dances. Evidently I was quite reasonable at them.

What's a hop?

It's the name of the dance. Saturday night hop. Don't know why we called it hop.

40:00 **Tell us the different planes you trained on before you got your licence?**

In the civil life before I joined the air force? I only flew one really, and that was a little aeroplane called the Tailor Cub. A little high wing monoplane thing. Gosh, it was, you wouldn't want to go very far in it. It only had speed of about 100 knots, but it was a good little aeroplane to learn in. It was fairly feistless. It didn't have any nasty

40:30 habits like some of the ones I flew later on. It was good fun to fly. I enjoyed it.

How old were you when you got your pilot's licence?

18. I was nearly 19, but I was 18.

What was that like?

I think I had to wait till I was 18. It's coming back to me now.

41:00 I think you had to be 18 to get a license. Even though I'd flown solo and had done most the tests, I think it was not long after, a fair while after my 18 birthday. I know I finished it off.

Did you have a celebration?

I was very proud of myself. I wanted to tell everybody, but I can't remember anybody being particularly interested except me. I think the family were of course. They thought it was great. I know Dad was tickled pink. I don't think mother was very happy.

41:30 Flying machines a bit dicey in those days.

Did you continue going up and flying as much?

I would have if war hadn't broken out and I got paid to fly. Yes, I would. My ambition really was to get, after that little licence sort of far more commercial licence of sorts. But my real ambition was to join the air force. I wanted to be a military pilot. If that couldn't happen, because in those days they had a very small intake

42:00 of chaps a year, I would have hoped to go commercial flying somewhere.

Tape 2

00:32 **What awareness of the First World War did you get as you were growing up? From school, family, friends?**

A lot of Dad's friends were World War 1 returnees, veterans. My greatest interest, once I knew all about the Western

01:00 Front and that sort of stuff, was the antics of the air boys. I could tell you all the famous aces in those days. The aces included on the other side, the great Red Baron and what have you. I've read every book that you could get on it. I remember in those days too, the British produced a couple of magazines. One was called Triumph and one was called Champion. They used to have a lot of wartime stories in them, particularly

01:30 flying. There were some magazines specifically devoted to flying. Flying Aces I remember quite well. Used to read that avidly. They had some movies too in those days called Hell's Angels and all these angels and things, which I used to go and see time and time again and pretend I was flying, dog-fighting and so on.

02:00 **Your passion to fly was fuelled by World War 1 pilots as well as people like [pioneers Charles] Kingsford-Smith and [Bert] Hinkler?**

Yes, absolutely. Even before, when I saved up a few shillings and went down and learned to fly, there was a bit of a glider outfit at Eagle Farm aerodrome, that was very basic. They had this thing. It was like a big

02:30 catapult. They had a great funnel and it launched it into the air and you sat out in a little seat in the open with a stick and rudder and you only got up to about 10 feet. It wasn't very, but it gave you a sense you were flying roughly. I didn't do much of that. I think it folded up after a while.

Were the magazines expensive?

Yes, they were. I can't remember how much they were, but they were, I suppose

03:00 they'd be equivalent of 7 or 8 dollars now. That's the best way I can assess it. I know it'd take a fair bit of pocket money to buy one. We'd hand them around. My friend across the road would buy Triumph and I'd buy Champion and we'd swap.

Did you get much from your Dad about his war experience?

03:30 No, Dad didn't tell us much about it. We had to almost drag him out of it. I wouldn't say he was anti-war, but being out in Australia I thought he felt it was a much safer place compared to Europe. He didn't say those things, he hinted at some of them. He did tell us, I remember he told me once after I joined up and I had him along to the mess and gave me a few beers. Dad was not exactly a

04:00 teetotaller, but he didn't drink very much. He expanded a bit on some of his Indian stuff and that's where I learned about Walers as I was saying earlier on, and horse breaking. He was up in the Khyber Pass area and he used to talk about Rawalpindi and all those names that now they talk about the Afghanistan thing. He was up in that area in those days. That would have been in the early 1900s. In the '14-

04:30 18 war.

So he was supportive of your dream to be a pilot?

Yes. And he was very proud when I came home as a pilot officer. Dad, having been in the British army, which was then in those day and still is I suppose, was class related. You couldn't be an officer unless you had a family and private income. So Dad never rose above corporal.

05:00 Whilst he was very, he never done great at the British Army at all, but he was quite surprised. When I rose to a fairly senior rank he said, "What's that equivalent to?" I said, "In your army it would be lieutenant colonel." He was absolutely shattered to think his son could have got to that sort of level. He didn't talk much about it, but now and then things dropped out.

05:30 What you heard about World War 1 and going to war was quite a romantic notion?

Yes. It's interesting. It's coming back to me when we are talking. I said all I wanted to do was flying, particularly military flying, so the war was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. One of the other things I wanted to do was go to sea. It was never very strong, but I said, "If I can't make this flying business I wouldn't mind

06:00 going to sea and becoming a deck officer somewhere." When I joined the fleet air arm I got everything because one of the first things they did when they came back into the Royal Australian Navy, even though I was the most senior aviator they had by this time, when they started I didn't get near an aeroplane for the first 6 months. They made me go to sea and do watch keeping and all those things. So I really achieved both things in the end.

In the time leading up to you getting

06:30 your flying licence, what was your ultimate flying dream?

I can remember going out to Archerfield when the RAAF had some Hawker Demons, which were the frontline aeroplane there and watching these fellows perform. That's

07:00 what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a fighter pilot in the RAAF. In those days they didn't have monoplanes. I think they had [Bristol] Bulldogs and Hawker Demons. Hawker Demon is a beautiful looking aeroplane. That's what I wanted to do.

Were you one to thrive on learning about particular models of planes and the principles behind

07:30 how they worked?

Yes I did. Remember I built models of just about everything. I had a wonderful collection of models and I built it from scratch. I used to buy balsa [light balsa wood for model making] things, I didn't buy the knock together kits and carved them all out myself. As for logistics of aeroplanes, yes, I had reasonable, when I look back on it, it was very basic knowledge, but I understood a little bit about it. I didn't know much about

08:00 navigation in those days. But I could describe the aeroplanes of that vintage. I remember a lot of American aeroplanes, Wart [?] and Corsair and the Brits had all the famous ones. The Spitfire didn't come along in my growing up days. They had Gloucester Gladiators and things like that. I was pretty knowledgeable on them.

Did you have a softer

08:30 spot for the British planes?

Of course. We were British to the bootstraps in those days and it's hard to imagine now that the Americans weren't quite so visible in Australia as the British were. Mum and Dad were English and all her friends in those days were English or British. A lot

09:00 of Scots around. I suppose our media in those days was mainly full of British stuff. We were a part of Empire and most of my reading would have been oriented towards Britain. Strangely enough I didn't know much about the rest of Europe. I was never, even though Germany had been an enemy in the '14-18 way, I

09:30 never ever worried about it. As a matter of fact I couldn't tell you where most of the countries were. Whilst I could draw a map of Southeast Asia fairly well, I couldn't tell you where Poland and Czechoslovakia and Hungary and all those countries were. I didn't know much about them. I was never interested.

When war was close, did you

10:00 **have a genuine compulsion to get out there and protect the Empire?**

Can I say quite clearly and categorically, in those days the cause was just. We had none of these hesitations that people have now you've got to read about the Iraqi war and so on, the nation's fairly divided on that. There was no, all of us were quite convinced that this was a battle for our future. I don't suppose we could have put it into words like

10:30 I am now, but we were right. [Germany's Adolf] Hitler was a threat and our way of life was under threat. Particularly when the Japanese came in. There was absolutely no doubt. I killed scores of them once, when they landed at Milne Bay. Should I tell you a bit about the story now? A bit out of context.

We may as well wait.

OK, remind me about it.

11:00 **You were enjoying the discipline and lifestyle the CMF introduced you to. Were there any other aspects of the training that you enjoyed?**

Yes, We were still using Morse code as a communication. We did have phones that we hooked onto when we laid the wire.

11:30 I was NCO of 6, in charge of 6. It was great fun and I learned a lot. Morse code was the only means of communication in those days. You started off with flags. Then you had a buzzer type thing that you sent off along the thing. I've forgotten the Morse code now, but I was very quick at it at one stage.

12:00 We were horse drawn. That was interesting too because as an NCO of 6 I had my own horse. So I didn't have to gallop into action with all the others. I had what they called a horse holder. When you got to the thing you threw your reins off, only your old corporal sort of thing, threw the reins to this horse holder and he looked after your horse while you got on with your work. Sorry, I've lost the question now. What was it?

The various other aspects of the CMF

12:30 **training that you enjoyed.**

The camaraderie was great. When you're in camp you had 4 people to a tent and you became very close together after a few weeks together of this sort of stuff. Very little else I can think of right now.

You would have an annual camp?

Yes, I think it was annual camp. I

13:00 think it was for a couple of weeks in those days. As war, or maybe after war was declared, we went into almost semi permanent. I can't remember how long we did, but I was at Caloundra just before war broke out, because I was at home. I get a bit, memories are not quite clear there.

Take us through the process of the transformation between you

13:30 **being with the CMF and the offer coming along to fly the air force.**

I remember I reported out to Archerfield, which is a grass airfield. What was very strange, we were Number 1 Course. The Empire Air Scheme, as the name suggests, was all the British Empire doing a similar thing. Training aircrew in an enormous hurry.

14:00 My crowd was Number 1 Course, which people find hard to believe that I'm still alive from Number 1 Course. We were into Archerfield where they had Tiger Moths [biplane trainers]. Most the instructors were civvies [civilians]. The Queensland Aero Club. This was the start of everything and it wasn't quite organised.

You were the very first group to go through the scheme?

Yes, in Queensland, but there were similar things

14:30 going on in Sydney and Melbourne to my knowledge. You could say there was three or four number 1 courses.

This was how far after war was declared?

I actually went in flying, I think the interviews and all this sort of stuff earlier on, in April 1940. So that's 5 or 6 months after war was declared.

15:00 **You got a letter with information they were interested in taking you on, what was the process of enlisting from there?**

I had to be discharged from the army and enlisted in the RAAF. So I got the papers somewhere and

Was there reluctance from the army to let you go?

Not at all.

15:30 I was only a corporal, a bombardier officially. They were gearing up for full mobilisation, so it was not chaotic, but it was flux in those days. To go into more on the changeover, what was astonishing, when I talked about how people weren't quite sure what was going on, we

16:00 reported out to Archerfield and the last of the cadets, there were cadets going through who were going to be cadet officers and they were going to be commissioned. They had all aircrew pre-war, 99% of them, were officers. We went in, they didn't know what we were. We had no rank, we had no uniform. We were given long blue overalls and a beret. They called us Mister and we ate in the cadets' mess. The

16:30 troops used to salute us, but we had no rank at all. We didn't know what we were. It was a pretty tough life. We didn't have beds or anything. We had palliasses on the floor. We had to get up at 5 o'clock and go and have cold showers and the cadets were making sure we had them. Then we'd go flying and do ground school. The flying was great. I took to

17:00 it, I loved it. We did it in Tiger Moths. I had a civil aero class instructor. He wasn't very good frankly, as I learned many years later when I was instructing myself. God knows how I ever learned to fly with that bloke. However, I passed and I came out round about mid-1940.

A typical day you did the flying first thing after breakfast?

Yes, what happened,

17:30 you were split up into two. Half the course would do flying before lunch and lectures in the afternoon and the others would reverse it. So you did half a day in an aircraft. You might do two trips, that's all, by the time you were briefed and debriefed.

How many hours would that translate to in the air?

Anything from 40 minutes to an hour each flight. Something like that. We had a strict thing that we were taught straight and level

18:00 and you were taught turns and climbing turns and descending turns. Then you went on a bit to steep turns and aerobatics, which most of the civil instructors weren't very good at. They didn't like being upside down. I used to love it. It was the only way to go. I really took to aerobatics. Loops and rolls and spins and all that. So I can't remember how many hours, but when you finished you didn't get your wings. It was called elementary

18:30 flying training. So you finished there after, I suppose we would have had 50 or 60 hours up by the time we finished there.

Do you recall details about the lessons you received?

With the ground school? One of them was Morse code; I had no problem with that. We were taught basic navigation, very basic, the triangular velocities and that sort of stuff.

How were

19:00 **you with the navigation side of things?**

I had no trouble at all. Map reading, which in those days was essential, because we had no navigational aids at all, so it was really straight navigation, dead reckoning, or map reading. We talked a bit on the principles of flight. Again, looking back on it, it was very basic. We were taught

19:30 a bit on mechanics on engines, which was quite good. A bit on armament, in those days when we went to Wirraways [Australian built trainers] we had Vickers 303 machineguns that fired through the propeller, so you had to learn a bit about how to do that without shooting the propeller off. That would be it. I can't think of anything else in the ground school.

How did you find the Tiger Moths as a plane?

They were lovely.

20:00 Lovely. I enjoyed them very much. A great little aeroplane. Going ahead a bit, I finished instructing on one while I was in England. I finished up with 1,200 hours on them. So I really could finish up making the darn things talk.

Tell us why they were a pleasure to fly and a bit of technical information about the plane.

Recalling that I

20:30 got my licence on this little Tailor Cub thing, which was a high wing monoplane, very slow, Tiger Moths were a great advancement on that. It was very aerobatic, which the Tailor Cub was not. You could loop and cut it upside down. Not for very long because the petrol would drop out. You'd lose your fuel and the engine would cease if you stayed too long because the oil wasn't worked out to keep

21:00 lubricated while you were upside down. Not that we spent much time upside down. I think looping and I really took to aerobatics in a great way. It was great fun.

Did you have close calls in the earlier stages of training?

We're still in Tiger Moths aren't we? No. I remember one instructor was terrified of aerobatics.

21:30 Aero club instructor. So being brash and knowing all about it I think I had about 20 hours off or something. I started to teach him aerobatics. We had nothing terrifying. I think I spun off a loop. We spun down. Nothing really worrying.

Were there accidents amongst the group you were with at that stage?

I don't think so. I can't recall any accident, any forced landings. There may have been one

22:00 or two, but I can't recall.

How big was your group?

I would think we started off with about 25-30, that sort of number. A few of whom were scrubbed on the way, didn't make in for one reason or another. Had no aptitude for flight. That's why I think the air force chose a lot of us who already had licenses, because they knew that we could fly. Some they took straight off the street

22:30 who were mad keen, but just couldn't coordinate or whatever was required to fly an aircraft. One or two of them decided they didn't like it, which was understandable, and decided to go off and join the army. Most of us, I'd say 80% of us got through the elementary stage.

How long did it take them to work out how to dress

23:00 **you and give you a rank?**

We were Misterys and no uniform. When we finished at Archerfield elementary flying, we all went to Wagga Wagga, which was then the service flying training. There you converted to the Wirraway or the Ansons [twin engined Avro Ansons]. You were then split up to whether you were going to be fighter pilots or bomber pilots. Basic split.

Did you have input into that decision?

23:30 We were asked what we wanted to be, but the decision was made by your instructors. Some would say, "I don't want to be a fighter pilot, I want to fly bombers." The instructors looked at your aptitude. The fact that I loved aerobatics I was obviously a fighter pilot. A bloke who didn't like aerobatics, hated being upside down, put him in a bomber sort of thing. That's over-simplifying, but that was the sort of thing you went through to decide.

24:00 When we went to Wagga they realised we can't be Misterys anymore. So they made us LACs, Leading Aircraftmen, which is one of the lowest ranks in the air force. We did our conversion there, Wirraways or Ansons, as LACs.

Were you immediately told you would be in the Wirraway?

Yes.

24:30 We knew, at least I knew anyway. We went straight onto Wirraways and the others went onto Avro Ansons. Then, remembering how brash and overconfident I was, the air force hadn't had Wirraways all that length of time. The instructors didn't know much about them either. I had an instructor, who shall remain nameless, who,

25:00 he'd sit in the backseat and I'd sit in the front seat. So we'd go and fly. It was a piece of cake I reckoned. Mind you it's an enormous jump from the Tiger Moth to Wirraway, because you had, amongst other things, 2 or 3 times the speed, you had all sorts of other things, you had variable pitch propellers, you had retractable undercarriage, you had flaps which you could put up and down and all sorts of other things in it. Half your time was

25:30 worrying about the cockpit checks and pills and so on. But I remember my instructor was very nervous

and they used to do the takeoff. I used to teach him how to do some of the flying in the Wirraway. It was only overconfidence. I was overconfident. I think one of the reasons I left was that I wasn't at all concerned about it. So we did a Wirraway

26:00 conversion and the other boys did their Anson conversion. We did night flying for the first time, which was terrifying. We did basic strafing and dive bombing. It was very basic. Then we got our wings. You were qualified. They put your wings on your left breast. I've got my original ones up there.

26:30 **How long were you at Wagga before you got those wings?**

Round about October, November sort of thing. We left here in December to go to the UK, so it was October, November.

All up, how many months' training was that?

April, 7 months.

Explain the

27:00 **challenge of night flying.**

Particularly in those days, we did this at Wagga where it was very black. Black night. The problems are you lose most of your references. It's hard to explain, when you fly normally, under what you call visual flight rules, VFR, you orient everything by the horizon, the ground and the sky,

27:30 you know where they are. You know if you're that way or that way. At night, and this was a very clear horizon, can be very deceptive, sounds silly, but you can get the stars and the ground lights mixed up. Not quite, but if you're not careful. You have very good instruments in the air force and what you've got to learn to do, as I learned many years after as an instrument flying instructor, God didn't make a very good job of us as far as

28:00 our reactions are and our orientation. For example, normally you know where you are relative to everything else, by sight. You've got verticals and horizontals and things to refer to. You've also got muscles that tell you when you move and so on. You've also got these clever things which are called the semicircular canals, which we won't worry about. So when you get up in an aircraft, all sorts of movements, those things,

28:30 particularly your visual, you could lose them. So you have to trust your instruments. Sometimes it's very difficult to do. Your body's telling you to turn to the left and your instrument is saying "Shut up, you're straight an level." You've got to do that. So that takes an enormous amount of discipline. You have to overcome all your normal reactions and believe it. The other most worrying thing is coming in to land, particularly in an aeroplane like the Wirraway with a long nose and propeller

29:00 in front of you, you had a flare path. Ordinary kerosene flares each side of the runway. When you're doing final approach, remember to put your wheels down. One of our fellows got killed doing the wrong thing. He meant to put his wheels down and put his flaps down and finished straight into the ground. That was one of my first solos when I saw that. What you do as you're coming in to land and see the flare path and

29:30 it changes orientation. One moment it looks flat and next it's like that. So you have to find, and it takes a little bit of getting used to.

Were there many accidents during your time in Wagga?

Yeah quite a few. One of the famous ones, and I've got a photograph of it,

30:00 is two Ansons collided in midair. I don't know if you've ever heard this story, have you? Quite incredible. This bloke, they were on cross country training. The Anson was a twin engine aeroplane, originally a bomber but it was a twin engine aeroplane. It was a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky and their paths crossed and one flew into the other and they got jammed in midair together. The bottom bailed out. The fellow in the top,

30:30 I'll think of his name in a moment, he landed them both stuck together. Rather rude actually. He landed this thing. I've got a photograph of it. Rather tragic end to that. He passed and went over to England and became a bomber pilot and got shot down and killed, no, no, no, he did his tour over there. He did a full tour in bombers, came back to Australia and was riding a bicycle and got hit by a car

31:00 and was killed. I'm digressing. What else did you ask me?

The extent of accidents during Wagga.

I can't remember really. There were one or two others, chaps forgetting to put their wheels down, which was common practice in those days. I can't remember anybody else being hurt except this bloke who was killed. I can't remember any others.

Was that disturbing to have one of the blokes you had been training with

31:30 **pass away?**

No. I get asked questions about, later on in frontline squadrons where a lot of people were killed. You develop a strange attitude. It sounds a bit stupid I suppose now, in the cold light of day, but it's not you, it's him. You're all right. You become a little bit

32:00 cold blooded about it all. Somebody's got to write to his wife or his parents and tell them, but it's not you. You don't have to do it. I wonder if he's got any clean shirts, I'm running out. That sort of thing. And you do. A funny story after we were in England, one of the chaps got shot down flying Hurricanes over the Channel. In those days of clothes rationing and no laundries, we all used to run out of clothes, so we hopped into, we didn't take any of his money or photographs or anything,

32:30 all his underclothes and socks were all pinched. Keep us going. Bloke turned up about 3 days later and he demanded all his clothes back.

You got your wings in Wagga. Where did you go from there?

We got a couple of weeks' leave. Things were, we're now

33:00 talking the end of 1940 and things were going very badly in the UK. Battle of Britain was well and truly on. I remember hearing about it all the time. So there was a bit of a desperate hurry to get people over there. I think we had 10 days' leave from memory. I came back up to Brisbane. Then we sailed from Sydney on the 10th December 1940 on a ship called the Large Bay, which was a fairly small ship

33:30 full of cargo and particularly meat and stuff for the UK. We sailed and we took a long way because she had to refuel everywhere. I remember going across the Indian Ocean. There were German raiders, so we were told, and the odd submarine around. So we went via South Africa, down the west coast into Freetown and halfway to Bermuda.

34:00 We came right round up the north and into Scotland over the top of Ireland, round over the back in that into Glasgow. We took about six or seven weeks to get there.

Did you stop anywhere on the way?

Yes, everywhere. Durban, I don't think we went to Cape Town, Durban, Sierra Leone on the west coast, Freetown,

34:30 and then that was the last place.

Did you get a chance to look around when you did stop?

We didn't go ashore. Oh, we went ashore in Durban, but not in Freetown. It was full of malaria. It's on the Ivory Coast. Durban was interesting because they didn't know whose side they were on when we were there. A lot of German descendants there. It was early days of the war and the Germans were winning.

35:00 It was rather a mixed reception we got there, but we only had a couple of days while they refuelled.

How big was your group at that stage on the ship?

I suppose there'd be about 20 of us. Something like that.

What were the living quarters like on ship?

Not very good. We also, this is rather interesting, not only was our course with our wings, but there were a lot of blokes who embarked with the ship,

35:30 20 or 30, to go and do their flying training in Rhodesia in those days. So they came with us as far as Durban and went off. In fact one of the very famous blokes, number two ace, was in that crowd. John Waddy who became a very good friend of mine later on. He learned to fly in Rhodesia. The rest of us, we went on to Glasgow.

36:00 Do you want to go on from there?

The journey was an opportunity to bond a bit more with your.....?

I don't think we knew that word in those days, but I know what you mean. I think by that time we were all pretty friendly and you tend to sort yourselves out to special chums and not so special chums. I had a couple of very close chaps. I think we just hit it off. We had the same likes and dislikes and

36:30 what have you. We had to work fairly hard. We had to keep the watch. So we used to get up in the bows of the thing on submarine watch, looking for the periscopes and that sorts of things. We had a couple of frights. One fright I remember, we got stopped in the middle of the night, we didn't know about it till the next day, but we hear the engine stop and go full astern. We were intercepted by a destroyer. Fortunately it was a British destroyer checking who we were.

37:00 I can't remember anything special except just before we got to Glasgow, we came around the north, we started to see debris everywhere, all the Atlantic convoys being knocked off and sunk in the sea.

Lifeboats and bits of debris and so on. You realised you were at war.

What was the farewell like between you and your parents?

Well, we said farewell at Brisbane,

37:30 because we caught the train down here to Sydney. I had and still have a horror of farewells. So we said farewell at home. That's all. I don't know how I got to the station. Probably a bus of some sort. We just said farewell at home. I can't remember. Mum probably had a little cry. I don't know. I can't think back that far. I was in a hurry to go.

What mood were you in?

Great. Let's get on with it.

38:00 They might finish the war before I get there.

What happened once you arrived in Glasgow?

Well, it was the first time we met blackouts and bloody awful weather I remember. It was January, late December or something like that. Grisly, typical Scottish weather. We caught the train down to London,

38:30 went to a place called Uxbridge where they had a big holding camp sort of a place. I remember we were there and I saw my first Spitfires take off. Oh, boy. That was absolutely wonderful. Saw them going off on an intercept, because the battle was still on. I don't know how long we were there. Not very long. We got sent to a place called Sutton Bridge, which was what they call and

39:00 operational training unit where you went to learn to fly your aeroplane, which in my case was a Hurricane.

You knew a fair bit about Spitfires and Hurricanes prior to getting there?

Only from reading about it. Because the Battle of Britain was on while we were on our way and just before we left and so on. Oh yes. Very exciting. Didn't know much about what they were like to fly, but that was

39:30 where I wanted to go.

Tell me about the Hurricane.

It won the [aerial] Battle of Britain, not the Spitfire. This is a thing that a lot of people don't realise. It was the Hurricanes that destroyed most of the German raids. It got the bombers. The Spitfires looked after mostly the German fighter escort. The Hurricane was a pretty heavy type of aeroplane. I

40:00 flew the Spitfire much later on and for pure flying the Spitfire was delightful. The Hurricane we flew at southern Bedford later on could take more punishment than the Spitfire. It could be shot up quite a bit more. It was a bit slower than a Spit [fire]. It was one of the nice things about it, it was a more robust aeroplane to land. In those days

40:30 we didn't have runways, we landed on grass airfields and so on. A Spitfire was easily bent. The wheels were a little bit fragile compared to a Hurricane. So that was always in our favour when you were coming back and you were probably a little bit tired and a bit frightened and all you wanted to do was go out and have a beer or something and your landing wasn't as good as it should be, a Hurricane was more reliable. The Hurricanes we flew had, the first ones I flew had 8

41:00 guns firing from the wings. Browning .303s. Later on we had 12 guns and that was when the Hurricane improved a bit. It was for those days fast. I can't remember speeds anymore, but I imagine you're talking 280-300 knots. Something in that order. I'll tell you a very strange

41:30 story that happened to us at Sutton. Is this alright to go on like this now?

Tape 3

00:33 Sutton Bridge is a pretty gloomy sort of place. It's out in the fen district in England and flat country, lousy weather and it was January. It was a bad time. I hadn't flown for 2 1/2-3 months. We got there and the Hurricane was a quantum leap from a Wirraway and my instructor

01:00 had been shot down a couple of times and he was very twitchy. He took me over to a Hurricane. He gave me one typewritten sheet about all the cockpit checks and all the speeds and all the clever stuff. Gave me a quick check in a thing [trainer] called a Harvard, he did a couple of circuits and he went off. I climbed into this aeroplane and took off. By

01:30 the time I got my wheels up I was in cloud. One of the funny things about transferring from Australia to England, amongst other funny things, is their maps and the countryside. In Australia, when we learned

at a place like Wagga to navigate, you had maps that were 15 miles to an inch for example, on scale. Got to England and it was 4 miles to an inch. So you had to make that enormous

- 02:00 jump. Four times the thing. Plus the fact that flying in a place like Wagga, if you were map reading and you saw a railway line, there was only one railway line, and there was only one road that crossed it. So you knew where you were if you found that place. In England there were railway lines and rivers and bridges and things and flying down very low in a fast aeroplane, which you're unaccustomed to anyway, you didn't know where you were. I had no idea where I was most of the time. A couple of strange things happened.
- 02:30 You always flew these aeroplanes, even the first time when you were only learning to fly them, you always had your guns fully loaded because you were just as likely to have anything happen. Intersect an aeroplane on attack, after you got airborne. A couple of strange things happened. A friend of mine, Nolly Clarke did his first solo and he came in to land and as he landed he pulled the stick back and he was kangarooing as they called it. The aeroplane was -- have a look at the gun button which was just a little thumb thing you pressed with your thumb. Every time he pressed his thumb on it.
- 03:00 8 machineguns spraying all over the airfield. Everybody ran into cover as he did his first landing. My first take off landing was very uneventful except I got lost. Another time I got lost soon after. It shows you how stupid we were in those days. I took off, run into cloud, by the time I shut everything off, wheels up, flaps, tidied everything up, I was well above the cloud, but I had no idea where I was. My radio wasn't working. We weren't used to radio. We didn't have them in the Wirraway.
- 03:30 I didn't know what to do for a while. I saw an aircraft and I said, "That's a Blenheim bomber. I'll formate on him and he will show me the way to some aerodrome." cos there were plenty of aerodromes in England. I couldn't catch him. I got up close to him. The faster I went the faster he went. So I was getting a bit low in fuel and I thought I should go. I very cleverly worked out now that the North Sea, there's no mountains or hills out there, if I get out over the North Sea and down through the cloud, I
- 04:00 shouldn't run into anything. So I did exactly that. It was very clever of me. I came out over the North Sea and flew due west and found my way home and landed at Sutton Bridge. The blokes said, "Good on you mate." I said, "What for?" They said, "You chased that JU88." What happened, while I was airborne trying to formate on this, it was a German JU88, a bomber. I didn't get close enough to see the bloke's red crosses on him. He'd just bombed the airfield.
- 04:30 Here's brave old me on one of my first trips chasing this German. So I told them I was trying to formate on him, I thought it was one of ours. That was a funny story.

Can you walk us through your very first op on the Hurricane?

I'd have to finish at Sutton Bridge and we did our time there. Then I got posted to a famous squadron called number 17 Squadron Royal Air Force

- 05:00 just had the rugged old Battle of Britain. They lost lots and lots of blokes. They shot down 170 aircraft, so they had a pretty good tally. But they'd lost fellows and they needed some new ones. So our people from, 2 of us got sent to 17 Squadron. By the time I joined them, we took a bit of leave first, went to London to the best spots, and so on. A bit naughty. We stayed a bit longer than we should have. We finally got the squadron. By that time it was up in Scotland. A place called Castleton.
- 05:30 You can't go any further north. We joined them up there. This is where I first, you asked about readiness. What you did in those days, when the squadron was on readiness, they usually had you on readiness on 4 hours or relief for 24 hours. When we were on readiness you have maybe 4 aircraft. You go out to your aircraft when you're due to go on. You do all the
- 06:00 cockpit check ready for takeoff. You set your rudder trims, your fuel, you put your helmet on the gun sight with connect to your radio and oxygen. Your parachute would be in the seat with the straps to one side. Then you would go back and sit outside or inside the disposal hut with Mae Wests [flotation jackets] on, flying boots and gun strapped to your shoulder all this. Maps stuck in your flying boots.
- 06:30 You'd sit there trying to read or play cards, twitching like mad, waiting for the call. They'd phone eventually and say, "Scramble all directions!" Scramble meant, "Get airborne." You'd race out to your aircraft, it wasn't very far away. By that time the ground mechanic had started it for you, so the prop was going and it was warmed up. You leap in ready for takeoff and put your parachute on, helmet and everything on, while you're pulling your wheels up. So
- 07:00 by the time they said, "Scramble!" you'd be airborne in three minutes and off on the intercept. You wouldn't know until you got your radio and helmet and everything on and warmed up, usually 2 of you at a time, maybe 4. The ground control would vector you. They'd say, "Steer 180, angle 30." 30,000 feet was what that was. So off you go on this thing and they changed as the raid came in. They'd say,
- 07:30 "Steer 160." or whatever. They give you bearings and distances until you'd gotten to your intercept and they'd say, "Bogeys." bogey was the word for if they weren't sure if it was a friendly or baddie. Bogey was unidentified. So, "Bogeys at 12 o'clock above you or below or 3 o'clock." When they were positively identified they'd say, "Bandits 3 o'clock." and you'd say, "Jesus!" That's when your tummy turned over. So you

- 08:00 had your gun sight on. Your guns were always armed. You were really a little bit twitchy. They'd off you on the intercept and the first time we didn't get intercept thank God. By that time I got over the fright and, "Let's have a go." So that was the first one. Can't remember all the others. I only had one,
- 08:30 I didn't fire my guns up in Scotland. We chased a few. I had a pretty unpleasant thing. There's an airfield called Alden, which is just near Inverness. We were supposed to be rested, but we had a couple on night readiness. I got scrambled and Aberdeen was being bombed. Oh
- 09:00 God it was a black night. In a Hurricane at night the exhaust, you looked out of the cockpit and the exhaust was just streams coming past. You couldn't see through it. Just streams of orange and red coming through. You got on your instruments and you were being vectored. I'll never forget this. They started off they vectored me to chase a JU88 that was bombing Aberdeen and he was heading out over the North Sea. So they give you all sorts of things like
- 09:30 "Buster, buste!" which is, "Faster, faster." "Gate" means, "Go right through." They gave me a gate and said, "He's 12 o'clock, same level." So I was just up his backside. Suddenly the whole of Aberdeen ground defence opened up on me. They had anti-aircraft. They were supposed to be aiming at him, but I was copping the lot. I had red and yellow and greens going all over the cockpit. Quite frightening. So I said a few rude words over the radio to tell these blokes to stop. I was the goody
- 10:00 and not the baddy. He got away and I didn't get a shot at him because by this time I couldn't see anything because of all this stuff going on. I was just about out of fuel. So I couldn't get back to where I started, so they told me to land at Aberdeen at a place called Dice. When you've not been to a strange airfield at night and you just had a couple of frights and your fuel gauge was empty. I landed all right.
- 10:30 I was taxing and the engine stopped, I was right out of fuel. So I went in the mess and had a couple of beers I think and they filled it up and I flew back the next day. So that was an interesting one.

Do they give you special training to fly at night?

Well, we learned when we were at Wagga learning to fly, yes. There's no really special training they can give you. You just have to go and do it. There are certain things I think

- 11:00 I've explained in an earlier tape that you have to trust your instruments. That was the big, big difference at night. In bad weather it was the same thing. You had to trust your instruments.

You were in different conditions, but there wasn't any extra training done?

That's right. I said earlier too about map reading. It was very different in Britain really, because I never

- 11:30 really did get used to it during those early days. I did eventually, but in the early days. They had, which we weren't used to, which was very wonderful in the UK, you had radio control and radars for the first time. So if you really got lost you sent off what they called a homing. You call up your controller and say, "Joe Blow here. Give me a homing." and he'd tell you a course to steer and pick up

- 12:00 and he'd bring you back to the airfield. Thanks goodness.

Tell us about the relationship between you and the ground controller.

The ground controllers were almost all pilots who understood what was happening. How to fly an aeroplane. They would do their best to put you in a favourable position for an incoming raid. The ideal position was to be above the raid coming in

- 12:30 so you could use your height to get extra speed and so on. And up sun. One of the greatest worries when you're a fighter bloke is the sun. Because a bloke could hide in the sun. If the sun's up there and he's up there, you can't see him for the sun. So what a good controller would try to do was up sun. So the enemy couldn't see you. So you could dash out of the sun and have a shot at him. That was one of the main
- 13:00 things. He was also very helpful in giving you a homing. He'd pass you over to somebody else to give you a homing. If you got into trouble, got shot up and something like that, he tried to direct you to the nearest airfield or warn the air sea rescue. A couple of blokes got shot up in the Channel and had to bail out. He warned the air sea rescue,
- 13:30 gave them directions to get out and get the bloke.

Did you have to make many decisions without the ground controller saying OK?

Once the controller put you in the right position and you saw them and you said, it sounds silly, you said, "Tally-ho." That was a, "I've got him, I can see him." The old hunting thing. "There he is. Tally-ho." After that you're on your own. You did your own dog fighting procedures and

- 14:00 the ambition was always to get on his tail. I don't know whether, dog fighting, when you see it in the movies, is nothing like the real thing. In a dog fight you finish up in a steep turn. If you see an aircraft, say you're firing your guns at him, you've got to fire well ahead, because by the time your rounds get there he's done that.

- 14:30 Even if it's only a couple of seconds, the aeroplane's along there. So you have to stay off deflection. So you finish up in a steep turn. If you can get right behind him, right up his backside, there's no deflection, you've got a dead aim shot. I'll never forget at fighter school there were three methods we were not taught. Three famous blokes told us how they did it. There was a fellow called Stewart Bewing [?]. He was a Canadian.
- 15:00 He was just a mathematician. He shot down a lot of aeroplanes. He could tell you of your gun sight, which was a radar sort of thing, about deflection shooting. You could say to him, "Messerschmitt 109 doing 220 knots, 30 degrees off." he'd say, "2 1/4 rads." He mathematically told you where to aim to get it. The second bloke who was good is a famous bloke called Salem Halad [?].
- 15:30 That's all bloody nonsense. He said, "You wanna shoot the aircraft down, get on his tail, get both hands on the stick and fly up until his tail wheel from your cockpit sight you can't miss." Why with both hands? He said, "Because you're right in the bloody slip stream you fool." The third one, who I loved dearly, [Squadron Leader Keith] Bluey Truscott, quite a famous bloke, he didn't go for any of this nonsense at all. Bluey was a duck shooter. He
- 16:00 was just one of these fellows who knew exactly where to aim your sight. The boffins [scientists], the mathematicians worked out, that if a JU88, which was a fairly big aircraft, if he came across at nearly 90 degrees and you had 8 guns firing at whatever speed level, the most you could put in him was 11 rounds, which meant it was impossible almost at 90 degrees. Bluey
- 16:30 was leading the whole wing across the Channel on a sweep and he had about 24 aircraft behind him. A [Messerschmitt] 109, which is much smaller than the JU88, came at it from 90 degrees and doing not 280 knots, doing 220. Fast like that. Bluey just pulled the stick back, boom, it fell out of the sky. He just knew exactly. He just had a feel for it. Like clay shooting.
- 17:00 **What was your tactical strength?**
- I only fired my guns a few times in anger. I knew all the theory. I tended to, you just didn't know what was going to happen, whether you'd get into a proper dog fight and get on the turn. A Spit could turn inside after a number of turns, it could turn inside a
- 17:30 German 109. A Hurricane couldn't turn as well as that, so the Hurricanes tended to take on the bombers who wouldn't turn at all. They just stopped in formation, because they had rear gunners and top gunners and so on. So the Hurricanes tended to go in on either dead astern or slightly to one angle. I don't know what my tactic would have been anyway if I had a go at the bombers. I did have a go at a JU88 once, too.
- In your squadron,**
- 18:00 **who were the other fighter pilots? Did they come from all over the world?**
- Yeah, when I joined the 17 Squadron, we had 2 Australians, we had 3 Frenchmen, we had a Pole, we had a Czech, we had a Rhodesian, and the rest I think were British. We had a Canadian. In those days the Poles and the Czechs, I don't know if you saw that
- 18:30 wonderful movie called Dark Blue World? Fantastic movie. It's all about the Polish Air Force. They escaped a lot of them and came over to England. They were great fighters.
- Your squadron was chosen from the crème de la crème of fighter pilots?**
- No.
- How did they pick you?**
- How did I go to a certain squadron instead of another squadron? Cos they needed pilots.
- 19:00 Attrition was happening, some squadrons got a lot of losses, others didn't. Some squadrons would use a rest to replenish and so you might go to them. We were unlucky, a couple of Australians, we went to 17 Squadron when they were having a rest up in Scotland. So we didn't get into the war as early. Probably just as well. There was a lot of my chums who went to other squadrons
- 19:30 got shot down.
- In Scotland you were fighting against German JU88s?**
- There wasn't much, we were having a rest up there. The only enemy action was up there, very rarely, was the one I told you about Aberdeen. The Germans were sending reconnaissance aircraft out into the Atlantic. The Gap they call it between the top of Scotland and the Shetlands and
- 20:00 Spits Bergen or whatever's right up there, the North Pole. So they'd go to there. They went to there. They were reconnaissance aircraft and they were the only intercepts we had. My chum, Nolly Clarke shot out one of these JU88s just up there. But we'd go on readiness, but it was not much of a war up there for us. That's one of the reasons I wanted to get out of the squadron.

You did eventually get out of that squadron?

- 20:30 By this time we were having more of a rest. We went up to Shetland. Next stop was the North Pole. As far as I was concerned the air war was, you've got to remember you wanted to go, you wanted to be in the action. The big war was on in the Middle East. That's where the 3 Squadron was and all the action was. So I applied for a posting. I said, "I want to go to the Middle East."
- 21:00 About this time, I'll have to perhaps start telling you what happened, which we didn't know of at that time. The Russians came into the war round about this time. I'm talking towards the middle of '41. My understanding was that they were coming in on the German side and they were going to be the baddies. But they weren't. They came in against the Germans. They were having a rough time. Stalingrad was coming
- 21:30 up, the worst of it. So [British Prime Minister] Churchill, because [Soviet leader] Stalin was jumping up and down and asking for help, he decided to send some fighter aircraft to Russia. I didn't know that at the time. So when I applied for a posting, wanting to go to the Middle East, it was all, "OK, off you go." Half the squadron was sent to somewhere in Yorkshire.
- 22:00 They started issuing us with big woolly leather jackets and neck to knee underclothes and three pairs of gloves, silks, woollens, leathers and so on. It didn't sound like the Middle East to me, but no one knew where it was, so weren't told. Then we went and caught a big transport aircraft and went up to Glasgow and joined an aircraft carrier. I'm not going to talk about Russia now,

22:30 but that's how we got to Russia.

What was the aircraft carrier called?

The very first aircraft carrier in the world. HMS Argus. The Americans don't believe it, but you can look up Janes [Fighting Ships book] and HMS Argus was the very, very first aircraft carrier. She was commissioned in 1919. We flew off her.

Describe her as a ship.

Do you want to go over to Russia now?

Yeah, we may as well.

We finished at 17 Squadron. So we now called ourselves 134 Squadron, because we got people

- 23:00 all over the place to form the squadron. So I was still a sergeant pilot and we climbed aboard this Argus in Glasgow and I still thought we were going to the Middle East somewhere. I knew it could be a bit cold in some parts. The ship sailed out of there and even I was, this is my lack of navigation, when she turned right in stead of left and started heading up north a bit, I said "This doesn't look like the Middle East." Away we went.
- 23:30 After we'd been aboard for a little while they told us where we were going. Churchill had promised Stalin some help and he was sending 2 squadrons. The idea was to teach the Russians, we weren't supposed to necessarily go there fighting, we were supposed to teach the Russians how to fly the Hurricane. But more importantly how to maintain them, look after them, because it was a big jump from the agricultural aeroplanes they had.
- 24:00 Rolls Royce engine and all this sort of stuff, lots of guns. So that was the whole idea. I think we had 24 aircraft in the Argus. The Argus was not much of a ship. I think she could do about 22 knots an hour. We'd never been on an aircraft carrier. We had no idea what carriers were like. We were in fog, out of fog and in the fog again. We got spotted by a German
- 24:30 reconnaissance aeroplane that went around and around telling everybody where we were. Back into fog again. Finally we decided we'd fly off. There was no wind speed, so no wind at all. So we had very little wind speed over the deck. So it meant our takeoff was very critical. Other thing I should tell you,
- 25:00 at that latitude, first of all, compasses are useless anywhere near the poles. Everything points north. The other thing, they hadn't been swung. That meant they hadn't been checked against the magnetism in the aircraft, which you had to do every, in fact they were useless. So what they said, "You take off in this thing and fly to port. We lined the destroyer up on the
- 25:30 starboard beam, that's about there, so many miles away, and fly over the aircraft carrier and over the destroyer and pull your direction gyro out and you're heading south. You fly on that course for 20 minutes or half an hour and you'll hit Russia. It's a big country, you can't miss it. You won't go over it or anything. When you hit it, turn right and after a certain time you'll find a big river. Fly down that river and after a certain time, on the left you'll
- 26:00 find a little village and that's where you're going." We did that.

What were the maps like that they gave you?

I've still got one. They were all in Russian anyway, so it didn't mean anything to us. Strange thing about this Argus, it had a little ramp like a ski jump out on the bow. Rather interesting. Diverting a bit. Years later, the carrier, vertical takeoff, have got a ski jump. Anyway, the whole idea was they were

26:30 supposed to send you off. On the first trip they hit it and broke their undercarriage. So they had to prang [crash] in Russia. That was rather nice. First aeroplanes into Russia. I got away with it somehow. I didn't break mine.

This is your first takeoff off an aircraft carrier?

Yeah.

Wouldn't you normally get training for that?

Yeah. Their own blokes did, but this was all an emergency to get the aeroplanes over there. Was it 12 or 24 of us went off

27:00 the ship? Another convoy took aeroplanes in bits and pieces to Archangel where they nailed them together down there and flew them back up to us. I've got my vision still on that. You put the brakes on, full throttle and off you went. Hope for the best. "Our father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." The other unpleasant thing about it was that if you ditch,

27:30 too bad, we can't pick you up. Too many submarines around. Not only that, you weren't going to last long in that bloody [cold] water up there. So that was a nice thought. It didn't happen. So we landed in Russia.

Did you lose any men on the flight up to Russia?

No, not one. Except these, I think there were only two that landed with their wheels.

They survived?

Yes. Eventually, we were there from nearly Christmas

28:00 and, it was a strange war in many ways. I'd just had my 21st birthday by the way. I was unsure about the Russians. Till I got there I thought they were the enemy. The other odd thing, and this has happened to me totally, and it's quite true, that in the Russo-Finnish war, when the Russians and the Finns had a fight,

28:30 Britain had given the Finns Hurricanes and so to the Russians, Hurricanes was the baddy. We were over there in Hurricanes on their side. I can assure you we had a couple of very funny experiences where the Russians were trying to shoot us down. We were supposed to be on their side. Our senior people were terrified of an international incident. You have to cast your mind back to those days in 1941 when things were really

29:00 grim all around the world. The Germans, we were there supposedly to teach them to fly these things, not to go to war and the Germans, I learned this later on, they had one of their biggest divisions trying to take Murmansk where we were, because it was a warm water port. They wanted it badly and they put everything into it. When we landed and got into our

29:30 little huts and things we could hear gunfire only just up the road. It might have been 20-30 miles away, but you could hear the guns. So the ground war was close to us, which we didn't like very much. The other thing which was disconcerting, the Russians had no radar worthwhile, and the Germans had a big airfield near us called Petsamo. They'd send over their bombers to bomb us and bomb Murmansk and places around.

30:00 They had no radar, so the first thing you knew about a raid was when the anti-aircraft guns on the airfield opened up, or the bombs dropped on the airfield. So we'd take off between the bomb bursts. We'd be on readiness and sitting in the freezing bloody snow. The bomb burst would go and off you'd go. We shot out I think about 16 confirmed aircraft. We shot down a lot more than that, but

30:30 the Russians were strange people. They were loath to give us any real success. We never quite understood why, but we think that it was a sort of national pride, they were going to shoot down the German aeroplanes, not these bloody English. We had a funny joke too, we found out afterwards that they got something like 1,000 roubles when they shot down. So we said we wouldn't accept it because it would

31:00 spoil our amateur status. We shot down 16 or 17 confirmed, but it was quite a few more. We only lost one bloke in combat. Sergeant Smith got shot down. We had quite a lot of combat. One of the most absurd things, and I give you my word of honour this is completely true, the Russians had one of their destroyers up in one of the fjords, right on the frontline, providing naval

31:30 gunfire support. Firing out the ships' guns while their infantry was advancing. What's called gunfire support. So we sent one of our flights, that's about 6 aeroplanes, over to fly escort around the destroyer to keep the German bombers away from it. The Russians then sent over three bombers from our airfield to dive bomb the German troops. We, the other flight,

32:00 the other 6 aircraft, the same squadron who was around the ship, escorted the dive bombers to keep the German fighters away. It was a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky, see for miles. We got over this fjord and we were at about 15-20,000 feet. Suddenly the lead Russian dive bomber peeled off and dive bombed the Russian destroyer. Word of honour. Dropped his bombs on the Russian destroyer. The Russian destroyer opened up and shot the

32:30 Russian lead bomber out of the sky. We were scratching our heads, metaphorically. "What the bloody hell's going on here?" For one awful moment we thought "Maybe they're not our Hurricanes, maybe they're somebody else's Hurricanes." It was very confusing. I'd love to tell the story and say the Hurricanes had a go at each other, but they didn't. The Russian crew bailed out of there. I think we watched them flutter down, I don't know what happened to them. Couldn't care less by this time. So that was rather a strange thing.

What planes were the Germans flying?

33:00 The Germans had JU88 bombers and Messerschmitt 109s. They were a fighter.

How did you judge them as competition?

Damned good aeroplane. Equivalent to the Hurricane.

Just equivalent to a Hurricane?

I would venture to say, other blokes might disagree, it depended on the bloke who was flying it. They were so close.

33:30 Trying to compare fighter aircraft you have to say at what height, at what speed and where, for instance I was telling you about up sun, there are lots of variables come into it. If you finished up trying to match them and everything else being equal, there wouldn't be much difference.

How long were you in Murmansk for?

Only about 5 or 6 months.

What was the atmosphere like in that place?

34:00 First of all you were inside the arctic circle, so that's gives you an idea. Christ it was cold. For Queensland it was unbearable. After a while, remember the aim of the exercise was the teach them to fly and to hand the aeroplanes over to Murmansk. So we did that after a while and we stopped flying, I can't remember how long before we left. Shooting down these aircraft, it was coincidental. That wasn't what we set out to do. It just happened.

34:30 It was a while we had to shoot down aircraft.

This happened while you were training the Russian pilots?

The only training you could do was tell them all about the aeroplane. We had lots of interpreters explain things. There was no two seats. You couldn't hop in, it was a single seat aeroplane. The maintenance was much more difficult. They had to translate all our technical manuals into Russian. It was interesting because one of our interpreters could speak pretty good

35:00 Russian. She was called, I can't remember her name now, she was an engineer and highly educated. She was doing some of the interpreting for us. Her English was absolutely beautiful. It was pure Dickensian. She'd learned English at university, wherever it was, and it was an English of a 19th century sort of thing. You don't realise how much idiom had crept into your language.

35:30 She wouldn't understand half the things we were saying. You had to be very precise and try and put yourself back in old English. So the interpreting became very difficult. When you have to translate highly technical stuff, I wasn't involved in that of course, that was our engineers. What else?

Were there many instructions lost in translation?

I don't know. I was very young, very

36:00 junior, and very cold. Just to give you an idea what the conditions were like just before we left. At about 11 o'clock the sun was just sitting on the horizon. You'd just see it. No, no. It was starting to appear, that's right. 12 o'clock it sat on the horizon, 1 o'clock gone again. So that was your day. Then the northern lights would start and all that.

So a lot of the time you were flying in darkness?

36:30 No, we didn't at all. We'd given them up by the time that happened. The war had receded for one thing. The Germans, I wasn't privy to the high level stuff, but I think the land battle of Murmansk had failed as far as the Germans were concerned and the weather was closing in. I don't think there was much flying on the inside then. I don't think so. The weather

37:00 and the time of the year. I think we'd lost interest by then. I had. I was cold and miserable.

Were the Russian pilots easy to train? Was it a difficult exercise?

Yes. What we did, we trained the very senior people. There was a famous lieutenant colonel who was a Hero of the Soviet Union, which is the equivalent of a VC [Victoria Cross]. Sovinoff was his name.

37:30 He and a couple of major type levels were taught first. Then they taught the rest of the class. It's the

normal way to do things. You convert the senior experts and they did the rest. They broke a few aeroplanes. They were a pretty big jump on the ones they were used to. This reminds me, would you like me to go on to

38:00 one of the most terrifying things that happened?

Sure.

Because of the conditions and the snow and so on, we had semi dug outs for the aircraft. They were almost underground, but not quite, with a roof over the top. So we were down there. When the bombs started dropping you sat in your aeroplane, opened throttle and got up, climbed up the hill and onto the airfield. The Hurricane

38:30 was very nose heavy. So what you always had to do was taxi, particularly in snow or mud and so on, a couple of airmen would sit on the tail and lean over the rudder fin like that to keep your tail down, otherwise you'd tip up. Then you got up the ramp and you stopped and they got off and you took off. I was coming out of my little ramp and our flight commander, a fellow named Vicky Berg had his two airmen on.

39:00 Bombs are dropping and guns are going off. Vicky climbed up the ramp and opened his throttle and didn't let the blokes get off. I watched in horror, I stopped and watched. I saw this Hurricane going across, tail going down like this, full throttle trying to get off. All these heavy blokes were not only keeping the tail down, but they were blocking the airflow of the elevator, so the thing didn't work. He finally staggered into the air like that. It was awful to watch. He got up about 100 feet and

39:30 was absolutely vertical, and he catapulted down like that, cartwheeled like that and the two little airmen were flying from the sky. Not much left of them. Not much left of Vicky Berg either. The aeroplane was in a mess. So we took off and came back. We couldn't understand why these two blokes didn't get off. So we tried. You can't. If you're sitting on the tail of the plane and you've got the fin coming up like that, and the

40:00 fellow's got full throttle, you're pinned with the slipstream. You can't get off. So that was terrible to watch.

Were there many accidents during that period?

I had one. It really was strange. The snow, I don't know how deep it was. It was slushy, muddy, snow. A Hurricane's not designed for that sort of stuff. I was racing off,

40:30 taxing across ready for takeoff. I got a little bog and I stood on the nose. It spoiled one aeroplane for a little while, but they put a new prop on. I can't remember now the accidents. A lot of amusing things went on. I know one of the other chaps in the other squadron that was there, they got into a scrap and suddenly you're flying in formation and there was a fight.

41:00 The sky's full of aeroplanes. Two seconds you can't see anybody. Where have they all gone? It just happened, suddenly everybody's gone. This bloke, Michael... forgot his name, it's all coming back. Michael suddenly found himself on his own. "Ah, there's the aeroplanes." So he raced up and formatted on them. He's formatting on them and he had a look over and they had a big, black cross on them. He got away and shot it down and went home.

The big black cross is the German?

Mm.

41:30 He was formatting on a German. I'll tell you, it was a very funny war. It really was.

What did flying off with bombs going off around you feel like?

How do you cast your memory back? The strange things about most these experiences, strangely enough you only remember the good parts. Maybe some sensory thing that suppresses all the

42:00 bad. I don't know.

Tape 4

00:33 You asked me what it was like when we were taking off with the bombs bursting and all that stuff. You don't usually have much time to think about it, you leave the aeroplane. You get butterflies, of course you do. Once you get airborne and tidy up the cockpit, pull the wheels up and settle down and start listening to the radio, you're still a little bit on edge, but

01:00 I don't recall being particularly frightened. I don't remember a particular feeling. I assume I was frightened. I'd be abnormal if I wasn't. I don't ever remember wondering whether I was going to get shot down. It's always the other bloke that gets shot down, not you. You develop a

01:30 sort of a fatalistic thing towards it. I think you do, without realising it. It's not you, you're still there. When you come back and land you're a bit glad to get out of the cockpit. I could tell a longer story up in New Guinea, but you don't want that now I shouldn't think.

Did you strike blokes who had a struggle with the stress side of the whole operation?

Yes.

02:00 I know a couple. They called it lack of moral fibre, LMF, which I suppose is a polite word for saying "Coward" I suppose. He's not with us, he doesn't want to be in this anymore. I think it happened more with the bomber boys. I would have hated that. I think you did 20 missions over Europe before you had a rest. At one stage

02:30 there the fatality rate was shocking. I think with the fighter blokes, I think too many sorties missions] and the blokes would start to say "Hey, this can't go on. I can't keep it up." I knew one chap in 17 Squadron when I joined it, who was shot down twice in one day. Had to bail out twice. The second time, he got a good rest the second time cos he got badly burned, the aeroplane was on fire.

03:00 To this day he's got what looks like an oxygen mask because where he had his mask wasn't burnt, the rest of his face was where the helmet wasn't. It looks like he's got a pair of white gloves on, cos he wasn't wearing gloves. So all his skin was badly burned. Some blokes had enough. I can understand. I came close to it myself saying, "Hey, can I get out of this for a little while?" Just rough weather. I'd like a bit of a good rest. Some

03:30 squadrons they didn't get a chance. Particularly in the Middle East. It was far worse than we had. I knew one chap in the Middle East. He got shot down and he bailed out in the middle of a tank battle in the desert. He landed next to some of the German tanks. They were trying to depress their machineguns to shoot him and he was running along the side of the tank keeping as close as he could so they couldn't shoot him. He lived to tell his tale.

04:00 He didn't fly for a long while after that. That would be dreadful.

Waiting for "Scramble" must be a challenging time. You don't know when the call's going to come through.

We whiled away the time playing poker, cards; I played a lot of bridge.

04:30 We all smoked like chimneys in those days by the way. We didn't know it was wrong for us. Read. Some blokes wrote letters. Each to his own. I tended to play cards. I smoked too much. There was an operational phone and only that phone. It usually had a different ring to all the other ordinary phones around the place. This was straight

05:00 from the op room. So if that rang it was usually a "Scramble" or "Release." Every time that one rang you got up and started to go.

You mentioned a man you had been dealing with who had seen a lot of action and become twitchy. Was that uncommon to see?

Some people developed different twitches.

05:30 An eye thing or something. Usually they got over it eventually. I suppose it was two things. It depended on how much ops you had and how badly you were on the wrong end of it, and your own physical makeup. A lot of blokes, I know one fellow in the RAAF, he's still alive, I know him well, he was a born fighter pilot. For example, in Korea he was commander of 77 Squadron.

06:00 He did two tours up there. He commanded the Mustangs and when they changed over to the Meteors he commanded them. They said, "You've got to take some leave." So they made him take 6 weeks. You know what he did with his 6 weeks' leave? He went to his mates in the Americans and flew F86s [Sabre jets] up over the Yalu [River]. Liked fighting. He was a warrior.

The release of tension and pressure when you get out of

06:30 **a plane after a sortie, did you find it a good thing to sit down with a couple of beers?**

You couldn't have a couple of beers during the day because you might have to fly again. So I think what happened when you landed, up in the main plane, when you got out of the aeroplane was the intelligence officer saying, "OK, what happened?"

07:00 Are you claiming anything? Any confirmed? Any problems?" He was usually hard to convince on anything. So finally you got out of the aeroplane and you usually wanted to go to the toilet straight away. A nervous pee, we called it. Cigarette as soon as you got out. Locked down and you usually then probably didn't go back on raid in an hour or two. Cup of tea or something.

07:30 I don't remember getting two scrambles in one day while I was on readiness. It depended. Sometimes they'd have the whole squadron on readiness. Sometimes a fight and sometimes just two aircraft. So you get a fair bit of time off when you were not on readiness. If the squadron was on readiness today,

tomorrow was probably off and 8 hours notice. The next day, it depended on what was going on, you might be relieved

08:00 completely so you could go away for the day. It varied.

You had to trust the controller. Was the trust difficult to maintain? Did you have some controllers who were better than others?

I don't think I had enough

08:30 interceptions. I'm trying to think of a few I had. Mind you, the controller had a difficult job, because sometimes the radar didn't pick up the incoming raid until he couldn't put you in a good position and you might have to climb. That happened in Darwin. Ideally you were above them and up sun. He would strive to do that, but he couldn't always do it. Depended on when he was given the enemy raid information.

09:00 I don't think I ever knew any controllers by name. They were just voices as far as I was concerned.

You thought if things didn't turn out with flying you'd consider being on a ship. Heading to Russia you were on a ship, how did you find being at sea in a

09:30 **military context?**

I hadn't thought at that time I ever wanted to be in the navy. My feelings on that short time; I don't know how long we were onboard, 10 days maybe, that sort of time. I was sergeant so I was in the petty officers' mess. I can't

10:00 remember if I slung a hammock, I think I slept on a settee type thing on a mattress. The food wasn't bad. We had rum. The Royal Navy had spirits at 11:20. That was good. We went to lectures. We did PT [physical training] up on the flight deck. It wasn't a long trip. I think 10 days, something like that.

You didn't mind the feel of naval operations

10:30 **and people?**

I don't think I saw enough of it in that time. I remember watching, the Argus had some aeroplanes called [Grumman] Martlets. A little American fighter aircraft. I remember watching them take off and land. I said "Not for me." Little did I know that years later I'd join the fleet air arm. Watching was terrifying. As far as the rest of the thing onboard, we didn't have any contact with naval officers

11:00 or the captain or anybody to make any serious comment.

You were taking off from the ship. Were you also landing on the ship?

No. We couldn't. The Hurricanes were not Sea Hurricanes. They had no hooks, no nothing. Once you took off that was it, you had to land, ditch.

The art of taking off was to have the brakes on?

Yes. None of us had ever

11:30 been on a ship, never tried this before. We were briefed by some of the fleet air arm pilots. I've still got the instructions here of exactly what happened. They push you as far aft as possible. I think we had 3 aeroplanes at a time to take off. The rest were down on the hangar. So you could have maximum flight deck takeoff. I think the ship was at the most 600 feet, if that, long. Usually, in taking off from a ship,

12:00 the two things that happened is the ship always steams into wind because the total of the ship's speed and the wind across the deck reduces your takeoff run. We had no wind over the deck. We're talking about this foggy place. So what we were told to do, they pushed us right aft, we hopped in, ran up the aeroplane full bore, feet on the brakes, holding the brakes on, you had 10 brakes.

12:30 The brakes full on and the bloke waved a green flag and you went, tried to keep on the central line, otherwise you'd hit something over the side. The ramp went up in front, pull the pole back and hoped you got airborne. Pull up your wheels and the rest was as I said earlier on.

Your Russian experience was a bit of

13:00 **a miserable one. A bit of a challenging one from the point of view of the weather conditions.**

I would never have chosen to go to Russia in that thing, but I was just 21. You did what you were told. That was the other thing about those days. You didn't argue. If you were told to do something you did it. There was no such thing as today I think a sailor or airman can have a little discussion saying, "I don't think that's....." we couldn't. They said

13:30 "Do it." and you did it. I have no objections to the system. I liked it. I knew where I was and it was good.

How did you find the Russians in general as far as being friendly or unfriendly towards you?

We had a language barrier, which was impossible for 99% of us. I think

- 14:00 we had one Russian speaker amongst us. We got by with a bit of sign language and so on. We, the ordinary pilots, had very little to do with them. There was no social life. There were no toilet or bath facilities. I think we had a bath probably not once a week. It was a communal thing. It was bloody awful. The toilets
- 14:30 were indescribable. They had no flushing toilets or anything. It was horrible. We didn't have laid down water for example in the sergeants' mess that I was in. I can remember to wash and shave you'd go and get a bucket of snow and put it on a little potbellied heater we had in the thing. Then poured it into a basin of some sort and had a wash. You smelt a bit after a couple of days. Food was
- 15:00 very ordinary. We started off when we arrived, for breakfast we used to get champagne from the Russians. Then the commanding officer found out we were paying for it, so that stopped pretty smartly. Then we got vino, and we found out we had to pay for that as well. The bill was going back to the British Air Ministry. So that was stopped. Then we got this awful bloody Russian tea and the food was pretty grim. It was so grim that in the end

- 15:30 we had navy rations. We started to get bully beef and all the old English food. We lived.

The Russians didn't mind starting the day with alcohol in the tank?

No. We had vodka too. I'd forgotten about that. We had all the same supplies. I can remember at night when we finished we used to have a few vodkas. It was just like bloody metho [methylated spirits]. It was terrible stuff.

- 16:00 There was very little fraternising. I think some of the senior people fraternised a bit, talked tactics and strategy and what have you. But at our level. There was a certain amount of distrust. I'm just thinking aloud now. I remember when our aeroplanes, which were separated in these little dug out things, for reasons so if a bomb went off it wouldn't blow up the whole lot of them.
- 16:30 We put at night an airman's guard on, bayonet and rifle. I'm not sure why we did this, but we did. The Russians put a guard on our guard. I've got a photograph of that somewhere. The Russian guarding our guard. Anything interesting thing I found about Russia in those days, it's probably quite different now, I remember talking to one of the interpreters, a Russian officer.
- 17:00 Remembering how young I was, and inexperienced, I said, "I understand you don't have any class distinctions in this country." Thinking of England where I'd spent a bit of time. "That you're all equal." He said, "Good God, no!" not exactly like that. "Look at that bloke over there" and he pointed to one of the guards who was obviously a Mongolian and looked as though he hadn't had a shave or a bath for a long while. He said, "Would you expect me to have him in my home?"
- 17:30 What we do, we make friends and team up with people of our own standard. The university graduates with them, or engineers and so on. Yes, there are grades of people you want to be with. Maybe not officially, but you pick your friends with the same education and the same interests." It was understandable. So there was a distinction to that extent.

- 18:00 **Do you think there's anything else of your Russian experience we need to touch on?**

Did I tell you how I got home from Russia? I think I did.

Not yet.

Will I finish it off?

You'd been stationed there for how long?

5 or 6 months. And it was getting up to Christmas. I can tell you when it was in fact, because Pearl Harbor happened on the way back. We'd finished flying some time ago and handed over. We were

- 18:30 now filling in time. So it was time to leave the aeroplanes there and for us to go home. Apart from the pilots and the ground crew I think there were 150 or 200 of us all told to get back. The first thing we were told to do, the wing commander told us, was we were to go from Murmansk down to the Middle East across Russia. I don't know how he dreamt that one up, but at that time and what was going on. There was no transport of any sort going north and south.
- 19:00 There was a battle going on at Stalingrad and everywhere else. So it was a ridiculous thought. So then he said, "We'll get you home the best way we can." So another Australian and I, a fellow called Bart Campbell, a Queenslander, we went down to the wharf at Baenga and a British destroyer came in, HMS Entrapment, a lovely little ship. She came in, he said, "All aboard." so she was going back to the UK and we jumped on. I think I did tell you this story, didn't I?

- 19:30 **You may have mentioned it in the summary, but continue.**

I was given a pair of Lewis [machine] guns up on the bridge and Bart had a twin on the other bridge. So we sailed off from Murmansk. This bloody mad captain of this ship, he was after some action. So he kept on going in all these little fjords between Murmansk and Norway looking for trouble. We went into one at Shamba Harbour, it was night time

20:00 we were doing this, and there was a German troopship had just arrived and she was alongside. She was going to disembark all her troops to help in the battle that was going on. So he let off a torpedo and sunk this ship while she was alongside. And I had this pair of Lewis guns. I don't know what I was supposed to do with them. By the time we'd done all this we were out of fuel. There was no way we were going to get back to the UK. So back to Murmansk we went. I was bloody angry about all this. We went back and refuelled. Finally we set off for the UK and we got back to

20:30 Scarpa Floe [Orkney Islands]. It was on the way back that we heard about Pearl Harbour, December the 9th 1941. So that's how I can pinpoint that. So then as Australians we knew it would get dangerous now, we wanted to go home. We got back to the UK, Scarpa Floe; I don't know how I got from Scarpa Floe to London. We got to London, reported in. They said "Gould? You're missing in action."

21:00 So I said, "No I'm not, I'm still here" so then they

Had that news been forwarded on to your family?

No it had not, thank God. I asked them first thing, "Have you told my kin?" They said, "No, no, not yet." So then I had a few weeks' leave in London, which was great.

How did you find London?

I enjoyed in those days. It was being blitzed [bombed from the air], but the people had a wonderful spirit. There were blackouts, which were unpleasant.

21:30 It was Christmas time so it was foggy. They had fogs in London. There was plenty for us. They had lots of dances and parties going in clubs and so on, which we belonged to. We were quite well-paid relatively to everybody else. So you can stop at a decent hotel. Stopped at one right in Piccadilly. Had nice young ladies around. It was good, particularly

22:00 after Russia, it was great to have a good time even though it was dark and blackout and blitzes and so on. It was pretty good.

Did you socialise with other Australians or a bit of everything?

I don't think there was an Australia House in those days. It might have been. But there were plenty of Down Under [Australian] clubs. There were a lot of RAAF people over there then in Bomber Command and Fighter Command and Coastal Command. Dark blue uniforms, there were quite a lot of them around.

22:30 I can't remember particular clubs, some were in the heart of London, some where a little bit out.

What did you do to celebrate your 21st birthday in Russia?

No, I was in Scotland. This was the 5th May 1941.

23:00 We were billeted, I told you we went up to the north of Scotland on the squadron, we were reinforced. It was a bare airfield, we were billeted out. I was billeted in the manse, a local Presbyterian place. It was interesting. Nearly everybody in that part of Scotland spoke Gaelic. They didn't speak a bit of English, but most of them were Gaelic. It was quite interesting. They found it was my 21st birthday, I probably told them.

23:30 They gave me a, there was a tiny little pub down the road and they gave me the keys to the bar for my 21st birthday. I was responsible for giving everyone drink. I got very drunk. I drank beautiful scotch, what do you call it? Glenfiddich and all that sort of stuff, malt whiskey. It was beautiful. I passed out somewhere along the road. That was my birthday. Fortunately we had the day off the next day.

24:00 The leave in London, you got over your Russian nightmare. What happened next?

OK, it was 134 Squadron was the number of our squadron then, we were to reform and re-equip, cos we left all our equipment behind as a lot of blokes were posted. So we were moved to northern Ireland, just outside of Londonderry

24:30 to reform. We reformed from Hurricanes to Spitfires. It was a rest area. There was no real war going on. A little bit, but not much. The odd Focke Wulf Condor or whatever it was used to go out over the Atlantic. We used to go and escort the convoys coming in across the Atlantic. Meet them 100 miles out or something, just make sure nothing ever happened. It was pretty restful. We got all new ground crew and new pilots

25:00 and so on.

This was your first encounter with Spitfires?

Yes. I loved them too. It's hard to describe what it was like to fly one. It was absolutely beautiful. I describe it rather like a ballerina. It was delightful to fly. You should think obviously I'm wrong, I'm exaggerating, you're obviously wrong; the aeroplane did it for you, but not quite. It had no vices except it was very fragile.

25:30 Couldn't take much punishment either on air or land. It had a little dainty undercarriage that would

collapse. Just for pure flying it was delightful. It really was lovely.

From pure aerodynamic point of view it was superior?

Good to go to war in too in Europe. I would sooner had been in the Spitfire than the Hurricane, if I got into any serious, which I didn't, any serious war. A Spitfire would be much better.

26:00 Digressing a little, you know we've got Spitfires out here? They wouldn't fly for different reasons, which I'll describe later on. They weren't a success out here.

What's the gun setup of the Spitfire you were flying over there?

We had two 20 millimetre cannons. It was quite a big thing, and four .303 machineguns, which is good armament. A good way to go. Cos

26:30 quite often the little 303s, you have to hit a pretty vital spot to do anything with it, but the 22 mm cannon hit anything the hole in it was like that, which was pretty good.

In a plane like that, how far can you get with the initial load of ammunition and is

27:00 **there a process of reloading or is it you've got a set amount and that's all you can spend and you have to return?**

You had about 20 seconds in a Spitfire. Talking about the machineguns particularly. They had a rapid rate of fire. If you couldn't hit anything in 20 seconds, it doesn't sound much, it might have been 30 seconds. It's in that order. I can't quite remember. You had no way of reloading, you had to go home. Your 20 mm [millimetres], probably not that long. The cannon, probably not

27:30 that long. I can't remember.

If was a fairly action free time, just getting acquainted with the Spitfires. Practise flying and that type of thing.

Northern Ireland was great fun, a great rest. It was strange in many ways, as you can well realise the north and south were still not very

28:00 friendly. Some of our blokes went down to Dublin, which was enemy territory. They'd go down there, and we had no civvy clothes at all, so all they did was not wear their blue jacket with the wings and rank on it, they'd get a sports coat from somewhere and they'd use their identity card to cross the border. It was quite stupid. They'd go into Dublin and they'd find German U-boat [Unterseeboot, German submarine] commanders and they'd have a drink at the pubs and so on. Southern

28:30 Ireland was a haven for these blokes. Not all the southern Irish felt that way. We had a lot of southern Irish in our squadron in some cases. It was a mixed up sort of place. You could buy a fight, when we were over there, by singing the wrong song, which some of the fellows did. Singing the Black and Tan [English Police] song or another song and you'd get into a brawl pretty quickly. (UNCLEAR). We had 4

29:00 Australians then in the squadron. Pearl Harbour happened on the way home, so we're talking January, February, March '42 and all we wanted to do was come home. 'King and Country', now it's 'Australia and Country'. We wanted to get home. Things were grim. Singapore had either fallen or was about to fall. I can't remember now, but the Japs were well and truly knocking everybody over. So we wanted to come home. We all put in for posting home.

29:30 You may or may not remember the politics of the time, but [Australian Prime Minister] John Curtin wanted everybody home too. He had a go with Churchill over all this. So one day the posting came through. By this time I was a pilot officer thank God.

When had that taken place?

That took place in Ireland and it was back dated to Russia. I'll tell you a funny little story about how I got about this commissioning process.

30:00 I was wheeled up before an air commodore, Royal Air Force, not Australian. He asked me lots of questions and said, "Very good, yes, very good. What sport did you play in Australia?" "I played a lot of cricket." "Good, good, good, good." He was old school obviously and he said, "What else?" I said, "I played rugby." "Great." I said, "Rugby league." he said "What?" I said. "Rugby league." He said. "What?" I said. "Rugby league." As you know,

30:30 in UK that's the working man's, not officer stuff. I was able to point out to him, "Hang on, sir. In Queensland when I played rugby league at school there was no union. All the schools played rugby league, it was the only game. We only called it rugby." He said, "Oh, OK, that's all right. That's different." So I got my commission.

What did that commission mean as far as changes day to day for you?

In Britain it means a lot. An officer is much, much better off than any

31:00 ordinary person. You have a much nicer uniform, you don't get much more money than we were getting,

but you have a better mess. You travel first class in trains and so on. You have a better social life. Again, in Britain in those days, the officer class was a much, much better entertainment side. Of course, I wasn't there long enough to really enjoy it. I left soon after.

31:30 **You were explaining about the political situation with Curtin and Churchill and Curtin wanting Australians back to Australia as quickly as possible. Can you pick up the story around there?**

I'm no expert on it and any political historian will probably argue with me, but as I understand it, the best thing to say is I believed it happened. Prime Minister Curtin, when things were pretty tough and the Japs

32:00 were coming right down to Papua New Guinea and so on, particularly wanted to bring home the 7th divvy [division], which were in the Middle East. Churchill said, "No, we'll finish the war in Europe first and then you can have them back." inferring, we believe, that what happens to Australia is not important at this time in the big strategic picture. It's winning the war against Hitler. We want your 7th divvy and whatever else in Germany and what have you there.

32:30 Churchill disagreed completely. Not him, John Curtin said, "Not fair. Come home." and he ordered them home, which I think was great. Right and proper. But I'm not sure whether that's exactly what happened, but I believe it was. So we all believe anyway.

How did the story unfold for you from there?

For me? I was still in northern Ireland then and I can tell you exactly the day I sailed from Belfast, cos it was St Patrick's Day, the 17th March 1942.

33:00 Interesting thing, there was a chap in Russia with us, in our squadron, called Sergeant Pilot Neil Cameron. I didn't see him till long after the war. When I next met him he was a wing commander of the DSMC [Defence Services Military Command]. He had finished up Lord Cameron. He was boss of the whole defence force. So he went from sergeant pilot to Lord Cameron, boss of the whole defence, which meant that Britain was changing as far as officers were concerned.

33:30 The 17th or March we caught the train from Londonderry to Belfast. Caught a little ship across to Liverpool I think. I can't remember all the details. They formed us up there cos apart from the couple of Australians from our squadron, there were some more famous ones, Bluey Truscott and people like that, came across. We caught the ship to Nova Scotia.

34:00 God knows why. Then we got to Montreal and we were supposed to fly, remember this was now March April 41 and the Americans were just gearing up. So we were going to fly B25s back to Australia from the US. I don't know what happened, it didn't eventuate. So we

34:30 spent 10 glorious days in Montreal. The lights were on, no coupons, no rationing of any sort. Then caught a train from Montreal down to Chicago and did that wonderful trip from Chicago to San Francisco by train. Wonderful trip in those days. Then caught a troopship from San Francisco

35:00 back to Melbourne. I can remember some of the days there, cos we got nearly home and the Battle of the Coral Sea happened, which was a turning point in the war's history. We were only in a merchant ship. I know that happened because we were told it was going to happen, so the ship turned due south and went towards the South Pole to get away from it all. So that was round about the 6th May, that sort of period. It

35:30 happened on my birthday. Then we got to Melbourne some time in May.

Did you get a chance to have leave in America?

No, we had the 10 days in Montreal, which was great. While we were waiting for these aeroplanes, which didn't happen. The trip across was good as any. We had 2 or 3 days in San Francisco, which was very good.

How did you find the Americans in San Francisco?

36:00 I can't remember. I can tell you a lot about them on the troopship when we came over. They were the most uninformed people I've ever met in my life. They were absolutely completely uninformed. There'd been no war as far as Europe was concerned. That was somebody else's war, couldn't work out why and what we were doing over there. That sort of thing. This was officers too. Not just the old Joe in the street, it was

36:30 senior officers would say "Hey, do people speak English like you in Australia?" And "How many white people? Are you outnumbered by the blacks? What sort of money do you use? Do you have trains? Transport?" These were senior officers. They were absolutely uninformed. So we had to give them lectures on this sort of thing. We used to pull their leg a bit. We'd come up with all sorts of lies about it.

37:00 We got so angry about it, we'd say "No, very few people speak English like we do. Might find one or two, but only the very senior people speak English." We pulled their legs.

How did you find the Canadians in Montreal?

That was strange at that time because there was a very strong French presence. Very strong. I understand it's still the same. They weren't anti us at all, but very French and we

37:30 didn't have much time, we were only kids, we were a bit disappointed by the French caving in as we thought and the Vichy French and all that sort of thing. We treated them with a little bit of reserve. I suppose the best way to say it, we were not fans of the French. So Montreal was not unpleasant, but there was that business there. Didn't worry us. Good food, pretty girls and so on. It wasn't bad.

38:00 **Explain what happened once you got back to Australia.**

We got back in May '42. Things were very bad out here then of course. The Battle of New Guinea and in the Pacific islands was pretty bad. I think I had about 10 days leave up in Brisbane. Then we were rushed off to Kingaroy where a squadron called 75, RAAF Squadron, was

38:30 reforming. They were the famous squadron in Moresby who got shot down almost to the last, they did, to the last aeroplane and lost most of their pilots, which is not a very well told story, the Battle of [Port]Moresby the 75 Squadron. The survivors were there at Kingaroy and you had B40 Kittyhawks, which was an American aeroplane. There were quite a few Australians, not Australians. Quite a few of us

39:00 back from Europe. We were looked upon by the New Guinea pilots with suspicion. They thought we'd had too good a war, we had lovely messes over there and nice pubs down on the corner of the street and a pretty good war and they'd been slumming it up in Port Moresby and so on. It had a bit of ill feeling to start with. Didn't last long. So we flew Kittyhawks

39:30 and our first impression of Kittyhawks was not very good. I was telling you how delightful Spitfires were. You've got a Kittyhawk and we described it as a bulldozer. It was a great big heavy aeroplane. Not as nice to fly as any of the others I've flown, but it's pretty reliable. Hefty and strong. Could take a real belting. Thank goodness it could, cos after we'd fought up there a little while we got

40:00 sent up to Milne Bay with a sister squadron called 76. I was in 75. That was one of the worst wars I've ever been to. Russia was a picnic compared to Milne Bay. Milne Bay was bloody awful. Never stopped raining. The mountains came straight up from the strip. The strip was just mud with steel planking on it. When you landed it used to do this sort of thing and mud would fly up. Spitfires wouldn't have lasted.

40:30 You couldn't fly the Spitfires, wouldn't have lasted. We all had malaria and dysentery. I had both at one stage. Just unpleasant. Our living conditions were so squalid. We had 6 in a little bloody tent and a little bit of timber on the floor, but mostly it was mud. I had malaria and the squadron doctor, I saw him the other day, fella

41:00 you'd come in and see. I got down to 8 stone 7 [pounds] in New Guinea. Phil said "Don't you get out of that stretcher." I couldn't have got out anyway. He walked out and the boss came in and said "airborne" and you'd go out, have a little vomit on the tail wheel, get in the cockpit. I'm not exaggerating this, truly, and you'd get airborne and I was doing one of these patrols. You take your oxygen mask off and have a vomit all over the place and

41:30 out it back on again. You'd have diarrhoea and it'd be seeping down the back of your legs into your flying boots. You had another hour and a half to sit up there in all this. That was unpleasant. I can tell you worse stories than that.

Tape 5

00:35 **We were talking about your experiences flying in Milne Bay.**

Yes. I was talking about the strip, how it was just a pier of steel planking over mud. When you landed it was an up and down ride. It was carved out of a coconut plantation, so if you went off the runway, which you did, you ran into a

01:00 coconut tree, which didn't do the aircraft much good. I also said Spitfires wouldn't work there very well. Two reasons why. First of all they were too fragile for the conditions we had. Not only that, they didn't have the range and endurance as an up and down interceptor. Whereas the Kittyhawks we had were far more versatile. We had a lot longer range. We could go out a lot further. So this was

01:30 very useful. We were raided quite a few times by the Japanese who came over from Rabaul. They sent over dive bombers called Vals and escorted by Zeros. We had quite a few fights and lost quite a few blokes and we shot down quite a few. One of the most important things that happened up there, I believe, it was a turning point, the Battle of Milne Bay

02:00 was a turning point like the Kokoda Track thing. Perhaps more so at Milne Bay. We got the word one day that there was a Jap invasion fleet coming to land at Milne Bay because the Jap strategy was to take Milne Bay and they could then take the rest around to Moresby over the Kokoda Trail and up that way. When this Japanese fleet was coming in, for some reason we couldn't get the American

- 02:30 heavy aircraft bombers to go out, so we were given the job in single seat Kittyhawks to go out and attack the fleet, which we weren't designed for. We were fighter aircraft. We could carry two 500 pound bombs and we went out. I'll never forget it because it was a typical New Guinea day. Low cloud, pouring with rain and we weaved our way out of the rain and we sighted this fleet. It was terrifying because
- 03:00 it was escorted by Japanese ships, destroyers, a cruiser or two and some gun ships. Our briefing was, "Forget the naval ships, go for the troopships." Knock off the troops before they landed. We went out there and we tried our best. I happened to be a very good dive bomber. I selected a troopship, came at it, very low
- 03:30 clouds. The Japanese were firing everything at us. The flak [anti aircraft fire] was quite enormous. I didn't stay too long. I aimed at the troopship, dropped my bombs and got back up into the clouds where it was fairly safe. We finally got back to Milne Bay to our landing strip and the wing commander, Peter Turnbull, came over to me and said "Well done, lad." I said "What for?" He said "You sunk the gun boat, the flagship." I said "I did not." He said "Yes, you did. You were flying so and so?" I said "Yeah." "I watched you."
- 04:00 I said "I wasn't aiming at that, I was aiming at the troopship." Anyway, I got a flagship gun boat confirmed. They landed and that was very unpleasant because the strip we were on went into the bay itself. The Japs landed and in the end they took one end of the strip and we had the other. So we'd take off over them, crouch down under the armoured plating. They shot at you when you pulled your wheels up, which
- 04:30 is not recommended. One of the satisfactions I had, again please put this in the context that we were in a war and hated the Japanese very much, I was leading a couple of fellows round to where they'd landed some barges. They were up on one of the beaches there and they were waving at us. We found out afterwards was that they
- 05:00 were told that there were no Allied aircraft there, any aircraft they saw were theirs. So they could feel quite safe. They were waving at me, so I pulled the boys in astern and we went down and strafed them. I regret to say it, but we killed many, many, many of them. Rather an amazing sight when you hit fellows with, the Kittyhawk had .5s. I think we had 6 guns. When you hit them you could see they were just like little rag dolls jumping up
- 05:30 in the air. I wasn't upset at all. I was happy to kill so many.

Did you get instructions to do that?

Oh, yes. Our main job there, we were still doing air defence when the Japs were coming over. There weren't so many aircraft coming over now they'd landed. The army were really engaging them. Our main job then was strafing. This is well documented

- 06:00 that it's one of the reasons the army won the war was because of our strafing the Japs, making them keep their heads down. It was a difficult strafing targets there because it was thick canopy jungle. Absolutely thick. On one side were these very high mountains, I don't know how high they were, they certainly went up in the clouds. So it was only a narrow strip between the sea and the mountains. There was thick jungle and the Japs were advancing
- 06:30 towards us and towards the army. We couldn't see anything when we strafed. So what we were told to do was the army would fire up through the canopy a red, I can't remember the colour, say a green Verey [flare], so that's our frontline. Then a number of white Verey lights for every hundred yards in front of the green to strafe. The problem with that was you were doing a couple of hundred miles and hour
- 07:00 round and round in low cloud, dodging the cloud and watching the mountain on that side and so on. When the green came up you'd see it, but how the devil could you pinpoint exactly where it was in the canopy when the jungle on the top was the same. So you tried very hard, so you'd make sure you weren't strafing your own fellows, you went well past them. We couldn't see the Japs, but we knew they were there, so we just strafed and came back and landed. We were only airborne about 10 minutes and back and landed and had a quick feed and got back in the aeroplane
- 07:30 and did it again. You strafed and strafed and strafed and in the end there we were. You have to know a bit about ballistics to realise how many rounds we fired. For example, the ammunition was so organised in the aircraft that we had tracer, which was a light sort of thing at the end of the belt. That was to tell you you were running out of ammunition so you may as well go home, it wasn't there to help you
- 08:00 target. What it shows was how we were wearing the rifling in the thing, because the tracer was coming out in great big spirals so in a rude way you couldn't hit a bull in a bum or a shovel with it. It was useless. We'd come back and land and go out and do it again. That perhaps was the turning point as far as the army was concerned. They had hand to hand fighting just up the strip from us.
- 08:30 We had to move our tent because it was right in the middle of the Japs infiltrating around it. I'll never forget it because half malaria and not feeling very well and I think there was four of us in the tent. I had a tunic that I never wore that was hanging up on the ridge pole that goes along the tent. We all slept with our guns. I had mine under my pillow. I woke up in this half malaria daze and I thought there was a great big Jap bending over me and

09:00 got the gun out. It was just my tunic bouncing up and down in the wind. I nearly shot my tunic. We were a bit upset and a bit worried. The food was bloody awful. No food worth talking about at all. It just rained all day every day. It never stopped up in Milne Bay. We wrote some very rude songs about Milne Bay.

Can you tell us one of them?

Yes. "Off to Milne Bay we

09:30 did go to that land" no, how did it go? I wrote it, but I can't remember it.

\n[Verse follows]\n "Gotta get up in the morning round about quarter to four.\n Down to the end of the runway and pour on the old full bore.\n Send her down Huey, send her down." \n

Huey's the God that makes it rain. If it rained too hard we couldn't fly. One day I'll sing it all. I don't feel like it now. Rather not. Most of them were rude about airborne. About our senior officers and so on. In fact, this fellow

10:00 died the other day who was one of my favourites. Paul Garey. He was our senior officer up there. I'm wandering around a bit.

You had reservations about the Kittyhawks, but there were ways to get around some of the drawbacks of them. Can you talk about that?

Yes. After flying Spitfires we didn't love the Kittyhawk when we first started flying them.

10:30 In the end, up in places like Milne Bay and so on, we got to be very fond of it for many reasons. First of all it could go a lot further than the Spitfire could. Secondly it was far more robust. One of our chaps came back, he'd been shot up by some ground fire somewhere. He had a hole in the fuselage down near the rudder that I could put my head and shoulders through. He flew it back. A Spitfire that would have been the end. It was that big a hit it would have knocked it off. The

11:00 Kittyhawk had some failings which you could turn into successes. At one stage, this is not during Milne Bay, but the Australians captured a Japanese Zero, their fighter. So they flew it and worked out combat manoeuvres with our own aircraft. One of the things we found out was, if you could get above the Japanese fighters and trade off your

11:30 height for speed, you could peck. You could come down and peck and climb up again. Whatever you did, don't mix with them, because they turned inside within a couple of turns and knock you off. The Kittyhawk had not a vice, but a strange thing that in a dive it'd be at high speed, it wanted to roll one way and yaw the other, which an aeroplane shouldn't do. It was very uncomfortable in the cockpit.

12:00 We found out that if you were bounced by a Jap and you dived full bore, got up over the speed where these things happen, take your hands and feet off and the aeroplane did manoeuvres that nobody could ever shoot you down, because it was rolling one way and yawing the other. It would be impossible to shoot. It was difficult in the cockpit to find your way around. You start at the bottom and work your way up with the stick. I never had to do that to be honest.

12:30 What else? I don't know. We shot down quite a few. I had an unpleasant time; we didn't fly every mission ourselves. We took it in turns of course, like everybody else. When you weren't flying you went in one of the gun pits with the army, the anti-aircraft people because their recognition wasn't very good and they were just as likely to fire at a Kittyhawk as they would a Zero. Not deliberately. Not only that it was low cloud and they're going very fast.

13:00 Is that why it wasn't good because of the low cloud, or was it that they weren't trained?

Well, I think a mixture of both. I mean, an aeroplane was an aeroplane to them. It all used to happen so very quickly. I was in this gun pit at the end of the strip and Zeros were coming in to dive bomb us and so on. I saw one of our Kittyhawks running, with a Jap right up its backside and I saw

13:30 very low, well below clouds. The Jap shot this fellow, shot the aircraft and it started to catch fire and Ingston was the fellow, I know him quite well. He bailed out just up there, I watched him, and his chute was streaming as he hit the ground. He was dead of course. Another couple of seconds and the chute would have filled, but it was streaming. I watched another, I don't think it was the same day, it was another day I think in the gun pit.

14:00 I saw another fellow called Stuart Monroe come screaming out of the clouds with two Zeros up his backside. He didn't seem to get shot down, but he went over there somewhere and we heard the gunfire and they disappeared into the clouds and that was Stuart. I don't think we ever found him. The jungle up there was very fierce. If you went down in it, the canopy just closed up over you. They're still finding aircraft up there now that got lost. I don't know how long we were there. I can't remember how long we was up there

14:30 now. I know we got out by Christmas. One time, when the Japs landed, we were ordered to evacuate and go back to Moresby. We didn't have enough aircraft for all the pilots, so we'd drew lots to see who would fly back and who'd walk back. If you look at the map there's a long walk from Milne Bay to Moresby. It was a long way. I drew the short straw so I had to walk back. Supposedly. So I took all my

possessions, which was my

15:00 log book and a Rolls razor I had and my gun and started to walk off leading a whole bunch of the ground troops, the airmen. We were about to go, and in came a Lockheed Hudson. He came in and landed. The Japs were on the other end of the strip and he said "Come on, hop in" so we all filed in. I don't know how many we got in this Hudson, but I know I was up in the bomb aimer's position lying flat on my belly with two fellows on top of me. I could see where we were taking off. Taking off in this thing

15:30 and we hit a coconut tree on takeoff. Blew the palm tree apart, but we got airborne. We went to Moresby. It was dark by the time we got to Moresby. One of our chaps in a Kittyhawk by the name of Bill Cowley, was formatting on him and went to find his way in the dark to get back to Moresby. He peeled off to go on his own and he hit the mountains just outside Moresby. I watched from down there and saw it burst into

16:00 flames. Cowley was burnt up. So we were in Moresby for a couple of days and then the army cleared the chaps off the end of the strip. We took some more Kittyhawks while we was at Moresby. Flew them back to Milne Bay. We stayed there. The battle gradually eased off and we came home.

It sounds incredibly physically demanding.

16:30 **Can you talk about the physical demands on you? Lack of sleep and dealing with malaria and dysentery while you were trying**

And the food. Baked beans, bully beef. We were lucky. The only time we ever got a cup of tea was when the Salvation Army came in. They were up the frontline. They'd give us a cup of tea and cigarettes. The food was dreadful. We couldn't even light a fire most of the time, it just rained and rained and rained and then the Japs were at the end of the strip so we

17:00 just didn't, there was nobody there to light a fire. As for bars and things like that, we never ever had one. We all grew beards because we couldn't shave. The physical demands, I said earlier about having vomiting and all this in the cockpit, which you did. I got down to flying saucer weight, a tiny little weight. I don't know how to describe it.

17:30 Because we had no radar, the only warning we had of a raid was the coast watchers. They'd let us know eventually. Usually it was too late by the time we got. We put up standing patrols. That was the only way to go. We put up four aircraft. They'd just go round and round and round and were relieved by another four. So we were always airborne when the raid came in. You had somebody up there. That was the unpleasant part flying around. We had no real controllers like we had in the UK. We did

18:00 have them, but we had no radar, so it was more or less word of mouth. "Hey, we think they're coming in from up that way" that sort of thing "and we think they're that high." Usually you just went on patrol until you saw them and by then it was a bit late usually. The Zeros always seemed to have the bounce on us. They always seemed to be above us.

What was your impression of a Zero?

At first we were rather, not frightened

18:30 of them, but we knew they were damn good little aeroplanes. They were. They were very versatile. They had their weaknesses. A lot of them was they couldn't dive, you could get away from them. The other one was that they were not exactly flimsy, but they couldn't stand the punishment if you got enough shots into them, compared to what our Kittyhawk would take. Normally they would go down. We were quite amused with some of the

19:00 antics of them. I remember once I was flying a Kittyhawk, this was before they landed at Milne Bay, and the Zeros came over and there was an American aircraft, B26 I think it was, and I was watching him. He came over with a bunch of Zeros. Two I think. They were doing aerobatics around him. Loops and rolls, don't ask me why. It was a strange thing. They were showing off I suppose. Showing

19:30 what clever little blokes they were.

You were telling us you were flying around looking for Japs when you didn't have radar. How long were you in the air doing that?

I could look at my log book and get the exact time. I think a patrol would be something around two or three hours.

Was it difficult to get supplies up to Milne Bay? Were you having problems with food?

Yes, even replenishing

20:00 of fuel and ammunition, very difficult. Food was impossible, I gather. I can't remember any food coming up. They sent in an American Liberty [ship] with a load of ammunition. He landed and we got most the stuff out and the Japs came over and strafed him and burnt him on the edge of the strip. I can't remember the rest of it. We did manage just to keep up the ammunition till it was time to go. I believe it was the same with the army.

20:30 The priorities for anything was ammunition, fuel, mail. Then things like food was way out there. Ammunition, fuel, mail and then things like food and so on. I think that was our priorities too. I didn't worry about mail too much. I preferred food. Mail was very important for morale.

What was morale like up there?

21:00 It was the worst I've ever seen it. We were all pretty sick and fed up. The conditions, after being in the UK and even Russia, at least you had reasonable quarters, you had a bed and so on. We had a stinky stretcher and a muddy tent. The Japs had landed and you knew they were around you and so on. We had to move our tents to the other side to get where the army were.

21:30 It was hard to keep it. The sister squadron, 76, their squadron commander was a chap named Peter Turnbull. I was telling you about the Japs had one end of the strip. He got shot down on takeoff from the ground. He was pulling his wheels up and they shot him out of the sky. That was the end of him. It doesn't make you feel very good when that happens on takeoff. Then a very famous bloke

22:00 took over from Peter called Bluey Truscott, who was a very great chum of mine, Bluey. Bluey was good for morale, particularly how good he was. He was a wonderful bloke. We got the order to evacuate all the pilots. Those who an aeroplane flew it back to Moresby and the rest were going to walk. Blue was ordered to fly back. He was a squadron commander and very valuable. He told them all to go and jump in the lake. He handed his aeroplane over to a sergeant and got himself a .303 rifle and got in the trench with his troops.

22:30 He was going to fight the Japs on the ground. That's the sort of bloke he was. That was very good for morale. Most the time we were glad to get out of it.

Did you lose a lot of men up there?

Yeah. Strangely enough, one of the fellows who was in Russia with me, a fellow named Mart Heldon, he got shot down by a Zero up there. I don't know what our losses were. Feeling from both squadrons, we would

23:00 probably have lost in the order of half a dozen or so. Some of the fellows got shot down and walked back. They found their way. The natives walked them back. One bloke got shot down at the end of the islands. He got brought back in a dug out canoe by some native. I think we killed a lot more Japs than we lost. The army was incredible up there.

23:30 Bloody hand to hand. The army used to brief us every morning. The general, whoever he was, would come and talk about where we were. You could almost hear the gunfire at the end of the strip. I'm glad I wasn't in the army then. I'll give you a funny story. The army wanted the intelligence. They always do. Everybody wanted to know what's going on, what the strength

24:00 of the enemy and where he's located and what sort of weapons he's got and so on. We shot down a Jap Val, a divebomber thing. He crash-landed on the beach, well away from us. The natives got him and brought him in for interrogation. We found out he was a Jap officer.

24:30 I was at the strip at the opposite end. They walked this bloke in. They had him like a pig. They had a pole on the shoulder of this fellow and another fellow, another Kanaka [Papuan] up in front. They had this thing like a stuck pig. His wrists and his ankles on this thing. His wrists were nearly cut through from the vines. They dumped him to the army. They took the thing off him. He was on the ground there and they were going to talk to him.

25:00 And an air force cook came up and said "my first bloody Jap" and pulled out his gun and shot him. There and then. Whatever happened to the cook, he was in serious trouble after that. He was going to kill a Jap before he finished the war.

Was he gonna cook him for dinner maybe?

Maybe. Like a pig.

What was the relationship like with the natives?

25:30 Good. They were very good. Very much on our side. They didn't like Japan man very much. Evidently there were a few atrocities committed around the place. No, they were intensely loyal, at Milne Bay anyway, I don't know about the other places, but yes, they were. Very good. I don't think they ever were tempted to turn us in. I don't think that opportunity arose as such. Whenever our blokes got shot down they'd bring them back.

26:00 Time and time again they brought them back. Might be a couple of weeks along, but they'd bring them back. Very good.

Was that what they called the Japanese? Japan man?

Japan man. I can't remember much Pidgin now, but we picked up a few words of Pidgin.

Did you ever end up in the jungle yourself? Were you ever shot down?

No. I chased up a reconnaissance thing there, but I didn't get a shot at him.

- 26:30 Most of our work was strafing and dive bombing as I said. Dropping some bombs. A couple of our fellows did shoot down some aircraft. It was mainly strafing. Mainly our presence. After we shot down a few, it was a long way for the Japs to come, particularly their fighters, from Rabaul to Milne Bay. It was a darn long way and they needed spare tanks and all that
- 27:00 sort of thing. So by the time they got there, they couldn't stay very long. They'd make one pass and then go back home otherwise they'd be out of fuel.
- 75th Squadron suffered heavy casualties, and when you came after being in Russia and Europe you weren't as well accepted. Did you have some understanding after a few weeks in Milne Bay what they**
- 27:30 **were talking about?**
- Of course. They were entitled to be suspicious of us, I think they were. As far as they could see, forgetting Russia, I was the only one went up, no there was another fellow, most of them were from fighter squadrons in England based in England. A lovely pub on the corner and a beautiful old fashioned mess and stewards to look after us and so on. OK, they were still fighting, but not like the jungle blokes. They came back from a nasty fight, outnumbered
- 28:00 and in a dirty, rotten old tent. No bars, no showers and rotten food and being strafed at night. The other thing that happened to us at Milne Bay, which reminds me, we were running out of sleep because at night time the Japs used to send a cruiser into the bay and shell us. So you spent half the night in a little slit trench with all the other snakes and scorpions and things they had in the jungle. I'm exaggerating a bit. So
- 28:30 you sleep was kicking. I don't think I enjoyed Milne Bay very much at all.
- With malaria and dysentery and so on, would they not class you as sick and say "You can't fly today"?**
- The doctor would come in and tell you to stay in bed and the squadron commander would come and say, "Get airborne." What else could you do? You didn't have enough pilots. We didn't have pilots.
- 29:00 We had no reserve. We had no fat as they called it. We had nobody spare. No pilots coming through the pipeline at that time to replace you so that was it. You flew until the whole squadron was relieved. We were relieved eventually just before Christmas, by an American squadron of Air Cobras. They weren't very good at all. They were full of talk. Anyway, the war was over when they got there. That part of the war.
- 29:30 **Why were you left without replacements?**
- I don't think it was deliberate. I don't think the system was coping with providing. Until we came back from England and joined the 75 Squadron there were very few pilots coming out of the pipelines here because most of our fighting strength were in the desert with the squadrons in the desert, or in Europe. I think we lost a few blokes in
- 30:00 Singapore when it first started. Yes, we did. I don't think the system was pushing out trained pilots enough to replace us. I'm not sure of that, but it wasn't, we just didn't have any spare pilots. They weren't coming through. I think it sorted itself after that, because we formed more squadrons. I think they were busily forming squadrons back on the mainland rather than replacing existing squadrons in those days. You'd need to talk to a historian.
- 30:30 I'm not sure of that.
- You went back to Port Moresby. Where to after that?**
- Then I went back to Milne Bay. We flew some aeroplanes back, yes. The war tapered off. We were replaced by this American. Then we flew our aircraft back to Moresby and Horn Island, Cape York.
- 31:00 That was great. There was no war. The food wasn't much better. Then we rested, then we went to Cairns. We spent Christmas in Cairns. That was lovely. An interesting aside there. The Catalina flying boats were flying out of Cairns. It was rather interesting, I don't know if history has recorded this, but the first bombing of Japanese troops in the south west Pacific was
- 31:30 from the Catalinas flying over the Solomon Islands and dropping bombs out of a Catalina [flying boat]. Why I mention the Catalinas, we formed a very close bond up there. They were the Catalinas, we were the Kittyhawks. So we called ourselves the Kit Kats. We had some very nice times. Very clever the Kit Kats. We had a great friendship with the Catalina boys. Couldn't imagine it being more diverse. Great big lumbering flying boats and fighter pilots.
- 32:00 We loved each other very dearly. Still do.

You were in Cairns?

Yeah, and then we all got relieved. Got posted. I had 2 weeks leave in Brisbane. Then I was posted to Mildura where they were just really getting going on the fighter school. They called it operational

training unit. That was an interesting thing. I mentioned it earlier.

32:30 **Not in great detail. Let us know what that was about.**

Iora, Mildura was where the fellows got their wings coming through the pipelines, just got their wings on Wirraways. Then they came to us for 6 weeks. I did talk about this, I'm sure. OK. I think it was in the summary. In their 6 weeks we had to convert them to their fighter aircraft, which in those days was a Spitfire, Kittyhawk or a thing called a Boomerang [Australian built fighter].

33:00 We had 6 weeks to convert them and then teach them the art of fighter pilots, which was teaching them to fly in battle formation, air to air gunnery, strafing, dive bombing, whatever. What was rather difficult for us, we went there as instructors, none of us were instructors. We hadn't instructed people flying aeroplanes. We

33:30 were supposed to instruct them in fighter work. Some of these kids only really just got their wings and they weren't very good at all. So you had to sit in the backseat of a Wirraway. The stick was up here. For example, and aside, I'm a fairly little bloke and landing a Wirraway from the backseat, I had to put the seat up so I could see where I was flying and where the ground was. Then I had to put the seat right down so I could reach the brakes. It used to be very hairy [scary].

34:00 I can't remember how long I was there. That was where we really killed people. We killed more people there. They called it the killer school. The day I arrived they killed 4. In one day. The day I arrived. It was 6 weeks before they went to the war. You have to do everything in the 6 weeks and convert to a new aeroplane. They didn't have many hours up. So

34:30 dreadful things went on. Just an example. We were trying to teach them dive bombing in a Kittyhawk. There was a dive bombing range. You could almost see it from the airfield. We'd be standing out on the tarmac and somebody'd say, "Hey, telltale wisp of black smoke." You'd see the smoke coming up. Somebody else had gone in. What was happening was that in the divebomb you'd tell them whatever angle to dive on, say it was 40 degrees, and you

35:00 get up to whatever speed it was and you release your bomb at whatever height it was, let's say it was 2,000 feet, and pull out. There were some dreadful navigating results. Nowhere near the target. So we worked it out that they'd gone from the Wirraway to this other aeroplane, the Kittyhawk was much, much faster, so the closing speed was much greater. Not only that, the Kittyhawk had this terrible thing I mentioned earlier, wanting to roll and yaw. If you let your bomb go and the aeroplane's not pointing at the target the bomb will go anywhere. So we

35:30 thumped these young fellows and said, "Hey, keep your eye on the instrument and get that skid thing right in the middle and don't let it get off." They're still looking if they hit the ground. Still (UNCLEAR). The other place where we killed a lot was Lake Victoria, which was this great big lake there. We used to teach this deflection shooting that I was mentioning early on, how you've got to aim well ahead of the target to make sure your bullets and aeroplane coincide. It was what you call shadow shooting. You put an aeroplane up and it flew

36:00 across the water with the sun, made sure the sun was up there, so the shadow was on the water. So as you flew your shadow was there. The kid would dive down and have a shot at the shadow that was moving. But again they'd forget to pull out of it. I remember I was flying some aeroplane, I think it was a Boomerang. Put my shadow on the water and said, "Come on." calling him up and saying, "Come on." I looked over my shoulder and there was a God awful splash in the water as he went in. He was trying to get the shadow. You

36:30 have to appreciate in those days you didn't have time to do all these things and people got killed. I did my time there. This was how I got to the navy. Because I got so, what's the word? We all thought it was too bloody dangerous to fly at the school, we'd sooner go back to the war. Every Friday we used to go up to before the group captain who I knew very well and say, "Hey, what about a squadron posting?"

37:00 He'd say, "You've had 3 or 4." I'd had all my ops. There were too many blokes wanted to go to the war and I'd had a lot. There was nothing to do. "You're staying here." So I didn't like that very much. So I came to join the navy. Do you want me to go on with that now?

At that time in the training school, were there many instructors? Did they lose their lives as well?

Yes. We had plenty. They were coming from all over the place then. A lot of Middle East fellows were coming back. A lot of English blokes from the European theatre. As a result of the

37:30 Japs coming into the war they were getting our own people back and they were coming from all over the place. There used to be a little bit of friendly rivalry. The desert blokes, we used to tell them they had too much sand in their shoes. The fighter boys from England were too much with Piccadilly naughties and so on. I was pretty good. I was amongst them all. We

38:00 were what they called the jungle blokes. Like to think there's jungles all around us up here. It was a big school. A very big school then. I suppose we would have had 3 or 4,000 people on the base. Including the airmen and all the rest of the blokes. It was a pretty big place. A lovely little town Mildura.

What year was that?

I came out of Milne Bay Christmas '42 so it would

38:30 have been most of '43. Most of '43. That's when I got myself out of it.

Was the social life at the training school?

There was nothing on the base. No frivolity on the base. Mildura was a lovely little town. We all got on very well because Mildura had been

39:00 started after the '14-18 war by soldier settlers. So everybody there was the descendants of ex warriors. They took us to their hearts. We spent quite a lot of money in the town too, but I don't think that was important. Some of the nice things about it, they had three clubs there. There was the Mildura Club, the Settlers Club and the Working Man's Club. It was known as the Golden Stairs, the Silver Stairs and the Spit and Dribble.

39:30 So they really looked after us. It was great. Most enjoyable. Lovely town.

Was it difficult for you losing a lot of the young blokes?

No. As I said it's them not you. You don't worry. I had quite a lot of accidents. Not a lot, a few. The funniest I ever had was at Mildura. Shall I tell you about this one? It

40:00 was quite interesting. Amusing anyway. One of the things we were teaching them how to do fighter work and so on. But when they first came to the base, maybe they hadn't flown for a few weeks, so we did refresher flying. Just put them back in the Wirraway where they learnt and got their wings. I was taking one off night flying and it was about 1 o'clock in the morning when I got my turn. Black as the inside of a cow. I took off,

40:30 I told the lad to take off and I'm sitting in the backseat. Just before we got airborne we burst a tyre. You could feel the tyre going. The aeroplane got sideways, hauled it up into the sky and got my heart back in the right place. I said, "We're gonna have a problem landing because we've got a burst tyre. When we land, I'll land it. When we land and I say 'now' I want you to put on full right rudder." Just to stop the thing ground leaping off

41:00 to the side. He was a young sergeant pilot, not very bright. We came in to land, hit the first (UNCLEAR) and I said "Now." He put on both brakes. You've never seen an aeroplane do anything like this. I wish I could work out aerodynamically how to do it. We just hit and the aeroplane went up in the air and came down and stuck in the runway like a dart in the middle of the dartboard. Absolutely vertically like that. So I climbed out of the backseat, had a long

41:30 way down from when the aeroplane's like that. Climbed down and got on the cockpit and the lad came out and round comes the ambulance. We had a wonderful doctor then, Tony Bonta, a lovely bloke. Tony was used to death and destruction. He came up to me and I think you're running out of tape, is that right? Shall I still go on?

Yeah. You've got another 5 minutes.

So Tony came up in this great big ambulance and hopped out.

42:00 He said, "How are you mate?" I said "I'm OK."

Tape 6

00:33 **Pick up the story where we were. Explain the transition to Darwin working on the Spitfires.**

I finally got the group captain to agree to let me go. I wanted to go to a frontline squadron. About the only one doing any work then was we had two Spitfire squadrons

01:00 up in Darwin. So he sent me up there. I was a bit unlucky from a fighter squadron point of view cos the war was receding again from there. By the time I got there, there was very little Japanese raids. One or two came in. Mostly reconnaissance aircraft and the only real excitement I had was the Japs

01:30 sent an aircraft over and flattened a mission, a place called Drysdale, which is just over near Wyndham. They flattened it, a stupid thing to do because it was just a few Aboriginals. It was Spanish mission. There was a little strip near there called Drysdale, so I took a few aircraft over there, a few Spitfires. One day we got word a reconnaissance aeroplane was coming in. It was called a Dina. This Dina came, a twin engined aircraft and

02:00 we intercepted it. I got behind it and fired a couple of shots and I believe I put his left engine on fire, there was smoke and stuff coming out of it. We were getting a bit low on fuel, we were halfway across the Timor Sea getting out. We were trying to get home, so we let him go. I don't think he got back, and

went back to Drysdale. That was the only real excitement I had. Chased a few other things, but never fired my guns.

How many of

02:30 **you were after that particular plane?**

I think I only had another one with me. A number 2, I think. It would have been a number 2, yes.

To go back to the last story, we just cut off before about the doctor offering the young bloke a drink. Can you pick that story up again?

03:00 Where I finished up stuck in the ground like a dart? Fine. It was very dark and we were a bit shaken. Going from whatever the landing speed is in a Wirraway to 80-90 knots to suddenly full stop.

03:30 Climbing down and finding we were still all right. The aeroplane didn't catch fire. Always a worry in an aircraft. My nightmares are always about being on fire. The doctor came screaming out in his ambulance. A lovely bloke, Tony Bond, squadron leader Bond, not James Bond, Tony Bond. Tony came racing up in his ambulance and parked beside me and my second flare. Said, "How are you Nat?" I said, "I'm all right." He

04:00 asked the young sergeant pilot, "How are you?" And the chap said he was all right. So Tony brought out a bottle of brandy, medicinal purposes only, he always assured us of that, and a couple of glasses and filled them up and gave some for me and some for the kid. The young sergeant was very uptight about it all and he said, "I don't drink, sir." Tony said, "Good, cheers." so he took the glass and he and I, I won't say we finished off the bottle, we got rid of most of it. We were out there for an hour or two

04:30 sitting at the first flare. Filled ourselves up with good medicinal brandy on the taxpayers. It was very good.

Back at Darwin?

I had one of my more unpleasant prangs up there. Want to hear about that now?

Yeah.

We were operating from a small strip cut in amongst the gum trees at a place called Livingstone, it was the name of the strip. It was just a bitumen strip and beside

05:00 it was the main toad, north south road, beside that was the main water pipeline, supplying all of Darwin. A great big concrete thing. 12 inch pipe. I was taking off there and I had a number 2. We used to take off in close formation, cos it was only a narrow strip. I had this bright young bloke tucked in beside me. Wings almost touching. Taking off and I was edging away from him, he was getting a bit bloody close.

05:30 I hit one of the flare paths, which was a big cone shape thing providing the light for night flying. This was daylight, not night. I hit this thing just before I got airborne and my number 2 got airborne. He pulled the stick and climbed up over me. I veered off the thing and I should tell you prior to this we had, because the road was right beside the strip we had a sentry at each end with one of these boom gates to stop traffic

06:00 going up. Because when we were taking off you were likely to do some damage. A truck was coming up there with a young pilot officer in it and a driver. The sentry stopped them at the boom gate and this officer pulled his rank and said "I'm on urgent business, I've gotta get up to Darwin" and so the officer told him to let him go. He got halfway up the strip and he stopped to watch the Spitties take off. So

06:30 I said I veered this thing off the runway and straight through this truck, hit the bloody water pipe and I finished up the engine fell off, the wings fell off and I was upside down in the little box, just the cockpit. Very shaken. The ambulance came racing up. It was always right beside the strip. The ambulance came up and another lovely doctor called Des, peers up at me, I'm upside down in my straps in this thing. He said "You all right?" I said "I think so,

07:00 but look, I just hit a truck." He said "Don't worry about them, they're dead." I just killed a couple of blokes. Didn't make me feel very good. They gingerly lowered me down, the aeroplane didn't catch fire. There wasn't much of it left there when it was finished. So that was that. That was one of my more unpleasant actions.

Would that be close to the most intense of your accidents?

I think so.

07:30 I didn't have a great number. I was a reasonable pilot, I really was, but those sort of things are not pilot errors so much as I suppose I made a bad judgement. I don't know what I can do. The young kid was pushing me over. He didn't mean to, but he was just being very keen.

Is it hard to get back in the saddle after something like that?

No, you used to read stories about how they make you go and fly again. You develop a philosophical attitude to this.

- 08:00 Some of the things that happened, they didn't have much of a war there apart from a couple of the stories I told you. I remember one of the lucky things, not for me, but, I was doing some very low flying. It was a lovely place Darwin. People didn't realise it. Out further was all the buffalo country. You go out there and there was miles of buffalo and Timor geese. Billions of them. We used to live quite well on those. Low flying was something to do. I had
- 08:30 number 2 and he was beside me. Not too close in, but he was right down on the trees going out over the marshes and swamps and so on. I looked over at Noel and out of his exhaust was coming a white smoke. What that meant in a Spitfire, the engines in the Spitfire were Rolls Royce Merlins. Their cooling was a glycol thing. The jacket round the engine. When you saw that white smoke it meant you had a glycol leak. You had
- 09:00 something like a couple of minutes before the engine blew up and caught fire. So if you saw the smoke, first thing you did was jump out. Right down on the deck and Noel didn't see it. He was busy formatting. I said, "Hey, you've a glycol." He said, "Shit" and he opened the throttle, pulled the stick back. He had to make a quick decision. By opening the throttle it meant the engine was going to burn more quickly. It was going to catch fire more quickly cos he was pulling the stuff into it. But on the other hand he wanted to get up as high as he could to bail out. He couldn't crash-land in amongst all the scrub. So up he
- 09:30 went. I pulled away to watch and I saw him get up and I saw his feet come out of the cockpit and it came down like that. I watched him and he got the jerk under his crotch, the parachute caught and hit the trees. Just absolute not a second to spare. Strange life up there.

Did you have good luck charms or superstitions yourself when you got up there?

I didn't. Some of the fellows did. They had to wear certain scarves or photos of their girlfriends or

- 10:00 something. I didn't have any. I was only 23, 24, 25, I didn't believe in all that junk. I got that far and I was still alive. I suppose I thought I was pretty good.

You got to Darwin about October '43?

Would you like to stop and I can tell you the exact? I'm not sure whether it was earlier or later.

Roughly.

I would have

- 10:30 thought it was towards the end of '43.

What was next for you after Darwin?

After Darwin I flew a few aeroplanes down to Oakey. This is an interesting story too, this. I led a whole bunch of Spitfires, they were being re-equipped. Oh, I'll tell you another interesting story if you don't mind. I think this one's very interesting. I just watched a film, a video of breaking the sound barrier. I nearly jumped out of my chair the other night,

- 11:00 it was on one of the videos here, because they talked about an experience before they discovered the problem of the sound barrier. What had happened to some pilots. Do you know what happened to me exactly? I'm talking when I was in Darwin. We got re-equipped with Spitfire 8s, which were much more powerful engine and more advanced than Spitfire 5s. I was one of the senior pilots in the squadron, so I got in an aeroplane to see how fast this thing can go. I went up to about 30,000 feet, rolled
- 11:30 it on over the top and dived to see how fast I could go. After I don't know what speed, the aeroplane went mad. It went all over the damned sky. I couldn't control it, I lost control completely. So I finally got it back somehow, came in and landed and told the engineer officer about it. He said "I think we've got a rogue." Like a rogue elephant. Every now and then you get an aeroplane that doesn't conform to what it should do. So they measured every aerodynamic measurement they could think of and couldn't find anything wrong with it.
- 12:00 They said it was just a rogue. So I don't know what they did with it, but I didn't fly it any more. I watched this movie last night. I found that what, actually, sorry, I had realised it before, long since, before I saw this movie, that what happens is that when you get, I don't want to be too technical about it, but when you're flying through the air, shockwaves go out in front of you and sort of clear the air away so the aeroplane can go through it.
- 12:30 That's not quite technically right, but you get a wave out in front of you. As you get near the speed of sound the shockwaves can't go fast enough to clear the air and so it starts to gradually build up a barrier and so the speed of sound, mach 1, you hit this barrier. Before you get to it you could start to hit the barrier. It depended on the aeroplane how fast you could go. For instance, 747s [civilian airliners] now with Qantas do about mach .8 something, pretty close to
- 13:00 the speed of sound without any problem. In a Spitfire, which was not a particularly good aeroplane aerodynamically, I was hitting it quite early and so I was hitting this sonic barrier. Obviously the aeroplane was going all over the sky. So there was nothing wrong with the aeroplane, in those days we'd never heard of the speed of sound. So when I watched this movie last night I nearly jumped out of

the chair because that's when people started to realise there was a problem.

It makes it more remarkable that you

13:30 **managed to pull out of that situation.**

I still don't know how I got. I assume when I got down to lower altitudes and lower speed that it let me take over again.

You were explaining where you went after Darwin.

Yes. Darwin, as soon as they sent me back to Mildura I said "Oh, God, not again."

It was the same role again? Instructing?

Yes. It was getting near the end of the war then. It was

14:00 Christmas time '44 January '45. I got down there. Same old same old. Backseat in Wirraways and converting blokes to Spitfires and so on. Bloody hell. About this time the Royal Navy came out. They had huge aircraft carrier. A lot of people always think of the Americans with aircraft carrier, the Brits had these monsters. We had 80 odd aeroplanes in each ship. 80 odd.

14:30 We'd get 4 of them in formation eventually. But anyway, back to how I joined the navy. They came out and by this time, gearing up for the war had started to move up to the home islands of Japan. The Allies were gearing up to attack on the mainland and invasion on the mainland of the islands. So the Royal Navy, whilst they had all these aeroplanes, they could do with some more pilots.

15:00 Experienced pilots. We, the RAAF had them coming out of their ears by now. The war from the RAAF's point of view had gone so far north that the Americans couldn't be bothered with our logistic supplies and looking after them, and they had enough anyway. So nearly everybody was getting out of work. So the two governments talked to each other and the British Government said "How about we have some of your fellows?" The Australian Government said "OK." So one day a signal came round to us to all the air bases,

15:30 all the front bases, saying "Who would like to join the fleet air arm?" A lot of blokes like me, all the fellows who wanted to go back to the war, put their hands up. So after a lot of interviews they took 12 of us. We went across to the, one day I was a flight lieutenant and the next day I was a lieutenant in the Royal Australian Navy volunteer reserve, which I met Sirenne eventually, because her brother was one of the 12 that came across with me.

16:00 Rather amusing. That night in the mess that it came through that I was going to the navy, and I had a great big walrus fighter pilot moustache. We decided to lose my moustache. Couldn't have one in the navy. The blokes started wielding shaving sticks and blokes had razors the blokes were going to take off my, we were all fairly sloshed by this time. I got a bit terrified about this. Finally I let the doctor do it. What they did, they took off one side completely. So I was walking around with one half of a big moustache.

16:30 So we went and joined the navy. I was RAN VR on loan to the Royal Navy. Got new uniforms and so on, navy uniforms and went to Schofield just outside Sydney here. It was a very big Royal Navy base then. I went to a squadron called 801. There were 12 Australians went to the squadron. We ranged from lieutenant

17:00 to sub lieutenant, some were very junior, but we all were quite experienced in flying aeroplanes. I joined the squadron 801 and it had 24 aeroplanes and 36 pilots. Huge amount. I was made senior pilot. I had been in the navy half a dog watch and I was made senior pilot of a fleet air arm squadron. It was rather good. So we could fly the aeroplanes. They were Seafires, which was the naval version of

17:30 Spitfires. So we'd spent hundreds of hours flying, so we had no trouble flying them.

Were they a big difference?

Not to fly. They had a hook on a bit of string for deck landings and so on. What we had to learn was how to do a deck landing. So we did what they called aerodrome dummy deck landing. We fly around and around Schofield and to air force pilots everything else was right until the approach. You had to rely on a batsman giving you signals

18:00 up and down, too fast, too slow, turn left, turn right. So we had to learn all of that. The most frightening thing was flying the aeroplane at a very low speed on the approach. You got right down to just a few knots, stalling speed, which we weren't used to. When you look at the air speed indicator and it's getting near the stall pin you start to get a bit concerned. But you had to do that to get down to minimum speed and the art of deck landings was to have a very nose up attitude, lots of power on and you were sort of

18:30 holding the aeroplane in the air on its propeller and you just went to stall. So when the batman [deck flight director] went "Cut." you pull off your throttle and you fell out of the sky. That was the theory and the practise. You caught the wire. So after these dummy deck landings, which we finally got to do, we got out and did our first deck landings off the coast of Sydney here in a ship called the Indomitable.

Most of us got away with it, but one young bloke, I've got a photo of it on video, of this happening. Charlie Burly came

19:00 in to land and there were two signals that were executive signals from the batman. One was "Cut" and you had to pull out your throttle and the other was "Go round again" and you'd made a mess of it and go round. Poor old Charlie. He came in, it was a pretty calm day, the sea was steady. He really made a mess of this thing. He was really committed to the deck and he got a wave off. He tried to take it and he stalled, went into the water just beside the ship. We were all watching.

19:30 It went straight down. Getting out of the cockpit of a Spitfire, or a Seafire, would have been pretty difficult, because you've got your straps, you've got your parachute harness, you're hooked up to your radio and your oxygen. So you've got to get all these things [undone]. The cockpit of a Seafire was terribly tiny. You've got your shoulders against it. We all waved goodbye to Charlie and miles astern we saw a little yellow figure bob up. He came up. The

20:00 destroyer, we had a tracer destroyer for that reason. Pick up when people went over the side. They picked up Charlie and he never flew again. I've seen him since, but that was it for Charlie. He didn't wanna fly anymore. He reckoned he got down so far he burst his eardrum. So we did our DLs [deck landings] and were now qualified fleet air arm pilots.

How long did it take to get confident with a landing and taking off?

One session.

20:30 The take offs in those days, we did what we called free take offs. We had no catapult, we ran off the deck like we did from the Argus. There were no problems with any of that. We then went to various squadrons. I went to Implacable. She was not a big ship. Two hangars. Huge monster ships. We had lots of cruisers.

21:00 Then we were getting close to the real war now and some of us were going to join the ships off the Japanese islands. So we flew up to Manus, up in the Admiralty Islands. I had a nice little interlude there. By the way, you've never seen an armada and you never will see it again. In the big bay in the Admiralties, I've forgotten the name of it now,

21:30 there would have been, including American carriers, a dozen of these monster carriers, battleships, you couldn't, KT5s, the big British battleships, the big American battleships, cruisers, destroyers, there would have been hundreds of ships, all in this great big harbour. You should have seen it. An enormous armada. We flew up in some sort of aeroplane to Mamoti in the Admiralty Islands

22:00 and I was with another fellow. The Americans were there. They had an aeroplane called a Hell Cat. You could do that in those days, you couldn't do it now. We got to know the Yanks and said, "I'd like to fly your aeroplane." He said, "is my guest." So the two of us took a Hell Cat each and we flew around and beat up the strip and had great fun. It was great to fly a new aeroplane. So then we climbed aboard a little carrier called the Striker. She was a replenishment carrier. She carried spare aircraft,

22:30 fuel, spare aircrew like us and whatever. It was part of the fleet train to replenish the fighting fleet. We got up north of Truk, and they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. So we did a 180 and came back home. That's why I'm still alive, because I'm damned sure if we'd have gone, if they hadn't dropped the bomb, we'd gone up there, the fatalities, we had to invade the island, it would have been bloody awful. So I welcomed the bomb. I came home.

23:00 When was the bomb off? Mid '45 something like that. VE Day [VJ Day? Victory over Japan] whenever it was. Came back and the war was over and I didn't know what to do. I knew that I was still Royal Australian Navy on loan to the RN. I was out of work. We had a wonderful Royal Navy admiral called Sir Phillip Bine. Straight out of the books of the old Nelson days.

23:30 He really was a wonderful bloke and he loved us, the abos [Aboriginal] he called us. His abo pilots. So he gave a special little party for us on the flagship here in Sydney, right up alongside. He gave a little party and we had quite a few drinks, sang a few songs, and he said, "What are you going to do now?" I said, "I don't know. The Australians don't have any aircraft carrier and the air force won't let me come back because they reckon I deserted them, so I'm out of work." He said, "Would you like to join my navy?" Imagine that happening these days.

24:00 I said, "I'll go and talk to the boys." So I got the boys over in the corner, had a few more gins and I went back to him and said, "Some of us will join your navy on one condition." Imagine us lieutenants talking to an admiral like this. He said, "What's the condition?" I said, "That we fly" cos we could see ourselves going back to poor old war torn Britain, tired and fed up with the bloody war. They weren't going to waste money on us flying aeroplanes, they'd put us behind a desk somewhere. I said, "That's no good to us." He looked at us and he looked at me and he said, "I'll fly

24:30 the arse off you." So we joined. In the cold light of dawn some of the fellows changed their mind. They didn't want to go out. They had wives some of them and they wanted to get back home. I think 4 of us decided to take it. So a couple of days later I was no longer RAN, I was Royal Navy.

Did you ponder a civilian life at that stage?

No, not on your life. Not while there were all these aeroplanes to fly. The only thing I thought, if I went to civil life I'd be flying commercial aeroplanes

25:00 between Sydney and Brisbane and places like that. It was like driving a bus I thought, so I went back to UK in the Implacable. He kept this word. They spent a fortune on us. Did all the very expensive schools. Simplifying school, instrument flying instructor school, school of naval warfare, all these schools. I spent nearly three years.

Did you have a bit of leave in Sydney or a break before you went over?

I guess I did. Oh yes, I'm sure.

25:30 I can't remember. I wasn't married.

Caught up with family?

Yeah.

Do you recall your reunion with the family?

Yes, I did. I went up to Brisbane. Mum and Dad were still up there and sisters and brothers. Dad was pretty happy, Mum thought I was stupid. She thought, "What the hell are you doing going away again?" I still liked flying, I still enjoyed the services

26:00 and life was great. I just couldn't wait. So off we went to the UK. Got there and did all this flying as I mentioned a moment ago. Want me to keep on going like this? So I was nearly 3 years. About this time we were getting to 1948. Australia decided we'd have a fleet air arm. They bought HMAS Sydney. I think her name was Terrible before. The Brits had her. So I got a letter one day from the Australian Commonwealth Navy Board, ACNB

26:30 saying, "Dear Lieutenant R.M. Gould, would you like to join the navy?" So of course I said, "Yes." The pay was twice as good. I was 3 years in England. As much as I love England the climate gets a bit wearing after a while. I wanted to come home. So I said yes. We started our fleet air arm. We got home in 48 sometime.

27:00 Typical navy though. They had started a fleet air arm and I was the most senior aviator bloke with all the experience in the world who didn't get near an aeroplane for 6 months. I had to go and become a naval officer. So I had to go to sea and I had to go do my watch keeping up on the bridge, which in hindsight was absolutely right, of course it was. We can't afford to have people just fly aeroplanes in the navy. You've got to earn your keep and everything. I enjoyed the watch keeping. Drove the ships around and so on.

27:30 Eventually they gave me a squadron. I'd been a fighter pilot and the first squadron I got was an anti-submarine squadron. I didn't know anything about it. So I became CO [Commanding Officer] of a Firefly squadron.

How were you finding the navy as opposed to the air force?

Many differences. I want to be careful here. The air force when I knew it,

28:00 remember we were all ex civilians in for hostilities only, 5 years sort of thing. So we were never anything most of us, but aircrew. We were not air force officer even though we had. We weren't taught what an officer's job was, to look after his troops, to do staff work and all these things. We flew aeroplanes. You went to the navy, the first thing I was thought, apart from becoming a seaman, was that

28:30 to be a divisional officer, which was the sailors' name, which was responsible for a whole lot of sailors in my division. I was responsible that they were looked after, that they were given opportunities to advance, that their domestic problems had to be sorted out. So that was one very big difference. We were an officer in the real sense of the word, not just a aircrew. The fact you flew an aeroplane was coincidental. Some of our fellows later on would be a squadron commander and the next job would be 1st lieutenant

29:00 on a destroyer. Remember I was telling you at Darwin this young bloke who flew number 2 to me when I hit the thing? He was a sergeant then. He finished up a commodore in the navy driving destroyers. That's how things could turn.

Did you feel good about the change to the navy?

Oh yes. I loved it. My ambitions, one of the things I wanted to do was go to sea. There I was flying aeroplanes and going to sea. I was a bachelor. Only reason I'm saying that is cos I

29:30 didn't own anything. I didn't own a car. The only thing I owned was set of golf sticks. I didn't have to worry about phone bills or the nonsense the domestic people do. I lived in the ship or ashore at Nowra. It was a great life. I can imagine nothing better than fleet air arm.

What was the pay like in the fleet air arm?

I think the three services were all on the same level

30:00 roughly. You got special pay for skills. I think there was a flying pay and that probably was the same in the air force and the army. It was generally the same.

You were in a position where you could accrue saving?

That's right. You were duty free at sea, not that we drank at sea as a rule that you didn't. You

30:30 might have a glass of beer, but basically didn't drink. Cigarettes, we all smoked in those days, cigarettes were duty free. When we got into port we did have a few parties with duty free. I remember gin was a penny halfpenny. So we were drunk for a shilling if you wanted.

The first squadron you were with in the fleet air arm, can you tell me more about that?

31:00 **It was anti-submarine?**

The Australian? Yes. It was aeroplanes called Fireflies.

Tell us about the Firefly.

It was a two seater aeroplane. It was the first time I ever had somebody else in the aeroplane with me. They called it an observer, in the back. He was highly skilled as a pilot. He was a navigation expert, a radio expert and he, on the

31:30 anti-submarine side, the Firefly was in the anti-submarine version carried a thing called sonar buoys. If you went out after a submarine you had to be given a rough idea where the sub was from other ships or something. You dropped your pattern of these sonar buoys around. The observer told you when to drop them. They had various colours, purple, orange, red, yellow, and so on. They transmitted a little transmitter and sent them up to the

32:00 aeroplane and the observer very cleverly could target these things you got where the submarine was and then you dropped the depth charges on the target. It was a pretty useful aeroplane by the standards those days.

Must have been unique to have company in the air.

It was. It took be a while to get used to it. I was the boss and so I had the senior observer who was

32:30 very experienced. We got on very well mind you, but I'd forget about him sometimes and do something stupid and he'd have to tell me. Funny little thing happened. We were playing games with the New Zealanders and the Brits down south of Tasmania, down in the real cold country. We were playing war games. I took off in my Firefly pre-dawn, a very dark morning, with Tod in the back, my observer.

33:00 I was loaded up to the gills. I had a huge extra drop tanks on. The aeroplane was miles overweight. I went toddling off, pitch black, fell off the bow, not in the water, but just got airborne. I toddled and the observer in the back saying, "OK boss, turn onto 130. Boss. On to 130." I said, "Shut up." I was trying to get the aeroplane airborne. I was about 2 feet off the water. The aeroplane was so heavy. If I had pulled

33:30 the stick back I'd have stalled. So I was trying to build up a couple of notches.[speed] I got the wheels up, I got the flaps up and I was just holding on waiting. I was on instruments too. It was pitch dark. I couldn't see the horizon. Oh dear. I finally got up to about 100 feet or something and I said, "Now, what did you say?" He was quite upset, but he didn't know how close we were to going in. The ship would have gone over us had we gone in there.

Were you based in Nowra at that stage?

Yeah, we only had Nowra or the ship in those days.

34:00 Yes, we only had the one station. We had two ships. We had the Sydney and the Vengeance.

How long were you involved in that phase of work?

I can't remember how long. I think you do about 12 months in command of the squadron. I can't remember where I went then, frankly. I got promoted, no, not then.

34:30 I went to the navy office. That was in the 5th department and got some staff job. I was in charge of posting aircrew officers. It was not a very nice job. Oh yes, that's where I was. I was doing that and the Korean War broke out and I was sitting in my little office down in Victoria Barracks in Melbourne. The ship went up there with a squadron. They lost a

35:00 few blokes. We had to replace them, send the ship back up again and so I was responsible for posting all aircrew officers. So I posted myself to command 805 Squadron. Sea Furies, the real aeroplanes. Took the list up to the admiral, Roy Darling, and he and I, I was lieutenant commander at the time, he said, "Come on, haven't you had enough?" "Come on, there's a war on and I haven't been to Korea yet.

35:30 I'd like to go up and do it." So I got myself 805 Squadron. That was a fighter squadron, these single seat aeroplanes.

The prospect of another conflict was a pretty exciting one?

Yeah, it sounds as if your mind's shooting, but if you're, how do I say it without sounding pompous? If you're a fighter pilot, the only thing you know, and

- 36:00 there's a war on, your country's in it, you think you're pretty good, well, you just fell it, why not? You're not stupidly brave. You just fell that you should do it. That's your job, it's your profession. So I gave myself 805 Squadron here and we worked up in Vengeance up in Hervey Bay. Joined the Sydney and away we went up to Korea. Fortunately, or unfortunately,
- 36:30 halfway up there they stopped the war. They had no business. So by the time I got up there, it was in between time. Everybody had fully loaded and finger on the trigger sort of thing up and down. We patrolled the armistice line and dropped a few bombs and that sort of thing. It was, we
- 37:00 lost blokes through accidents. Trying to think of. Oh yes, I went over the side there. It was interesting. The ship always turns into wind for landing and taking off, because it reduces the ground speed or the relative speed, so it makes things slower between you and the ship. You became very experienced in knowing which way the wind was
- 37:30 and where the wind was. There was little white horses and you know the ship's going to turn into wind within a couple of degrees. The other thing is, when you're very worked up and very experienced in the squadron, really, which we were. The CO always comes in first. You never keep the ship into wind any longer than possible. Because sod's law [inevitability] says "into wind is towards the enemy coast or to shoals or at the
- 38:00 least it's the wrong way." She doesn't want to go that way, eventually she wants to be making good to get to port. So the first one round, which is usually the boss, he comes round so that as the ship's turning into wind, he should land off. That's the ideal. It is better for him to misjudge it and the ship not be ready. So he gets round again, gets on the tail of his number 2 and his number 2 lands on and he comes on last. So the whole idea is least time into wind. I got pretty good at this.
- 38:30 I've forgotten where we were, south of Korea somewhere. The ship's coming round into wind. By this time I'd done a lot of deck landings. I was very experienced in this thing. I came in and I knew the ship wasn't going to make it, at least I wasn't going to make it. The ship was not going to steady. It not only had to turn, but it has to steady so you've got a flat deck. So I was bumbling in, the batman was giving me all this. There are two executive orders, one's to go round again, the other's a cut. I
- 39:00 knew I was going to have to go round again. The silly bloody batman gave me a cut. I, like a bloody fool, pulled off the throttle. The ship was turning sideways so I came across it like this in stead of up the deck cos I thought I was going to get a wave off. It really was stupid. It was more stupid. I caught this wire and straight over the side of the ship. I'm clapping against the ship's side looking at the water. I climbed up. I didn't get my feet wet. I climbed up and got onboard. They hauled
- 39:30 the aeroplane up with a crane. No reason to tell the story, it was just one of the things that happened up there.

Did you have to go to land while you were at Korea, or where you onboard?

No, it was an interesting war from a carrier point of view. The Australians, the Brits, the Americans, don't think the Canadians had a ship there. What we'd do, we'd take it in turns, we'd do 10 days off

- 40:00 the west coast of Korea, in the China Sea there, and 10 days off. You'd be relieved by another taskforce and carrier force and so on. So we'd go back to either Kure or this place near Hiroshima, can't remember, doesn't matter. Sasabo or Kure. We'd go back there and have a few days off. It was very good where the occupying forces had very nice messes and so on. We were tax free, duty free. So somebody
- 40:30 asked me a while ago what about, "Could you save any money?" Well, up there you just saved everything, because you couldn't spend it. There was nothing to spend it on and you didn't pay tax. And Lord Nuffield [government minister] gave us all one shilling] and six [pence] a day for some reason. So then you back and do another 10 days on. After I think, I can't remember sequences of that you did, you then were relieved for something like 4 weeks.
- 41:00 The captain used to always say to us, the aircrew, cos we were the blokes doing all the work, he'd say, "Where do you wanna go?" We'd all say, "Hong Kong." So the ship would go down to Hong Kong and we'd have 10 days onboard Honkers. It was great in those days. A wonderful place. We were still the savers, the people really looked after us. It was still British of course. Then we'd go back and do the same thing and eventually we came home. I can't remember when, but. It
- 41:30 was very good from that point of view.

In a typical situation when you are landing, you're how many planes coming in?

In the Korean thing we had 3 squadrons. We had, would have been 36 aeroplanes onboard the Sydney. But we wouldn't fly them all. Some of them were being serviced and things. I suppose we

- 42:00 put up usually perhaps

Tape 7

00:39 **After Korea you returned to Australia and continued your naval career. What happened when you returned?**

I came back and I was sent to the UK to do some courses, School of Land Air Warfare.

01:00 A couple of other shorter courses. Then I went to the US of A and I did an amphibious warfare support course at Norfolk in Virginia. Then I went right down south outside New Orleans and did an air ground operation school with the Americans. All very interesting. I suppose I was away a total of 4-5 months. I came back and the whole idea

01:30 of these courses was to make sure I could carry out the task of being on the directing staff of the School of Land Air Warfare up at the air force base at Williamtown. It was a joint school. Land air warfare was to teach young officers coming on how to cooperate and jointly how to for example have the land forces

02:00 get their air support when they needed it. It was reconnaissance or close strafing and bombing and all that sort of stuff. Paratrooping. In other words, how to jointly run those sort of operations. It was very much required cos a lot of our young officers tended to be one service minded so they needed it. Also nuclear warfare was coming in then. One of my jobs was to

02:30 talk about the use of nuclear weapons and missilery. Missiles were now becoming very important. We talked about surface to air missiles or air to surface missiles and all that sort of stuff. That was, I didn't fly an aeroplane, but it was interesting.

Where were you getting trained about nuclear warfare?

The ones I said before. I went to Williamtown

03:00 and I went to England, the School of Land Air Warfare and America.

Both those places?

Both those places were oriented towards what we were teaching out here. Our syllabus was almost completely identical to the British one. The American one became part of it cos we were to operate with American troops in the future. Again, it was very useful and very interesting. We also had at Williamtown, as an aside here, we had the

03:30 parachute school. This is a warning to young fellows. I was then a commander, fairly senior. I worked with the lieutenant colonel and a wing commander, so the three of us were the breaking staff up there. The parachute school came under us. I was in the mess one night talking to the parachute chief instructor. He said, "Why don't you do

04:00 some jumps, sir?" I said, "I'd like to do the course. I'll ask if I can get permission to do the course." I knew quite well that the navy would not let the aircrew do a parachute course. The reason was they might hurt themselves and too expensive, they also wanted to teach you how to fly and all these clever things and if you went and broke your leg it was stupid. Parachuting was considered reasonably dangerous. I knew I wouldn't be allowed to do it. I said, "I'll see if I can." I sent off a signal to Sydney here, our headquarters to

04:30 request permission to do a parachute course. Little did I know that a chum of mine was advisor to the admiral down here and he said, "I'll fix this bloody Gould bloke." So he sent back and said "permission granted." So now I was committed to do the parachute course, which I did. I had to do it properly. I had to take off all my rank and just became a dogsbody [private]. I had to do all the ground stuff, which was more frightening than parachuting. You step in a Polish tower, I don't know how high it is,

05:00 terribly high. You get a little wire up your back and you open the gate and you step out into nothing. Even though I was in the navy I hate heights. I still do. I can't get up on the roof. I suppose you do about 3 or 4 weeks of really solid ground stuff. Learning how to fall cos you hit the ground pretty hard. Then came the day I did some jumps. I went out and I not only did my jumps I jumped with the SAS [Special Air Service].

05:30 So I jumped out with full kit. Gun, kitbags, I led them out at night and did night jumps. I loved it. They couldn't keep me out of it. I kept on doing it. I finished up doing 20 jumps. So I got my wings up there, paratrooper's wings, not parachuter. I'm a qualified paratrooper. You can see them up there. I've got my air force wings on the right, paratrooper's wings in the middle and fleet air arm wings on this side. I'm the only bloke with three sets of wings.

06:00 Get another pair on my shoulders one day, I suppose. So I did the parachute and I finished up loving it. I did some tests for them. I was just the right height and so on. Right build for Paratrooping. They wanted to do a test with an American canopy and a British harness. So I said, "I'll do it." So I went and jumped over. Wonderful. I was the most senior bloke who went on the paratroop

06:30 course up there then. I was later on beaten by a full colonel. So that's where I got married by the way. At Williamtown.

You went courting your wife?

On and off for years, since the fleet air arm days and so on. On and off. Her husband had died. So we started all over again. I came back, before I went up to Williamstown, I came back from the US of A and went

07:00 and saw her again. I said, "Why don't we get married?" She said, "Why not?" So we were married a couple of days later up the registry office. That was in 1957. October the 13th I think it was. So we've been married for a while. Now, after Williamstown, I did pretty close to 3 years there.

Did you enjoy teaching?

No, not very much. It was dull because we only had,

07:30 we'd probably get 20 or 30 people in on a course, but there would be big gaps in between them with nothing to do. I had less to do than the air force instructor or the army instructor, cos they had their big contingency up there. I had no navy. So I got all the odd jobs. Every time a naval ship came into Newcastle I was the senior naval officer down there to welcome the French or the Americans or who it was. It was pretty boring. I was about to get out of it. So then they sent me to Canberra. I can tell you now we're talking,

08:00 by the way, I built this house in about 1958, something like that. We no sooner moved into it than I got moved to Canberra. Sirenne followed me down a little bit later. My job down there was the most interesting job I ever had. I was the coordinator of the joint intelligence staff. I enjoyed it very much. We lived in one great big room and I had a lieutenant colonel in the army and major and a wing commander and a squadron leader,

08:30 I had a lieutenant commander in the navy, I had a Foreign Affairs fellow, about the 1st assistant secretary, Joint Intelligence Bureau chap and a spook. Weren't allowed to talk about them in those days.

Was he ASIO [Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation]?

No, no. ASIS], intelligence service. We never had an intelligence service in those days. It was the most

09:00 wonderful job. I can't even now give you all the details, but the sorts of things you do, you got war intelligence, wireless stuff came in, all the rouseabout and you try to assess it, put it all together and come up with assessments, not usually one, usually a couple, which you pushed up the line to the joint intelligence committee and they pushed it up to cabinet. That was the sort of sequence. A lot of things I obviously even now wouldn't, can't talk about, but

09:30 it was wonderful seeing this raw intelligence coming in from wherever, from our Embassies, from our high commissions, from intercepts, a lot of it came from that, our allies. All sorts of clandestine and places.

Was it human intelligence mostly?

We were getting pure war material without an assessment. Coming to us

10:00 wouldn't be an assessment by whoever was supplying the intelligence. It would be raw to say, "So and so, so and so, so and so." you key that up to other intelligence sent to us and come up with a quick, as soon as we could, 1st assessment. Usually we'd have options. We'd rarely say, "This is what's going to happen." we'd say, "If so and so, this is the most probably course of events, but on the other hand, so and so." So that was very good. I enjoyed that.

10:30 I got some nice stuff out of that. In those days we had SEATO [South East Asian Treaty Organisation], which was roughly the equivalent of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] on a much smaller scale. So I skipped to Bangkok and we'd have meetings up there with the Thais and the Pakistanis and whoever else were in SEATO, Americans and us. Do a few weeks up there. That was good.

Your role was to coordinate this group of people? What was your role?

11:00 I'd coordinate. I'd allocate the tasks and perhaps a timetable for some of it. It's like being the commanding officer of a unit, you took responsibility and sorted it all out and fronted up the joint intelligence committee. Trying to think what else. It was very highly classified in those days. Probably still is.

It's 35 year period from now?

11:30 My memory's not good enough to pass anything of interest on. After I left that job, I think for about the next 10 years or something, even when I was a civilian, if I flew anywhere, I was not allowed to fly anywhere near Russia or China. I couldn't go to England via Moscow or anywhere near it. Just in case they got you for something and they'd know who you were.

12:00 Their intelligence was pretty good too. This was Cold War days.

Everything was centred towards the Cold War and trying to avoid it?

And Indonesia. One of the interesting things that was going on at that time, I'm talking early '60s now, was Indonesia was a client of the Russians. The Russians had given them, there's no secret about this, Svedloff cruisers, which was one of their best cruisers. They had (UNCLEAR) class submarines from

12:30 the Russians. They had the Badger bomber with missiles up. They had quite an arsenal of good stuff. The good side of this was it was mostly officered and controlled by the Russians, rather than the Indonesians. That was a pretty dicey period. We had to concentrate on that a lot. To this day I don't believe it was ever a real threat,

13:00 I can talk for hours about this, but I won't now. I don't believe Indonesia will ever be a threat for all sorts of reasons, which I like to explain, but I won't now. After that job,

Did that job change your perception on the world?

It taught me a lot about politics. You got very involved in it. Again, I won't tell you the story, but we quite often got what we called indicators, which

13:30 meant "Hey, there's a real problem coming up" and you usually woke up your admiral or the general, who'd wake up the prime minister, if it was an indicator, troops massing on the border. That's the sort of indicator we meant. That couldn't happen as far as we were concerned, but there are other indicators, which probably are still indicators, so I shouldn't talk about them. I think I had to wake up the admiral a couple of times.

14:00 All in good fun, he didn't worry too much. I learned a lot, to answer your question, about politics. For example, I saw a raw signal from the Prime Minister of Britain to the Prime Minister of Australia asking for what would happen if so and so and so and so. It was straight out a political one, but it was a defence type of question. That was a very quick one, we all had to get out of bed and work on that one. We came up with

14:30 recommendations to the joint intelligence committee. The joint intelligence committee is a big step above us, that's all the heads of the services and so on. So they passed on our recommendations to our prime minister.

Must have been exciting working so close to the seat of power.

What I've learned from that, and still do, is don't take any notice of the media. Things I knew inside out and backwards, long before I got into intelligence, when I was still commander in the navy, some of the things I'd read about that I knew

15:00 was absolutely, "What world are they in? A bloody parallel universe or something?" I have very little respect for most reporters, I'm sorry to say, but on things I know of anyway. All this stuff about Iraq and so on, I have my own views on that. I wrote a letter to the editors today and what a load of rubbish they talk. That's beside the point. Where was I?

15:30 Why do you think the navy gave you that job?

No idea, I suppose, I've never asked, but you never did ask why you got the job, any job. I was getting near the end of my, they couldn't put me back into flying. I was commander and there weren't any commanders flying ops. I was 40 something then too, so not much use as that. Obviously your use in the navy was some staff work of some sort.

16:00 I don't know. Maybe predecessor in the joint intelligence crowd was due to move onto somewhere else and they said, "Who have we got as commanders to fill this?" We don't have too many in the Australian Navy spare or due for a posting, so they probably said, "Let's send old Gould there." I suppose so, I don't know.

You'd have to be a commander to get a job like that?

This job, yes, the joint intelligence. The coordinator of staff was a commander's job. We took it in turns. The chap that relieved me was a lieutenant colonel in the army.

16:30 The fellow who'd relieve him would be a wing commander and then you go back to the navy again.

You were getting close to your retirement?

Yes. Then I was due to retire. The navy were very kind on this, they let you, within reason, do your last job in your home port where you intend to retire. So I got the job in Sydney here in 1963

17:00 as base intelligence and security, nothing to do with aeroplanes of course. Again an interesting job. I had the Garden Island dockyard as my biggest problem. Full of bloody commos [communists] in those days. I worked very closely with ASIO, I worked very closely in those days with Special Branch, which is no longer officially going, but it still is. That was good, playing spies and running around. We had some

17:30 very interesting things happen. Unmarked cars and all the stakeouts. Real James Bond stuff. It was great fun.

Was your sphere of influence the base? Why was it called base intelligence?

Because all the navy stuff was based in Sydney then and you had the Garden Island docks. It's the home port for most of our big ships and they're all here. The Korean War was on at the time. You saw a lot of intelligence coming in.

18:00 Not the Korean War, the Vietnam War. Quite a lot to do. You were still getting reports and merchant ships and all sorts of things. It was still a fair bit to do. It was quite a busy period. Mostly it was security. I was more involved with the security of the dockyard. We had all sorts of funny people. Trade unions were absolutely rampant. I know some people that they'd want a new

18:30 sheet metal worker on the thing, so as a trade union, they picked their best communist [comrade]. Cos the governor on the dockyard was a com target. So they picked their best com. The only way we could refuse to employ him was if he wasn't up to the trade thing. Of course they'd make sure he was a good tradesman. So he'd get in and we'd have to watch him, get other people to watch him. We had a few things like chopping cables to the ship and so on, power cables and

19:00 so on, just to delay its departure and so on. That was it and 4th May 1965 I waved goodbye to the navy and became a civilian.

It was probably before the days of computers. How did you collect and collate all that information?

19:30 We'd work with ASIO and Special Branch and we didn't get, I had other people working for me there. I had a lieutenant commander and a civilian and staff and so forth. I'd report to the admiral on my side of it. I suppose he'd report back to naval headquarters. How did we collate it?

20:00 I don't think it got to that stage. I think as we got something we told more senior people about it. We weren't doing the assessing that I was doing in Canberra. We didn't make assessments, we got whatever stuff and gave it to somebody else to assess. I'm not answering your question, but I can't answer.

Did you find getting married, settled down and staying in Australia a difficult

20:30 **transition to make after your adventures overseas?**

No, because the job I took on from the navy was very similar from a civilian point of view. Do you want me to go to that now?

Yeah, but you were in Australia for a little while before you, and married and in the navy before you

Yes, 8-9 years. From Williamstown '57 to '65.

So that time,

21:00 **compared to your time overseas, was that difficult?**

No. In many ways I think it was, remember I'm getting older, more settled down. I'd got married. So I started to own things like motorcars and these things. Paid bills, which I'd never had to do before. Difficult income tax returns, which you never had in the navy. No, it wasn't really difficult. Still, I was 45, so.

21:30 Because the job I went to, you were talking about before I went out. No, because I was in interesting jobs.

We're at your civilian life now. Let's talk about your first job as a civvy [civilian].

OK. I'm in Sydney here, in my little office and I knew I went out for my birthday. That's the way you go out, or the day before your birthday. So on the 4th of May

22:00 I was going to be a civilian. It's a terrifying thought after you'd been in the womb since you were 17 or 18. I'd been a good staff officer. I'd been taught how to analyse problems and look at all the courses of action and so on. So I sat down, I had plenty of time to do this, with a pencil and paper and said, "OK, what are you going to do? What do you want to do? What are your qualifications?"

22:30 Didn't take long to work out the only thing I really knew anything about was aeroplanes. So I said, "OK, now what can you do as a civilian with aeroplanes?" You can go and fly for Mr Qantas, or Mr Ansett [now defunct domestic airline] you can be a flying instructor at a civilian school. Not much else you can do. Do you want to do it? I thought flying in an aeroplane Sydney-Melbourne, Sydney-Melbourne, Sydney-Melbourne. Like driving a bus. No.

23:00 Not any of that, to be quite honest. I'd been flying since I was a small boy, I'd had a lot of accidents, or a few accidents, I had been damned lucky I was still alive. I just thought I'd be pushing the luck to start flying aeroplanes again. My hearing was starting to go, bloody jet engines screaming my ears, and my eye sight wasn't as good as it should be. Still [UNCLEA] some aeroplanes. I done all this as an assessment.

23:30 I said, "I can sell them. What could I sell and who could I sell and how would I go about selling?" I

talked to another chum of mine who I knew quite well was in the air force, he finished up a wing commander and fighter pilot. Famous fighter pilot, his name was Dick Creswell. He said, "What are you going to do? Why don't you come and work for our company?" I said, "That's a good idea." Hawker DeHavilland down at Bankstown. Big aircraft company.

- 24:00 He said, "I think they're looking for a marketing manager." So I said, "Sounds good." I wrote a CV [curriculum vitae] about myself and sent it off and I got a reply back to have an interview and I retired from the navy on the 4th May and about the 7th May I started to work at Hawker DeHavilland. I was the marketing manager for military equipment. I had a lot to learn. I didn't even
- 24:30 know things like what an invoice was. I had no idea what commercial life was like. I had to learn very fast. Fortunately, most the stuff I was trying to market was military equipment and so I soon worked out quite a good system, which I think they use today. I did some staff work and realised that if you're going to sell some equipment or market some equipment, you've got to make sure the right people know about it.
- 25:00 You've got to make sure that other people that'll be on the fringe of it, for example, if you want to sell the air force and aeroplane, the army wants to know what it's going to do for them. The navy wants to know, "What can it do for me?" Defence and foreign affairs, foreign affairs particularly will say, "We've gotta be careful what Indonesia are gonna think about this." I'm throwing a wide net here, but there were a lot of those things that probably hadn't been thought through before.
- 25:30 Not only that, I knew all the people in Canberra, they were all buddies of mine and they had all become fairly senior by now and so I could go and talk to them. One of the things I must say about defence lobbying, people have said, "it's a business, you're using all your old mates." The first thing I say is, "The services will not, you will never sell the services anything, they'll buy something off you if it's what they want." What you've got to find out
- 26:00 is what do they really want. Is the company you represent, have they got something that can do that? If it can't, can it be altered to do it? Or can you talk to the service and say, "Hey wait a minute, there's something better coming off the drawing board, which will do more what you're asking for." They'd say, "That's interesting." So it's a sort of liaison, you interpret.
- 26:30 The spin off from the point of view of the services, you've got foreign affairs angles on these things, I can tell you a lovely story about trying to sell missiles. The French would, just like the war we're in, were going to cut off supplies if we bought it. So that's the end of that, you don't buy them off them.
- Which war are you referring to?**
- Let's not go into all the details. The Swedes, you have the same thing with the Swedes. They were going to sell the army a weapon,
- 27:00 I think they did sell it to them. They didn't like the Vietnam War, didn't like Australia being involved in that so they cut off their supplies. So no country's going to have its foreign policy and defence policy decided by a manufacturer. So all these things come into it, which hadn't been carefully thought through, so a lot of mistakes had been made. For example, to give you an idea how you interpret and liaise. The navy wanted
- 27:30 a big helicopter for an anti-submarine unit. I think there were five, they issue what they call a staff requirement, outlaying the things they want it to do and all the things, pages and pages. I think there were five aeroplanes in the competition. There was Boeing Vertol, [vertical takeoff and landing] there was Sikorsky, the French had two in and I was looking after a British company called Weston. So I
- 28:00 was back and forth to Canberra, and over to the UK and sorting out all these things. One day my gentleman in the navy rang me up and said, "Come down to Canberra. We're officially going to tell you in a couple of days that you're out of the competition, you're finished. You don't meet our requirements." I said, "Why?" So he gave me the exact details. I said, "Can you defer it, because I think we can meet it more than you want." I didn't know how, but I said, "Look, can you hold it off?" He said, "Yeah, OK." There's nothing
- 28:30 illegal about this. They want the best they can get. So I got on the phone to the UK and told them the problem. Without boring you with technical details it involved Rolls Royce upgrading their engine, it involved the manufacture of the helicopter, altering its three gear boxes so it could take this increase in power and it involved a redesign of the tail rudder. This was all done very quickly on paper to start with and I said, "Rick, come out." So he sent out a highly prized team, technicians
- 29:00 and Mr. Alderoy and everybody else. We had a special meeting down there and we were back in the competition. Then you get down to price. You get down to other complicated things like how long is it gonna be in service before you stop manufacturing spares and bits? How reliable is the source of supply? Are you gonna have trade union problems? Not providable when we need it? All these things come into it. To cut a very, very long story short, I sold eight aeroplanes. That was the job of marketing. It's an interesting job
- 29:30 and a very worthwhile job. That's what a good marketer does.

Sounds like it was a culmination of all your experience.

You had to talk the language. People say, defence salesmen, gunrunners, arms salesmen, "Why don't you employ an ordinary civilian to do it, not a warrior?" Well, he doesn't talk the language of these people. You can talk to them. You can say, "Listen, I suppose 25 of the aeroplanes are no good." You know what they're talking about. A civilian

30:00 wouldn't. I would be quite honest with them and say, "We're not going to meet, we'll fall short here and so and so." "OK." they'd say and we won't be in that competition. So it becomes a trust with you and the military.

Did the fact you fought World War II and survived earn you credibility?

Yeah. How do I say this?

30:30 You get a credibility factor. They know your history, most of them do, some of them fought with you and so on. The politicians don't know that. We asked a big team out to do a presentation in the old parliament house to joint defence committees, military parliamentary committees. Bring out the chief designer. He's not a sales person. He'd take

31:00 his pipe out of his mouth and talk absolute sense and no waffle. Bring out the chief test pilot, he could be as honest as hell and say, "This is what it can do at certain altitudes and certain things." I'd bring out the stores bloke. Finally bring out the money man who'd get a piece of paper and tell you how much it's going to cost you.

Was that an unusual method?

No, I think all the companies would do that. We were, I think in Hawker DeHavilland we were

31:30 pretty good at it.

Where were you purchasing most your equipment from?

England. I represented, not me, Hawker DeHavilland represented Hawker Siddley, which is one of the biggest aircraft companies, or was, in the UK. Only UK. Well, not only UK, because we got, that's right, I looked over some American companies for a while and missiles and targets. I think only in that. Hawker DeHavilland did and

32:00 I was the man doing all that. I used to go over to the US and talk to various companies over there on this. We were their agents, that's the best way to explain it.

The Vietnam War was going on in this time?

I think I was still in the navy in the Vietnam War. When was Vietnam?

It went through the '60s and it finished in the early '70s.

I didn't get involved in it. Marketing. I can't remember. No. They were just the ongoing defence

32:30 requirements. In the services they have to look at replacing stuff, even ships, they've got a life. Everything's got a life. It's no good bragging till the thing's about to pay off and then plan to get it. You have to plan well ahead. You have to know what's available. This is the other thing we could do. How can a naval officer in Canberra know what's available all around the world say in missiles or radars? He can't. So he relies on the

33:00 representatives from the big companies who can say, "This is the state of the art in so and so." He'd say, "OK." It's an education thing for them.

You had a big contract that was about to go through and there was a change of government and it all fell through. Was that when you were working for Hawker DeHavilland?

I'll come to that. What happened now, I'm at Hawker DeHavilland and through a series

33:30 of takeovers in the UK and the famous aircraft companies were head to head banged together and formed one big one. For instance, the famous names like Hawker, the DeHavilland, Avro, British Electric. I can't remember. All of them anyway. Suddenly became British Aerospace. Huge outfit. Now, that meant that out here

34:00 they needed a British Aerospace representative. So one of their very senior directors came out and he had to come to us. He obviously had to talk to me because I'd been looking after Hawker at Sydney, so I had most of the aeroplanes. There were a few others they talked to and considered, but I knew I was in the box seat. First time I'd ever been headhunted and I

34:30 liked the idea of this. They said, the senior blokes, "We'd like you to come across to British Aerospace Australia." I played hard to get. I said, "I'd like to, but I'd like to go on the board of directors." They said, "Oh." I said, "And I want my superannuation brought back from wherever it was." They said, "OK." So to make a long story short I became a director of the board of British

35:00 Aerospace Australia. Then I had all the aeroplanes. Getting to your question about changes of government

What year are we in now?

1977. I went across to British Aerospace. Had a lovely office in a nice building in Circular Quay here. I had a bag full of aeroplanes. The one that was taking most of my time, not all of it most of it, was the Sea Harrier

35:30 that jump cut thing. Now, we still had [HMAS] Melbourne then and they were looking for replacement aeroplanes for her. The only way they really could go, that would fit in a ship of that size, was a Sea Harrier. The Sea Harrier is a vertical takeoff thing. It's a very good aeroplane. I've got one up there. So I was pushing

36:00 it and bringing out chief test pilots and everybody out. About that time, they were game for it. They had decided to buy eight So they sent a team across to the UK. I went across with them, took Sirenne with me for a nice little trip.

This is the Fraser years in Australia?

Yes, [Prime Minister] Malcolm Fraser was there. We were over there and the Falklands War came up.

36:30 We were going to buy the ship too, I've forgotten the name of the ship, one of the British aircraft carriers. A little one, with our Sea Harriers. The Falklands War came up and Malcolm Fraser talked to [British Prime Minister] Maggie Thatcher and said, "Hang onto the ship, finish your war and we'll take it when you finish with her."

37:00 So what happened, the war went on a bit longer, Malcolm got tossed out, Bob Hawke came in [as Prime Minister] and scrapped the fleet air arm. Boom, gone, finished, done. No more fleet air arm. So no ship, no Harriers, no nothing.

Do you know why?

I'm on the record; I'm not going to say. I have my own ideas. No, I won't venture.

37:30 I do know, but I won't comment.

How did that affect your career?

Not a great deal. Again, I was getting near retirement from that. It was the best arrow I had in my quivers those days. Anything else I had on the market wasn't looking too good anyway.

38:00 We had a few little things like HS125, I can't remember what else we had. HS75s and so on. They weren't looking too good. The navy particularly was going through this phase. As far as the air force was concerned, they were committed to American aircraft. That was the end of that. I don't blame them, cos people would rather work with them than the British any more. So I suppose that was really the end of my interest

38:30 and I retired from British Aerospace in 1983.

Was British Aerospace a good company to work for?

Yeah, very good. A monster company. One of the biggest companies in the world. I can't remember how many thousand people. A huge company. They were in everything. You know the big airbus? They owned a third of that with the French and the Spanish and the Germans. It was about a third. They owned just about every military aircraft there was with the

39:00 French and the Italians. They had a thing called the Tornado. That's right, I looked after the Tornado for the Germans and the Brits too. That was an aeroplane like, a huge bloody aeroplane. Hundreds that were built, still being built I think. The French, the Germans, the Italians and the Brits have got them as their frontline aircraft. We thought about it out here, but the air force as I said were committed to the American aeroplanes. That was good. I used to go over to Germany - don't like Germans, but I had to

39:30 go over there and talk about it. What else?

Tell us about some of the places and people you met.

I was getting fed up with it. It sounds glamorous, but I remember I was down in Canberra on the Friday. The boss said, "I'd like you to go out to London." I said, "When?" He said, "On Monday." Bloody hell.

40:00 Travelling was nothing. It was another aeroplane, another airport, another hotel, another somebody else's office. You may as well be going to Sydney or Melbourne as going to London and Paris. I was getting fed up with it. I wasn't getting fed up, I was getting to hate the whole ado. For example, after I left British Aerospace to work for another company for a little while I went to London.

40:30 We were there for about 5 or 6 days talking about an aeroplane. Then I went down to Greece, down to Athens, flew back the next morning to London and came home. It was getting absurd.

You said you entertained a lot. Was that part of your career entertaining business people?

With Hawker DeHavilland and with British Aerospace I was the military marketing man.

- 41:00 What I was not an expert on were particular aeroplanes. So my job was to bring out the expert. I'd bring out sometimes a team. For instance on the helicopter thing I brought out the Weston chief test pilot, the Weston managing director, the Weston chief designer, Rolls Royce designer. There were fairly senior people. And I think a couple of others. So you had half a dozen of them
- 41:30 flown out. I arranged their itinerary, who they'd meet, and it wouldn't be just going down doing a presentation to 'Joe Blow'. They had to meet the minister, the senior bloke would meet the minister, they'd had to meet the chief of the air staff, they'd have to meet those sort of people. So I'd arrange all that. Plus of all the social things down there, I had senior boys and their wives out for dinner at the Lakeside or wherever it was in those days. Then when they'd come to Sydney we put on something here at our house. We had to wine and dine all
- 42:00 sorts of people. Sirenne loved it. She was very good at it in those days. I suppose she still is.

Tape 8

- 00:46 **When it was finally retirement, was that challenging for you initially?**
- 01:00 Yes. Why I said goodbye was that the Brits had a rule that directors had to go at 83, so you had no choice. So I had to go on my 81st birthday. For a change I wasn't apprehensive about what was going to happen. I was starting to look forward to it because off to UK, off to the US and round and round the world on aeroplanes, I was getting tired.
- 01:30 Another thing that was happening is that all my contacts in Canberra, I had a lot of political contacts too by the way, they were all changing in the defence forces. I was now 60 something, so I had no colleagues down there. Some of them knew of me, but I didn't have the close rapport. So I suppose I can really say that I was not as useful as I had been. I was
- 02:00 getting ready to get out anyway and go and do something quieter. So I got out and one of my friends who had been in the same business as me said, "When you go out, make yourself a consultant. There are lots of useful things you can do, just keep you a bit busy. There are also some benefits. You set yourself up from home and you get tax benefits and so on. You can pick and chose your jobs."
- 02:30 I thought, "That's great." So I did. I told all my old mates in the aerospace business that I was now a consultant. I started to get so much damned work I wished I hadn't told anybody. One of the first things that happened, my first company, Hawker DeHavilland said, "Hey, come work for us part time. We'll buy half your time." I said, "What's half my time?" They said, "Whatever you'd like to say." So I said, "Well right." It wasn't bad. When I went over to them the first thing they did was send me over to the UK again.
- 03:00 I did a bit of time for them and it was financially rewarding and useful and kept my brain ticking over. Again I came to the point where I was now losing all my contacts, so I wasn't as useful. After a while we had a mutual, I think I did about 3 years of that. A couple of other companies asked me to do something, but I didn't want to. I wanted to get on with my golf and relaxing. So I quit altogether as a consultant.

Was Sirenne

- 03:30 **getting keen for you to let it all go?**
- I don't know. I think she was quite happy for me to go on working. Keep me out of the house. I think most wives are. They don't like you under their feet when you retire and so on, but I promised not to get under her feet, keep out of the way. I think she accepted I was at that age when it had to happen.

You've enjoyed your retirement proper since then?

Yes, well something else happened

- 04:00 some time ago. Round about early 1987 [Australia's] bicentennial year was coming up. One of the tasks the Bicentennial Authority gave a company was to have a Bicentennial Air Show. So a little aero club out at Schofields was given the job of running a Bicentennial Air Show. So they started advertising for professionals and
- 04:30 that sort of business. I saw a little ad in the Australian newspaper that said they wanted a marketing manager for the Bicentennial Air Show part time what have you. I'd been playing a lot of golf and thought, "I can do a bit of part time. It's only for a short time. I can do with the extra money." So I wrote a little note, about half a page, told them who I was and I said, "Come out and see me." They said, "When are you gonna start?" The blokes at the Bicentennial Air Show.
- 05:00 That was 1987 and the show was in 1988. It was my job to set up the expo. It was the first time we'd had an aviation expo in Australia. I knew what to do about this cos I still had contacts in British Aerospace and the Americans I knew, Boeing and those sort of people. I had to go round the bloody world again seeing all these chaps. It was a pretty easy job, because most of them were

05:30 enthusiastic about the Australian expo. I don't know why, but it sort of rang a bell. I think it was the first time for them to come out in a big way and show all their wares to everybody. What was just half a day a week or whatever it was supposed to be, finished up 24 hours a day and half the night 8 days a week sort of thing. So we put on the bicentennial air show, which was an enormous success. Absolutely - at Richmond -- great success. We made over a million dollars. We were a little aero club company

06:00 made over a million. Most of it was mine from the expo. So with that, the organisers set up the Aerospace Foundation of Australia, which is still going. Its idea is to encourage aerospace in all its forms. Whether it's general aviation, military aviation or something. So then it grew to becoming putting on an air show every two years and it moved to Avalon outside Melbourne.

06:30 So every two years they have a big one down there. I did the first one down there. I was commuting again, down to Melbourne. Just to show how stupid it was, we went to London to give a presentation. In the morning we flew to Paris, gave a presentation, flew back to London. The next morning down to Rome, had lunch and flew back again. Afterwards I thought, "This is the last thing I want to do." They went to Melbourne so it was a lot of commuting just

07:00 to go down there and stopping in motels. So I got out of that. I'm an honorary consultant to the air show or something, but I don't do anything with that now. So that was that.

Is it safe to say now that you are officially retired?

They call me Dame Nellie Melba, because I retired about 4 times. From the navy, from British Aerospace, from the air show and consultancy. I am

07:30 completely retired now. I go along to a couple of meetings, but I don't do any work.

How has your experience in the Second World War changed you as a person?

I think very early on in this interview I said that I welcomed the war because it gave me everything I wanted, that was flying and travel and everything.

08:00 How did it change me? I suppose I became more worldwide in my knowledge of international politics for one thing. I learned a lot of lessons. My geography's very good now. I can draw you a map of the world without any help. I think the most important thing it really taught me was, I know it's a bit trite to talk about mateship. In the defence

08:30 forces in the war you really do become absolutely reliable on your mates, on your friends. They protect your tail when you're flying. The other thing it taught me was that if the cause is just, which we sincerely believed without any hesitation, not like now you can say "Should we be in Vietnam? Should we be in Iraq?" and so on, we knew.

09:00 If I believe the cause is right even now, I'll listen to other people, but deep in my heart I know what we should be doing. So I think it taught me to think more clearly on a lot of the more complicated problems, particularly in foreign affairs and this sorts of things. I think they'd be the main things.

What can a career in the services do for someone?

09:30 Now? So If I'm telling a young man?

If you were giving him advice.

Yes, I by all means still recommend it. I've got a nephew and his son, so it's my grand nephew who went to the navy. I think it's character building, the services. I do, I know this is almost an old-fashioned word, like discipline. I do believe discipline

10:00 is still part of your life even if you're not in the services. You drive on the left hand side of the road, you're not going to drive on the right hand side of the road. That's an absurd example, but you learn you've got to perform certain terms and in the military you learn to do it. One of the things, there are a lot of misunderstandings about the service life, I was taught, before you can give orders and tell people what to do, you've got to learn to take them yourself. Always

10:30 somebody senior to you. So I don't mean without question. There's nothing to stop you saying, "Aye, aye Sir, but what about so and so?" In these days in most services people say "Well" and tell you why you're doing it. It's not blind obedience, it's not blind discipline. It's the sort of thing that for the good of everybody else there are certain rules and you obey them. I don't know whether I'm answering your question,

11:00 but I think discipline is one of the most vital things. I still think we can do with more of it when I read the papers and hear what's going with some children. I think a little bit of discipline would be a great help to them.

Do you think national service is a good thing?

I did, but I don't now. If it means people are forced into it against their will I'd have a doubt about the usefulness of that and about their reliability in a dangerous position if they're

- 11:30 resentful about it. So that's one thing. The other thing is, it takes an enormous amount of money and effort from the regular forces. I mean to provide the efforts and leader of national service people and we don't have any people to spare in the regular forces, you never do, but also it costs money that could be going to other things. I think you should have a reserve. I'm a great believer in reserves, but a
- 12:00 willing reserve, people that join because they'd like to do weekend soldiering or sailing or flying sort of biz [business]. I think that's a great idea. I think we could put more effort into that and we could use the reserves services a lot more. But I have very grave doubts about national service.

You mentioned people's misunderstandings about service life. Are there any

- 12:30 **other things that you would like to comment on or clarify?**

I don't know whether this is true, but there was a feeling that officers were a special caste. It's certainly not true now, although a lot of the officers will come from academies,

- 13:00 there's still an enormous amount of sea services come up through the ranks. There is no difference if they do. Once you become a lieutenant or a lieutenant commander or a commander it doesn't matter what your background is, you're an officer. Where things have changed is your job as an officer is you don't brutally order people around, you're responsible for them in everything that they account for. I think
- 13:30 that was a misunderstanding, probably still is, particularly with the left leaning type of people who think the officers are a special class from special schools and so on. I think that's one of the misunderstandings. I can't think of any other ones. We used to think of soldiers of course as drunken brawling things, fellows. An ordinary infantry soldier now is a very high skilled person. He's not just a bayonet sort of poke it all, he's
- 14:00 highly skilled and he's taught all sorts of subjects. Our technical people in the three services are vital. No, I think the forces, I don't know much about the modern forces. I see some of my old friends now, they're also retired of course by now. The services have changed. I think they're a lot more community minded.

- 14:30 They tend to help out the community a lot more than they used to. Can't think of anything else particularly.

You've described yourself as a warrior. Do you think some people are born to be warriors?

That expression is usually used half in jest. We don't

- 15:00 seriously refer to ourselves as warriors. It became a bit of an in word in my generation, the fellows. If you had a particular friend you'd say "Meet my warrior chum" in other words he was another serviceman. I think there are people who take to service life more than others. It's not a matter of a killer instinct or anything like that, it's a matter of there's
- 15:30 a special camaraderie in the services that you don't get anywhere else. Don't get it in companies. It can be a fascinating job, but I don't care if you're flying an aeroplane or driving a tank or whatever, it can be challenging and the pay is very good these days by the way. Very good. Some people are more, not warriors, but more inclined to like it, like the
- 16:00 idea of war rather than others who don't. One of the things I still can't come to grips with completely is the number of females in the service now. I read a debate the other day about now putting them in the frontline in the infantry. I have reservations about that. One of my reservations about that sort of thing, I welcome them aboard big ships and so on, not so sure about on the submarines,
- 16:30 but if you've got a woman in the frontline I wonder about her colleagues, male soldiers, whether they wouldn't be wanting to be a bit more protective than if it's another chap. Whether they could rely on her when, and I don't want to be anti-feminist, but what happens when a fellow comes at her with a bayonet for example. I'm just not qualified to talk about it, but I just have reservations about it all.
- 17:00 It is a different defence force, different than those days of course. I think some of the women officers that I've met, and I've met quite a few of them, I was down at Nowra not so long ago, and my old flying squadron, the engineer officer was a female. She was engineer officer of the whole damn squadron. One of the senior helicopter pilots
- 17:30 is a woman, flying big Sea King helicopters. When they had a ceremonial march past, carrying rifles and so on, pretty little girls. Just a different service. I don't object to it. It seems to be working all right, but I just have one or two reservations about where you can deploy them, that's all.

What do you think your greatest achievement was in your career?

- 18:00 Staying alive, getting through it all. When I think of whatever it was, all those years, and the few prangs I had and so on, I suppose it's an achievement getting through it all. That's not the answer you want I suppose, I can't think of any other one. Getting promoted was pretty good.

What things do you put that ability to survive down to?

18:30 90% luck, 10% perhaps skill. There's a lot to do with being in the right place at the right time too. The worst thing is people were killed in the wrong place at the wrong time. I lost a whole pilot chums in the war. Lots and lots of them. Some very close friends, some just squadron other chaps. I've seen so many, actually watched people

19:00 get killed. Strangely enough it didn't move me one little bit. I watched for example, this is in Ireland, I'm standing out on the tarmac and there's a Spitfire came into circuit. He's about 800 feet just up there. He was doing barrel rolls. Right in front of me he got himself into a flat spin and the aeroplane just went like that, went like that, went like that and he almost got out of it and it burst into flames and he was killed. On a slow motion like that. That's just one example. I can give you

19:30 lots and lots of these things. Oh dear, poor chap. That's it. You don't go to mourning. I mean this book thing, I probably shouldn't talk like this, but it's a load of bloody nonsense. The bloke's dead, he was killed. Why have pages and pages and pages on it? I just don't go along with it. I'm not insensitive, but having seen so many blokes killed, I just shrug myself.

20:00 **Is that an important ability to have in such intense situations of war and conflict?**

Yeah. I don't say I was rare, but most people didn't feel like me. Most people were more sensitive and used to, not get up in their nose, but some people overdo it. "Let's have 2 minutes' silence for Joe." Bloody hell, he's dead, that's it.

20:30 Having 2 minutes' silence is not going to do him any good. I just don't go with it. I think not all of us, but a lot of us were like that. You had to. You weren't going to last very long if you were going to get upset about people being killed.

Are there any memories or experiences that still haunt you? You said one of your recurring nightmares

21:00 **was a dream where you were burning in aeroplane.**

Yes I was. I don't get it now. I'm often flying, but that one I had a lot after the war. I remember Mum and Dad used to come and wake me up on one of my few days of leave, I'd be screaming. What I could see in my mind was being upside down on the ground and on fire. They can't get you out. Unless they had a huge mobile crane somehow.

21:30 I saw that and you watch the bloke being burned. It happened at Nowra, but we got this bloke out. We cleared lower deck as they say, and hundreds of sailors came through and they got the wing and lifted it up and pulled George out. Just before the aeroplane went up. I haven't had that for years. Now and then I get, I think it's as I get older and lose my hearing and eye sight and so on,

22:00 I have this bloody awful dream. I'm in a strange aeroplane. I don't recognise the cockpit, everything's all over the place. All these millions of dials and I don't know what they are and I can't find anything. I've got my glasses, I take them on and have a look. It's pitch black night, I can't hear what they're telling me on the radio and I've got to take off. I wake up absolutely sweating. It's a silly dream, but that's more terrifying than being burned.

22:30 I don't know why I've got to take off. I used to leap different aeroplanes in those days. I remember when I was in the Spitfire squadron a chap landed in a funny aeroplane called a [Thunder?]Bolt (UNCLEAR). He was an Australian, he got out in his blue uniform. I said, "What the hell is that?" He said, "A bolt (UNCLEAR)." It was a two seater, machineguns in the back and machineguns forward. Big aeroplane. I said, "I'd like to fly it." He said, "Can I fly your Spitfire?" I said, "Yeah." So I got him in my Spitfire and he went off

23:00 and I hopped in his aeroplane and flew it. You couldn't do it now. That was a strange aeroplane, but they were near enough similar and you're not allowed to do it now. You're in serious strife. You have to go and do a 6 month course if you're going to fly a different aeroplane. Simulators and all that sort of stuff.

Do you ever fly these days?

No.

Do you miss that?

When I went to DeHavillands, the boss was Rowley Kingsford-Smith, great renowned.

23:30 He often then said, "I want you to fly all the aeroplanes." We were the agent for Beechcraft. We had a whole range of them, twin engine aeroplane, single engine aeroplane. I said, "No thanks." He said, "Why?" I said, "First of all I haven't got a civil licence." except the early one. "And secondly I don't wanna fly anymore." I'd reached the age and stage where I'd done it all, I'd trained myself and I'd lost hearing and eye sight and I didn't wanna fly anymore. Still don't want to.

24:00 **Through your career you saw a lot of development and change in aircraft.**

Yes. I flew jets in the end. The changes were big jumps. I must say, I think most the blokes would laugh at me now, but I think the jet is the most boring thing I ever flew. We had them at Nowra, Ground Fires

and Venoms and why

24:30 it's not boring, it is simple to fly compared to a propeller aeroplane. You get no gyroscopic flex when the tail comes up. If you're doing aerobatics you don't have to play around with the rudder cos if you want to do a roll in a jet you just put the stick over and it'll go around and around as long as you leave it there. Whereas in a propeller aeroplane you had to put on top rudder, bottom rudder, all sorts of clever things. And you can see where you're going. In the Spitfires, Sea Furies, you had 8, 10, 12 feet of nose in the front of you. When you were

25:00 in the landing position you had to look out through the propeller. You couldn't see very much. The jet you sit right out in front with nobody in front of you. Piece of cake, easy. I could teach a monkey to fly it.

Have you been involved in the RSL [Returned and Services League]?

No. No objection to it, but no I haven't had it. I didn't see a need for it.

Have you been involved in Anzac Days?

Yes.

25:30 I do. I march on Anzac Day. Used to march with my old air force squadron. The last couple of times I've marched with the navy. I just changed my mind I think. But after the march I go and drink with both of them. Just go and have a beer with them. At my age there are fewer and fewer of them attending Anzac Day. If you were in World War II you've got to be in your 80s now, maybe late 70s,

26:00 but you've got to be in your 80s. So you go along to reunions and say, "Where's old Bill?" "Oh, he's got Alzheimer's[disease]." What about "Fred?" "He's got cancer of the gut." "What about Joe?" "He's dropped off the perch.[dead]" So you get to that stage. So I go along and have a drink now, because it's not going to be a lot longer before I see some of them. Not before they see me too.

Why is it an important day for all of Australia?

For years I didn't go because when I was still serving I was never

26:30 here on Anzac Day. Since I've retired, I didn't go immediately, but I started to go, and I started to see some old chums I hadn't seen for many, many years, since the war years and so on. I found it was great fun. You're talking to people who you could communicate with and who understood what you were talking about, whereas if you're talking to people your own ago who

27:00 hadn't been in the war, there wasn't that same wavelength. It was great, have a few beers with them and find out what they were doing and most of them, nearly all of them, had been quite successful after the war. Not all of them, but most of them. One of my greatest chums in the world, Noel Gorton, I had a letter from him.

At this stage, have you

27:30 **many civilian friends? Is your circle of friends mainly from service years?**

I would say now the majority of my friends are non servicemen. I think that's pretty true. They're golfing colleagues now or ex business associates. Some of them are both. Some of them are ex servicemen. But

28:00 I didn't know a lot of them. For instance the golf club is where I spend most my time now. Some of them are only teenagers, they're in their early 70s and so on.

What do you miss most from being involved in the service?

It's so long ago now. It's 35 years ago now. I don't think I miss anything now.

28:30 I don't really miss anything now except my hair, my eyesight and my hearing. I don't want my hair back, but I would like my eyesight and hearing back. Don't know why, but I'd like it.

How do you feel about the way you see war portrayed in movies?

I don't go to the movies very much, that's one of the reasons.

29:00 I always say "Thank God the Americans were on our side." Dear, dear, dear I don't like their military movies. Well, they're not services, they're Hollywood. 99%, most of it's rubbish. I don't like it. "Colonel, good luck." and all that sort of stuff. Don't like it at all. Some of the British movies were quite reasonable. I liked some of those. Because of my hearing and so on I haven't been

29:30 to a movie for years. I see some of them on TV. It's all murder and rubbish. I'm terribly intolerant of that. Don't like it. I'm a science fiction man. I like all the space stuff.

You felt Indonesia would never be a threat for Australia, would you like to comment more about that?

Yeah, well, I

- 30:00 don't think it ever was a threat unless as I said it was being used by a major power who were using it as a serving space. Why on it's own it can't be a threat, first of all, it hasn't got the capability to move a large number of troops across that short distance. It would need a number of ships, a number of large transport aircraft, they haven't got them and it's
- 30:30 unlikely to have them. First of all I see no reason why Indonesia would want to invade Australia. I just can't see a reason. When you're doing an assessment of a threat, the first thing to say is, "Would they want to do something?" For instance, you can spend days and days and days writing about the threat from New Zealand to Australia, but your first rate is, "Why would they want to do it?" So you say, "They wouldn't want to, there's no sense in it." so you forget all the rest
- 31:00 of the assessment. So you don't worry about it. Why would Indonesia want to invade Australia? What reason would they have? It doesn't need the land, it's got plenty of space itself it's not using at all. So that reason alone I don't believe it's a threat. Secondly, they don't have the capability to transport them. Let's assume that they did somehow land. Where are they going to land? Northwest Australia somewhere? So what? What do they do then? How the hell do they get. Let's say they
- 31:30 even take Darwin and Wyndham and Broome. So what? How do they, if they want to really take over, which they can't, they've gotta look at Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. How? They certainly don't have the capability to come over the South Pole and that way. So they've got to come across country. Even with our fairly small defence force, it's very capable defence forces, if they did land, well, put it this way;
- 32:00 it's normal military practise that if you've got a threat, the first place to stop the threat is before it gets going, before it takes off or sails. At its own port or home field. That's the best way to get it. The second way, if you can't do that, is to get them en route. The third and last way is to try and get them when they land. Let's assume they do the third thing and they land in Australia. I still think we'd knock them off pretty easily.
- 32:30 Their defence forces are infantry type defence forces. They've got battalions, lots and lots and lots of them, and highly skilled infantry type. They've probably got artillery, I know they have. But their air support, they've got some good aeroplanes, we sold them to them a little while ago, Hawks and so on. I just don't see it as a genuine threat. I think it's a nice bogey for people to put up, but I don't see it. I really don't That's my personal opinion.
- 33:00 **What are your feelings about the situation in Iraq at the moment?**
- I tend to keep quiet on this with all the arguments that are going on, particularly with some of my left leaning friends. Without being privy to the intelligence, I've been reading all the arguments for and against it being conned and poor old [British Prime Minister] Tony Blair having this problems with the last fellow who
- 33:30 committed suicide and what have you. I read it avidly. I have to honestly say; I don't know. I have no idea. I'm not privy to what's going on and none of us are. Certainly the journalists aren't privy to what's really been going on. In my heart of hearts I don't believe the Americans, the British and the Australians would have gone into Iraq without an honest to God real reason. I can't see any reason why they'd go there
- 34:00 just to go in. I don't believe oil's a thing, because I think if the world was all out of oil they've still got Saudi Arabia and what's the South American country it comes from? So I believe we're right to go in without giving all the real arguments, cos I don't know why. I just don't accept that the leaders of those three countries would go in and risk what could have been lots of body bags if they didn't believe they had to go in.
- 34:30 I just don't believe it. You can't tell me that, I know a lot of people think [US President] George W. Bush is sort of a cowboy. I don't think Tony Blair is stupid and I don't think [Prime Minister] John Howard is. I don't believe they've gone in unnecessary, but I can't argue the case for going in. I just know in my heart of hearts that they were right to go in. At the golf club and so on, my chums are very anti what's going on.
- 35:00 They're intelligent educated people. I keep quiet. I just don't get involved cos I'm not a debater. I don't know the arguments.
- Is there any message or reflection that you'd like to pass on?**
- 35:30 **Is there something you'd like to communicate at this point that we haven't covered?**
- Yes, I'm thinking now while I'm talking. I have watched anti-war movements for a long while. I can remember in the '30s when people were anti-war and I remember in the UK they unilaterally disarmed at one stage,
- 36:00 or practically disarmed. I can remember when Hitler was appearing on the scene and most of the media, certainly all our academics or most our academics, and most people were saying, "Look, he's no threat. Let him take that little bit of extra place he wants. They were done badly by in the armistice in the First World War." So what happened, he got bigger and better and stronger. He rearmed against the convention that was supposed to stop him forming an army.

- 36:30 People let him do it and so millions of people died one way or another as a result of it. Five years of bloody war and displacement and all that sort of thing. Vietnam, now I have very strong views on Vietnam. People marched in the street "Why does Australia get involved in Vietnam?" I get into trouble. I don't usually talk like this, but you asked me for my opinions. I am absolutely certain we were right to go to Vietnam. People would look at me in dismay if I said that. Why
- 37:00 I say that is that you go back to those days when communism was a real threat, not just story telling. It was a real threat. The Chinese were coming down to Vietnam. If they were allowed to continue they'd have gone right down to Malaysia and to Singapore. I don't mean necessarily armed, but they'd have taken over as communists. They'd have gone around the other way to hook round to, I have to get my geography right here, Laos, Burma, round that way
- 37:30 and what would have happened in southeast Asia is it would have become communist. So what Vietnam did, and I believe we bought time. Bought time for particularly, well Bangkok too, but particularly Malaysia and Singapore, to, forgive the word, become democratic, and start to not be communist anyway. So we bought them time, and it succeeded. The Vietnam War, in
- 38:00 my opinion, did its job. It should have been finished of course. The communists are still there, but they're no longer a threat to the rest of southeast Asia. So my message is to future generations, for God's sake don't say, "There's no threat to Australia. Stop burning money on weapons and so on. Let's put it into hospitals and education." all these cries go on. "Don't waste money on military." You never know when a threat's going to
- 38:30 come up, and having been in intelligence for a while, usually there are indicators and you get a little bit of time. I'm not sure that with the speed now of weapons and the capability of missiles and things like that, for example, I used to talk about nuclear weapons, and I know a lot about them, I believe that if people wanted to go to war and
- 39:00 really win, I wouldn't use nuclear. I'd use chemicals or biological, because then you don't, when you knock out the place, you don't have transport that doesn't work, you don't have sewerage and power and all that stuff all in a bloody mess. You just walk in and get rid of the dead bodies. Sounds terrible, but if you're serious about to go to war. So I'm saying to future generations; for God's sake, take threats, you don't know where they're going to come from. It can arrive very quickly these days, particularly, more so
- 39:30 than in our day. So don't let your guard down. And both, not only your defence forces, but your foreign affairs. Your diplomacy has got to be right. I don't care what anybody says, people still respect power. If you've got a credible defence force, and credible is relative, relative to whom? If you've got a credible defence force, which we do have, against any possible threat in our region, except China perhaps,
- 40:00 nobody's going to even think about it. If you had no defence force at all, if you were wide open, God knows what would happen? I don't mean necessarily invasion, but people could take over economically some other way. You get boatloads of immigrants coming in and all sorts of things. So my message would be; whatever you do, keep your defence forces in good order.

INTERVIEW ENDS