

Australians at War Film Archive

Thomas Hall (Tom 'Tommy') - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1439>

Tape 1

- 00:43 My grandmother came to Port Melbourne with four daughters. Her husband had died through menostasis, through stone dust on the lungs in Ballarat and she had a few relations.
- 01:00 I was born in Port Melbourne on 21 five, '21 [21st May 1921] and I was brought up there. I went to the state schools and then finished up in the last three years from eleven to fourteen at the Technical School in South Melbourne, where I got my Intermediate Certificate. As it was we'd been through the Depression, it was a bit
- 01:30 tough. You had to get a job, so I got a job at fourteen as a temporary messenger in the Commonwealth Public Service. When I went there I thought I'd be a telegraph messenger and they said, "Oh no! You're going up to the Weather Bureau as a messenger delivering weather reports." I thought it was wonderful having a bike supplied because we were a bit poor.
- 02:00 While I was there a man said, "You've got to go in for the permanent exam." He said, "If you go to Taylor's Coaching College they'll coach you." So I went along there and the advertisement came in the paper, and in the Commonwealth Gazette that the exam was on, and they needed 60 people to be made permanent. Well,
- 02:30 H was 1,250 and my friend, Stanley Vanes with V, he was 2,400. We went along and we thought we were very flash. The exam was held in the Wilson Hall at the university. That's the only way we got anywhere near the university. When the results came out I came 38th so I was assured of an appointment.
- 03:00 The Bureau liked me so much they put in to get me made permanent there and I finally did, and when I got there this same man, Joe Raddick, he said, "You've got to now study for the next division." So I put in a couple of years of solid work and then passed for entry into the big division, which was great because when I was away in the war, they promoted me
- 03:30 in my absence. So that paid off. Then as I went along I thought, "I'm interested in the air force and it looks like at my age I better do something about it." I duly volunteered for aircrew and I passed the medical like mad but in my time there they said, "You haven't got enough trigonometry, algebra, and
- 04:00 maths, so you'll have to go to night school. We'll put you on the reserve." So they put me on the reserve and I kept going to the night school, finally I got up to the standard, and I was called up, and I went into the air force, and went for initial training to Victor Harbour in South Australia. Now only nineteen of us went to be trained in the Empire
- 04:30 Air Training Scheme over to South Australia because with their lack of population they wanted to bring the numbers up, nineteen of us. One of the ones who came over with us was Bay Adams, who was as you'll know, later on finished up Vice Marshall of the Royal Australian Air Force. He had a wonderful career during the war. He slept in the tent,
- 05:00 in the hut behind me in the bed. It was really a harem scarum in those days but after initial training you had to indicate your likes and dislikes, and I said I wanted to be a pilot, but I didn't want to be a fighter pilot up at 20,000 feet. I felt the army cooperation suited me down to the ground.
- 05:30 It's strange but in the air force if you volunteered for anything you never got it, but right through my career I always got anything that sort of had to do with army cooperation, solely because of the 100 pilots that turned out, there were only two that wanted army cooperation. All the others wanted to be fighter pilots, like Finya
- 06:00 Cain and all these types. Then I went for initial flying training and went solo at Benalla. That was an elementary flying training school and after that I went to a service flying training school on Wirraways, where I got my wings. A lot of my course were posted to an operational
- 06:30 training unit at Mildura but I was one of those that was sent to the embarkation depot to go across to

the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]. So after a bit of fiddling around we got on a vessel, the Stirling Castle for the run to San Francisco. We set off and went down well south

07:00 of New Zealand on the way because of the mine laying that was going on around the Australian coast. It was an uneventful trip. It took fifteen days and we pulled in to San Francisco. Well there's a train there, a Pullman train, pulled up on the wharf and we all went straight off the boat onto there. This was

07:30 to go by train through the Rockies across America to the other coast. It was a fantastic railway journey. They had Negro porters on and about seven o'clock they'd come along, and pull the beds down out of the roof. We all marvelled at the wonderful engineering feat that they did to get through the Rockies with a railway. We went through Salt Lake City and Des Moines,

08:00 and all these different places.

That's fantastic detail but not for the introduction.

I beg your pardon. I thought that. So okay, we went across the Rockies in five days. I haven't messed it up have I? No? All right. We went across the Rockies in five days and we went to a military camp at Taunton in

08:30 Massachusetts. I'd never seen snow but by crikey it was cold there. The fifty metres where you went from the shower to the thing your hair would be frozen stiff. I shouldn't get onto that should I? But anyway, after a while the people made us most welcome. We had two days in Boston official leave and we stayed at the big police assembly, and it didn't cost us anything for our breakfast, and our bed. Then

09:00 after about ten days we moved up to the port of departure for Europe. Our vessel was to run alone and it was the French one. I've got the name of it somewhere. They newly installed guns on the

09:30 vessel. They'd taken these light ones off. These guns had been proof tested and there was a wonderful episode. We were in the gun crews. What happened was and I'll just quickly say that the first time we fired the gun, our gun crew, we were all under British gunners, the back pressure was so much we were in safety positions, it blew the hospital windows in on the bridge, so they never wanted, if any sub

10:00 came they didn't know what they were going to do. Anyway, we got there and we landed amidst a lot of rumours about U-Boats but we got there okay. We weren't in convoy. Then we took off for the personnel reception depot for Australians at Bournemouth. We pulled in at about three am at Bournemouth

10:30 and all the crew were there to give us a very, very early breakfast, and we were stood down for the day. Of course we woke up at about ten or eleven and we had a walk around Bournemouth. We were just coming out the gardens and there was this great screaming sound, and the Focke-Wulfs [German fighter planes] from France did a hit and run raid, and blokes we'd been talking with,

11:00 and everything on the trip, seventeen of them were killed in the gardens. So then what we couldn't get over was that on all the telegraph posts were signs, "Don't talk. The enemy is listening." We thought this is a bit foolish down here but it turned out Lord Haw Haw, [English traitor who broadcast for Germans] who was on the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] a

11:30 week before war was declared, he went over the Germans and he broadcast a session. We listened in at the end of it and he said, "Oh by the way, we'd like that Australian contingent to give their view on what they thought of that lovely welcome we gave you. Seventeen of your people were killed. What are their mothers saying?" All this and that, and we were staggered to think that, that

12:00 information had gone. The place must have been riddled with spies within a few hours. Then from there we were allocated to those who were going to be navigators and those who were going to go on the multi-engines, and I was okay. I went to a place where you were on single engines. So we went there and we needed a bit of a refresher, and we flew Miles Masters, which were quite a nice aircraft. After a little while

12:30 we were doing night flying and everything in them. There were some casualties but I won't get onto that. Then we moved on to Hurricanes. Oh what an aircraft. We loved it. It had no vices. Some people said you had to watch a high speed stall but it was wonderful. Then we started training on

13:00 cross-countries and ever sort of facet of flying. Then later we got onto Typhoons [fighters] and I shouldn't mention it I suppose but when you went off in them for the first time with this terrific engine in it, and it was a brute of a machine, but oh.

13:30 We all got to love it but when you took off you had to watch this violent starboard swing. Then you had to get your tail up a certain way but you soon got the knack of it because you'd be taking off in pairs, tucked in as you went along. Once you'd gone off and got the feel of it, you'd run to see one of the new boys, Bill Speedy in particular, an Aussie mate of mine I met

14:00 when we went onto Hurricanes [fighters], and we watched him take off, and he over corrected. Down on the port-side, that's the left side of the runway, there was always a duty pilot on there, well Bill missed him by about six inches and skated round, and we reckoned he took the prize for the first trip. We often used to recount it because

14:30 he got through the war and he had a few bad crashes and that, and we used to always relate about that.

Can I ask you to tell us very briefly which operations you took part in, no details about the operations but which operations.

No, we weren't on ops at the moment. We were still training.

15:00 We were training what they wanted us to do in all the different techniques and all that sort of thing.

That's probably a bit too much detail for now.

Well, that's what I thought. Then we went to the Group Support Unit. Now in these days it wasn't set up much. You just went there and they said, "Go on a cross-country," or something but through us doing a lot of cross-countries, and some of them were at 200 feet,

15:30 and we'd get lower than that because it would be over farmlands, and we'd ask one another how many hats you'd blown off with the aircraft. You could see the farmers singing out and that.

Sorry Tom, I'm going to interrupt you there.

Then I went to the Group Support Unit. Then I was allocated from there to

16:00 175 Squadron that was equipped with the eight rockets and four cannons, and that suited me down to the ground. Then we did ops from England across knocking out different things. On D-Day [opening of Allied invasion of France] we did a special op but I was last in to attack, but that can come later. The

16:30 second one was another, almost a finish for me. Then I sat down and I thought that this is for keeps. All the days of messing around and flying low over people, that's all finished. So that's where I thought if you didn't have the luck in this game you wouldn't survive. I made it on ninety percent

17:00 luck and ten percent know how. Then I went on and I did all ops with long-range tanks into Germany, and picking up barges, motor transport, staff cars, railway train engines, and that. Then I did 122 ops. The normal tour was 100 but in those days they were

17:30 getting short on, so I didn't mind. My second last trip I thought it's time because my luck almost ran out. I can relate about that later. Then I was allocated back to Group Support Unit, my tour expired. My rest was to train the boys there who were coming in as replacements to the squadrons and giving them so much operational

18:00 time. I was there until the finish of the war.

That's great.

Well is that about it?

That's fine. Now what we can do it start from where you were born and grew up. So if you'd like to tell us about your childhood days, your school days, where you went to?

You've got the business

18:30 about my date of birth and all that? Anyway, I was interested in cricket and football, and I played cricket in the local competition. Football, the aim of every young bloke in Port was to play for either Port Melbourne in the Association of Football or South Melbourne in the League.

19:00 At around about fifteen I managed to get in the curtain-raiser team [preliminary game to main match] that played before the games for South Melbourne, so I grew up with those. Then later on, I was on the reserve of the air force then and I moved up to the seconds, and then I played two senior games. The full forward was

19:30 injured and I played a full forward, and kicked two goals in my first game against Fitzroy, and my next one I kicked three goals, and we won by a point. I'll never forget this, the captain, I wasn't being paid of course and the captain said, "Right Tommy. Get up on that table." I got up very sheepishly and he said, "Look we won by a point and this bloke won it for us. He kicked

20:00 three goals and we've got a prize for him." I'm all sheepish. I put my hand out and I was given a ten shilling note. So actually it's amazing to see in the records of the AFL [Australian Football League], there's me with my five goals for the two matches. After that I had a crook ankle and I didn't play any more before I was called up. I was on the reserve of the air force then.

20:30 Do you want me to cover about the night school and all that or have I covered it?

Yes. Well, you can tell us about how?

After I volunteered and my medical was okay, they put me on the reserve and said that I had to improve my algebra, trigonometry, maths and physics, and I had to go to Melbourne High School for that of a night, two

21:00 nights a week. Finally I got through there and they called me up. Then seventeen of us went across to

Victor Harbour and this was under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Why Victorians went over there was to make up the numbers for the South Aussies, who didn't have as much population as us. Then I went to

21:30 Benalla.

You're talking about the war now? About the training at Benalla?

Yes, well that's leading onto it. Is that what you want?

That's okay. There's a few questions I want to ask you just before the war.

Yes?

What about your religious background? Tell us about that.

We went to Sunday school and at the Church

22:00 of Christ in South Melbourne. Why we went there was they were a great one for immersion and all this but I didn't go on with that, but we went there to Sunday school. I had two sisters and I mentioned about my grandmother had gone there before hadn't I? About the

22:30 four daughters and they all grew up, and married there, and there was eleven grandchildren, and I was the only grandson, and I wasn't spoilt. Then you won't believe it but when some of those early ones and we always had a great affinity for Port Melbourne, when they died we'd meet at funerals. This

23:00 one we knew as a girl, she was married with kiddies, she said, "This is ridiculous. We've got to meet every six months. We're only meeting at funerals." So would you believe today we're still meeting, the Port South's Group and they're down to about eight now, and we started up with well up in the twenties. Everybody went their separate ways,

23:30 and every six months we'd meet at one another's houses, take it in turns, and it started off that your turn wouldn't come up for about six years or something but then it has got quicker and quicker. Everybody has their set things to do. I've branched off now from the air force again haven't I?

That's fine.

24:00 **Can you tell us what religious denomination you were from?**

Well really we were christened Presbyterian but the Presbyterian Church was in Bay Street, which had the cable tram running down and my parents said, "We're not getting up early to get you there across the tram line. You go to this nearest one." The Church of Christ is a Protestant one

24:30 but they're very straight-laced and you sort of weren't a member of the church unless you had been immersed to wash your sins away. Well my people said, "That's not for you. Just go there and learn to sing the hymns, and all that." So that's how it is. The Church of Christ is still going in different areas but that was it. So on my

25:00 dog tickets [military identification tags] I'm down as a Pressy [Presbyterian] too.

Your parents' background, you said your mother came from a fairly poor family?

Oh yes. One thing that was amazing, her mother had another child eighteen

25:30 years after she was born, my grandmother. Then that sister died in childbirth, so reared, that was my aunts because she was about the same age and she grew up, she said, "Well Liza, I'll have children. I'm going to call them after yours." Anyway, she married

26:00 and she had Ilma, Doris, Ruby and we called ones little Ruby, little Doris, and little Ilma. The others we called, our

26:30 cousins, we'd say our aunts I mean, big Ruby, and big Doris, and this sort of thing. So anyway we took it for granted that was the way it was and then it came to the time, she had the fourth girl, and it was to be my mother's matching up, Francis.

27:00 this lady, who my sister to my grandmother, she was married to a bloke that worked on the wharf and he loved his glass. She said, "Bill no celebrations. You know this one it to be Francis." "Yes. I know." He wasn't

27:30 picked up on the wharf then because all the Stevedores had to go, and if a vessel was in they'd just take a few. So anyway, he got full and he went to the registrar, and in those days you told the registrar, so he said, "Name?" He gave his name and his wife's name. He said, "Name of child?" And it

28:00 went blank. He looked across and on the desk was a rose, and he said, "Rose!" So anyway, he came home and his tea's on the table ready, and she said, "Bill have you got the papers?" "Yes somewhere here." "Did you do what you were told?" "Yes." Anyway, she looked and she said, "You stinkin," these are the

28:30 words, "You stinkin drunken sod." She grabbed the tea and tipped it over him, all the food. She said, "It's Rose and it should have been." He said, "I've forgotten." So my mother wasn't matched up. Now is that enough detail of that?

What about your father?

29:00 Yes, well my father, he got in the printing game quite early and he was in different companies. The first one was called Anderson and Douglas but that was going down the drain because the lady who owned it had become, in those days even, a cocaine addict and my father

29:30 had the responsibility of all of the business to keep it going. Anyway, it folded up and then he got a job with the Wilkie's at first, and then when that tightened he got a job at Specialty Press, and saw out his time there.

30:00 Then he took it quiet and passed away when he was aged 72 or something like that. But he was interested in things and he was one of the first members to join the Wireless Institute. He was building the wirelesses with cat whiskers [simple wire tuner] and later off moved to the thing. One of our uncles who had done well related

30:30 to my grandfather who had died and he took over as licensee of the Prince Alfred Hotel near the town hall. Our street, Spring Street ran into the town hall and my father, he built the first wireless set for a public bar and I helped carry some of the bits and pieces you needed to set it up there. I remember that and oh, it was a novelty to think,

31:00 here's a radio. Of course it had big batteries and accumulators, and all the rest of it. Also, with a chap next door named Sutton, they bought a fishing boat and they had moored at the lagoon, and because my father had helped some of the fishermen out with different things, electrical and all that, we had no

31:30 problems with anybody pinching it. There was a chap that was a cripple in a wheelchair named Redden, and the Reddens were big fishing people. I remember when my father got an aerial

32:00 up with a big mast and everything, and this chap Redden, he got up, just pulling himself up with his arms. He got up, fixed the insulators and all that, and got down. He had a son named Chummer and we'd be there, and I'd be reading books about [bower] birds. That had all these old books there

32:30 and he'd come in. There was a cup with water in it and he'd go over, and Chummer would go like that with his false eye. He only had one eye. Well I used to dwell on him coming in, like before we'd go home and he'd go, "Squiiit." Out would come the eye, the glass eye. So that was it and I used to play table tennis, and

33:00 when the American basketball in the very early days, we used to play in one of the church halls, and one of the military halls. Is that about the background of it?

You're dying to get to the war aren't you?

Oh look. I'm worried that I'll forget about some of the war.

No, no, don't worry.

33:30 **Look most of the emphasis of the interview is on the war, so don't worry.**

Okay.

What about your suburb where you grew up? You grew up in a working class area, Port Melbourne?

Well, Port Melbourne. Now everybody thought Port was, and it was full of smarties and all that but if you were a local, it was wonderful. Now my sisters could come home at eleven and twelve off the last cable tram,

34:00 walk down, no trouble at all but all the people at work would say, "Oooh. Port Melbourne. You ought to get an escort to take you home." It was ridiculous because you were locals and the only thing that I remember, after the war I was in a sleep out at the back home, and I heard the back gate go, and I thought, "That cat. I'll get it with a boot." But

34:30 I was just out there and there's a bloke standing, was going to rob the place, so off he ran down the back lane but anyway, it was very good. Of course amongst them selves there was always a fair bit of trouble. Of course all our people were tied up with the back lane bookmaking [betting on horse races] with the SP bookies and some of the uncles were scouts

35:00 sitting on kerosene tins, and warning that the police were coming, and all the rest of it. That was all taken for granted. I can remember the uncle, how outlived everybody was married to big Doris, our aunt and he died at about ninety-one but I can see him now running past our place, and big Doris would

35:30 bet in two shilling pieces. His bets were sixpence, sixpence each way but that was that thing. One uncle used to run a double and another one was running an SP outfit in a shop on the trotting at night, and

36:00 life went on.

For you growing up during the Depression how difficult was it for your family?

My father was on part-time and there was a lot of agitation with the unemployed being put out, and they couldn't pay the rent. They'd run around banging tins and

36:30 that, "It's on again." They'd try and stop the sheriff and his people putting the things out but then the police would come. There'd always be a spot of bother like that. There were soup kitchens that were put in at the side of the town hall, where you could go there and get soup in a billy. We managed and we used to go to the gasworks with a hand-truck,

37:00 and for a shilling or was it sixpence then? Whatever it was, you could get your truck full of coke. The gas was taken out and the residue was coke but oh beautiful fires. Then we knew some of the drivers who used to drive the one draft horse and there was a railway from the Town Pier to

37:30 the gasworks, and they'd have three smallish trucks. As they went around the corner, we knew some of them and they'd make certain a bit fell off, and we'd gather it there. Then we'd go to the tip and get wood, and that sort of thing. Then that uncle who went on for so long, he finished up a foreman on the wharf, Snowy Kerr.

38:00 He got a job at the Rover Tea and where they were going to dump a lot of old cases and that of the imported tea. It was coming in, in these three-ply cases and he'd get a load dropped, and I used to build pigeon sheds. Then I started on two WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and they both laid eggs, and everybody was amazed, and they went missing, and all the family said it

38:30 was just before Christmas, and how someone had left the gates open or the doors open but only years later they told me that these two WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s that I was really keen, they'd been topped off for Christmas because we never had poultry really, except at Christmas. We used to eat a lot of black puddings. Well, that was sort of the congealed blood from the amitors [pigs] and they made them into things,

39:00 and we loved them. You'd get them at the ham and beef shop. So we did all right compared to some others and one aunt had trouble with an uncle who drank a lot, and they were in tough, they were being booted out of their place, and everything. But that was life.

Would you go hunting for rabbits?

39:30 **Did you ever go shooting for rabbits?**

Yes we went rabbiting a few times and mainly it was with a ferret but oh the hours spent where the ferret would grab a young one down there and go to sleep or something, and they'd be smoking it out. We had a relation of one of the uncles and he

40:00 had poultry, and once a week we'd go over to the North Port Station, and he'd send a couple of dozen eggs down. The families would pay him and as a bonus, any double-yolkers [eggs with two yolks] would be put in, and they would be in a wooden box with chaff all around them.

Tape 2

00:34 **Where we left off you were just telling us about some of the food that you used to have when you were young. Can you tell us a bit more about some of the food that you had?**

We always had a Sunday roast and if our mother was ill, my grandmother would come, and we could always remember some of the special things she'd

01:00 do but all the four sisters, which was three aunts and my mother, they were all wonderful cooks, and they all their specialities of custard tarts on a Sunday, and apple tarts, and all that sort of thing. They were great battlers. They had a bit of a contract to sew up calico bags for a

01:30 stock and station crowd, who used to supply WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK feed, and they'd put shell grit in them. I can remember the machine in the backyard and all the aunts there feeding the stuff in, a treadle-machine it was. They used to get so much for that. They were all pretty good dressmakers. When they were young they all worked in

02:00 either Swallow's [biscuit]factory or Dunlop's [rubber], or did I say Swallow and Arial's? Yes, Swallow and Arial's biscuits. That's how it went on and there for a while to help out we had one of the workers from Dunlop's, a lady, a sort of distant relation used to board with

02:30 us. To make room for her I used to sleep out on the veranda.

You mentioned before that some of your uncles worked with Two-up games?

No, no they were never in the Two-up.

Just for the SP bookies?

Yes, the SP [starting price;ie illegal] bookies and that. Of course

- 03:00 this was only on the Saturdays. Most of them were on the wharf and I don't know whether you realise how the wharf pick-up used to work? They'd go along and if you got the nod to make a gang to go and work on one of the ships you were right but you could miss out unless you were in with them sort of thing. There used to be a lot of
- 03:30 or a fair amount of trouble about blokes being favoured on the pick-up. Then I'd see them, those who'd worked on the coal wharf. It was all shovelling coal then and they'd come home, and there was two eyes poking out of this black mass, and however they got clean, and that. Of course there were all the lorries with horses
- 04:00 everywhere. One uncle used to work for a, he was the one I think worked it to get the little bags and he worked with those, and he used to feed the horses on a Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, no extra pay at all, just part of the deal, and feed the cats in the factory, where they used to do the packing up of all the
- 04:30 stuff for the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. I used to go every school holidays with him and drive the two horses. I loved that and he had a different round everyday for five days a week, per fortnight. When we'd get out somewhere he'd say, "No, just leave the reins go," and they'd
- 05:00 go, and then they'd turn, and get wide, and then go over to the left and stop, and there's a hay and corn store. The bloke had come out and said, "No I didn't order anything today Jack." He said, "Right!" He'd just say, "None today." Plod off, go on and of course there was a lot of them around, and go two streets, turn right.

I don't quite

05:30 follow?

The horses would go another two streets, turn right, go down, bang, stop at another hay and corn store, and he'd have his order book for this crowd but he was just showing me that they knew the round. Then I'd go on a Sunday morning and help him feed the horses. Our family

- 06:00 had bought an old Essex for I remember 65 pounds and one of the uncles, he got another one the same model, an Essex Super 6, and all that uncle could so was say to me, "If only there was a zip faster on the engine." We used to smile at that. He had it down all the time and of course they had a sort of chain drive for timing,
- 06:30 and the chains would stretch over time, and next thing you're in a lot of trouble. Oh all the work that used to go in on these cars. Then we'd have holidays in the Dandenongs at say Upwey to Tacoma and Cockatoo. These are suburbs out there. Now they're
- 07:00 flourishing but ours were very rough, very rough. So that's a bit of a rundown.

Were there any gangs or pushes around your area?

Oh yes. On every, not every corner but most corners there'd be mobs there and especially on the corner where you went to the railway

- 07:30 but there was never any bother. I remember when my father was at the Checkers Inn. You might have heard the other day a bloke was shot in the bar there? Anyway, there was never much bother there but he used to go up for a Sunday drink with all the others and you weren't allowed
- 08:00 to be in there, and the police would raid it, and they'd run up and get into bed, like to say they were staying there, and they'd look at the register, and all this. But he got landed once and had to pay the fine but that was accepted sort of practice all the time.

Did you ever get into trouble yourself?

No. No.

- 08:30 Some of the aunts used to follow Port [Melbourne football team] and I used to go with them as a kid but we had one particular aunty, Aunty Ilma, and she bashed the other supporters with a rolled up umbrella. There was always trouble with her but they all lived for the Port side. I should digress a little bit here to tell you that
- 09:00 I with the father in-law built a house in Preston and so Colin was about five or six, and I said, "Oh. Look we'll go down to Ports. Ports playing Preston." So we go down to there and there's two blokes, half full, and they're not looking at the game. They're looking up like this saying, "Come on Preston."
- 09:30 See? Colin said to me, "Why don't they want to look at the game?" I said, "They want to have a fight and

they want to see if anyone calls out, "Come on Preston." In the finish a couple of blokes took them on and then the police were there again but that was par for the course. Then of course what developed after the war was all

10:00 the pubs, the Graham Family Hotel and why I mention that particular one is a chap that played in the Seconds with me in South and with the curtain-raisers, Keith Hill, he played for the Graham Family, and was that tough, really tough. The betting that went on, just on

10:30 where the player ran underneath. They were all there betting on who'd kick a goal and who'd do this, and oh there was always a lot of strife there but that was after my time when I left Port.

Tell us about the school that you went to. What sort of school was it and what sorts of kids were there?

We went to the Infant School, Albert Park Infant School down near the gasworks and

11:00 why we went there was we lived in Port Melbourne but the family thought we couldn't go to school on our own with the Bay Street, and the cable tram, and all the traffic down at the beach. So we went there, a fair walk but it wasn't too bad. Then we moved from there to the big school at Albert Park, which was quite a few blocks away. Then we went to

11:30 sixth grade there and my elder sister was pretty smart, and she went to Middle Park Central School after the sixth grade, and I went to the Tech School. Then she won a scholarship to McRobertson High that was built by McRobertson, who ran the air race. McRobertson, he was the big chocolate bloke [manufacturer].

12:00 So she really did quite well and did French there, and later on after she had a couple of girls, her and her husband took on French with the Council for Adult Education. Later on when they retired they went to the University of the Third Age and I suppose I shouldn't say this but Madame every second year would

12:30 take them to France but for cheapness she'd go way out into the back blocks, and of course with the dialects there they couldn't understand one word of French, so all the other families though that was a bit peculiar.

Did you used to go on holidays or day trips in Australia?

13:00 Not until later on when I got into indoor bowls and that sort of thing but no, I hadn't seen snow until I'd gone to that Taunton in Massachusetts.

What about just a day trip up to Belgrave or something?

When the Essex got going we'd do little trips in that but not too

13:30 far away.

There were quite a few of you in your house?

Well there was the boarder and the two sisters, and myself, and Mum and Dad, and of course there were only two bedrooms, and for a while I was in the dining room, and then the father

14:00 knocked down a sleep out. From then on I was out on the porch for a while with a blind down.

Did you have other family members come and stay?

No. We didn't really have the room but everybody's key, all the aunts and that, the key was in the door all night and they'd just come, and open it, and

14:30 get in. Of course the grandmother, if she had a win at the races would shout everybody this and that, and quite often they'd have parties. One thing I can remember when we were young, there was a Maltese migrant came out and he was about

15:00 eighteen or something, and he boarded at my grandmother's. He was a great one on opera and there used to be parties at the grandmother's place, and for fun they'd have live crayfish crawling around before they popped them in the heat, and then all these songs on the record player. You'd have to wind it up and all that.

15:30 This John Dalai, he fought in the Great War and everybody kept in touch with him, and he finally, after the Great War and later on, he married one of two sisters, who had a business.

16:00 I'd been out a couple of times to the business and I couldn't get over girls in bathing costumes advertising cigarettes and that, and they'd have a moustache and a beard painted on them. I'd go home and say, "I think these couple of women are off their rockers." So anyway of course

16:30 John Dalai wrote to me when I was overseas and said to me, "Could you look up my mother and father?" He gave me their address and finally when I had a bit of leave I did go, and of course it was all bombed out there, and finally I traced them. The mother was mental with the bombing and the father wasn't too

bad. After the war I went out and I'd

17:00 written a letter to John to tell him all about it. Then he asked me to come out and one of the people that I knew at work as a messenger, he went and did pharmacy. He was in a pharmacy and a worker was John Dalai. They only had the one

17:30 daughter, was working as an assistant there and it was a wonderful time. So anyway, John asked me to go out and see them in the shop again. I went out and his wife said, "Yes. You're the one who went there to arrange for the father to come out when the mother dies, aren't you?" I said, "No. No, nothing to do with me." But anyway, that was just a little aside.

18:00 **I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the SP bookmaking. I think you said that your uncles were lookouts and how would they know? Were they just looking out for police or were there other bookmakers perhaps that were going to break it up?**

No. All the bookmakers had their set

18:30 areas and if they tried to poach or something like that, or I've heard of incidences where blokes have come up, and wanted a free bet. They'd just go like this and they had a gun there, and just show it sort of thing but no, no. But after the war when I came back and I was just in ordinary clothes on a Saturday evening, and

19:00 one of the cousins was living with an aunt there and she'd married, and they had a bungalow in the backyard. I was going down to see them. Anyway, the alert went. There was a stranger and the book went away. Then of course one of the cousins, who lived right

19:30 on where her rent was paid by the bookie and if there was a raid, in a hurry they'd throw the book over, and she'd hide it in the copper underneath, and she got rent free but I don't know whether you should put that in. But that's many years ago, they wouldn't trace it back.

I don't think anyone is going to get in any trouble about that.

No.

20:00 **They'd still have to find the book.**

Yeah well, that's right but I could tell you the bookie's name, but that's getting out of the family sort of thing, yep.

Did you know anything about John Wren? [powerful businessman]

Well I'd heard a lot about him but I do know that anybody who pinched things, you could always sell it to this particular bloke and

20:30 that was for years. Anyway, he decided to go straight. Well that was one fence that you couldn't think but it was amazing. About a month later there's this great stack of stolen stuff in his yard and the police make a raid, and he got a couple of years in jail. See once you're in, you're in.

21:00 **So somebody else set him up?**

Oh yes. They put the stuff in there and tipped the police off. That's the way it worked.

When you were at school what sorts of things did they tell you about the First World War?

21:30 Quite a lot because a lot of the teachers were, one teacher named Drummy we had and he had a steel plate where he'd been hit in the head by a shell, and he was cuckoo. When we'd be going home he'd be waiting with a big stick and say, "I'm just tuning you up for tomorrow," and run, and whack you with all this. He was off his nut. I shouldn't say nut on here but off his

22:00 head. That's how we used to call him, "He's off his nut." I suppose that's all right but there was another one named Nelson and some of the hair-raising stories under shell fire and that. We were all just staggered with it. You know, he'd get onto details about this bloke's stomach was blown all over him when the shell went off and he wasn't hurt and oh, it was

22:30 really tough. But we all knew about it and we had a lot of cigarette card collections, shots of you might have seen them in the museum? Shots of the First World War, the war to end all wars, that was a bit of a farce too, that comment but all those, yes.

If they didn't mind telling you a few stories, what sorts of stories would they tell you?

23:00 Oh all about that, and another teacher named Punchon, and he'd drill for the marching squads, and that'd be in the sports you know and oh they'd be lashing out at your feet if, you know, if you had two left legs for a little while or something like that in the marching. They'd relate stories about how everybody'd be saying to one another before the war,

23:30 "They're going over the top," and all this. It was eye opening.

Were they horror stories or adventure stories?

Well, there was a lot of horror in them we noted. It made you a bit horrified at how it was because the number of people from Port.

- 24:00 There was one crowd used to hang, they had about six boys, the Frawley family. They had a big crowd used to be there and they all enlisted in the same one, and there was only a couple came back because you know, they were all skittled.

Did you know

- 24:30 **anyone in your family or in your neighbourhood who'd been involved in the First World War?**

Oh yes, the father's brother, he went and the parents said that my father should stay, and look after them sort of thing so he was in the mounted group, and he got through the war

- 25:00 but a cousin, their cousin, he's got no name, no known grave, and his name is on the Menin Gate.[WW1 memorial in France] Would you believe of all the different countries, there's about 52 thousand on that Menin Gate to commemorate.

- 25:30 No name, no grave.

Was it your uncle who was in the Light Horse?

Yeah, my father's brother.

Did he tell you stories of his experiences?

No, he never told us that much you know. A chap who married one of the aunts, he was a machine gunner.

- 26:00 He'd had a torrid time too but never told us very much about it. I used to see his military kit bag hanging behind the door when I went to see them.

Was there any official education

- 26:30 **about the First World War? Did you read any books about it at school?**

No, we only picked it up from really the teachers who were, Punchon and Nelson at the tech school and that Drummy at the tech school.

- 27:00 **So what was your impression of the First World War? What did you think had happened there?**

Well, it was absolute carnage and that [British General] Haig, he would blindly say, "Well look, we can stand 50,000 going in this one if we achieve this object." All that sort of thing and this is human life being slaughtered. Like me going to work at the

- 27:30 Bureau and I was fourteen, and I couldn't get over all the women about in their 30s. I went home and I said, "Look wouldn't you think they'd be?" All the aunts and that, they had kiddies. I said, "Wouldn't you think?" Then my father pulled me up and said,

- 28:00 "Look wake up to yourself. I'll guarantee all those had their fiancés killed in the war and those who have babies you say about because they're always talking about them, they lost their husbands in it. That's why. They've got precedence for appointment to the Public Service." So on the quiet I asked that Joe Raddick about it. He said, "Yes. You don't want to say much about that because they've all lost their

- 28:30 loved ones." That brought it home to me with a shock, just some of the ramifications of the Great War.

What was your idea of the British Empire?

We used to love seeing that red all over the place on the atlases but

- 29:00 honestly, when I got into reading a lot about it, oooh. They way the people, ordinary people going to out to work for the East India Company and they treated the Indians like dirt.

When did you read that? When did you do all this reading?

I was always

- 29:30 interested in those sorts of things and it came home to me. It's a wonder they lasted. We knew all about the Indian mutiny and what they did, and all the rest of it, and with Ghandi in his no arms force. He won the day and yet one of his own people had to kill him but when you think about

- 30:00 the set up with Bangladesh, there's no really possibility of ever doing anything, but they wanted on religious grounds to separate from the Pakistan, and Pakistan wanted to separate. It's wonderful to think that really with the Cashmere where all the trouble and all the deaths. I was reading the figures, in the thousands.

30:30 They might get together and see about something.

In the 30s did you have much of an idea of what was happening in Europe?

Oh yes. Actually I was at the tech school and a chap named Goldberg came. He was a Jew and

31:00 oh what he was telling us about how the Jews were treated. We were like getting it first hand. He was lucky. I think that would have been back in '35.

So he'd managed to escape and make it to Australia?

They did it formally but later on

31:30 my family said, "We were a bit surprised that he didn't finish in a Jewish School." They were the ones that were organising all those things but whether his father was in business? But he was really dressed nicely and all, Goldberg.

Were there many other different races or ethnic groups around Port Melbourne?

No, very

32:00 few and the Port people never took to them, integration or anything. I can tell you about one cousin that my sister and I, we were down looking at the old home when our father had passed away and we used to let it for a song to all the cousins, to have it but one of the

32:30 cousins who was living there at the time, some ethnic people put their head up over the fence, and oh gee, we couldn't get over the way this cousin went on. She said, "All they're doing is checking up when they'll rob you," and all this. Well, it was nothing to do with that but oh gee. That was general like that and of course

33:00 all the talk was, "Who'll go down to the Chow's for the fish and chips?" Or, "Who's going to the laundry?" And they'd say, "Who's going to the Chow's to get the laundered collars?" That was accepted all the time.

So there were a few Chinese around?

Oh yes and of course

33:30 the grandmother and that was really well in with them in a way, that Ballarat you know, had a lot of them. Well, they said that was one of the things that lead to the trouble there, the Eureka Stockade and that. The Chinese were treated awful by the Aussies and some of them stayed on, and

34:00 as you know they've finished up, but gee there's a lot of them out now.

When you were a young lad growing up in the '30s did you have much contact with girls and did you have any girlfriends?

Yes but never anything too serious because I was all on sport really.

34:30 You mightn't have got it there but I was just staggered that one of the girls we knew quite well, as I mentioned, her sister, just as I was doing the book by chance said, "Gwen sent this over for you." And here's all these cuttings out of the paper, where I'm

35:00 mentioned leading this attack, and leading that. It's in the book there and I thought people would say, "What a line shoot." But I was so taken about that. One of my other mates, who lived not far from this girl, he was in the army in the Southeast Asia area with this mate from South Australia he met up with. Well, the mate, he got on with this girl and

35:30 married her just as he was demobbed. She had three kiddies with him and I thought, "What a wonderful effort." When the sister passed all these cuttings out, she said, "Gwen said you were too slow." Well, I had a lot on my mind to be thinking about writing

36:00 but anyway I felt it so much that in the book I just mentioned, I didn't mention her name but I mentioned that's how I got them. The family had some of them as well but hers was a pretty comprehensive run down.

That's a bit rough.

Oh well,

36:30 I think it depended which paper they got and all that, you know? For thirty years I never told the family anything or anybody about the war but I don't want to get on that. You don't want me to get on that do you? Just speaking generally, what brought it about under the Freedom of Information Act in England they released all the squadron histories.

37:00 The squadron histories just had very bland statements this, that and so and so killed in a dive or something. Well I was inundated by all these authors writing up books about Typhoons and that, and

what happened on this? I'm writing these reams and reams of things, and the family said, "This is ridiculous." So anyway, the middle granddaughter, that's the middle one of three that Susanne my daughter had,

- 37:30 she said, "I'm doing VCE [Victorian Certificate of Education] and we've got to have something on about the Second World War. You've told us nothing and I want to go in. The Age [daily newspaper] is sponsoring it but it goes into the VCE." So I told her a couple of instances and that was the first time I'd said to anybody anything, apart from writing these things. When the family went crook at me about writing everything, I said, "Well at least it's being published
- 38:00 in all of these books." They said, "Yeah but who is going to look at all these books. You should bring it together." A couple of months had gone by and I got this excited call. She was home and she'd just got a letter that she'd won the monthly prize. So of course she rang me and said, "What do you think? I've won the 200 dollars and I go
- 38:30 now in for the 1,000 dollar one at the end of the twelve months, and it counts in the VCE." I said, "Carla. Why didn't you check? You might have technical details." With that she said, "Mum wants to speak to you." Mum said, "Will you pipe down. It's her story. Now get off her back." I thought, "Ooooh." She said, "It will be in Education Age on Wednesday." I
- 39:00 couldn't get to the paper quick enough and it's not bad. It was things with goggles on and that, and she looked, and she could tell how careful he was, and she'd blended it in about this bloke who'd been killed the day he opened the mail, and showed us his photograph of the baby.

We'll get to that a little bit later.

Well,

- 39:30 that's what I mean but it just intermeshes a bit how I did get to write the book. So then I thought, "Well look, I've done so much for these authors. I've got the basis of it." So I went to publishers. They wanted an arm and a leg. It was ridiculous.
- 40:00 I thought I'll self-publish it and would you believe it. On that Saturday there's an ad in the Literary Section of The Age and it said that this was the Victorian Writers Guild. I'd never been near them but they were willing to take some outside people who wanted to do self-publishing because they were getting the people to write the books. Then the whole stop was that the publisher's costs
- 40:30 were enormous. So anyway, I went to this seminar. I had to pay extra money to go because I wasn't a member and I found out how you got the ISBN [International Standard Book Number] and how you did this, and who was a good, safe printer, wonderful. So here it is, self-published. And the reprint will be self-published too.

Tape 3

- 00:34 **Can you tell us more about working class life in Port Melbourne?**

Look I've thrashed that like mad. I really have. About the blokes shovelling coal on the wharf and I'd see them coming by our place exhausted with two eyes poking out of black everywhere, no showers on the wharves or anything.

- 01:00 Well, we've thrashed that with the other chappie, all those sort of things, what sort of food we were eating.

What sort of factories were there?

Well, I ran through all those, Swallow and Arial's kitchens, Dunlop's, all those. I had lots of aunts working there in those places.

Did you find that people from other suburbs would look down on people in Port Melbourne?

Yes.

- 01:30 Port Melbourne as I said, wherever my two sisters worked, whenever they were working back late at night they'd say, "You'll need an escort. You live in Port Melbourne." But I've been through all those with your friend. Colin thrashed me on that.

Did you know people who joined the armed forces when the war started from there in the air

- 02:00 **force?**

A few in the air force but a lot went into the military. I even told him about the crowd of Frawleys, ran Frawley's pub down Port and there were about five boys in steps and stairs. There was a big mob from there and they all joined up the military together, and stuck together, and they were caught by the Japs, and

02:30 I think there was only a very few number who came home.

What enthralled you about the air force?

I realised in the war that everybody had to do something and I thought I'd always been keen on the air, not that I'd ever flown before but there was an airport or a little

03:00 airfield over at Fishermen's Bend, which was where the Yarra made a big bend there. I think I've mentioned this before I always wanted to support the army in army cooperation. That's one of the headings for single engine aircrew and ninety-eight percent of those who went onto single engines

03:30 wanted to be fighter pilots, and I wasn't ever keen on 20,000 and 25,000 feet, and all this. They had Paddy Finnegan, he was a bloke who knocked down so many aircraft and all this. We had a couple of Aussies who did well too. [Squadron Leader Keith "Bluey"] Truscott was one of them. I was in the two percent in Army Coop [Cooperation]

04:00 and I think I've mentioned to you or it might have been Colin, that no matter if you volunteered for anything in the air force, generally you never got it but I volunteered always and well, I think because only two percent out of 100 trained pilots wanted to be a fighter pilot, that's how I managed

04:30 to stay on it, and that's why I was so relieved when I went to a Typhoon squadron, but I don't want to get onto that yet.

Certainly, that's a bit too ahead. Tell us about your initial training and your, actually, firstly before we move onto that, where were you when the war started? What were you doing the day war was declared?

I was working at the Bureau then and

05:00 that would have been '39 and I was working in the Bureau feverishly finishing off all the studies for the exam to get into the next division, which paid off for me because I told you, I was given promotion. They said that anybody who was away, they'd be considered,

05:30 so there we were.

Were you shocked that war had started?

Oh no. We knew about the Japanese. I mean I don't know whether you realise, why did Bob Menzies the Prime Minister get the name of Pig Iron Bob? From all the Stevedores who said, "We're not shipping steel and

06:00 all this business to Japan. It will come back as bombs and that." They were all jailed and belted up by the police, and everything, and they were right. I'm not saying they were right every time but in this instance, Pig Iron Bob. I know blokes who, whenever he was addressing a meeting or anything, would be shouting out all the time till they kicked them out.

06:30 So you're obviously from a Labor [Party] sort of background politically?

Yes, well that's right. That's nice to know, so I'm not treading on your toes when I tell you these things.

No, not at all.

But did you know about Pig Iron Bob?

I did, yes.

Oh okay, right.

Very famous.

That's how he got the name and of course all the right wing people were saying, "These dirty Stevedores," and this, that and the other.

07:00 "We need the money." We're exporting everything. All right, now where to?

So tell us how you got enrolled or enlisted with the?

I went home and said, "Look it's about time I did something." My mother said, "No. You're only one of eleven grandchildren, the only male and others can do it." I said, "No. No. It's time."

07:30 She said, "Well I'll see that we don't sign for you because you're underage." I said, "Well I'll sign for you. So let's make it easy. My mind's made up." So that's how it was and I really think that going on like that, that's why my mother died at an early age because all the aunts used to say she was worried sick.

About you?

Yep.

Did you feel guilty about that later?

08:00 No I didn't really. I thought I'd just played my part, that anybody could and I had more luck than other people. That's why I think I couldn't talk about it because I thought really all these young blokes with all their training, coming and being knocked down on their first trip or something. Anyway, we're back to the war again. Sorry.

08:30 **Okay. So tell us more about the enlistment. So your mother refused to sign?**

I went along and I had to go up, and put the papers in, and they made an appointment for me. So I went along and they said, "Oh yes, you'll do us." But then when I got to the next step they said, "Look we want more. Yes, you've done trigonometry. You've done algebra. You've done a bit on maths and a bit on

09:00 physics. We want more depth." Then they put me on the reserve and I had to go to Melbourne High to go to the night school, and met quite a few who were there, and actually those on the reserve who were going to be wireless air gunners used to go to night school for their Morse code, and all this sort of thing. I got to know

09:30 some of them. Then with the progressive tests finally it came up that okay I was right at the standard but it was different within about fifteen months. When they went in they'd really get by with just basic sort of things, you know not as definite as they were then because the manpower

10:00 shortage was drying up. One thing I should mention to you and this is on the war too but with the loss rate with the Typhoons they decided to circularise the Spitfire squadrons, and say would they like to see some action, and they'd give them some hours on Typhoons, and they helped to fill in the Typhoon squadrons. I've spoken to Spit blokes and they said,

10:30 "oh it was general. They never got one volunteer, not one".

From the Spitfires?

From the Spitfires because see we had such a predominance of those and they had some of the Spitfires dropping bombs, 500 pounders or 22-50s or something but they wanted them for

11:00 attacking trains and all this like we were doing in the Typhoons. But anyway, I've got to laugh at some of the Spit blokes I've spoken to. They said, "All right. Sling off at us." Our wing, not one out of four squadrons and another bloke was on a different wing, and not one out of his, so it wasn't hearsay. It was right but anyway, that didn't matter. We got by.

We're jumping a bit

11:30 **there.**

No, no I was just digressing then, didn't I. Okay I'm sorry. I do that.

I'll have to whip you, get the whip out.

So anyway, then they called me up and then I think it was a Friday. They called me up and

12:00 off we went on the train, nineteen of us to Victor Harbour in South Australia.

What year was this by the way?

This was '41.

'41.

Yes and we went to Victor Harbour. All the rest of that intake went down to Sommers. They had a

12:30 big initial training school there for the Empire Air Training Scheme. I think I've mentioned about six times that the point is that we only went over to South Aussie to make up the numbers for the quota for them but it was a lovely place. We were in huts there of course but the brass who were running the place, they were

13:00 in this lovely castle sort of thing. It was really wonderful there. So we did our training and rifle drill, and shooting, and all this, and the marching to the meal. We'd all be putting on a turn to try and beat the other crowds and all that sort of thing. Then we had a lot of sports

13:30 and I suppose it's all right to say this, he's recently died but Lex Gowdie, he was a great fit bloke. He had his agricultural degree. He was older than us and I used to do a bit of boxing with him, and another couple of blokes, for exercise. They said, "There's going to be a boxing

14:00 night on." He said, "Are you going to go in?" I said, "Listen. How will I go in? All the blokes have done a bit of pro-pugging. I wouldn't have a chance." Anyway, the next day's parade and Lex was so good that he knew he'd done a bit in the Uni, that no one could match him. Anyway they said, "All

14:30 these to fall out." And I'm amongst them. I thought, "What's this about?" So I said to one bloke, "What's this fall out for? We're going to hospital." He said, "It's to check for the fights tonight." I said, "What? I bet it's that lousy Gowdie's done this to me." So we get there and I thought, "How will it be if I pull out

now? They'll say I can't face up to it." So anyway, they check us out and of course we were all fit

15:00 and I'm matched with a bloke that was pretty good. I'd seen him training a bit and Lex said, "All you've got to do, you're pretty fast, keep out of the way of him and land a punch here and there." I said, "You're a dirty dog to do this to me." So anyway, of course this bloke if he'd hit me I'd have still

15:30 been going but I managed to dodge and just land one, and he was doing all the chasing, and you know yourself that when you're chasing a bloke round the ring, you tire out, different to the bloke who is making the moves. So anyway, the decision comes up, I'd won on points. I always remembered Lex Gowdie. Now I'm digressing again but

16:00 he then went on to fly in Southeast Asia and they were on where there was two crew on the Dakotas, and they were mine laying, and who do you think was his navigator? Gough Whitlam. [future Australian Prime Minister]

Over Tarakan

16:30 **did you say? Or Southeast Asia?**

No. I said mine laying around Australia. Mine laying over the sea.

Gough Whitlam?

Gough Whitlam was the navigator and Gough's never spoken or said anything about the thing but remember once when one of the mines got loose and

17:00 Lex, I tried to keep in touch with him but I lost track. Lex said they had an awful worrying time about this mine that was loose and he was on there, and he did well. I don't know whether he stayed in the air force after but later on he'd retired at Tweed Heads and when I went up to Colin, one of my sons, who was at Suffolk Park,

17:30 I drove down, and rang him up, and met him. He said, "I don't remember nominating you for that boxing thing." I said, "Yes. Do you remember we used to box at the thing?" He said, "No." Well, he seemed a bit slow on it and anyway I recalled a few things, and he

18:00 just seemed a bit distant to me, like sort of not with it. He came over to me like that and anyway, he died about three months after I'd called on him, so he was on the way out like. I noticed he had a pipe there that he used to smoke a lot too, now whether that was to try and ease what troubles he had? But anyway, that was Lex Gowdie

18:30 and my episode with that.

When you joined up the EATS [Empire Air training Scheme] scheme?

The EATS? I go to lunches now still with them, those who are still left. EATS, yep.

You went to Victor Harbour first?

Victor Harbour and then I went for elementary flying training, where you'd go solo, to Benalla in

19:00 Victoria. There we learned to fly and after the average number of hours, I forget what it was, I went solo. Then I went through all the exercises and then we moved to Uranquinty. Uranquinty was a service flying training where they had Wirraways and you'd do

19:30 exercises later with live ammunition, and all this sort of thing. Then you'd get your wings there. So I got my wings.

Was it tough to get your wings?

Well really you had to be on the job all the time but when you're young and so alert, but you had to watch where you had to...

20:00 The instructors would tell, "You look but are you seeing?" In other words to get by if you were going to do a starboard turn or that, you'd have to look but quite often people would do this and they wouldn't even take it in, just knowing that they'd complied with the thing. There'd been a few accidents and

20:30 they made a point of saying, "Yes look but see." In other words really see. So anyway, that was one thing. I flew with a cold there because I didn't want to miss out on the program but all the muck flew into the, it didn't fly

21:00 into it, it went into the inner ear and I got an infection in the ear, so that held me up for a few weeks until it cleared up. I thought, "I'll have to watch this." So I used to make certain and get my ears syringed out every so often because this left me with the tendency for it to go to my ears then. So anyway, we got through

21:30 and then a lot of the course I was on went to Mildura OTU, that's operational training unit, for work in the Southeast Asia. I'm still in contact just sporadically with Claudy McLeod and he was on Spits

- operating from Darwin, trying to get the Zeros [Japanese fighters] and that. Then I went to the
- 22:00 embarkation depot to await going over to the RAAF. So you didn't have any influence on where you went or anything like that and yet lots of the blokes coming back from the UK after the war, and the shocking losses of the Bomber Command, and yet people were there saying you deserted
- 22:30 Australia, and there's your white flower.
- White feather you mean.**
- Sorry I meant feather. Yeah, white feather.
- So you got a white feather?**
- No. Not me but one or two groups when they came back that's what happened.
- 23:00 Yep, so anyway are we still broadcasting? Oh sorry. So anyway, will I get onto the detail now of what's happened?
- No. Now you can tell us how you got to America.**
- Yes, that's what I mean. Well okay, then we boarded the Stirling Castle for the run to San Francisco.
- Where did you**
- 23:30 **board that? Melbourne?**
- Port Melbourne and I was dead scared any of my crowd would be there because I didn't want the trauma of it but they weren't there because they didn't know when the vessel was going or anything, but they knew assignments were going of trained ones, navigators, wireless air gunners, straight air gunners and pilots. We went far south of New
- 24:00 Zealand to miss any of the mines that the German raiders were leaving all around the place, which blew up quite a few. You might remember the hospital ship, the Centaur? That ran into one with wounded people on. [and was sunk with heavy loss of life] Anyway it was uneventful but it was staggering to see all the gambling that was going on. It was like
- 24:30 all people stripped down, their tops off and that, and there was Crown and Anchor, and all these sorts of games but you'd just be throwing your money away. When we got there we just marched from the ship over to this line of Pullman cars to go through the Rockies.
- 25:00 They had porters and five days the trip took, and as evening came on the porters would come, and pull the beds out of the roof like, and we slept. While we went through Salt Lake City and Des Moines, all these places you read about. Oh the
- 25:30 engineering was magnificent how they got through the Rockies and this was a big train. We admired that and then we went up to Taunton in Massachusetts, and we went to an army camp there, and it was cold. I'd never seen snow before. I'd never been to the snowfields and I couldn't
- 26:00 get over how your hair would go stiff like that, going from the shower, the ablution block only thirty metres to your hut. The ladies at Taunton invited parties of ten out for hospitality to give them a meal and it was amazing to have a look at all of them speaking to the other people. Down in the basement was this huge furnace and it was
- 26:30 pumping out the hot air, and it was rising right throughout the house like that. We couldn't get over it. Then they gave us two days leave and we went down to Boston, and it was lovely there. We had bed and breakfast in the police place. They agreed to that and so it was great to have a look around. Then we came back and a couple of days later we went up
- 27:00 to Halifax ready for the run across the Antarctic. What's the name of the French thing, the ship? I'll think of it.
- The French ship?**
- Yes the French ship. I wrote it down the other day to remind me, a French ship anyway. They'd put new guns
- 27:30 on it. They'd been proof fired on the range but not from the vessel. They said the guns that had been on were too light. Well, all the aircrews that were on were formed into groups to man the guns each 24 hours, like enough where you were so many hours on and so many hours off, coinciding with
- 28:00 the ship's watch. Of course we had the big naval coats and each gun had a British gun layer in charge. So anyway, we were practicing all the time and as soon as you'd done your thing, and reloaded you had to get into this flash-proof little thing for each one of them. Anyway the time comes and we're to fire
- 28:30 the first gun. Look he's sighting it and doing his calculations, and they'd dropped a target over, and made a big wide sweep, and we're coming up to it, and he said, "I think we'll be right boys." Anyway

he's ready, "Fire." Off the thing went. We were in a little, and this huge back flash,

- 29:00 and behind us was the folks all where the hospital was. It blew all the windows in. It was too strong now, the guns, so they stopped practice but for the eight days journey we had to go through the process of loading and unloading, but we didn't fire them. So if anyway U-Boats
- 29:30 came they'd just have to fire them and take the risk. Then we got to Liverpool. A train was waiting and it got us down to the Australian Personnel Reception Depot that had been set up in Bournemouth in one of the pubs there. It was three am and they gave us a lovely early breakfast, and they said, "You're on stand down for 24 hours."
- 30:00 So that was good. We got up. We slept we were in all the hotels that had been taken over because Bournemouth was a great, guest holiday place you see. So the government had taken these over and the facilities were pretty good, and the bedding was all service bedding but it was okay. Then we went for a walk, three of us and we walked around, and had a look.
- 30:30 Then coming back through the gardens, oh they were beautiful gardens. Then we'd just stepped out of the gardens and we heard these screaming engines, and Focke-Wulfs had started a hit and run raid on Bournemouth. These bombs were going off in the gardens and all. Finally
- 31:00 they took off and little did I know that in a few months time I'd be sitting in a Typhoon waiting at an aerodrome to be vectored off, like strapped in and all, so if there was a hit run raid on one of the seaside things they'd vector you out right out over the sea to pick these up coming back to France. Anyway then
- 31:30 we heard that seventeen of our blokes that had been on the ship with us, we knew them and all in our consignment and they'd been killed. One chap who came back with me Bob Gardner, he was actually in the gardens when the bombs went and laying down, and didn't get clobbered but seventeen were killed, and then used to listen in to Lord Haw
- 32:00 Haw, and he was an ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] announcer, not the ABC sorry, BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] announcer, and he went over to the Germans, and was broadcasting in English there a news summary for the British to listen to. We used to listen to it, so that night he comes on and he gives his run down, and then he says, "Oh before I forget
- 32:30 I really wonder how the British, the new British, the new, what the people feel about the new Australian consignment. What do they feel about us taking seventeen of them out, where their mothers will be regretting the action from a hit run raid we did on them." That
- 33:00 really accounted for all the telegraph posts around with these signs, "Don't talk. The enemy is listening." To think the spies could get that information into the German network of news and announce it just hours after the event, seven hours or so. So it shows that that was right and fortunately six weeks later the Aussies'
- 33:30 control in London at Australia House, they decided to move the Personnel Reception Depot along the coast to Brighton, where they never got too many ones because they were too close to the fighter aircraft. Anyway about two weeks after they'd vacated it is was occupied by Yanks and Canadians,
- 34:00 and there was another Focke-Wulf raid on them, and both of the big seaside hotels were hit, and 175 killed, so that was very fortunate that the Aussies moved.

Or they'd be dead.

They were dead. Well all these Canadians and Americans were killed like that, so really you could say that the people in those coastal towns were in the war area just as much as anybody on the continent.

Yes.

So anyway then, after a few at the Personnel Reception Depot they divided people up. Single engine pilots to so and so, bomber pilots, twin engine ones who trained on twins, they're to the bomber training and wireless air gunners, all the rest of them. Then we went onto Miles Masters and got our hand in again. Then

- 34:30 we did a fair bit of night flying with them and one of the chaps, a Canadian, there was a sharp change in the weather. You had to watch this in England and I was flying too at the time. I managed to get back but this Wally Fredericks I think his name was, he didn't make it back and crashed into the short of the runway, and he got killed there, and yet just an
- 35:30 hour before I was talking to him about this, that and the other, and little did you know that could happen. We then moved on from there after we'd been there a few weeks to advanced training on Hurricanes. They were a lovely aircraft. They had no vices but some people used to say you had to watch out for a high speed stall with them, but
- 36:00 we never did. We did a terrific amount of flying in them, all aimed at either fighter operations up in the air or on attacking tanks and all that sort of thing.

With the Hurricanes?

With the Hurricanes.

What squadron were you in?

No, we weren't in any squadrons. At the Operational Training Unit.

I see.

Or the advanced one there sorry.

That's before your posting I see.

Yes, before

36:30 the posting. Then we did all these low level things at night with 200 feet and I know one chap they were training on vectors made a mistake. He vectored one of our blokes into an 800 foot hill and he got killed but that was just par for the course. Another one, I'd gone on leave with a bloke named,

37:00 I've forgotten his name now but I've been twice to a farm with him and he'd gone on Hurricanes, and he was flying at night, and they were training the air gunners, and he did a miscalculation, and he was killed too. Then it came the time to go into the Typhoons and I don't know whether

37:30 we recorded about Bill Speedy and that. Did we or was it just talking to you?

We haven't recorded Bill Speedy, no.

No, about him, well on the Typhoon, it weighed seven and a half tonnes as against three and a half for the Spit and the Hurricane. The Spits and the Hurricanes had 12 cylinders and we had 24. Their horsepower averaged

38:00 about you could say 1,200 or something and we were 2,200 horsepower. You had to get the knack of taking them off because the engine was so powerful and had terrific swing with engine torque to starboard, and you had to correct it pretty early,

38:30 and you didn't have to over-correct it. I got through that not too bad and then we used to go and when a bloke was going to do his first trip, see who won the raffle for the toughest takeoff. Bill Speedy won it because he over-corrected looking ready at

39:00 what stage he got the tail up and all this, and he did a ground loop, and almost cleaned up the duty pilot on the port side. There they used to have a duty pilot there with a Very [flare] gun just so there wouldn't be two people landing together or something like that. He just missed that and we said, "No, he's won the raffle." A

39:30 lot of us had trained together at Typhoon places and then I went to, with Bert Copeman, we were both flight sergeants then. We were interviewed by the area commanding officer, a good captain and we both did all right, so they gave us a commission. Then we had to

40:00 take all the ones at the place down with our new uniforms on and they filled our new hats with beer, and we had to put them, and it dribbled all over the things but that was our initiation. It did stand us in good stead being commissioned instead of a flight sergeant I can tell you.

Tape 4

00:35 **You've remembered the name of the ship and the bloke?**

Yes. The Louis Pasteur was the ship and the name of this chap who I knew for a long time, who got killed in a Hurricane at night was Art Terry, and he had a lot of cuttings where he'd fought as a preliminary boy at the Fitzroy Stadium.

Okay good. Well

01:00 **we can add that in.**

Well that's great.

I wanted to ask you a little bit more about when you arrived at Liverpool as you were attacked in the park. Can you give us a bit more detail on what actually happened there? What sorts of planes were they?

Focke-Wulf 190s. They were hit run bombers, which they were using along all the cities on the south coast. Brighton used to get a share,

01:30 Bournemouth and all along. When we arrived at Liverpool a train was waiting to take us to

Bournemouth. That was the Australian Personnel Reception Depot, APRD. I think that's right, yep. Anyway, we got there at three am in the morning and they gave us a lovely early morning breakfast and said, "You're stood down for 24 hours and

02:00 you can have a look round, and we'll see you at eight am the following day." So we had a look around and we were billeted in, all the hotels there had been taken over, and all the sort of boarding houses, all this had been taken over, so they were quite good for accommodation. So we came to at I suppose about eleven o'clock or something. We a little look round and it would have been about twelve o'clock,

02:30 we had a good look in the gardens. They were beautiful and we'd just left the gardens, and we heard this screaming of plane engines, and they were Focke Wulfs dropping bombs on Bournemouth, and a couple of bombs went in the gardens where some of our blokes were, and Bob Gardner, who I still see, and after the war he graduated

03:00 as a medical man. He was in the gardens but he wasn't hurt, but he got a great fright. Anyway we found out that seventeen of our people, who we'd been talking to on the ship for the fifteen days as we went across to America and on the train, seventeen had been killed. Lord Haw

03:30 Haw who was a BBC announcer and went across to the Germans about two weeks before the war started, he broadcast for the Germans in perfectly Eton English. He gave his usual rundown and then, "We wonder how seventeen Australian mothers

04:00 are feeling tonight. You know there's a new arrival of a group of Australians at Bournemouth today and the welcome we gave them, I wonder if they'll understand that we mean business. Seventeen of them were killed." Then off he went and they played something else. We were staggered. How did they know unless there were spies everywhere?

04:30 I think I might have mentioned before but on all the electric light poles, telegraph poles and everything were these things pasted up, "Don't talk. The enemy is listening." It must have been a hive of spies there because how did they wireless that information over or even find it out? We were staggered and we thought, "These people at these coastal town, they're as much in the fighting as fighting in France or the continent."

05:00 That shook us up a bit.

The deaths must have had a great affect on you? I mean this was really your first contact with war.

Well, really it was and we thought that this was fair dinkum. We thought it was all fun with the, previously, even sort of shooting up [diving on] farmers in Australia when no one was looking and that. Of course

05:30 we got over that pretty quickly and thought how lucky we had been.

Then you went to stay on a farm for a while, is that right?

Yes, when leave came due but that was when we'd started flying on the Hurricanes because they reckoned I think that we had a lot of leave on the way but we hadn't really much.

A lot of people weren't so

06:00 **keen on the Hurricanes. What did you think of them?**

Oh no. We thought they were wonderful. We couldn't find any vices but we heard from a lot of people that they were likely to have a high-speed stall. Well we never experienced it. Bill Speedy when we were at one of the,

06:30 at an OTU [Operational Training Unit] at Annam in Scotland, he'd lost control but in a cloud and he was lucky to get out of it. He crashed just on the side of the airfield and it was a made aerodrome at Annam then. Someone who pulled him out of the aircraft, I see him every so often Glynn Sago,

07:00 that was on our wing but on 245 Squadron. I knew him there. He was an Aussie and Bill that set him back quite a while. He was in the hospital and later after the war he had a special thing to build an ear for him. He'd been burnt there and it was wonderful. I'd go and visit him. They'd taken the skin from here and leaving it attached one end,

07:30 and finally they'd make the ear thing. His nose, they fixed his nose up and then later on when we were on Typhoons, along comes Bill, and we were at the same OTU on Typhoons, advanced flying, and then we finished up on the same squadron, 175. So anyway, that worked out pretty well.

Before we get onto the Typhoons though I'm interested,

08:00 **you mentioned that you wanted to work with the army in support?**

Army Cooperation it was called.

And there were very few blokes that did that. Why did you want to do it? Why was it so

important?

Well I never fancied this stooging around at 20 to 25,000 feet and that or shooting planes down. It didn't sort of

08:30 appeal to me but when I think that some of the German army were retreating, we killed thousands, thousands. We'll get to that later.

What operations were you involved in with the Hurricanes?

No, we didn't do any ops with those. All

09:00 we did was practice what we'd have to do when we got onto Typhoons. One of them was cab rank and that entailed having a grid map, and we'd practice with someone, say, "Right. Going down EG27. In two minutes red smoke." We'd look out and sure, they'd put

09:30 mortar smoke down, and we'd pretend to do a false dive there. Now what it was, they were developing cab rank to be carried out on the invasion because it was shaping up that they weren't going to go for a port that was already made. They were going to make a port on the Normandy Coast themselves with big floating caissons. I'll mention that later. Anyway, we were practicing that like mad

10:00 and when battles were on, we'd be doing this where they'd be putting coloured smoke, mortar smoke on where they exactly wanted the rockets. It might have been buried, these tanks and that, Tiger tanks buried there as a strong point. We were helping [British Field Marshal] Montgomery. He had the British Army and the Canadian Army there, and we were helping

10:30 him. I'm back to Typhoons and I'm sorry but I'm trying to say that we were learning all these things as to what we'd have to do. We were doing rapid changes from airfields, to go to so and so. Like when we were really in France we were doing this for real and if they couldn't find an aerodrome that had been vacated, and they'd filled the bomb

11:00 holds, well they'd have to dig it out, and lay the metal strip, and all that. So that's how it went with the Hurricanes. We put a lot of time in and also this going at 200 feet, and map reading as you're going at that height but it all stood us in good stead.

Can you just explain to me about the cab rank again because I'm not

11:30 **quite sure, is it finding a target and bombing it?**

Yes but we've got to be in the right position as on the grid of the map. What it was, there were army people up in the battle zone. They'd wireless back to an air force bloke and a military bloke, who were in a vehicle, not really in the frontline but back a bit and they would be the ones to be told what on the grid for the

12:00 day, what it was, gun emplacement or tank hold up, or something that was causing them trouble in the battle. Then they would wireless up and we'd know roughly for the day where we should patrol, and we'd patrol up above 5,000 feet out of the height of the light flak. We wouldn't worry about the 88 mill flak because they burst

12:30 black. Sometimes there's one, before they got their target even, they'd be getting us airborne, when we were with the Typhoons again, I'm sorry but and we were practicing all that all the time. At one stage we were doing so much night flying, we were saying, "Don't say they're going to make us night fighters." But thank goodness they didn't. So

13:00 that's how it was. Does that explain it a bit to you?

Yes that's a bit better. Why is it called cab rank?

Well, it was like taxis. We were getting into position and it was like the cab ranks at the taxis, they were moving up when some moved off. When the real battles were on that's how it was because at the battle went they'd be progressively held up. As you know, I don't know whether you've read but Montgomery's

13:30 crowd were really held up in front of Caen. Have you heard of Caen? Well anyway, I'll get back onto that one when we're helping them and what we found out.

Okay, look what other things did you learn or practice with the Hurricanes?

While we were on that we had to go to the baths

14:00 that reopened and we'd have parachutes on, and dinghies, and we'd practice jumping off the tower, hitting the water as though you'd come down in a chute, and get into your dinghy. For a lot of people it saved their life when they knew what they had to do, like that sort of thing. Actually, I don't want to read out of the book but there were a lot

14:30 of things that were learning all the time and it stood us in good stead.

Let's get onto your beloved Typhoons. I know you want to.

This is awful. You're embarrassing me.

But it's what we've come here for.

Of course it is.

So let's not mess around.

That's what is filling my mind you see, so I'm sorry if I thrashed a bit about it.

No,

15:00 **not at all.**

Well, I think I told you I got my [officer's] commission with that other chappie and they christened us with the, were you here? They took us down to the pub and said, "Right. The usual christening." All brandy in our new officers hats. We had to hold them, shout for the beer and that, and then they'd say, "Right." And everything would run down and that was the protocol but we didn't

15:30 moan at all, but it made a difference. We were flight sergeants and it did make a difference. He got onto a different squadron than I did but it made that little bit of difference. See on each course there were just two commission granted and the others were sergeant pilots. Well, there was a lot in front of me, so I didn't have much chance there but this paid off for us. So anyway, I went to

16:00 the Group Support Unit. Now they weren't organised at all in these days. When I reached the stage after my tour and my rest was to go and look after the new pilots, and take them over the different things, I reported in, and they said, I told you I'd got onto Typhoons hadn't I?

16:30 Yes and I did tell you about that. After one or two trips, here we tucked in with two of us going off. We knew when to lift the tails and when to do this and that. Anyway, I'm posted from these advanced operational things to the Group Support Unit. All my friends were there, Johnny Pugh and Bill Speedy, and another friend

17:00 had already left through the GSU, and was on 175 before I got there. So I got to the Group Support Unit and I thought someone will give me a bit of form on this or that, like operational techniques or something. They just said, "Oh no, take a Typhoon out there and don't forget to sign the sheet for it, and practice across country."

17:30 Well, through all the travelling in the Hurricanes it was a soda. The day was one of these heat hazes and you only had a little circle of land. I blithely looked up at the map at this dairy farm that Art Terry and I used to go together, then I was going on my own there, and I thought, "I'll give them a little bit of a shoot up but not too much." Not shooting the guns but a shoot up, going over,

18:00 because it might put the cows off letting the milk down, you see? Anyway, I navigated just with a little circle under me because you couldn't see ahead or anything and plum right on there. I thought, "Gee this is all right." So I went around with a very lazy sort of thing, so as they'd know it was me and then came back again. Well there were some of the things we'd learnt.

I'm sorry, I'm not clear

18:30 **on what you did there. Did you actually shoot a rocket or drop a bomb, or what did you do?**

Oh no. "Shooting up" was the term where you'd fly like when you're not attacking, you'd fly over and go "Rrrrrr." You see?

Do a dive?

Do a dive and scare them a bit. I'll tell you how embarrassed I was. You must remind me if I forget it. The first day I'd come back to the Group Support Unit

19:00 after my tour but we'll get onto that and I'll tell you what happened. No I didn't shoot them up really. I just went round gently like this, waggled the wings if they could see me because it was just vertical profile you could see. That's all. I thought that any neighbours reporting me, they wouldn't be able to read the big printing, three letters on the side. Anyway, I went there but I was just illustrating

19:30 how all that practice came in and it really helped on ops.

How did you find it going from the Hurricane to the Typhoon? What were the main differences?

The main difference was the power. It was like a monster. If you opened her up you knew. Also you had a higher landing speed and it was very

20:00 delicate to start because you started with a cartridge, and you fired the cartridge, which would tick her over. If you hadn't primed the engine properly there'd be a fire in the exhaust outlets, so they always had a fitter 2E, that's the mechanical bloke, standing with a thing to just give it a squirt and put the fire out.

- 20:30 The engine fitters were wonderful because they had them tuned up perfect and they never missed. Sometimes we'd go through a few. You only had five cartridges. It was called a Kaufman Starter and it was like you could say, a gigantic what was in there, a gigantic shot gun but it shot the gas out to turn the motor. If you had her right she caught but
- 21:00 I'll get onto that when I'm on the squadron because strike me blue, that's where I reckon I aged like mad. When all our good fitters and that had to go to get in the landing craft and we were left with blokes from Naval reserve. We had about one bloke who was a bit clued up and we weren't too clued up. We never had a great,
- 21:30 terrific number of hours. So on the other two I just did little trips around and had a look round the countryside. Then they said, "Right you're posted to 175 Squadron." Off I went and I arrived there, and they introduced me to all the boys. Then I made a point of going down and introducing myself to all the
- 22:00 fitters, and armourers, and riggers, and everything because really you depended on them, and if their gear wasn't in it you could give it away. So really I made a point of that. Then a few days later Bill Speedy turned up and he came to that squadron. For a while we were on the same flight and with a readjustment with that,
- 22:30 he finished up going across to A Flight. It wasn't a derogatory term or anything. It was just A and B. Then Johnny Pugh turned up and we'd trained on Hurricanes for a long time with him, a very nice bloke. So we're there and then bringing up the Typhoon squadrons to what they wanted, an establishment of 28
- 23:00 pilots getting ready. We knew that D-Day was coming along because there was transport everywhere. So anyway, we did about seven trips, not against the enemy but as though it was against something, on the squadron. All of us did about seven trips with the experienced blokes and some of them of course had got up a number of
- 23:30 trips well before, so some of them if they lasted would be going on rest.

Did you take the Typhoons out on any operations before D-Day?

No. Well actually, they were going very steady on, they didn't want to make it look like they may be concentrating

- 24:00 on where the decision was made to go. So anyway, we did these fake ops and got a bit of experience, how you must not lag, and this and that. Then it was getting close about D-Day. We could tell.

Did you have an idea of what was going to be involved?

Yes.

- 24:30 We were to provide the flying artillery for the army. They couldn't bring up big guns and all the rest of it. They'd start off with the Navy there bashing into targets and all the rest of it but as they reached the stage of advancing or if they were to advance, we'd have to help them. Then I think it was about the
- 25:00 day before D-Day. They left a radar station going and then when the, on the board they put up, and Johnny Pugh, who had come after us two, he's down on the board. He was in another flight and I think they were a bit shorter than us but anyway, he's to go, and they're to go on this radar on the peninsular there,
- 25:30 and they had to knock it out. So he went and there was I think another squadron they joined up with, and Rusty Townsend, that we'd flown with before, and had been on the squadron a while, he was flying as a number two on the trip. Johnny Pugh
- 26:00 didn't sleep much that night. We were billeted in the same hut but he was up and down. Anyway off they went. I think two of the other squadron were shot down. One of them, the chap bailed out. Then the other one was circling him for a while and
- 26:30 whether he'd been hit before and was losing petrol but the engine stopped, so he bailed out. So they sent a Walrus aircraft out and picked one of them up, and then another Walrus came, and picked that one up. So that was all right. But our squadron coming back, Johnny Pugh is lagging like mad. The bloke in charge said, "Righto. Come on Blue 4." He said,
- 27:00 "Look this engine won't go any better. I've been hit. I heard a bang." Then he started to drop back. So he undid everything and then turned the aircraft over, and fell out that way, and he got the chute open lovely. Then in the book you'll see, Rusty Townsend, I put it into context but I said to him, "Look you were on the show. It's better and
- 27:30 you did some looking for him. You write it." So he wrote it, so that was pretty good. Anyway, what happened was they checked him and it was very misty. It was just about on the end of the distance you know, a Typhoon could get there and get back. Then it was very misty and getting darkish, and they'd skittled this radar thing properly,

- 28:00 and then he went down. Now whether he misjudged the height and undid the chute too early? He had a Mae West [life jacket] on but whatever happened, the next time that bit of mist had gone, he'd disappeared. So he may have gone too early. Of course we're waiting for, we weren't at ops at the time, the ops
- 28:30 room and then they came, and said, "No he's not coming back. He's bought it." So we thought, "Gee this is starting to get," knowing them for so long. So anyway, that was it. Then the next evening we're to go and be assembled, and we hear this stirring thing from Eisenhower, "I've said go!" And,
- 29:00 "We'll beat this weather." But the weather forecast wasn't too good but they said there'll be a lull for about six hours. So then everybody got to work and painted all the aircraft with black and white stripes, so we didn't get skittled by the Yanks mainly. We knew all the aircraft but they had the bloodlust up and they wouldn't think, as long as they shot something down. Now people mightn't like to hear that but
- 29:30 that's how it was because we lost some through the Yanks. We did that and then we looked at the ops board for the next day, and Bill and myself were on for D-Day. So anyway, Bill didn't fly with my group. He
- 30:00 flew with some more of the others at a different time. Everybody's on edge and we're going to Cherbourg where there's a group of big heavy guns that were pounding the invasion coast with knocking out the landing craft, and all that. That was our job and we had twelve aircraft went, and it was just the way it folded
- 30:30 out but three lots of four, and my lot was the last to attack, and I was number four in the last lot. Well of course that was always a danger point because you always had the flak concentrating on the last one. We found we were going so fast in the dive that invariably the defences would under-deflect so as that
- 31:00 you were there and there was always firing behind you, just through the speed. Of course one of the things as I got going a bit, any new chum I'd say, "Look if you're out of position or anything, never fly behind anybody because if they fire at the bloke in front you'll cop it." With new chums wanting to maintain their position and that, they'd get behind. Anyway, we're to go.
- 31:30 One group was to go down with their canons and give them a great strafe, so as that they'd put them off a bit, and we'd come in, and go onto these guns. So anyway, it went okay and I'm just pulling out of the dive, and all the rockets, we fired them in salvos, that is all at once, and they were all in there.

How many in a salvo?

- 32:00 Eight.

Eight?

Eight rockets and you could fire in pairs if you were attacking a tank or something like that. See the Yanks never had aircraft with the rockets on. They had the bombers with say, a 500 pounder or that, under each wing but that's all right for bridges, but for moving targets really the rockets were the thing. Anyway, as I'm pulling out,

- 32:30 "Bang." I hear this bang and I could feel a draft. It had come in the starboard side this shell, past the armour plate and out the other side. Where it went out it hadn't exploded but it tore a bit and I tried everything, and it worked except it was just a little bit one wing low but it was all right. So we got back okay and landed normally. Then
- 33:00 they mentioned about it and I thought, "Gee this game. It's going to be all luck." It made me stop and think. So then the next day.

Can I just clarify something before we go on? With the Typhoons, if you were firing a rocket did you have to come in vertically to go into a dive first?

Oh no. You could come with a flat one but if you had a flat dive

- 33:30 you had to allow that she'd start dropping and what you'd have to be aware that if there was a bit of wind, if there was a head wind, you'd have to allow, and just sight it. We had this sight that appeared as if it was out there but it was all done with electronics, and you'd sight it a bit above what you'd normally do, and that sort of thing. You had to make those sorts of allowances but the flatter your dive
- 34:00 the less chance you had of getting it properly unless you were almost going right into the, as some of them did, right into the tank or that, like trying to concentrate to get it properly and going a bit faster than they thought. The next day Bill and I were both on. He'd got through his episode okay and then we went out in twos. I went
- 34:30 with Kelly Kelsick, a West Indian and he was getting close to doing a hundred ops [operations,missions]. He'd been there for a while and a very nice bloke. So anyway, we're to look for tanks and that being brought up now to try, and repulse the attack. They'd got their footing in on the invasion coast, all the different things, Juno and all this, and Montgomery's Canadians,
- 35:00 they'd got ashore. So now it had stopped being a sort of battle to get ashore. It was consolidation but

we had to range up to where they were bringing up reinforcements, the Germans and skittle those.

Can I just hold you there? I hate to break your flow when you're in a story.

No, that's all right.

But can we just go back to D-Day for a moment? This was an extraordinary event. Can you describe it for me? What did you see?

Oh Yes. That's one of the things I've

35:30 described, look I'm sorry, I jumped ahead. Do you want to switch off or not?

No, no we're still on.

Okay. Anyway, as we formed up I was glancing and I couldn't believe it. All these big ships. It was ships everywhere and they're firing, and you could see all the smoke belching out of them, and the flames, and then on the shore. Then we could see all these concrete caissons being towed to

36:00 make their own wharf and also Pluto. Now Pluto was a pipeline under the ocean. That's how they were getting all their quick things, pumping this thing and it was like a big snake, all lot of it under the ocean as they were towing it, to get it into position, to rapidly, so as there wasn't much fuel that

36:30 would be going in tankers. It would be pumped through Pluto and all these things. I'm taking it in, in quick glances like this. You couldn't believe but the number of ships. How was it organised? That's what I kept thinking. I'm pleased you caught me up on that one. Put it in the right context will you? I'm sorry to say that but anyway that was it because that was the big thing. Of course my book, I've got the right serial number on it of an aircraft over

37:00 the beachhead on D-Day, P for Percy it was.

Apart from the shell that hit you, did you come under heavy fire?

No well, there was a fair bit of flak but they'd be trying to get onto those pulling out before me.

How did the other chaps fair?

Two had little nicks in them but not enough,

37:30 like my mine was a decent sort of nick but I was lucky it didn't explode and it went through.

Did you hit your target?

Oh yes everything and I was last in, and I could see it was a mass, so my eight rockets went straight into there. The next day we're going out in pairs, and they thought it would be best to go with long range tanks, and get right back where they reckoned

38:00 they wouldn't be caught, and you'd get them on the road. So we went with the long range tanks.

How far could you go on a long range tank?

Well you had 45 gallons of petrol in each and one of the things, there was no indicator how much you'd used, and this as later I'll tell you, you had to watch. There was a few who were lost and that, had to go down,

38:30 and crash because they had an air bubble in the petrol supply when they'd gone onto the mains again after on the tanks. There was a set procedure you must follow, no good getting excited or that, you had to do it right. So anyway, we're going there. We dropped our tanks and we're having a look, and just at the last minute under some overhanging trees I saw this tank.

39:00 I said, "Kelly?" He said, "What?" I said, "There's a tank under here but I'm not in a position to really hit it. Will you follow me?" He said, "Course I will." So anyway, I knew I had a bit of skid on because I'd seen it too late but I was trying to get in. If you got a bit of skid on the aircraft, well you just skid the rocket away.

What do you mean by skid?

Well, the aircraft instead of flying straight, there'd be

39:30 skidding a bit.

If you tried to change direction too fast?

Really it was like you could say that, like you wanted to straighten it up there but it's skidding like that and then you've got to try and kick it round with the rudder just before you fire the rocket. Well I fired a pair of rockets and they went off just in front of it but there was a gunner with a machine gun, a fixed gun there, and he was

40:00 firing. He hit my right [Oerlikon], starboard, but it never jammed it or anything. It just went through the

wing and all that didn't lose any petrol or anything, in case in the wing tank. Kelly Kelsick came around behind me like and I went there, and he got

40:30 a couple of rockets right into it, so that was it. So when I got back and it was flying a bit heavy on the controls but see, if you hit in one of the hinges that jams and whichever way it jams, it forces it to go that way, and you're in awful trouble. So anyway, I got away with that.

Tape 5

00:00 And then of course, we had a, I should have told you, could I just interpose this? Why we knew it was D-Day coming,

01:00 they kicked us out of all the buildings and everything on the drome where we were. We had to live in tents there and we weren't allowed to go on the drome. We had to land within certain distances as though we were on strips you know? They couldn't have long runways. Then they issued us with khaki soldier's

01:30 uniforms because they'd found that our blokes had been shot in the grey. It was a very, very similar grey to the German grey, so they said we had to wear these khaki battledresses and that. I should have mentioned it. They issued us with mugs and eating things, and we had to go to this mess, where they had the oil ovens all under

02:00 tents, and all this, and they gave us folding up things that you put your, where you washed, and all this. So I should have mentioned that, so you might be able to work that in, can you?

You can mention that now if you like?

Well all right, so that's how it is. So we had to have all this stuff to sort of live out of a tent and this was in preparation for when we'd be

02:30 living in tents, and just behind the army all the time to help them as they advanced. Back onto the other, then sitting in the, what we called the mess all right but it was rough table and rough chairs, and I was thinking, "This bears it out. If one of those bullets had gone through and jammed that oerlikon up or down, I'd have had the wing, you couldn't control it

03:00 sort of thing, so I was lucky again." I thought, "No it's ninety percent luck," but I'll get onto Charles Laughton later on. So anyway, we were going over the Channel and then as they got onto building the airstrips, we would land at B2 or B3. They were the first two British strips [airfields] done and

03:30 we might do an op on the way, and or then land there, and be refuelled, and rearmed, and then take off, and do an op, and then go back to England. Then I must say that the dust where they'd bulldozed the strips out of the wheat fields, it was enormous. Now with the Typhoon, it's got a big radiator

04:00 and this is the air scoop. Well, it was a sleeve valve engine and this dust, grit getting in it, was playing up with us, and we're having wheel cup landings taking off with the sleeve valves packing up. So what they had to do and when we got on our own strip it was developed, and we were only there, and all the blokes who were handling the strip would say,

04:30 "Yes you're all right," because as soon as you go, the artillery gets onto us with the dust going up, and we've got to put up with that as well as the dust. Anyway, that's how it was until finally we were sheltering before we took off on B2 it was and Bill Speedy was with me in this slit trench, and these shells but they were going

05:00 over, and landing, and exploding further on. I said to Bill, "Would you like to be in the army with this?" He said, "No. We're in the best racket aren't we?" I said, "Yes." So anyway, that was our experience of that. I think it would have been nine days after D-Day, I think that's right, about the 17th June, they said our strip was ready, B5.

05:30 That was the British strip Number 5.

Where was that located?

In France near Camry, I've got the name there too, Le Friexnet Camry, some name like that. I've got it in the back of the logbook but I've just forgotten for the moment. It's a fair time ago but anyway,

06:00 oh the dust. Before the dust they stood us down to dig out about three feet down for the tents and that meant that the Germans were flying over all the time, every night taking photo flashes to see how far the invasion had moved on. Of course they were generally JU-88s, quite a few of them coming over

06:30 and they were doing something. They said they could never have a diesel engine it was so heavy but the JU-88s had diesel engines because you could tell with them, "Womp, womp, womp, womp," like that sort of noise. You see, in the diesels they've got to have a big heavy block because it's exploding the fuel all

the time. I

- 07:00 used to lay there and I'd put the tin hat [helmet] on here in case we put, people would put enormous barrages up to try and get these JU-88s. They'd be firing their guns as they went and took the photoflashes. So anyway, Rusty Townsend, who was an Aussie but he'd gone back to England.
- 07:30 His mother was English and she'd married an Aussie, and they didn't get on. So he went back when he was seven. He wore the Australian insignia on the shoulders but he was in the RAF [Royal Air Force]. Of course on our squadron, I should have mentioned, we were all like a couple of, a few Aussies and New Zealanders, and Canadians, and South Africans, and West Indians, a real dominion sort of squadron but the majority of them were
- 08:00 RAF people, like English ones. Anyway, we dug down and look it was amazing, as we got down a bit out of the walls would come moles, and they were blind. We used to say, "Well they're better than rats, aren't they?" But we dug down and got the tents up, and there were toilets,
- 08:30 just sort of very rough, up the end of the tent line. Ross Clarke a Canadian, of course he could speak French like, well a Canadian because they've got the duplex occupancy there, you know? French Canadians and that. So anyway, I said, "Look Ross, what about teaching me a bit better French than we've got in this thing?" You know,
- 09:00 a rapid thing to learn and you just pronounce it out as you read it. He said, "All right." But look, after about a quarter of an hour he'd run down the line of tents and he'd say, "This bloody bloke will drive me to drink. He's got an accent that's like a Cockney." So anyway, everybody would laugh but in the finish we gave it away and I just made do with this booklet.
- 09:30 Anyway, we were attacking, sort of helping the army, not that far away over the bomb line. The bomb line was the artificial line, our side here, their side there, if you bailed out. Anyway Ross got hit and he's coming back and waving up like this, and then the motor starts stopping, and then he bails out and you wouldn't
- 10:00 believe it, he's heading for the River Maas, a big river, and he starts swaying on the thing and everything. He plops straight in and I must say we'd discarded the Mae West once we weren't flying over the Channel because they were so hot, and when you're in a Perspex thing like this with the sun, oh it was enormous. So anyway, of course he didn't have the Mae
- 10:30 West. He just went, when he released the chute he went straight under and he was drowned. Anyway, they found his body a few hundred yards down where it was snagged, so that was Ross and I often thought about him, about him shouting about the thing but he was a very nice bloke really. Then Rusty Townsend, before Ross
- 11:00 got killed. I was on the last op for the day and it was pretty late, and of course most of the food had been done but they made up some stuff there, some bits and pieces, and I had that. We used to go to bed about eight o'clock because there was nothing else to do but try and get some rest. I tossed and turned all the time. I was crook in the stomach.
- 11:30 Anyway, Rusty Townsend said, "Look Tommy, you can't put up with this. I'm going to get the doctor." I said, "Don't take the risk," because we had roaming guards and they'd shoot anything that moved. "Don't. I can put up with it." Anyway, he said, "No." He got dressed and he left, and he came back with the doctor, and the doctor lent over me, and said, "Why didn't you come in the daylight?" I said,
- 12:00 "I wasn't crook [sick]. I'm crook since I've been in bed." He went, "Your appendix is right. I'll see you in the morning." And off he went. Anyway, I started to calm down a bit and in the morning I went to see him, and he said, "There were ten crook. You got the crook batch that was the last one of the potatoes." You know?
- 12:30 They're already made up but evidently this was crook. There were ten of them you see? Well I didn't thank Rusty profusely. I just said, "Thanks for going but I didn't want you to go Rusty." He said, "That's all right." Later on, Rusty was shot down and a prisoner of war, and I wondered what had happened to him after the war. Did he ever go back to Australia? One of our blokes had caught
- 13:00 fire on the English coast and they put a monument up, and Jack Frost, who wrote the introduction to my book, and he stayed in the RAF after the war, and he was on our squadron, and I caught up with him at the Group Support Unit, he's representing the RAF at the monument, the dedication of it. He looked across and he
- 13:30 thought, "That bloke looks like Rusty Townsend." He had two tall sons with him and he went over, and he saw him, and he said, "It's you Rusty isn't it? Townsend?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Look, Tommy Hall's been priming us, all of us who are left here, just get in touch with him and give him your address. Here's his address."
- 14:00 So anyway, Rusty wrote to me and I wrote a lovely letter back I thought, profusely thanking him. I never made it, and do you know what? I got a reply and he said, "You've got the wrong bloke. I never did that for anybody in Normandy." I couldn't believe it. It was only Ross Clark always slept with a great snore. He's

- 14:30 snoring his head off while I'm crook. Rusty was the only one. But when I started writing to him and getting to know his family, some of them called in and saw me on visits to Australia, it was lovely. I said when I was doing the book I looked through my photos and got one of him in pyjamas because we didn't have any coupons or anything, you just had to make do but seeing
- 15:00 he lived in England he worked it. So anyway I said, "Oh, well one thing, all the boys used to say you were the only one who had pyjamas in Normandy." He said, "That's rot. I never did." I said, "Well read it in the book." A photo of you." So anyway,
- 15:30 I think in the prisoner of war camp it's blotted something out of his memory because here was another one. I had a little camera that proved invaluable, a really old fashioned one but it took the photos that you'll see in the book. Anyway, we're sitting there and we were standing down, weren't on
- 16:00 call, and all of a sudden a Liberator [bomber] came over with USA [United States of America] markings, and they just got over us, still had a little way to go to get into German territory, and they all bailed out. Well, one really, his shroud caught on the tail and I think he had it but this Liberator, and it is well
- 16:30 known, it was trim tail-heavy, so that meant that the tail would be down, and it would go up if it had the speed, so when it started to go down like this with no one at the controls, and then the trimming tabs took over, and pulled it out of the dive, and then it would go up, and then it would shake, and stall,
- 17:00 and come down again. Now all of us on the strip, it was like a gigantic hand. We'd all run this way and then we'd think, "No it's going." We'd all run back there. He was an English bloke sitting in sort of a little deck chair saying, and he gave a running commentary, and no one heard him but it was like the cricket, "And now here it's coming down again."
- 17:30 He was amazing. We were all running one way and running back the other, and so anyway, this thing is going on and getting lower and lower, and you'd swear it's all over the strip. They called up two Yankee Thunderbolts and they couldn't get a good shot at it, so they circled, and as it went into a dive, they're coming down with four canons blazing. Well, we're in the slit trenches
- 18:00 here at this time and with that Charles Laughton bloke, his aircraft was behind, and one of the shells went into his radiator, and it's squirting out glycol, and I said, "Rusty. I've got the camera here, quick, plug the hole in the Dykes in Holland." Just being silly. So he went there and I
- 18:30 snapped it. I wrote to him and said, "Look Rusty, what about really when you plugged the Dyke in Holland?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Remember when the Liberator was coming down and then finally it flipped the other way, and landed at the end of where we were, and went up in flames?" "No, I didn't plug the
- 19:00 hole." I said, "Bernard Jervis, his aircraft." I used to call, not to his face but Charles Laughton. He said, "I never did. I never did." Well, that was three things. Then another thing, he said, "Look I don't remember you being at Annam in Scotland." I said, "Yes I was. I was
- 19:30 there when your sister came through with an Insa group as a dancer." "Well, look I can't place you. I remember Art Terry." "I was next door to him." So really, I gave it all away then and I said to the family, "This bloke." Anyway, he's been out to see me here, so he's all right. He remembers me now when he's seen me but that was strange, wasn't it?
- 20:00 Everybody has taken it up about who was there on the strip when that Liberator, and of course we thought it was a confiscated one by the Germans, and they were going to fly it over the bomb line into Germany but it turned out the real story was they were supposed to be going to a target in southern France,
- 20:30 and they got disorientated. How they could do it with the invasion, you could see it down there, and they all bailed out, bar the one who got his parachute shroud on there. So that's the story of that but the number of magazines that story has been in and it was only, I forgot in my book to mention the shroud where the bloke had got
- 21:00 caught on the tail as he went out, and he tore the shroud of the parachute off, and this bloke, who was in the RAF guard round the perimeter, he was the one wrote to me, and said, "You never mentioned about the shroud." So a number have mentioned it now, so in the re-write or the re-print, it will be in about the shroud.
- 21:30 **Can I ask you some questions regarding your operations? Were you involved in solely daylight operations on the Typhoon?**
- Well, I'm pleased you mentioned that because the Germans had made a breakthrough. Now, we'd gone to bed about nine o'clock and this was about ten o'clock, and they made a break through, and they were going to
- 22:00 divide the Americans, and Montgomery's British Army, and the Canadian Army, they were going to drive a wedge there. So a truck came round, it was like one of these blokes with a bell but he came around and said "Right, we got to have the first eight to go and put some rockets into these tanks to dissuade them." Well I was one of the first eight, so what they did

- 22:30 they lit oil lamps, just burning in a tin, along the sides of the street. So the Wing Commander on the briefing said, "Whatever you do don't tuck in, keep well back as you take off and form up." He was leading. "Form up but we don't want accidents on the strip where you normally take off like this with your wing tucked in there, as you take
- 23:00 off." But he said, "No, go back a couple of aircraft lengths. We don't want any." So we all got off okay and we lined up, and we went down, and it was really, I think I mentioned in the book. It was less than five minutes we were there. That's how close the strip was to the thing and we put the rockets in all around there. All of a sudden whether it was an oil tanker but a great black
- 23:30 thing went up. Anyway, it blunted the attack and they were happy about it, so when we came back I thought, I wonder how it is landing here? It's a bit dark and there's smoke and everything." But we all landed okay. I'm pleased you mentioned that because that was one of the ones at night and I'll tell you what, as we all were at the debriefing, everybody said, "Let's stick to daylight." There were red tracers everywhere
- 24:00 and there were all things you never saw in the daylight. There they are all illuminated and going everywhere.

Could you see the battles that were taking place on the horizon?

Oh yes. We could see, really with Montgomery's crowd there we were helping him all the time but they were bogged down. They couldn't get anywhere and they called in some heavy bombers, and they put a raid on, and in front

- 24:30 of Caen they dropped their loads of bombs but they cancelled them from then on because our attackers, they were in a worse position trying to get through those before they got up to the fighting again. So they brought some medium bombers up and we're sitting there, and we're watching, and all of a sudden
- 25:00 we could see the glint. They were dropping their bombs but we knew through being in front of Caen battles, they were dead short. And they killed over 3,000 Canadian soldiers and you don't hear much about it because some of the people in the field there told us. It was a terrible waste of life. I don't know whether you
- 25:30 should put that in but that's true and before all the others cark it, they'll back me up, the ones who were standing there. We were watching saying, "Oh, no."

This was daylight?

Daylight. These were Bostons [bombers] and those sorts of aircraft, run by the RAF.

You only did one night operation? That was that only

- 26:00 **one where you had to?**

Yes I think that would be right.

You said that in the horizon you could see the battles taking place in other sectors. If you were in a plane in an elevated position you should have been able to see all those huge explosions of artillery duals and things like that?

Well a lot of it first of all was fighting in the orchards and the German youth, they were brought up with it from babyhood, and they

- 26:30 fought to the death. I'd seen when we landed the first time, we were the first ones to land the Typhoons on B2 and when they were rearming we walked, and had a look at some of the smashed up orchards, and it was terrible but they fought. Later on in the war and I've got a good story to tell you about that,
- 27:00 this tail gunner was caught by seventeen German youth, and they wanted to surrender. They said, "You lead us with a white sheet." He said, "No. Give us one of the submachine guns. You can carry the sheet and I'll walk behind you." I've got a story in that book, if you've never got to it, it's just wonderful.
- 27:30 **I read that story yes.**
- Did you? Wonderful. Of course I want to add to it in the three years since I did that, well two and a half years, I've found out through a French war historian that air gunner's name, how he bailed out later than the others, how he landed and how did I know. It was a wonderful story and I've got that. I want to add to the thing that I knew who it

- 28:00 was. We are really still battling, Normandy hasn't been finished.

Can I stop you there just for a second?

Yes.

Normandy, what was it like flying Typhoons on ground attack missions in the [Bocage country]?

It was flak everywhere and see, before we attacked we

- 28:30 always liked to have 5,000 feet, so as the light flak would peter out. We didn't worry much about it except when we were on a long haul to get a factory or that and you had to, then as time went on I went up to leading the squadron and that, and I'm not trying to say I was a bang on bloke but I knew what I was doing, and there were no
- 29:00 other experienced ones around. Anyway, as you approached you'd hear in your earpieces, "Click, click, click." This is the German radar locking on you and then if you didn't change height, forward speed, and course they could get you, and it would burst black.
- 29:30 88 mill it was. It's out of context but I could tell you how it played havoc with new chums because out of the blue without saying on the telly, you'd alter course and alter your height either up or down, and alter your speed, and that would throw them, and then the clicks would go but where you'd been
- 30:00 up would burst an 88 mill. But new chums are not ready and then they'd say, "Oh. They've left me." And then they'd try to get into position because each person in the formation had a separate amount of sky to scan all the time just to see. The leader would keep his eye open all the time but it was good if you could
- 30:30 see it before any of the others, but quite often you're depending on these people with a segment of sky. They'll say, "Three o'clock above." This sort of thing or, "Nine o'clock above." So anyway, when I was on this target and they briefed us, and they said, "Look don't come back and tell us that
- 31:00 you couldn't see the results much because there was dirt, and smoke, and everything, because you're asking for trouble if you've hung around." So I thought, "Okay." So we attacked this and there was a big, really lot of smoke and everything.

What was it you attacked?

This sort of factory thing.

In France?

Yes. I said, "Well, we'll do a lazy orbit and we'll

- 31:30 see when it clears, and we'll just take it onboard." Then "Click, click, click" started on me. For the first time I ignored it because I thought that they wouldn't follow me round in this circuit, if you get what I mean but how wrong was I?
- 32:00 All of a sudden a black burst under me and it threw the aircraft over like this about 25 feet, and then she was still going because I was thinking about bailing out but still going, and I called up my number two, and said, "Come and get under me, and see what's happened."
- 32:30 He flew underneath and he said, "The door over one of the undercarriages, the starboard one, that's blown off and there's a lot of the fuselage blown away." I said, "Is there anything leaking out like hydraulics or oil?" He said, "No." I said, "Well I think I'll get back all right." So I flew
- 33:00 left wing low and when I came into land I was up about thirty miles per hour higher than normal just to make certain that she didn't stall on me, so that was all right. Anyway, a bit of the dust had thing and we said, "You won't have to put another thing on there. It's definitely wiped off, you know, the target."
- 33:30 I didn't leave until I'd had a look at what the result was. That made me think never again no matter what they say. I'll stick by what we do and I should have been doing a bit of jinking there but I thought I could get away with it, but you couldn't afford to take those risks. Look you'd think, "Oh look, when we're attacking
- 34:00 things right in the back of Germany and everything, what a wonderful thing we could say, oh we did this and we did that." You could do anything but when we'd take off, about quarter of an hour later the Spit PRU, that's Photo Reconnaissance Unit, they'd take off. They would have been briefed like over the phone and that where it was exactly, and they'd
- 34:30 come, and check exactly, and take photos. At the briefing when we came back after about ten minutes the photos would be there, so you had to say exactly what took place, and you had to say I know on one I was down, not to fly but to go as a reserve. Of course someone dropped out, so I was back there as number four
- 35:00 and honestly, we'd misjudged the wind blowing, and everybody undershot. When I saw the others where they were bursting, I tried to lift mine a bit being last in to attack but it still was a bit short and the wind must have been enormous. It was a bit of a valley and it tricked us but anyway, we had to say because the PRU
- 35:30 blokes, it was there. So where people said, "You can tell them anything." No, you could not.

Can you tell us about the operations you had against enemy tanks?

Oh, well. We had some great successes of flamers and all the rest of it. In the

- 36:00 award, the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] to me, they've got some spelt out there. So really with tanks the Germans hated us because they hated the screech of the rockets, and the damage. Now Ronnie Dale, I'll talk about him. We were being briefed and as we were briefed
- 36:30 the bloke with the mail for the day came up but he wouldn't give it out. The wing commander who was briefing said, "Wait till we finish." Of course Ronnie Dale gets his letters and I didn't get any at the moment because Australia was a fair way away. It took a long while for them to come. Anyway, Ronnie gets a photo of his newborn baby, his first one. He said, "He's a beauty. He looks like me.
- 37:00 He's going with me from now on." I said, "Look Ronnie, if the Germans get you they'll torture you with that photo. Put it under your bed or somewhere." "No. Going with me." So I said, "Okay." Well anyway, we're briefed and we've got to attack these tanks but the cloud, the base of it 2,500. It was deadly
- 37:30 for us that because the light flak and the Germans had got more and more of these multiple barrelled, four barrels on the one unit,[guns] so the coverage of the space was enormous. We were really getting clobbered. We go there and no messing around. We flew over and got stuck into them, and got out of it as quick as anything, and Ronnie
- 38:00 Dale was hit. What was the bloke's name? He was flying as number two to a bloke called John Henry. It's amazing how these names come back to me. John Henry tried to stick with him a bit but he was hit in the engine, and he did a wheels-up landing. With the Typhoon it was quite good to do if there was no obstacle in the way. If there was an obstacle you were in strife. So he shot along
- 38:30 not too bad. He got out, undid his straps and he ran to a hedge, and he came back, and said, "Well, Ronnie Dale's all right. I don't know whether he had time to get his picture." You know and everybody laughed. When the army advanced seven days later, there's the crashed Typhoon and his body is buried there beside it, and he'd been shot in the back of the
- 39:00 head. So you know, you can't help thinking, what with his wife with a new baby and that but you've got to drop those out of your mind.

Did you feel anger towards the Germans when that sort of thing happened?

No, not really. They were doing a job like us.

Are you saying that you were clinical about your job, the way you viewed it?

No, really I realised

- 39:30 that was crook and when I think, only even now, I look at these hands and think that in the [Falaise] Gap Battle, we were going around, there was the German Army with over 600 retreating, and they were jammed in this valley, and the Americans were pushing that way, and the Canadians pushing this way. There was only isolated
- 40:00 flak, one or two were knocked out but isolated flak and we were going around like on training, and we had the four canons, and you'd focus on this moving mass of horses, even horses, and lorries, and mass of men, and we'd go, and this hole of bashed up people would appear. It was,
- 40:30 we were all going round like having a go until we'd used up our ammo. When I think we slaughtered people. That was Falaise and another one was Mortain. You might have heard of these battles. Did you ever hear of the Battle of the Bulge?

Yes.

Tape 6

- 00:34 **Tell us about the Battle of the Bulge.**

Well, the Americans, the Germans had decided to make a breakout and they had eight hundred troops in American uniforms. They lead the advance so called and then the Germans poured out, and

- 01:00 it was going terrific. The Yanks got on the SHAEF that was the Supreme Headquarters [Allied Expeditionary Force] and asked Eisenhower would he put the Typhoon rocket firing squadrons on the job. Now the Yanks to ask for that. See they didn't have anything with rockets. Their fighter bombers had a bomb under each wing. Well that's all right to blow up a
- 01:30 bridge or that but it's just useless if you're trying to stop traffic on the roads or trains, or barges, or these sort of things and of course we used to do a lot of train busting in the back blocks of Germany with long range tanks. Anyway, with this Battle of the Bulge, it's looking really crook and then they turned us on. Well we did a really good job and I

02:00 don't want appear to be boasting but a really good job, and they never had much time to set up anti-aircraft posts. So it wasn't too bad at all. We lost a few but not too bad at all and of course, you'll never read in the history the part that the RAF Typhoon aircraft played in blunting that Battle of the Bulge.

Can you describe it for us from

02:30 **your point of view what actually happened?**

We were shelling them with the canons along the road, like where they were trying to, they had a bit of transport too but it was such a big effort and we were getting them on the roads, and getting anything moving, and that sort of thing. This was blunting their follow-up all the time. They would get and take a place, and

03:00 then they'd want to consolidate it but then we'd be nipping all that in until we had a go at where they'd got to. So it's an interesting story when you read it as written by the RAF.

Can you take us through it step by step? You're giving us the overview of it, of the whole battle but I want to

03:30 **know from your point of view and the point of view of your squadron. I mean did you lose any planes? How many targets did you hit and what was it like to actually be there?**

To think of that, we were hitting everything quite often. We might have lost about one on this but as I say, they never had much chance to consolidate anywhere to set up real flack batteries. They were really

04:00 going flat out. I'm speaking about, they'd moved about 150 miles to start with and that was enormous. I should remember and it's coming back to me, the Battle of the Bulge, the proper name for it, where it was, and all the rest of it. I'm pretty certain I've got it in the book there.

Ardennes Offensive?

Ardennes, you're a good lad. Good

04:30 Sergio. Full marks lad. Ardennes. Did you get it out of my book?

No.

I shouldn't go on like that. Sorry, I forgot I was tape. Don't let it go on, they'll think this bloke's over the moon.

Too late now Tom, they already know.

Ok, you've got me. You've got me like this.

Where did you take off from for the Battle of the Bulge?

05:00 I'd have to look at the logbook just to say because see we were moving on just behind the army all the time. The first thing that they'd do, because we had to supply the artillery for them, if you get what I mean, so we'd be moving to different things. We were hoping upon hope that we could get to a permanent

05:30 drome. We know it would be bombed silly but they'd fill it in for us and we got to one. It was a French one and the Germans had had it, and they'd only left about fifteen hours before. I got quite a few mementos from there. I got a Swastika and all that, that was hanging over the pilot's room. Also there was a

06:00 downed Messerschmitt and one of the blokes on our squadron, his brother was on Spits and that was his victory that one. Anyway, I knew the form and I saw the bloke in charge of the RAF guards, the RAF Regiment it was called. I said, "He have you been over here for booby traps?" He said, "No, no booby traps." So I sort of got the screwdriver

06:30 and I went there, and I'm unscrewing the fuel gauge. All our mob who'd landed were there. They'd fill in the, they said, "You great fool. It will be boob trapped." I said, "Listen, I'll take the risk." But I was well armed beforehand, so I unscrewed this and of course it was just a simple thing but it was like a good memento I thought.

07:00 Anyway but that's how it was. Now, another one, we were at Vogel and we over-wintered there. Oh some of the weather. Those wonderful engine fitters, they'd take it in turns to get up of a night and they had these big overcoats, and they had these

07:30 warmer things, they'd heat the warm up because everything would be frozen otherwise. They put in a fantastic effort. It was a really wonderful effort there. I better tell you about before

08:00 we got to Vogel, we were at Antwerp. Duane I think the place was called, the aerodrome there and they'd captured it but the Germans were about three or four miles away on the other side of the Albert Canal. So we came there and we'd just got out of the aircraft, and these shells started. We ran into the slit trenches and our crowd decided this

- 08:30 was no good. So the wing commander briefed us and we were to go over, and we put a few rockets over where they thought the artillery was. We did one or two strikes like that and on the last one we landed, and the artillery started from another slightly different position over the other side of the canal. So we sheltered
- 09:00 and all of a sudden a shell hit my aircraft. By this time I'd got my own aircraft called T for Tommy, HHT, a beautiful four bladed one and when I was leading I had to have it throttled back, so as the others could keep up for cruising.

What does four bladed mean?

On the propeller. See, the others had three blades

- 09:30 and now they started to improve, and this was one of the first four bladers. Anyway, it was a beautiful aircraft. It would fly hands off all the time, lovely. I'd only done six hours in it. You can imagine how I loved it. Anyway, it caught fire and then all of a sudden the rockets went off. There was a NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute] wagon, National so and so or
- 10:00 whatever it was called. That used to go around with papers and that for the mechanics, and cups of tea. This rocket hit it and killed seven of the ground crew, who were getting cake and a cup of tea.

I'm not clear on what happened here. What caught fire?

One of the shells landed on my aircraft that was parked there.

- 10:30 We were hiding down in slit trenches and it caught fire, and as it caught fire the rockets took off. They just went aimlessly anywhere but one hit a NAAFI wagon that normally would go around the perimeter of the drome and they'd all knock off the jobs they were doing, and get a cup of tea or a piece of cake, or say, "Have you got any papers?" And it killed
- 11:00 seven of the ground crew there. Of course I got the largest piece of it left and I've got it as a souvenir. It is a 20 mill brass case, where all the ammo had exploded and blown up, and blown everything everywhere. But the next HHT I got, the same four blader and that, it wasn't right. I was always having
- 11:30 it in for doing this and doing that. It was really crook. So when we were at Vogel I had them going over it and they said, "No, it's all right." So anyway, we're loaded up with four rockets and full long range tanks. It might have been six
- 12:00 rockets. Whatever it was it wasn't a full complement of them because we were going to try and go as far as we could in to get some trains or something. They had a tip off. I'd just taken off and I was just on the down wind leg, "Ugh, ugh," and the engine stopped. Now, the glide path without engine for a Typhoon, none of this, you could go
- 12:30 there or whatever. It was just like that and you'd have one chance to flatten out, and that's it. So I thought, "Well?" So I screamed. Yes, I think I screamed out to the bloke on the other end of the thing and said, "Stop anybody else taking off. I've got a dead motor." Of course with the wheels, I had no flaps because the
- 13:00 hydraulics had gone with no motor. So then you've got a bog pump, so I was pumping the hydraulics to get a bit of flap down and then the green lights came up that I had the wheels locked, and I just got in over the end, and sat her down, and she's running like mad, and I thought, "Oh look. I'm going to go off the end of this into where these rough bombs
- 13:30 holes are and they'd half filled them." So I dropped the tanks, the overload tanks and they went along, and I thought, "Any sparks they'll go off and I'm done." But they didn't go off. They just split and petrol went everywhere. So anyway, I ran off the end and finally stopped.
- 14:00 The CO [Commanding Officer] came out and said, "You were lucky to get away with that." So anyway, he recommended the group captain of the wing that I get a commendation and you got a green entry in your logbook that you saved an aircraft or you saved a life. So that was very nice. Another case I had is that people were coming back with this particular aircraft.
- 14:30 It had only had a 250 hour do up, over all the engines, everything's perfect. Well, they're coming back all the time saying the engine is stopping and then it's picking up again. They had all the experts on and Chiefy, he was the warrant officer in charge of them all. He was an expert. He said, "There's no drop in revs. There's this and everything. We've
- 15:00 checked the carbies [carburettors] and everything's right." So they decided that it had to have a good test. They said to me, "Well take it up and test it." Now the runway we were using went into a pine forest. I saw Chiefy and those working on it, and said what did they think. They said, "We've got no clue. Everything has been checked out about the magneto drop and
- 15:30 the revs." I decided what I'd do. I'd get off the ground and I'd build up the speed like mad. So I did and then I did a real, real climbing turn, and she just got there, cut out. So I sung out to the air control mob,

- 16:00 "I've got to come in. Don't let anybody takeoff." Now, I couldn't make the runway but I knew there was a long stretch without anything. Anyway, I kept the wheels up and I landed there with a great shower of stuff. Actually I had the straps tight but it still played up a bit with my back, but it didn't matter. I got down all right.
- 16:30 I'd just got in over the fence. The Air Board order is that if you have a cut on takeoff you must go ahead but with all the pine trees and all the rest of it, I'd obviated that requirement I reckoned, by doing this excessive speed to takeoff. So anyway, they took me to the hospital and checked me out, and made me a cup of tea, and I spoke to the doctor.
- 17:00 Then a message came through that the chief flying bloke, the wing commander wanted to see me. So he said, "You were lucky to get out of that." I said, "Oh yes." He said, "You know you disobeyed an order?" I said, "That order, I would have smashed an aircraft beyond repair and I would have been killed but I got away with it. I took
- 17:30 precautions and I had enough speed, and I judged it to get in with no motor." He said, "Oh I can't give you a greenie." That's the commendation I was speaking about. I said, "No I'm not after a greenie. I'm pleased that I saved the aircraft and myself." He said, "Sorry. I can't do anything for you. You disobeyed an order." So I thought, "Well I've struck some lovely RAF blokes
- 18:00 but he's not one of them." And what do you think? They jacked up the aircraft and they found that the non-return valves for the wings, they had been put in upside down, so when you banked instead of like holding that petrol there, they starved the carburettors. So all these
- 18:30 boys bringing it back, they'd go to turn, the engine would cut out and then they might straighten up, and it comes good again. Do you get how it was? Doing a long run in to land, nothing would cut off but the non-return valves were upside [down]. Now because of the rush in production in doing the engines, normally they'd have a little nipple on that that you wouldn't put them in upside down.
- 19:00 That was the whole problem and this mug, I shouldn't say that I suppose but he couldn't call me back to say, "You did a good job and you got out of it but fancy that saved us all the time trying to trace it." Then later on I got a newspaper thing and I cut it out. Two aircraftsmen were charged with murder
- 19:30 because a twin engine aircraft of the RAF was loaded with generals taking them and it had been in for inspection, and they couldn't get the engine started, and they crashed, and they were all killed, and they were up for murder. They found that the wing tanks had the non-return valves upside down. So when you banked, see the idea of
- 20:00 those is you bank like that in our aircraft, all the petrol would run down here, so they have it automatically and then when you straightened up it would level up again. That's what the purpose [was] but when they're upside down they cut the petrol off the other thing that goes to the carbie. Oh it's in the book and I've made a photocopy of the newspaper thing. So that's it.
- 20:30 **You've vindicated yourself. You've done well. Now tell me, the day after D-Day you mentioned that you flew over some orchards and you saw some young Germans there. Now what were they doing in the orchard?**
- They were fighting but they were dead. They were fighting but they all fought to the death, a Hitler Youth Group
- 21:00 but I struck this other, found out about this other group.
- So they were just boys?**
- Yeah, it was getting towards the end of the war sort of thing, past Christmas and that. They could see these young ones and they were sort of about seventeen. Now I must tell you the story about this. We were going to attack a train no I'm just looking at the runway
- 21:30 line. We were attacking a train and or to attack a train, and we going to come in over this great big shed, and in the distance we saw a bomber, a Lancaster bomber on fire, one wing. All of a sudden four chutes came out and then I said to the boys, "Have a look at this." With that
- 22:00 a single chute came out and those four fell way over there but because the aircraft had moved a fair bit, he bailed out and as he bailed out the wing burnt through, and it came down wafting like a leaf. We're over here having a look at this thing like it was on the movies. It missed his chute by that much. I said, "Oh
- 22:30 how was that." So with that we started preparing and we attacked, and blew up the engine, and we damaged all the things on the trail of trucks, and did a few attacks. So now we moved on, we moved on to, I go over for the anniversary of the Empire
- 23:00 Air Training Scheme, the 50th year of it.
- That's going a little bit far ahead.**
- Yeah but over to Perth because then I want to come back to what happened.

Okay.

We're marching along. It's Anzac Day and we're marching along to go to the Cenotaph, and in the afternoon we're invited to a race meeting. On the corner there's a hold up in the march.

- 23:30 So I'm just there and this smallish bloke came up. He had an English accent and he said, "G'day mate." He used that usual form and he said, "I didn't know this was on. I was an air gunner." I said, "Oh were you?" He said, "I was on Lancasters. What were you on?" I said, "Typhoons." He said, "Not with the rockets?" I said, "Yes." He said,
- 24:00 "I've never forgot those. I bailed out and I fell just near a big shed, and these damn Typhoons starting to attack a train on the railway line a bit further, and they're coming in low over all." I said, "But how did you get in the shed?" He said, "Some German Youth ran out and got me, and took me into the shed."
- 24:30 I said, "What date was that?" He said, "I think it was so and so, and so and so. We'd been attacking Mannheim." I thought, "Mannheim was just down a bit. It's a fairly big city." He said, "We were hit and she was burning, and I was the last to get out. They took me in the shed and they said we want to surrender."
- 25:00 He said, "All right." They said, "Will you walk in front of us? The British are up over that river there." He said, "No. Give me one of the submachine guns and I'll walk behind you, and you carry the sheet." So they said, "Okay." Now they set off. Just as he got to that the
- 25:30 movement of the column started to go to the Cenotaph. I said, "I'll see you back here at ten in the morning." He said, "Look sorry. We're leaving at half past six on a tour, a five day tour." And that was it. Anyway, this war historian in Normandy, who I've provided him with a uniform and everything for his museum, he
- 26:00 delved into it, and got the name of the gunner. He wrote to me and he said, "His name was so and so, and you'll need to get onto the archivist for that squadron." Well I wrote to the archivist and nothing happened for three months. Then this letter came, the new archivist said, "The other chap, he found the letter amongst his stuff. The story is all that happened was
- 26:30 after fifteen days wandering through France, the air gunner turned up in the British lines." But he said, "There's nothing to say that he had the seventeen blokes with him." Anyway, I'll be able to put the bloke's name in but I said, "It's more like a trillion to one." Of course as soon as I got home I looked up and there's the
- 27:00 very thing with a comment about the Lancaster, and a statement, "The last poor cow, getting out of it."
- That's great. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the long range tanks that you had.**
- Oh yes.
- And how they worked because it was unusual to have long range tanks like that and to be able to drop them,**
- 27:30 **wasn't it?**
- Oh no, they'd catered for them. It suited the aircraft but you could get so far into Germany you'd pick up quite a good range of targets and barges because they were using barges a lot, and the number that we knocked, and then they'd be spinning around in mid-current.
- 28:00 With the tanks, there was no indication on them anywhere to tell you how much you'd used. Now you've got to think of this, you're the leader. You've got a set throttle setting and you know if you're changing that throttle setting all the time in your car with your accelerator, you're going to use a lot more petrol. So when you then say that wing person,
- 28:30 he's leading out there. He's got throttle changes all the time to keep but there's only one. He's not too bad but then his number one out here or number two our here, he's got throttle changes but he's sort of three people. So he's using up the petrol and in the early days
- 29:00 with the long range tanks, the leader, he's trying to gauge, and you do it really on time, and speed you were going, he couldn't judge, and quite often as a number four then, we'd have two judges. She's spluttering and you'd have to do the change over. Then when she burst into life again oh, it was
- 29:30 lovely. To think that that's what used to happen. I can tell you in A Flight a bloke leading the squadron for the first time on an armed recce. It was a fair way away and Gordon Swift, who was a great friend of mine, he was an Aussie, and he called up, and said,
- 30:00 "Hey Jack. I think we're low on juice." Jack said, "I think we'll be right." They didn't have long range tanks by the way but Jack wanted to get something to hit, to say that it was well worthwhile. So anyway, they went on a bit further and another bloke said, "Hey Jack. I'm getting down on juice." He said, "All right. Well we better start going back. I'll just have a look at this station up
- 30:30 here." There was nothing there to hit, so they turned and came back. Three of them landed wheels up,

didn't get to the drome. One, his props stopped on the thing and Jack, and his number two were the only ones who finished.

So the ones who landed with their wheels up, they landed in a field somewhere?

31:00 Yes in a smooth part you pick and of course they'd send the retrieval crowd out. It was in our territory then but when you're on the others with the long range tanks and someone gets excited, and does the wrong thing, they've just got to be a prisoner of war or something like that.

I wanted to ask you

31:30 **just briefly again about the day after D-Day and you saw that tank under the trees?**

Yes?

You didn't quite finish story. You said you had a bit of skid on, so you called in one of the other blokes?

When I fired the rockets they were short and they hit in front of it. I said to Kelly, "Will you finish it off?" Or some words like that and he said, "Yep." So anyway,

32:00 I moved on but the bloke was firing the machine gun as I was pulling away and that's where I got the four bullets through the Oerlikon but the Oerlikon was okay. It didn't hit any of the hinges and then I did mention I think that Kelly finished the tank off because he had a nice run in, and gave a bit of canon

32:30 fire for the bloke on the machine gun, and that was it.

Okay I just wanted to check on that. The role that you played was very high risk you would have to say and I wondered how the men coped with this, with the fact that they had a very good chance of not coming back at all. Were there

33:00 **any blokes that couldn't take the strain?**

Yes there was one chap. He was coming back because his eyes were playing up and they were checked, and checked and re-checked. He came to us a bit after D-Day and he'd got married, and in the finish they got rid of him as LMF, lack of moral fibre.

33:30 That was the official thing.

Why did they say it was LMF?

It was obvious that he wasn't trying. He was coming back all the time with this and that, with the aircraft.

So did he not complete his missions and just return early?

Quite often he'd say so and so, and she was coughing a bit but a couple with this eyesight thing. He was getting

34:00 around with a smart pair of glasses and all this. I think it was, he'd given it away. Other one was when the CO spoke to me and he said about him. I said, "I think he's trying a bit," because I didn't want to make any judgment too bad but he seemed not too bad.

34:30 Anyway, that's how it was but some people seemed to handle it a bit better than others and when you had a lot of luck.

35:00 With Gordon Swift, I was leading and he was flying as a number three. I think we had six aircraft on the do and we'd found V2 venting, all ready to send

35:30 a message over to London. You know, explosives. They were the rockets, the vengeance weapons of Hitler and if he had not put the effort into the V1s, which had the little "Putt, putt" think up, they'd go about 300 miles an hour with 1,000 kilograms of explosives, if he hadn't put all that effort in, they would have killed us in the air with their fighter production.

36:00 But anyway, after the D-Day they let go the V1s, the first of the Vengeance weapons. Now they would take off on a ski ramp, a concrete ski ramp that, could you write down Bob Merlin somewhere and mention him? It will bring it all back to me because Bob

36:30 Merlin was shot down and worked on them, and got a certificate to say he was a wonderful worker but that's another story. I'll get to that. Anyway, with these they were in woods but with clearance, so then the RAF set up a great team to back plot where these V1s were coming in on. They'd back plot,

37:00 "Hey. This might be where it is." We could see some of them taking off when we were on the strips. So anyway, they'd put in medium bombers to bomb that area. Then we noticed that some of the V1s were going off at right angles to the path for London. Then we'd watch

37:30 and they'd turn around, and go to London. In other words, they'd put another steering gyro in the unit

that back plotting was no good because they were firing them out here, and another course, and when they back plotted where they came in, it was just hopeless. Then the Tempest,

- 38:00 which was a modification of the Typhoon came in and it was a glorious aircraft. Now a lot of my friends, including Bay Adams, now was on Typhoons before that on another wing, he was the leading one, and they lost a lot of these boys on getting too close to an undefended target. When they blew it up they were too close and they'd get
- 38:30 a 1,000 kilogram explosion, and some of them were killed. Now he brought up the technique, he'd fly up with them, put the wing under, and slowly lift the wing up, and tilt it, and once he got to a certain degree, the gyro running it, and steering it would topple. So then it would crash in the sea. They'd try and do it over the sea. Sometimes they'd be over farmland
- 39:00 and they'd get them down there but he got quite a number of them.

This is the V1 you're talking about?

That's the V1, yes. The V2 you couldn't do anything about it and they were horrific because I know. I had a couple of days leave in London and you could get in anywhere, accommodation was easy but you couldn't get in the basement of them.

- 39:30 You had to take number one or two floors and I was in one there, and a V2 landed. Oh the concussion. It didn't blow any windows on our one but it blew a big hole. There was one that landed on Billingsgate Fish market and it was fish market day. Oh, the number of women and children that were killed.

Tape 7

- 00:37 I'd like to speak about my so called, "Black." Now a Black in RAAF parlance is a big crime. We were briefed to hit this factory that had a big tower on the factory and the Germans
- 01:00 were using that to direct their artillery, and the Canadians wanted an attack on it but be very careful in case the Canadians had taken the factory, and the tower. So anyway we were briefed to that.
- 01:30 I'm flying number three to the CO. He'd been in the Battle of Britain too and he was clued up about getting to the targets and that. So anyway, we were briefed and off we took. We had eight flying and I was number three. He steered there and he
- 02:00 echeloned us out. That's were you go out there like this and you're ready to come in, and attack. He and his number two, and he said, "Going down now," which was normal parlance. So anyway they went and I took my eyes off those, and I lined up the target, and gave it the works,
- 02:30 a really lovely shot. All the boys following, they did and it was a shambles, a real shambles. Now I couldn't understand. When we pulled out and we formed up again, he's going [makes angry gesture], and all this. So I thought, "He's around the bend. What's the matter?" Then I looked and he had his rockets on, he and his number two.
- 03:00 They hadn't fired. So I thought, "I've had it if the Canadians are there." But this bloke and I know he was slipping a bit, this bloke never said, "I'm going to have a look." He went through the correct procedure for an attack, going down, echelon starboard, going down. He never said to have a look.
- 03:30 He was giving me all the stares, "You've had it and yeah." [gestures thumbs down] All this. We pull up. He rushes over before he gets in the jeep to take us to debriefing. He said, "You've committed a Black and you're going to pay for it." I said, "What's the worry?" He said, "I was uncertain whether we should attack." I said, "Well why didn't you say so? Your sass said, "Going
- 04:00 down." Do you expect me to follow you and then try and get on the target? You'd be the first to say you missed. You did it as a normal procedure." "No I didn't," this, that and the other. Anyway, we get there. he gets up with the wing commander for the debriefing, and the wing commander is looking at me like this. He's blowing down his ear all the time. He said, "Well it looks like the squadron put up a
- 04:30 pretty bad Black. So we've signalled Supreme Headquarters to see if the Canadians were there and they've suffered. We're waiting a signal. It should be through to us in about five or ten minutes." At the debriefing I said, "Look the CO
- 05:00 leading echeloned us out and he said going down. Now, he only had to say going down to have a look but normally if you're going to have a look, you leave the squadron in a tight formation and you're not ready to fire." He said, "No, no. You've got to pay attention. You knew the briefing." I thought, "I've got no hope here. They're going to railroad me." So anyway,
- 05:30 an orderly came in and they both, the wing commander and the squadron leader both [whispers], and the wing commander said, "Well, this signal is a signal of congratulations from the Canadians. It was a wonderful attack. They hadn't got into the place and they're

- 06:00 moving on now. So we're off the Black now." Anyway, I couldn't speak to this joker after that. So after a couple of days, I was acting flight commander but they wouldn't give me the rank because they had an establishment of so many for the squadron and some of them were ill or something, and weren't flying,
- 06:30 but I was doing the flying still as a flying officer, whereas I should have been at least a flight commander, but I put it down to him. I would have been a flight lieutenant and I'm leading the squadron all this time, and I reckon it was ridiculous. But anyway, about the second or third day he said, "What's up with you Tommy? You're not
- 07:00 joking as per norm." I said, "You know what's up with me." "Oh you get over these things." I thought, "No. You swine." Oh, I shouldn't have said that. Will you take that out? Hey?
- Don't worry about it. It's okay.**
- Oh all right.
- You can say anything you like, seriously. It doesn't matter.**
- Are you sure?
- Yes absolutely.**
- Well okay. Anyway, then I made out the statistics and
- 07:30 signed it as acting flight commander and took it to him, and he said, "Oh that's a pretty good month's activities."
- What were your statistics? Are these your kills?**
- No this was what you flew and the times on, and times off, and what the results were. He went
- 08:00 through it and said, "That's pretty good." Anyway from then on, he signed it and from then on he didn't fly too much, and then he was posted away, and only about six or seven years ago he died with dementia. I'm not saying it but he was suffering I believe from other people who knew him in England, for quite a while. I'm not dare saying this was dementia because
- 08:30 he was a wonderful navigator and all the rest of it, getting to the targets and that. That was a lapse but I was going to be pinned with it without doubt. I mean I'd done it before. You keep your squadron together while you're in a manoeuvrable thing, to go on a wide thing and check up, and say, "Well it looks all right. We'll echelon out. We're going down." But anyway
- 09:00 that was that one. What was the other one I told you, another name?
- I can't remember actually. I've got a few questions I'd like to ask you from what you raised before.**
- Yes?
- The strike on Mortain, tell us about what happened from your view.**
- What happened, our wing commander went out on a reconnaissance and he found this mass of German
- 09:30 armour, 200 tanks or something forming up. So he came back and reported it, and they said, "Right." We had round the clock, not in the night but daytime, early in the morning until fairly late at night, smashing up this crowd, all the tanks. It was going to lead a break through onto the Americans one
- 10:00 side and the Canadians the other. So the wing commander, a chap I still know, he was servicing two aircraft because the wing commander was coming, leading us each time but we'd have a bit of a rest on one if we'd just had one, but he was going and leading them all the time. He knew exactly where they were and all this.
- 10:30 A friend of mine was flying number two. You see we had four squadrons on our wing and he was an Aussie in 174 Squadron, Harry Markby actually. He was with him when he first found them. Harry died early last year. So anyway, Mortain, oh.
- 11:00 We had flamers and trucks, and everything, blowing the lot up. I know one was knocked down but there was very little flak. It was an open slather and that really blunted the whole thing. In fact that was a really, Mortain was another big battle.
- Was that on the road?**
- Pardon?
- You were just strafing on a road area?**
- 11:30 Some were in lanes as they formed up and that.
- So Mortain was a town?**

Mortain was a town that they named it by.

How many tanks and vehicles would you have hit and destroyed that day?

I always like to work on the squadron effort and I know I claimed about, I think, and

12:00 you can correct me from the book. I think I had about six flamers.

What's a flamer I'm sorry?

Where they go up in flames, the tank, like petrol tanks or something have been hit with the rockets and we were using armour piercing ones. With the canons, 420 mills concentrating to the one point, a massive armour.

So the canons itself

12:30 **can pierce armour of a tank?**

Yes they'd have the shells on, yes.

They could pierce the armour of a tank?

Yes.

I presume these would have been Tiger tanks and so forth?

Oh yes, the very good ones. I think they were, weren't they [JU] 88s? See, in the defence of Normandy, like the Germans defending, they had built some of these tanks in because

13:00 they were self-moved up and then they buried them in, and there were a lot that we used to knock out.

So you would have got at least six tanks in the Mortain battle?

Well that was,

To your knowledge?

I don't like to be specific as though I'm really building up a case for myself.

No, it seems to me, what I'm trying to say is that it is pretty obvious that

13:30 **your squadron would have had a huge kill ratio. That's pretty obvious.**

Well that would be in the squadron history.

So individually I'm trying to partition it. Individually it seems that each person would have had many kills regularly.

Oh yes but as you run your canons along it you'd use up your rockets, you could make an awful mess. When you think, you've got say

14:00 six aircraft doing this.

How many vehicles do you think the six aircraft knocked out?

Oh well look

In the Mortain battle?

There were rows of them, rows of them and anyway of course, they got a good mention from our wing commander of our wing, who was the one

14:30 who found them. They thought there was a build up and I think that's why he did that reconnaissance but lots of them were hiding in bushes and all this sort of thing until they were told to move off by their people.

And you said Falaise Gap?

Falaise Gap, yes.

Falaise Gap.

That's the one where I was speaking out at the briefing and there was an Australian War

15:00 Correspondent, and it appeared in the newspapers in Australia. I said, "Goodness me, it was the nearest to a training exercise. There was little flak and we were going around in a circuit." As I say, these hands killed about 3,000 blokes because there were walls of blokes trying to escape and you'd put the canons on them, and pull it

15:30 right through, and here a great opening. Then blokes would be coming in again. It was terrible and I'm saying it was like a training exercise. It ready pretty crook, as though I was a blood-thirsty bloke but I didn't mean it that way.

When you saw that and you knew that the outcome was going to be before you pulled the trigger, you would have known that clearly when you were going to dive?

No, you could have

16:00 undershot or overshot, or anything. It was only when you saw the, as you went away, this great opening with writhing bodies in it.

What went through your mind after that?

You didn't think about it. You only thought, "I hope some bloke doesn't fire his rifle up in the air and hit you." That's how it was.

But you thought about it later?

Of course I did.

Did it affect you?

16:30 Not really. It might have had something to do with why I never mentioned it to anybody, even the family, my mother and father or anybody, for thirty years. What broke the shell was me under the Freedom of Information where the squadron histories were released and they were onto me to fill out what really happened. That might have broken my

17:00 shell I suppose, if you can call it a shell.

How often did you come across convoys? Would they be small or large convoys?

The convoys? Do you mean in the sea?

No I'm referring to on land, the army convoys, German Army.

Because we had such a preponderance in the air they were very careful but the

17:30 thing is when we did strike those, you never aimed and run your canons along. What you did, you put your rockets into the leading one and that holds all the others up, and then everybody takes their time to run their guns, and rockets right through them but if you start on that, you'll find it's not much good knocking one out or two out there, and then the others are still keeping

18:00 going. So the whole thing was to knock the first one in the queue, the convoy.

How often did you encounter convoys?

Well look, every now and then sort of thing. How often did we strike barges? Every now and then.

These are river barges?

Yep. How often with trains? Sometimes they'd say, they'd get a tip off through

18:30 the Underground that there's four trains in at so and so, and some of them wouldn't have steam up or that but because we know that when we whack the engine, they wouldn't blow up. You had to be a bit careful on trains because they had anti-aircraft

19:00 guns on the front and rear, and you just had to be a bit careful with how you went about getting them. Now will I tell you about Bob Merlin? Bob Merlin. Now Bob Merlin before D-Day

19:30 was shot down about five or six months beforehand, okay? Then when we moved into Normandy, to our first threat, we were only there a few days and who drives up but Bob Merlin in a German jeep,

20:00 and a German shepherd dog that belonged to the major who, it was his jeep. Now, Bob could speak French because he'd spent a lot of time in Cyprus and he was one who hated the Germans because his sister in Cyprus, when the Germans landed there, ill-treated her, and he had a hatred.

20:30 He joined the French Marquis,[part of the French Resistance] that was the secret ones and they'd blow up things, and he got going with them, and he could speak French so well, he was done up with false papers and all. Now the RAF kept sending signals through to the Marquis to get him to give himself up because they were starting

21:00 on the thing but Bob would not and he kept blowing up things with them, and he got a job at, one of the Marquis blokes got a contract to build these ski ramps for the V1s. So he showed us when he arrived in the jeep that the Marquis had killed the major and said meet up with your people, 175 Squadron is based on

21:30 B5, and that's how he came up. So anyway, he went back and we could never understand this. The RAF kitted him out, gave him a couple of weeks leave and sent him back to our squadron to fight. He had a few hours on the Typhoon and fighters. Now, normally

22:00 they'd never let them. They'd send them out to the Far East or Southeast Asia, never to the same area

because they've got so much information about Marquis things and the Germans would know about him. We couldn't understand but it appeared they wanted him to, some time ago, because he had some information, to go through Switzerland or something like that. They had some escape routes but he

- 22:30 wouldn't buy it. Anyway, Bob had done a few practice things with us and then he was ready to go. It turns out he's to fly as my number two and he's got a Sten [submachine] gun, and he's got all implements strapped to him, and everything. I thought, "Gee what's going to
- 23:00 happen here." We got through that trip and he was flying as my number two the next time, and we were attacked, and he got hit, and he started to get on fire. He said, "Take me to the nearest way to the bomb line." I said, "Right." So he's following along with me and then he's getting white sheets of glycol coming out of the motor. I said,
- 23:30 "Look Bob you've got time to bail out." "Are we at the bomb lines yet?" I said, "No we've got a bit more to go." He said, "Well let's keep going." Then he's losing height all the time and he's definitely got to land on the ground because he's too low to bail out. I said, "We're just about here." Now for people to think the bomb line, it's not a defined line. It's roughly where they're there and we're here. You've just got to
- 24:00 judge it and I thought we were about where, on the briefing, where the bomb line would be. So anyway, the motor cuts and he's on fire, and he comes down, and he goes into this lot of bushes, and then it keeps ploughing along, and about 80 metres on whoosh, up it goes. So I went up and I
- 24:30 circled for a while to transmit the exact position so we'd know for the authorities, and I got them to take a bearing on me, and the two stations take it, and that's where they know he went in. So after all this I get back okay and I said, "No Bob's had it." So anyway, the adjutant packs his stuff up and the next night we were in the
- 25:00 rough nest there, and who comes in with a black face but Bob. We're that pleased to see him but what does the adjutant do? He runs to me and he said, "Are you bloody blind? I've packed all his stuff and now I've got to unpack it." And I wondered if it was all packed or not. So anyway, the story was that as soon as he hit the side he
- 25:30 was in an agricultural channel, no water in it but the side was ripped out of the aircraft and he just dropped there, and the aircraft went on another 60 metres before it blew up, and that's how. Then he's lying there and he thought, "What'll I do?" All of a sudden on his pants, he was lying stretched out and he nearly collapsed, and there's a British Tommy going like this.
- 26:00 So he helped him turn round and they wriggled back. That's how close it was, the Germans. They were firing into the aircraft on fire with the rattler machine guns. Of course these bushes had sprung back again but down there it was all burning. So Bob came and then he was
- 26:30 sent away, and he never came back any more to the squadron but it was wicked, he was that close to that, but what an escape it was, absolutely wonderful. And that damn dog, I was just playing a little game and it bit me, and I've still got the scar round here somewhere. So anyway, Jimmy Wood, a Canadian, who came to us a bit late in the action,
- 27:00 about October or something, he looked after the dog but when the squadron moved into Germany they weren't there long before it was poisoned. So that was Bob Merlin and Bob is in the book there, and he said that his first crash, explaining what happened,
- 27:30 and he says that he's flying as my number two. So in that book, I've got a copy of the book, he made a big mistake. It was the second time. When he went into France the first time, it was someone else he was flying as number two to. So it's only just a mistake but people say, "This bloke's been around everywhere." No but he's made a mistake there. That was
- 28:00 that one.

Okay there's a few more questions I'd like to ask you.

Yes?

Tell us about your experiences against the German fighters, like the ME-262, the Arado?

No, no. Look we weren't fighters.

But you would have encountered them no doubt?

No, we never encountered an Arado. We never encountered face to face an ME-262. All we,

- 28:30 as I've told you, the ME-262s, the Germans were using them to come over at a great height, turn and dive down at terrific speed, and drop twelve personnel bombs right across the aerodromes, the airstrips. As I said, our billet got a direct hit from one and
- 29:00 two of our blokes collected shrapnel, and they were away for some months, and I told you, I was writing a letter home, and my fountain pen, a tile hit the pen, and broke the nib, and that's all I got out of it.

You've got to remember you told me this off camera. That's why I want to get in on camera.

Oh did I tell you, I beg your pardon. I hope I wasn't in a querulous mood then but I thought no, I'd told you that.

29:30 **What about ME-109s?**

Well, we saw a lot of those but as I said, we never stopped to try and fight them, and of course the flight with Bill Speedy in, it was a cloudy day, and you had to be careful but they came out, and we lost a bloke who hadn't been long with us. His name starts with H

30:00 and another bloke, Capstick Dale, was shot down, and got a broken arm. Bill Speedy's aircraft was shot up but it would still fly a bit, but he had to get down on the ground quick. So he got to an American strip and he landed with the wind, and he went down, and of course ran on a bit, ran on but got the brakes on. An American colonel came up and he said, "Hey,

30:30 don't they tell you blokes how to fly? Fancy landing downwind." Bill said, "If I'd have gone around into the wind the aircraft might have given away. I've been shot down really and I've had enough petrol left to there but would you have liked a smoking wreck to hold up your traffic?" He said, "Partner, I apologise." I

31:00 should have had an American accent then shouldn't I? That was Bill's experience with that. But anyway, Hubble? Some name like that. He'd only been with us a little time and he was knocked down, and Bill speedy got out of it, and Capstick Dale, he left. We never got him back.

What about your

31:30 **flights over Germany. Tell us about them, the hardest ones you had over Germany.**

They were nearly all worrisome there because of the distance and all the rest of it. We were so used to having just short trips really but with the long range tanks we'd get

32:00 quite a distance in. Then when the V2s, where there was no, you couldn't have any defence against them but we put in a great effort on the, did I tell you about Gordon Swift? He was flying number three to me.

32:30 I was leading and we found this V2 venting. I didn't finish that did I?

A V2? No, I don't think you did.

So I lined up the boys and we came down, and Ashers Ashman, a West Indian, a lovely bloke.

So he was a Negro?

No, a West Indian. They were like really sort of Indian type I think,

33:00 dark but a lovely bloke and well educated too. His French was wonderful. Anyway, Ashers was flying, I don't know where he was flying but he was in our group and I really appreciated this because we came down out of the sun, and we blew this thing up, and it

33:30 was enormous. I thought because Joe Swift didn't, he said, "I'm hit" or something like this and so anyway he went off, and I sung out to his number two to keep with him. The

34:00 people in the control on the thing picked it up and told him to go to another frequency. Then after a while as we were going back his number two came up and I went like this to indicate change back to us. He came back and said, "I couldn't pick him up but

34:30 he said something about look out for his girlfriend." We got back there and when they were missing, and they didn't know what happened, I thought he might have been caught in the explosion because I know our rockets set it off, my number's one and two.

35:00 I thought Gordon, number three, he might have got caught in a bit of that explosion but it turned out later he'd been hit by flak because he just said, "I'm hit in the engine" or something like that. The squadron leader sent a note off to his people, his mother

35:30 to say this, that and the other. Well about three weeks later I got a letter from his mother to say she knew I was leading, the squadron leader had told her and is there anything that hasn't come out that I could tell her. I said, "Look, this is exactly what happened Mrs Swift."

36:00 I went right through it, exactly what happened and then I said, "I'm at a loss because they went to another frequency as soon as Gordon said." We never called him Gordon but I had to use the vernacular for him. We called him Joe all the time. I'd slip sometimes

36:30 but anyway. I said, "They went to another frequency and his number two couldn't find him, and that's where it is." Anyway, then the message came through after nine weeks that he was a prisoner of war and then Rusty Townsend was shot down, and went to the same prisoner of

- 37:00 war camp. They were in prison together before they'd been interrogated and because Rusty made a comment to Joe, they came in with a rifle and belted him over the head. Now that could account for where he forgets things. So that was a lovely story and then Gordon got home. He was a farmer
- 37:30 and he died just before I went over for the Empire Air Training Scheme function but I had their address, and they'd moved from the farm down to be near the hospital where he was getting treatment, but he couldn't be saved. So what I did, I took a book on Typhoons where Joe's mentioned
- 38:00 and I sent them a copy of my book, and I took the original letter of what his mother sent because they told me they had the original letter from me. So then when a nephew of Gordon's or Joe, when she wrote the history there, she asked me to help with the section where he was on the
- 38:30 175 Squadron, which I did. But it was lovely to meet his family and that. He had three sisters and they were all married, and his widow. Now what was the one about? Was it Colin had the thing about the name? Did you want to know?
- No, no Colin [interviewer] will ask you that when he comes on.**
- Okay.
- 39:00 **If you actually valued all your kills, that includes tanks and all the equipment and I think this is all recorded isn't it, most of it?**
- Most of it is down in the logbook but I don't think I'd like to be saying, "And what do you think? I did this and I did that." No, that's not me and I wouldn't like to do that really. All I want to emphasise is
- 39:30 how lucky I was compared to a lot of other young blokes and when I think of them it does get to me. Now we had a New Zealander who came to the squadron a bit late and his name was Cain and of course we never really knew his first name, the New Zealander. Well I think on his grave his proper name is there but we called him Killer Cain because there was the
- 40:00 Cain in the Battle of Britain. I think a New Zealander name Cain, not the same way you spelled it but natural, he was called killer and what a wonderful bloke he was, and also he would preface every statement with, "Hey boys, this is good for a laugh," and away he'd go. At the time we'd captured Eindhoven. When I say we,
- 40:30 the allies had captured Eindhoven and they had the big balloons there to keep the Germans away because there was something like 60,000 at the Phillips factory there, and they'd all hop on bikes when the whistle went. It was amazing to see. We were in Vogel about forty miles away. It was amazing.

Tape 8

- 00:34 **So you were about to tell us about the New Zealand bloke.**
- We were based at Vogel and they decided to run a truck in to have a dance with a Dutch girl. There were planet of girls around there and hardly any of them sort of,
- 01:00 the upper crust Dutch girls could speak but these were all factory girls, and I'm not denigrating them. They were lovely but it was hard to sort of understand much, but Killer was wonderful. Whether they could speak or not, he was always good. Then he finally teamed up with a girl, a Dutch girl, who
- 01:30 swam in the '36 Olympics. Of course the truck only went now and then, and you'd have to put your name down because it was a trip but he had an arrangement with the transport. He'd pay some bloke that had to go there so often and we'd know that he was on with the girl because he'd come round, and buy
- 02:00 chocolate from us or anything like that. We used to laugh but the point is the mother of the girl was wrapped in her Olympic medals. Every time he's there and he thought, "How am I going to go?" She'd say, whatever her name was, he did tell me but I've forgotten. She knew a bit of English, "Take him up and show your medals, and the authorisation
- 02:30 for them," or something like this. So he'd say, "This is all right." Anyway, that's how he went. As I say, every thing he said he'd preface with, "Hey boys, this is good for a laugh." And it always was. He'd have us in hysterics and everything.
- Just to clear that one up, are you saying that the girl would take him upstairs to her bedroom to show him the medals and they would stay for a bit longer?**
- Yes and we'd say, "But what
- 03:00 about the butterfly collection?" He'd say, no one there. They don't have butterflies there." I don't know whether that was right but that was our request that we'd say to them. I don't know. Either Mum thought well this is repayment for all the stuff he gathered from all the time, passing it on to Mum. So

anyway, we were attacking a place and

- 03:30 Killer was hit, and he had plenty of height, and he said, "Well I thought he was going to bail out but he started to come down as though he was going to do a wheels up." I thought, "He hasn't picked a place yet." Of course with the engine not ticking over, the glide angle is pretty steep. Then
- 04:00 all of a sudden he said, "Hey boys, this is good for a laugh." He undid his straps and jumped overboard, and he was going about 180 or something. We couldn't get over it. He originally had plenty of height to bail out and it was in our territory. So then they said, "We want

- 04:30 a volunteer to go up to the army." They've buried him temporarily.

Did he live?

Hey?

Did he live?

No, no. No the Army rang up and said, "We've buried him temporarily and he'll go into a war graveyard later but we've got all his bits and pieces here." So anyway, Bill wasn't down to do an op the next day and he said, "I'll go."

- 05:00 Well he went there and got all his bits and pieces, and his 38 revolver, that we had to carry, and you know he hit the ground so hard the barrel was pointed like that. We couldn't understand it because whether he'd lost the plot or something. So
- 05:30 we could never work that out but I shouldn't say it. No I better not say it on the record. You won't put it on will you?

What do you mean?

Well if I say something about what they found in his belongings? No, I'll let that go. I'll tell you when we're off the tape.

Okay.

But you won't have that bit in will you?

- 06:00 **Anything you say will be recorded by the camera. The camera is running all the time, so if you don't want it to be recorded you can tell us later.**

Just in case a relation heard it but remind me to tell you later. Now okay what was some of the others?

You said leave plane?

Right. They gave me a few days leave. They said, "You've been flat out, so you can have a couple of days leave." So

- 06:30 I went over and I stayed at the farm naturally. It was about sixty miles from the airfield at Hendon. The two leave planes would go there. They were DC-3s. They're twin engine ones. You might have heard of them. They call them Dakotas a bit. You would have heard that. So anyway, I went to the farm and I used to take when I'd get a food parcel, I'd take
- 07:00 food there for the people, which they appreciated. After the leave I went back to Hendon and I went down, and showed the papers. He said, "All right, you're in number two aircraft." I said, "Okay." So I went down with the chit, the boarding chit they had to show you should be there. He said, "What's the
- 07:30 matter with that mug?" I've told him we've got vacancies but they're all taken with packs for parachutes, parachute packs those seats. No one in them but they're there. "We can't have them loose over the floor. Go back and tell him to have a look at number one." So I went back and told this loading master. He had the notice up there. "What about
- 08:00 it?" He said, "Oh I did forget that. Look here's a chit. Go to number two." I said, "Okay." So I went there and they were awkward seats. They were made really that you sat back a bit, like they might have used them to transport blokes with parachute on. I don't know. We take off and the weather had got crook. Now our bloke climbed
- 08:30 up and got out of it at 6,000 feet. The other number one, who'd taken off a bit before us, he really tried to go under it, nice to look at the ground and all the rest of it. Anyway, he hit a hill and they were all killed only about two miles away from the farm. When I got there they said, "Oh we were worried which aircraft you were
- 09:00 on. The boys said that we got a signal that one of the returning leave ones, we knew you were coming back, had crashed." I said, "Well I was really lucky." Then I got a letter from the farm to say, "We were just wondering and we'll be concerned if you don't reply to this." So I wrote back and I didn't say to them that I'd changed the aircraft. I just said, "No I was all right. I was on the other one. There were two left." I didn't even

09:30 tell them that one had tried to go under me because it's a great temptation and the one, he did the right thing, and climbed up through it. Now look, someone was looking after me. There must have been. It was amazing. Now, what was the other one I had there?

There was a bloke, I'm not sure on the name but is it Lehman?

Who?

10:00 **Lehman?**

Lehman? No.

Stan Lehman?

Who?

Dan Lehman? I'm sorry I didn't have my pen. I tried to remember it but I can't remember that. I wanted to ask you. You mentioned that there was one bloke who was put out for LMF? [Lacking Moral Fibre ie cowardice]

Yes.

Were there any other blokes who really lost the plot,

10:30 **who became reckless, as pilots often do?**

Oh yes. One bloke who came to us, Dekerderl, Dekerderl. I really D-e-k-e-r-d-e-r-l. I got a big story from him and I put it together from information that this war historian provided to me. Now why did he

11:00 do all this? Because he was in the sixth grade when Dekerderl, no Dekerderl was in the sixth grade when he was just starting the school in the first grade and he wanted to follow up what happened. Well Dekerderl was killed on our squadron and I provided a lot of information, and he did appreciate it, and that's why he's been so helpful. I've helped him out with his museum and that.

11:30 DK as he was called, his father was a Count and a big place in France. His mother was a Scottish girl from Edinburgh and when the war came he went over with her there, and actually

12:00 he was for the French Underground, the contact and all this. So anyway, his son went to France and said, he to honour being called up. So he went there and he was wounded in the, I thought they said the Ardennes there or somewhere there. He was wounded and they discharged him. Anyway, he recovered with an honourable

12:30 discharge and he decided to go, and join the Navy, the British Navy. So he went with a friend of his and it was arranged, actually I think the father had a lot to do with it, for a submarine to wait for them to come on a certain time on a fishing vessel. Every now and then the Germans would raid the fishing vessel to

13:00 check that he was keeping in accordance with his licence to fish because he was providing fish to the Germans. They got aboard and away they went, and they made the rendezvous. Then the skipper of the submarine said, "Look we've got to go down the Channel and have a look round. It will be a few days trip but make your self at

13:30 home." So they did there and there were no incidents, but they could tell with the confined space that when they came back to the port, Dekerderl or DK said to this other chap, "Do you still want to join the Navy?" He said, "No. Not on your life. We'll go for the air force." So they applied and then he went through the Air Training Scheme,

14:00 got his wings, and then he went onto Spits. Then he got advice that the girl he was engaged to had married another Frenchman that he knew and he was battling with the war, and it really affected him because even his family later said that they thought he

14:30 wanted to die. So I put the story together and it's a fascinating one. Then on the Spits he said that he was sick of patrolling and not seeing much in the air. He wanted to get onto Typhoons, so he did a conversion and he came to us on 245 Squadron. He did about eight ops there but I think because of the bit of poor seniority, that's a bit

15:00 to stay. He came to us as flight commander of B Flight and I was acting flight commander of B Flight. There was no differentiation. There was only A and B. But why wasn't I paid as flight lieutenant or got the temporary rank with the number of ops I had up? Because something to do

15:30 with on the establishment they had too many. I think it was two squadron leaders held against it and they already had two flight lieuts [lieutenants] who were flying, so they just said, "You have to carry on." I mean I never made a fuss about it but others would have fought it tooth and nail. Anyway, he came to us and he had about eight ops on 245, and all of them said

16:00 to me, I used to meet them in the mess at times. They were on the same wing as us, 245, 174 and we were 175. They used to say, "No we won't ever go to the ops hut down there with him. He'd kill us."

16:30 **They wouldn't fly with him?**

No, they wouldn't go in the jeep down to there. He came to us and they were attacking a target, and once you've done your attack unless there's requirements to really hang around, you don't hang around because it lines up all of the flak on the one. They

17:00 made a good attack and he went round in again, and quite low, and got clobbered. Well he pulled up in the air and he was trying to get out of the aircraft. He wasn't wounded but he hit the ground and was killed. Well of course this war historian blokes said, "How long did he live?" Well, I wasn't on the show at the time. Bill Speedy, who

17:30 moved to A Flight, he was on it and said, "Really he shouldn't have gone in again like that." Of course the bloke who was acting as our squadron leader, he went to the family's chalet. It wasn't that far away, just about 50 kilometres and it was

18:00 not occupied by the Germans, and the family weren't surprised at all. They said, "We expected it any sort of time." So that was the story on DK. It seemed a waste of life but how your feelings can get to you. Were you the one Colin that I said about Charles Laughton?

Yes.

Right. You forgot about that.

18:30 **You spoke to both of us about Charles Laughton. I thought you already told us the story.**

No.

Oh okay, he was a British Officer. He got killed.

He was a British Officer, Vernon-Jervis and he had the Oxford accent, and he had the jowls of Charles Laughton because I'd gone to see the local cinema when I was in one of the suburbs of London, and the manager saw me

19:00 in the queue. He came out and he said, "Don't line up here. Come in and I'll give you a good seat." And it was Mutiny On The Bounty. Charles Laughton [actor who played Captain Bligh] was well and truly in that. I don't know whether you've seen that one of his? He acted wonderful but this bloke was the dead image and what a wonderful pilot he was. He was wonderful. I'd flown as part of our squadron and

19:30 he might have been leading because he was on 245 Squadron. Anyway, they made him CO, I think it was 198 Squadron, so they gave him six weeks off and all his gear went to the airfield they were on, still Typhoons of course with rockets. He drove there and all his gear

20:00 was there, and the wing commander greeted him, and said pleased to meet you, and that. "Your squadron is being briefed now for an op." "Oh," he said, "Right I'll be in that." So he went in and they went over the briefing again, and he said my style is the usual one, this, that and the other. Anyway, he was a wonderful navigator too. They got to the target okay and he echeloned them out, that is stepping them out so as they could go down, put the

20:30 rockets in, and he just started in his dive, and his tail was blown off. Then all the airfields got a signal round, "Typhoon pilot's second to our shortest on record. One hour, fifteen minutes." His second tour

21:00 he only did that. Now he was wonderful and Vernon-Jervis was his name, like a double barrel one. I never knew. I just always, not to his face, said Charles because he did, he had the jowls and everything, wonderful. Okay, that was that one. What was the other one you had?

There was the Glaswegian bloke.

Oh yes.

21:30 Oh gee I think of him now. Jock Wiper who was a tough boy, really tough. He had been in the British Army and he changed over, and was trained as a pilot, and he came

22:00 to us, and when I say tough, he was tough. Of course I was leading the squadron then, each time we flew and we got on well together. Jock was hit. We got back into our lines and he had to bail out, and he bunted out over the front, that is you push the stick forward but hold it back, and you undo all your straps, let it go, and you're catapulted

22:30 out. You've got to make certain you've let the lead for your earphones and everything, you leave your parachute on of course. Anyway, he bunted out but as he went he caught his knee on the top of the windscreen. It was still in our area then. He'd got back into our area and the Army came, and picked him up, and dropped him off there.

23:00 We said, "You're limping Jock. Go and have a medical." "I'm staying on." You know, like this. He stayed there and he said, "No, the knee's getting better," and all the rest of it. Later on they sent him over to England to pick up an aircraft and have a few days off they said. The next night

- 23:30 we got a signal, "Warrant Officer Wiper fell over in the shower and has broken his arm." Everybody who looked at the signal on the board said, "Yes and they should have put full as a boot too." Oh gee but later on when he had got over that, he
- 24:00 was a good flyer too and he'd moved up to sort of leading with a number two. Of course we were doing a lot of armed reconnaissance, in that book there, armed recces but they were looking for whatever we could find in the way of transports and barges, and all the rest of it. They briefed us to say when we were going on these, keep an eye
- 24:30 open for the steeple towers of churches because in battles they'd found invariably there's German spotters up in the tower. Now this was exactly down what Jock wanted because on the first time we're going and we'd picked up a few things. We'd used up our rockets and canons but not Jock. He said, "Tommy."
- 25:00 I said, "Yes Jock." He said, "I think I've seen something." I said, "All right. I didn't see anything but we'll do a lazy circuit. Anyway, he and his number two go down, and skittle this church. So when we got out I said, "Look Jock. This is no good. The point is there's no battle going on there that would worry the Germans to put people up
- 25:30 there. Why did you do that?" He said, "Listen you won't wake up." I said, "Why not?" He said, "I had three relations in a hit run raid on Glasgow and they died, and they weren't in, and they're going to pay, and I can tell you I only hope they're there on a Sunday when they're on their knees, and I skittle them." He went on like this and I thought, "Now look, he's going to job me properly." So I said,
- 26:00 "Well Jock, all I can say to you, there's no battle on. If we happen to be shot down there and we want a bit of assistance, every villager will stick their pitchforks into you, as they've done to a few others." He said, "Never mind that. I'm getting my own back on them." So every time we're coming back he'd say, "Tommy I have seen
- 26:30 something." I don't know whether that's a Scotch accent or what but that's how it sounded to me. Down he'd go and skittle the church, so a lot of these churches he skittled, and really there's a lovely photo of him and myself together, and we got on well because I swallowed everything. He said, "We were briefed
- 27:00 if there is a battle and the Germans can't get there, what do you say to that?" I said, "Not much Jock." "No. That's right. You haven't got an answer." That's how it was but I rolled with it all the time. I've never forgotten him and I thought he'll never get through the war but he did, and he died about nine years ago from Legionnaires disease. At some function he was at about six of them got it
- 27:30 because I thought he'd die of alcohol poisoning. So that was Jock Wiper.

You didn't think that he was too reckless, that he was endangering others?

Look I could have taken action and skittled him properly but that's not me. He was a really nice bloke at heart but I didn't

- 28:00 want to. I just thought, "If we're shot down near there it will be goodnight." Anyway, people would say that's not much leadership but I thought it was the right thing to do. You've got the use of a good bloke and a tough bloke.

You were about to tell us earlier on, you started telling a story about

- 28:30 **Eindhoven, and a balloon barrage.**

Oh yes. Now I don't want to finish the ops and where I go, and have strife at the Group Support Unit.

Well okay, tell it in your own way then.

Well okay. We're on stand down and I'd learned to play bridge, and I loved it. Ashers and I are

- 29:00 playing bridge against another pair there, and all of a sudden the CO, Rollo Campbell came in, and one thing that I really admired him, I'm bouncing off a bit but he was an Englishman, who was in the army, and they put him across to the air force, and he was a flyer
- 29:30 in West Africa, I think on light aircraft. Well he came and they gave him the Typhoon Squadron 175, and he'd done a few hours on that. This is what I admired. He came to me and he said, "Tommy I'm going to have eight trips as your number two until I get the score." Now I've struck ones who have come to be
- 30:00 flight commanders, who didn't have the score at all but they'd put over, but wasn't. He was true blue. I went and saw him with Bill Speedy on the 40th anniversary of D-Day. We looked him up and we had a lovely time together. So anyway, back to the thing. So the CO, Rollo Campbell came in
- 30:30 and he said, "Righto you're off stand down. You're duty. Four aircraft have got to go over to find so and so. They've got an intelligence report there's a big convoy with a lot of army equipment on it and it's at so and so." The weather was shocking, so anyway he said, "Look this is a tough one and what we're going to do

- 31:00 is we'll draw cards, and the lowest four cards are to go." He said, "I'm sorry, I'm leading, so it's three cards." So everybody said, "Okay." So they went round and drew the cards, and held it over, and he came to me, and he said, "Oh no, you don't have to have one Tommy. You've got 121 trips up. You don't." "No." I said, "I'll be in it." Naturally saying to
- 31:30 myself the odds on getting one of these three low cards, so Ashers there, Ashers says, "No count me in too." He said, "Well Ashers, you've got 108 trips." He said, "I want to." He said, "All right." Would you believe it? Bob Ainslie got a three, I got a two and Ashers got a three, so we were the three that made up. Well I flew
- 32:00 as number one of our section and Ashers formatted as my number two there, and on the starboard side, that was the CO, and Bob Ainslie there. Bob Ainslie was an engine fitter, an apprentice before the war and he changed over. He actually only died last year Bob. He had a good record and a very nice bloke. We'd been at
- 32:30 OTU together. It was really clamped down and we were going up on instruments to get through it, and of course with the bumping on the strips you had to watch that the gyros weren't too good and that but anyway, we all got up. We all scattered but we all formed up, and off we set for the target. Well, it was cloud all the way.
- 33:00 Rollo's taking his times and that, and he said, "Look I think we're about right now what speed I've been keeping, so we're going to open right up and we're going to dive down through the cloud." Down we go. Well. The way the Typhoons build up in speed. We're going and going, and going
- 33:30 and then I reach for the transmitter button, and I was going to do something you never do if someone else is leading because you can't have two leaders, and I was counting off, and the rate we were going I reckoned we were almost beyond it. I was going to transmit and all of a sudden, "We're," and as soon as he said, "We're," he finished
- 34:00 too low. Ooooh I pulled her up vertical like this. I was blacked out and everything, and pulled her up, and then eased off. Then I came out of the cloud and then Rollo came out of the cloud, and Bob Ainslie but Ashers didn't. We just couldn't understand it. Anyway, Bob Ainslie didn't get back. He overflew Vogel
- 34:30 and went to Eindhoven but got in there okay because the weather was still crook. The boss and myself, we got into Vogel. Anyway, six weeks later when the army advanced they found Ashers buried where he'd crashed on the side of the valley and us three had dived in the valley,
- 35:00 and Ashers was killed there, temporarily buried there. He was just too far out but when you're in cloud like that you want to be a fair distance, but just how tinny we was and really counting off, and watching the altimeter and that with a bit of a lag, and I almost committed that sin. That
- 35:30 would have been.

What would you have said?

"We're too low," or "Rollo we're too low."

And instead what was the command? You said you heard somebody else say we're too low and that gave you the cue to pick up?

He was the lead. He's the leader and it's up to him to say. He told us to dive and it's up to him. You can't have other people overriding

- 36:00 but I knew by experience and I've always done this count, we were miles too low. Anyway, that's one that I thought, that was my second last and I thought, "Now look, those odds? I can't have much more luck left because that used up a great swad of them, the luck what I had." So anyway,
- 36:30 I got through the last op okay and they said, "Look you were on stand by to go on rest to the Group Support Unit." My rest was that as the pilots came in, I'd get them up to seven hours on operational things, firing at barges in the sea and doing all these things. Then when they'd got their seven up and I was happy that they were
- 37:00 formatting operationally, and they went into an attack. I tried to simulate it like it was on ops, they're up on the board and they've got to be on time. Then at the end of the week they'd give me a sort of sheet and how many, and who is to go off to Eindhoven, Vogel, and later when they'd moved to Germany, to Gosch
- 37:30 in Germany, and I dropped them off. Well I did a few of them and I couldn't get over the bloke I'd replaced. I said, "What are you rushing back for a squadron for?" He said, "Because when I say it's too crook to go, they say there's a war on and you've got 600 feet when you get over there." But you can imagine going across the Channel in cloud and hoping you're right.
- 38:00 He said, "I'd rather be on a squadron." So I thought "Struth." Anyway on the South Downs there was a meteorological sort of difference. It would be clamped down everywhere but it would be clear on the

downs, the way the wind came in over the Channel but then as soon as you'd

- 38:30 finished seeing the land, you had to go up you see. So I'd done a couple where it was a bit dicey but as soon as we got over the Channel it opened up and I really knew the continent like the back of my hand. So they were all right and I wasn't too worried but on this particular time it looked crook what the meteorological report was, to drop some at Eindhoven, and all this.
- 39:00 They said, "Oh no, you'll make it. It's about five or six hundred feet over where you'll be coming down." But I wasn't happy because the wind seemed a lot different and when we took off, as we came over the South Downs it was clear. I said to the boys, "Now all spread out and set your gyros." See your gyro, you'd set it on your normal compass reading so that you didn't have to be
- 39:30 looking down at the compass reading all the time. It came up as a number there, 180 would have been south, and all this. I said, "Don't set it on, just set it on anything and stick to that. If everybody does that we'll be right." Of course we're no sooner in the cloud than someone crosses in front of me and the aircraft went with the slipstream into me. I thought, "Strike me blue." These blokes had never
- 40:00 had operational experience and you had to stick on there. So anyway, we go up and it was about 6,000 feet, and we come out of it, and they're all over the place but no one had fallen by the wayside, so I formed them up again, and off we went. I thought, "This is no good to me. The way this wind is blowing this cloud, the tops of it, I'm miles out I think on what course I'd
- 40:30 mapped out on the map." So I left my crowd and I got onto the listening out channel. I said, "I'm transmitting for a course to Vogel."

Tape 9

- 00:34 He said, I think it was 78 for about eight minutes and then so and so for something else. So I said, "Oh okay. What's the height of the cloud at Vogel?" He said, "About 600 feet." I said, "Okay." So anyway,
- 01:00 there were no balloons over Vogel. I went back and listened, and no one was saying anything because you never did say anything in case there were aircraft around. I thought, "Great." So then I steered and then I said, "Right, we're going to turn now." Well of course they could see me and then I'd say, "With this wind I'll just go a bit closer I think
- 01:30 from what the blokes said." Then I said, "All right now we're going down, just a steady dive, not a racing dive and we should come out of it at 600 feet. Now stick to your gyro things. If you don't you'll cross over someone and we'll have an accident." So down we went and then we broke off, and I echeloned them out, and sure enough, here's Vogel, just over there. We went round
- 02:00 and landed, and we dropped the two blokes off for Vogel, and wished them the best. Now there was four to go to Eindhoven and we took off, and we had to climb up through the cloud again, and because Eindhoven had the barrage balloons. Of course this
- 02:30 cloud was in places, right down on the deck, so it was too risky, so we climbed up and then as soon as we'd gone up I said, "All right, well now we're, I reckon I'll go a bit to the starboard." That's the way the wind was coming over there, so really any drift would be away from the balloons. We came down
- 03:00 through it and it was about 600 feet, and then here's the canal that ran into, I knew exactly where we were, echeloned them out, and then we landed, and I wished the four they said, "Well look, what wonderful navigation. How do you do it?" You know what? I said, "Oh you get used to it."
- 03:30 So there you are. I ducked it that I'd got a course to steer but it did help me with that strong wind. Then I wished them all the best and then we went on to Gosh. 175 Squadron was there. The weather had got so bad the courier plane couldn't pick me up to take me back, so I stayed overnight and it was great to meet up with all the boys on the ops. So that
- 04:00 was when I was at the Group Support Unit and of course I'd been awarded the, the CO and the adjutant came up to tell me I'd been awarded the DFC before I left the squadron to go there. Then I did say remind me but it's coming back to me now. The first day I went to the Group Support Unit
- 04:30 and had spoken to this bloke, and he told me about it, I'm standing there at afternoon tea, and all of a sudden a bloke shot up the, so I dived under the table. Of course they were all used to them doing this, so I felt that terrible, and he said, "Don't worry.
- 05:00 We know where you've been." So that was that one, how I dived under the table because this screaming thing, you had to get on the ground. Another one that really I thought about for a long time, that the wing commander lead us and we were to attack these buildings.
- 05:30 It was just a routine sort of thing, a bit of flak about but not too bad. We attacked and pulled up. We were forming up and he said, "Who is that with their rockets on?" It was a new boy and he said, "Red 1, it's Yellow 4 here." He said, "Well what's up?" Now I tried to send a

- 06:00 mental telepathy message to say, "An electrical fault. I pressed it and nothing happened," or "The electricians are wrong." That was the answer. He was honest this boy and he said, "I forgot to press the button." I'm sorry, that was wrong. "I forgot to put the switch on." Of course that activated it on the throttle when you pressed the teat on the throttle.
- 06:30 He said, "Well that bit of building that of building that's burning, go and put your rockets into that, and we'll do a lazy circuit." This was a death warrant, every surrounding flak thing concentrated on him and he'd just got into his dive, and his tail was blown off, and then he fired his rockets. They were about five mile off target but he fired his rockets. Then
- 07:00 he went into a great orange, black whoosh, and that was murder. When we formed up no one ever spoke in that and when we went in, instead of a joyous sound at the debriefing it was strictly silent. Anyway, the wing commander said, "Look we attacked and one was hit in the dive
- 07:30 with a very successful outcome. That's it." Now there was not a word spoke. Normally it was this exuberance of getting through another op. Do you get what I mean? It would be joyful and all those who smoked you could see puffing away, and all the tension falls but no one.
- 08:00 It was quiet and I've never forgotten that. That was murder and that was one of the headlines that The Age put in when my granddaughter won the prize for the best wartime story. Now have we used up the time now?
- No, we've got a fair amount of time.**
- Have I got any notes down for you?
- Yes. I'm also interested**
- 08:30 **about your co-operation with the US Air Force and the problems you had with them. Can you tell us more about that?**
- We had a bloke on our wing and he was going along, and they were attacked by the Yanks, and he was shot down, and killed, and he'd only had that one op too. That was one who was close to all of us really. That other one where we might have been decimated only we
- 09:00 broke in underneath and what a waste of petrol with all this dropping 90 gallons. We'd only taken off and we couldn't get into the back blocks of Germany. We just did ordinary sort of works on things but that was all. When I reported the squadron letters and the exact timing and everything, they just came up with,
- 09:30 no they had no squadron there with those numbers at that time.
- Can you actually tell us the story from the start? What happened exactly? You were flying in formation? What took place?**
- We were going along and someone reported, "Red 1, bandits at so and so it looks like." I'd seen them before and I said, "No. They're Mustangs but
- 10:00 we'll watch them." Anyway, instead of keeping on they started to edge over and they're quite a few thousand above us. I said, "Hey I don't like the look of these." They started to turn more in towards us and I said, "Look don't fly behind one another but drop your tanks." They dropped them and I said, "Look, if they
- 10:30 come in on us, we're going to break downward and to the starboard. Now everybody clear? When I say break." So then I was hoping upon hope they'd have a good look at us and they'd keep on going. I mean we've got the black and white stripes, and all on. Anyway no, around they came and diving.
- How many of them?**
- 11:00 There would have been about six. So anyway, I waited and waited, and then I said, "Break." Then we broke under them and got scarping away. They used to say that we were looking like Focke-Wulfs. Well we couldn't see that but that was their story all the time. They seemed to concentrate on, if they could shoot
- 11:30 some aircraft, it was another on they'd be shot down. So that was the story of that one and as I said, we never got too far in with no long-range tanks. Of course the closer to the battle it was, it was a bit hard because they were moving all their stuff at night.
- The Germans?**
- Yep and when it was poor weather, I should have told you,
- 12:00 before I left the squadron they said [technical break]. Looking up to see if a bloke trained in Rhodesia with Bill Speedy because he died and he was missing for 29 years.
- Did you ever fly Tempest aircraft?**

Oh did I? When I was at the GSU I'd lead

12:30 the boys in the Tempest. It had the shape of the Spit and the big motor, and everything. It was delightful. I used to do that and of course when I was there I flew a Spit 9, just to say I'd flown one but to me it was just jammed in like this. With the Typhy [Typhoon] you had plenty of room to move. I was that careful. In fact it was so light on the touch

13:00 to what I was used to. I thought, "This little wheelbase, to bring it in." And was I careful. So of course I could say I flew a Spit. We're not on are we?

Yes we are.

No, are we?

Yes.

Oh truly?

Yes I told you we were recording.

No. What the telephone call too?

No, not the telephone call.

I didn't know you'd switched.

After the telephone call.

I didn't know you'd switched it on. So

13:30 what was I speaking about?

You were talking about the American Mustangs, how they attacked your unit.

That's right and how we broke under them. Then of course we reported it, the exact time and everything, and it went to the Supreme Headquarters, and the Yanks were told, and we got a signal back, "No aircraft of the USA Air Force was in that area at that time.

What was the tension like

14:00 **the Americans and the British, like the RAF for instances and the US Air Force?**

Not too bad. Really there was not much liaison really but of course they were taking a terrible lot of damage with the daylight bombing. I had a friend that I'd gone over to England and he'd gone on to Mustangs, and they were flying six hour

14:30 flights to support the Americans during the daytime, trying to get the fighters off them.

Did you ever go close by to Berlin in your Tempests or Typhoons?

No, not to Berlin, no.

Whereabouts in Germany did you travel with your Typhoon and Tempest?

All over the place.

Can you think of any places, main places?

15:00 Lots of places. Mainly we're in out of the way places because unless you had specific targets, which were never available in the main cities. The Germans were intent on keeping their trains loaded up with stuff, hidden in various places. That's why

15:30 where that Lancaster we were attacking a train there that was loaded up with a lot of stuff, when we saw that about that air gunner.

What year were you doing these operations? Was it '45 as well, '44 and '45?

Yes. I left it in about February.

'45?

'45, I think it was that and

16:00 I got to the stage I think, saying about when I was awarded the DFC. Then we had a bit of a party that night, a very quiet one though but I really took it, when I thought of all the blokes who hadn't had the opportunities I had really, through getting knocked off so early, I thought, "Well this is part of them." I think I mentioned in the book that even though I got it, there were lots of people who'd helped me

16:30 get it too. I didn't want to sort of big note myself. Anyway, what else can I think of? I've done this without checking on the book.

No, that's okay. I've still got questions for you.

Well, that's all right.

What did you find the difference was after Normandy as far as your targets were concerned in '44 and '45 like when you were starting to go into Germany, and started doing runs there?

There were generally battles on except it eased

- 17:00 off during the winter, except when that one, the Battle of the Bulge. That was a good exercise. I meant to tell you that just after I'd got the DFC and they said, "No you're going on rest but before you go you've got to meet a team of boffins in Eindhoven."
- 17:30 I flew over there and met them, and they said, "We've developed a new radar and we want you to first of all fly, and we'll calibrate it, and then an hour later you'll take off, and we'll direct you, and then you go on what rate of turns we say, and then we'll get you to go into a dive of 45 degrees, and tell us what target you could hit
- 18:00 with that." They said, "This means that even in bad weather Typhoons could still operate." In bad weather of course, when we couldn't operate the Germans would use the daytime as well, and it would be a great advantage. So I said, "Okay." So when I went back all the boys wanted to know, "What are you going to do with boffins?"
- 18:30 I said, "No, just a bit of interest." But anyway, they all found out and they said, "Listen, you know what it's going to be. We'll be flying. We've got a big enough attrition rate now. We'll be flying in lousy weather and we've got to come back, and land and all make certain it doesn't work." I said, "I know nothing about it." It was true. They wanted to hear Typhoons coming in daytime when the weather was crook and they'd
- 19:00 frighten the Germans off doing it. I know that but they didn't tell me that, but every time I'd do the calibration and I'd go, and I'd tell them what the target would have been, they'd then say, "Thank you." But they wouldn't tell me where I was because I wasn't looking outside or anything. I was concentrating. They'd say, "Right 125 degrees," and I'd fly that.
- 19:30 "Now start a medium left port turn," and I'd go around. "Stop. Now," and they'd give me another course to go on. I don't know. I don't think I got the targets what they were after any time but I was annoyed at the finished of it. They'd never tell me where I was and I'd have to battle around to find out. I knew the area all right but I thought they could say,
- 20:00 "Steer 060 to get back," or something like that but they never did.

Did the Typhoons have a sound that was similar to the Stukas? [German dive bombers with a distinctive scream]

No. They had a sound all of their own. See, the Stukas also used to increase it. They used to have bottles to make that whirring noise. They'd fix them there and

- 20:30 a lot of it was the dive that used to frighten people.

You wouldn't dive like that would you, as a Typhoon pilot? The Stuka would almost be a vertical dive.

Yes, well they had the air brakes and everything. They were pretty accurate too, if you read a bit about them in the Western desert. They were pretty smart with the Stukas and they had to practice

- 21:00 in Spain. When you think of all that effort that went in and that megalomaniac Hitler ruined his own country's possibilities. I mean why when a lot of German Jews were the Fatherland forever and ever, they were doing technical work and to think you'd throw them into the concentration camps.

- 21:30 **What was the most dangerous mission you had? The most dangerous? You've done 122 sorties?**

I really think my 121st was the diciest I reckon.

What happened on that one?

Oh look Sergio. This is the one

- 22:00 where we lost Ashers on the rim of the valley.

Oh right.

Oh. To think how tinny, the three of us were in the valley and he's out there, the proper distance out and he hit the rim of the valley. Oh 108 ops.

How many ops would make you a seasoned Typhoon pilot?

- 22:30 Well really your learnt all the time and you took notice of how the experienced blokes went about it.

Then it started to formulate. I was going to say that one where we dived on the V2, that we lost Joe Swift,

23:00 we found out the story later that he bailed out, and he came down in a tree. All the Dutch farmers ran with their pitchforks to keep him up the tree until they went and got the Germans. We were trying to liberate them but there you are, that's how it was. They were scared of the Germans around.

So he got killed by the Germans?

No, no.

23:30 He went as a prisoner of war. There were too many people knew that he'd landed all right and someone would blab if they broke the Geneva Convention there but we had proof. Oh the one I wanted to tell you and I think you wrote it down, about Cedric Henmann. Did you write that down or was that Paul? Anyway, have I got time to tell it?

Yeah you've got time.

24:00 He was a flight commander and he was the one, who when the Liberator was operating at that time, diving, he was the one giving what we said was the cricket commentary. He was a lovely bloke. He and his mate had a lot of experience, and they went on the same op, and one was killed.

24:30 I've just forgotten his name for the moment. Cedric was shot down. The Germans picked him up and tied him to a tree. They were going to shoot him and an army officer came along, and said, "No. You're not to do that because they respect

25:00 our airmen. We respect him." So they untied him and that. As soon as this colonel bloke went they tied him up again. He's just about to be shot and a Luftwaffe officer came in a jeep looking for a downed German pilot. He knew the score. He said, "Release him to me and I'll take him for interrogation." Well, he

25:30 was interrogated and the information this interrogator, he spoke like with an Eton accent, and he knew everything about the squadron. He even knew some of our names, like nicknames. Look, oh it really would weaken your defences when they know so much. Anyway, he finally went to a prisoner of war camp and he's allocated

26:00 there, and they're going on a train. On the train they're going along and there's a prison guard at each end of each cattle truck with about sixty blokes on. He's there in one of them and there's some soldiers there, British soldiers, about fifteen of them. They've got a dirty big screwdriver and they're undoing

26:30 the inspection plate. They undo it and every time there was so many aboard, that when it slowed down on a hill, they were going to take it in turns to drop out. They're ready and it starts to slow down, and whether the bloke got caught with the axel turning or what but this scream rang out, so the German fired two shots, the nearest German. So all of the

27:00 group were lined up and the Germans went along, and every 10th one they shot in the knees, and then as they fell over, shot them in the head. The Germans said to the rest of them, "Now was one in ten. It will be one in four if there's any more attempt."

27:30 We used to call Henmann "Ducks" because Cedric was crook in the Air Force, you know? Ducks Henmann or Hennis and anyway, he worked in Argentine for the Swift meatpacking company of Britain. Could you believe it that he's down in France before returning, he got through

28:00 the war as a prisoner of war and he's down in the south of France, and one of our blokes, Poppa Ambrose was there sunning himself, and he said, "Wait on. You're not Cedric Henmann?" Poppa didn't know him that well and he said, "Yes." He said, "Well look, you've got to come to our get together for the 40th anniversary of D-Day." Well I never knew this story and that's how it was related to me,

28:30 how lucky he was, really what he went through. Absolutely wonderful and I couldn't get over seeing him again and to hear what happened to him. And I've got a photo, The Goose of Capenquay, and they'd killed a goose, this other bloke it will come to me. This bloke had a, the one who

29:00 got killed when they were on the same op as Hennis, I should look it up and tell you but anyway, he had a close knit group of armourers, and that, who worked on his aircraft, and do you know, one of those engineers or engine fitters has made three trips over to France,

29:30 and put some flowers on the grave. Well, is that about it?

No. We've got another ten minutes.

Well, I was going to say, Paul might look up the name of that other one. I'm terribly sorry that I've forgotten it but you'll see the name under Goose, a photo of Goose of Capenquay.

30:00 **Once the war ended what was going through your mind?**

Actually just before the end of the war they'd sent a lot of the Typhoons for tropicalisation, ready to go

out into Southeast Asia. I thought, "Oh gee.

30:30 Don't say they're going to send us out there now but who knows." When the Japs called it a day after the Atomic bombs, well that was off but somehow they tended to forget me there at the Group Support Unit. Finally I was posted to Cranwell, the home of the RAF. That's where it first

31:00 started and it was all very flashy, and all the Aussies that were going home were posted there, and we had to pay three month's mess duties, and the duty for those twelve weeks was enormous. We were only there two days and we all paid for three months,

31:30 three months of mess fees, you know afternoon teas all wrapped up. That was a real put over. You're helping them out in the war and that was the reward. We thought it was wicked. Did you find it Paul? It's in the early part. I'll look.

Am I looking for a photo or a story?

Yes, there's a photo as well.

32:00 **So how did you adjust to post-war life after you were demobilised?**

I went back to my own job. Mainly I wanted to be a farmer but I went back to my own job in the Public Service at the Weather Bureau because they'd promoted me while I was away and the government paid my superannuation contributions instead of me paying half.

32:30 That was a big steak to give up, so I stayed on there and then I met a girl, and married her. We had three kiddies and her father was a master builder but he was retired, but he guided us along, and we built our own place. It was very hard getting building materials and the plaster,

33:00 we only got a crowd that were going out of business, and they had some lovely centrepieces with the filigree. We got those and it looked very nice. I was 55 years in that place in Preston and now on the 22nd August I've moved here.

Did you find that you dreamt about the war?

No, not

33:30 very much.

Not very much?

Really I'd say hardly at all because I had so much on my plate with building the house.

34:00 Then when the last child came along, four months later with the wife getting ill. We were given the wrong steer but anyway.

You only met your wife when you came back?

Yes.

What about your mates? Did a lot of them have, not all of them were of course Australians in the Typhoon units, the pilots?

Oh no, no. They were all dominion types, very

34:30 few Australians and Bill Speedy, because he'd had a dance or two with this Sally, he married her. We were amazed and we'd had a bit of leave at one of the Operational Advancement Training Units, and they're all around the fire toasting, and someone said, "Well Billy,

35:00 you're a shrewdie. Did you get married?" There's deadly silence and Bill said, "Yes I did." They said, "What?" He said, "I went down and got an urgent application, and interviewed them on the first day in Australia House, and they agreed, so I'm married." So when we were going home, Sally and I'm going down to visit her

35:30 on Thursday, this Thursday, and just have morning tea with her to remember old times because it was great to see her. When we were leaving, as we were to pull away from the pier, we went down to have a cup of tea with her. She'd come down to see Bill and myself off, and she came out on the Arch Royal, where the

36:00 government pressed it in for all the women who'd married Aussies.

What about the gruesome nature of some of the work? I mean it surely must affect you in some way or another? How did you handle that?

No, you let it all go. You have to let it all go over your head because if you start pondering about it, it would affect you and that's how it

36:30 had to be. I mean close people you were living with, you wouldn't even ask them what their private

address was because it might mozz them. They wouldn't be there the next day and when you spoke about it, it might really put the knocker on them.

What were the statistics for the Typhoons casualties? Cold you say them for the camera?

All together

- 37:00 the monument now in [Villers] Bocage, which was originally done for the ten weeks of the Normandy campaign and I'm repeating the statistics, 151 Typhoon pilots, and 220 were killed, and their names are on it, and there's reference to the 222 I think it was, who were shot down in the Normandy campaign,
- 37:30 who were prisoners of war or injured but saw out the war. They weren't killed. Now they've added to the monument all the Typhoon pilot's names who died. 665 of the Typhoon pilots were killed and really when you think of the great job that
- 38:00 that the French people have done, especially for the Province of Normandy because they said they'd see Typhoons around all the time attacking, and helping. Now I must close I think, if that's suits you, with saying that an appendix I'm putting in my review is about an Aussie Typhoon pilot, who went missing for
- 38:30 49 [years]. They had rockets. He was hit and tried to, well they thought he'd make it back over the channel but he just disappeared, and they said he went into the water. What do you think? A Typhoon, not him but another Typhoon had killed his father.
- 39:00 The father, who was a farmer with a woman he'd picked up from Caen, but he had a lorry very similar to the German ones with a German tarpaulin on it, and he was mistaken, and skittled, and that afternoon when the father was killed, a Typhoon pilot crashed onto the farm, and the two sons
- 39:30 went out, and it was buried right in. They sawed off with hacksaws all the tail section and smashed it up, and sold it later for scrap metal, and put some dirt around, and never said anything for 49 years. Then they sold the farm, the two brothers and they went to the head of the Caen Military Museum, who has got a replica
- 40:00 of a Typhoon there in the museum, and told them, and they went, and excavated, and they are reassured that it wasn't the same pilot that had killed the father. I think it might have been one of our ones had done that because I remember them and I remember them speaking about a lorry, and they didn't know who it was but who knows? It could have been one of any aircraft. So anyway, his name was Don
- 40:30 Mason. I hadn't met him. He was on a different wing to me but I thought I should put it there so Australians who will read the book will know that he really turned up after 49 years. They found his wife and the RAAF flew the family but the wife was too ill to go. She'd married someone else after eighteen years I think it was and
- 41:00 their daughter, that was born during the early days when he was training, she went out to where they put him in the cemetery for the war people. (TAPE ENDS)