Australians at War Film Archive

Jack Piper (Pip) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:36 **Okay Jack, we'll make a start for the day. Can you give us an overall summary of your life thus far?**

Well I was born in Guyra in northern NSW [New South Wales] and I don't really have much memory of Guyra because I think I was probably about two or three years old when my mother and father moved to Sydney. He worked in

01:00 the Bank of NSW I think in Guyra, possibly in Armidale but he was the eldest son of quite a large family. I think there were ten or eleven in the family and they lived on a farming property at Llangothlan because there was not enough income being derived from the farm to support those huge numbers of, mainly well there were about six

01:30 girls and four more brothers. So anyway they moved to Sydney I think in about 1925, '26, lived at Darlinghurst. My earliest recollection was that he going to work every day, he obviously worked in the city. We eventually from Darlinghurst moved out to what is now called Malabar and the time we lived there it was called Long Bay

02:00 and when the ship the Malabar was wrecked it changed its name because Long Bay had connotations of the prison and I think any name was better than Long Bay. But growing up there I remember the beach and fishing boats and all that sort of thing, childhood memories but we moved then to a flat up at Maroubra Beach so we spent quite a bit of time as very young children on the beach. I think it would have been 1927 or '28

02:30 my father, the Australia Day weekend, so this is an anniversary in a sense, we have just passed Australia Day, he had arranged to visit his family back in New England, back at Guyra. All the passenger trains at that time they were generally night trains. They left Sydney from Central Station, probably about 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening and this was the

03:00 New England mail terminated probably at Glen Innis, one train a day. All the country trains were called mail trains because you could post your letters on them and get the mail back the next day which is probably much more efficient than the present day mail service. He went on the train and that was it, he never came back. The family were at Guyra waiting for him and he never got off the train,

03:30 he never came back to Sydney. My mother really couldn't do much about it because nobody had telephones. You couldn't ring up on a telephone and the only communication in any way faster than mail was to send a telegram but Mother probably wouldn't have worried too much about it. She probably assumed that he had got there, with his family and was staying there and would come back the next weekend. Time went by and he didn't come back. The family at Guyra didn't

04:00 worry because they obviously thought, "Well he missed that train, he might come on the next train." It was quite a significant gap after the event before any action was taken to trace his footsteps. It eventually went to the police and they couldn't find what happened to him. He just disappeared off the face of the earth. He has never been seen or heard of. My mother always blamed the Pipers for hiding him but I have met the Pipers many times

04:30 since and I am quite certain they had nothing to do with his disappearance. Just for whatever reason he chose to go, he went so my only recall of my father is from those very young childhood memories at Maroubra, Long Bay and we had a holiday over at Kurnell once. We went across Botany Bay in Fisher's Ferry to Kurnell and spent time there I distinctly remember that.

05:00 So anyway that was my very early childhood. I had two brothers, one younger and one older. Oh I still have two brothers. They are still with us. Mother, this was in the Depression of course and Mother couldn't support us. Fortunately her mother and sister were living in Sydney at Kingsford. We lived there. Colin, my elder brother and myself

05:30 started school at Maroubra Junction or Kindergarten Primary School. Mother went to the Presbyterian

Burnside Homes people in Sydney and they admitted us to Burnside, so 1929 the three of us went to the Burnside Homes and that is where we were admitted there.

06:00 We went to school there and had quite a nice time. Keith was in the infants' school. He was a couple of years younger than Col and I and we were in a home called Blackwood. So it was great, we enjoyed our time there.

Can I ask you just quickly about the Burnside Homes. I mean in those days they didn't have help for women that had been abandoned so what choice did your family have?

Well in the Depression the only

06:30 income mother could make was from housework, getting jobs ironing, washing, doing anything for anybody to make a few shillings but beyond that if she hadn't had family there we would have been out in the street so it was very, very difficult. My uncle had been an accountant in the bank and he was out of work. He used to make concrete baskets, flower pots and put them on a stick and walk from there up to Bellevue Hill to sell them

07:00 to make a quid to exist on. It was a pretty difficult time so we were children of the Depression there was no escape.

I might ask you later about life there but what happened after your mother left you there?

Well we had been there a few years and she formed an association with a man by the name of George Neilsen who had a son in the adjoining home to Blackwood that we were in.

07:30 Travelling up from Sydney by train they obviously met. George had been in the First World War as a returned soldier and his wife had died, not died, she had a mental breakdown at the birth of their son George and she was in the Callum Park Mental Home. So he was, George couldn't do much about it. The son, oddly enough, it was only in

08:00 quite recent times, we have kept in touch with him and he, probably ten or twelve years ago that he was ever aware what happened to his mother. He didn't know where she went or that she died. The family didn't pass any information. Oddly enough we knew and we assumed that George did know, but he didn't. So anyway my mother and George Neilsen formed a relationship. He bought a poultry farm up at Eastern Creek, somewhere

08:30 where the racing circuit is so we started school. We went from Burnside Homes, went to live at Eastern Creek on the poultry farm and went to school at Wallgrove, out from Rooty Hill. After twelve or eighteen months there he bought another ten acres of land without anything on it apart from an old house and he established a poultry farm there and we went to Quakers Hill Primary School.

09:00 a one teacher school. It was fantastic, a terrific teacher. At that time entrance to high schools was a competitive exam. My older brother and I both managed to get to Parramatta High School. Keith, my younger brother went to Westmead Technical High School. On the poultry farm we all had jobs,

09:30 we gathered eggs, cleaned eggs, looked after this, did that. I mean there was a lot of work but it wasn't a problem, we enjoyed it. While I was at Parramatta High school we used to swim in the river and there was some wog in the river caused a growth in my eyes and I was going to Sydney regularly to have this growth, nitrate of silver, very excruciating, painful business of removing this growth

10:00 but I still went to school but the pupils in my eyes from eye drops were dilated so while I could see I knew it was day or night but I couldn't read. I couldn't see the blackboard and I really couldn't focus. A kid threw an apple core and one fell on my head and it bounced into my eye and I went blind in that eye but it ruptured a blood vessel in the back of the eye, so that's really all it was but in the same thing it dislodged the remains of this

10:30 growth so I didn't have to have any more treatment. And eventually, after five or six months my eye sight became good. I had lost a year at school. I had turned fourteen and an uncle managed to find a job for me in Sydney at Rally Park, the State Tobacco Company part of WD and HO Wills, the British Tobacco Company. I worked in the cigar

11:00 section for two years and then I got a job with ST Lee who was part of the same organisation and I was an apprentice as a lithographic printer. Travelling by train back to Blacktown from Sydney we used to spend probably about four hours travelling a day, ride our bikes into Blacktown, get on the steam train to Sydney, get on the tram to work and back home. Did that for awhile and then I went and boarded with my grandmother who lived at Kingsford

11:30 and I started evening school at Gardeners Road, evening continuation school then. We were paid, I can't remember what my pay was when I was an apprentice but we started work earning fifteen shillings a week out of which I paid ten shillings a week to my grandmother for board so I had five shillings to live riotously but it was good. I

12:00 think back now and what kid's demand for money is it is quite different from what those days were. So there I was at ST Lee & Co apprentice at lithographic printing, a job that I hated but it was a job. In those days if you got a job you hung onto it, you didn't leave, you never left a job. And then war came

along, 1938, ’39, I was sixteen and a bit

12:30 I thought, “It will all be over, I don’t have to worry about the war.” I turned eighteen at the end of 1941, no before ’41, I was eighteen in 1940, so in ’41 I wanted to enlist in the air crew. So to get into air crew how had to have your parent’s consent if you were under twenty one and mother wouldn’t sign the papers for air crew.

13:00 So I thought, “I will enlist in whatever is going,” so I went down to Woolloomooloo to the recruit centre, the air force recruit centre and fortunately the sergeant in charge there was an old Parramatta High School boy and he said, “There is a new course starting in Melbourne on radar.” Radar was the big secret thing, radar and radar mechanic they called them. He said, “Do you know anything about radio?” I said, “I can switch them on. I have a Crystal set,” and he said, “That will

13:30 do.” They give you an aptitude test to see whether you can put square pegs in a round hole and they look at your education qualification and they decided I would be suitable so with thirty others we went to Richmond to it was called, there were two names number 2 AD, Aircraft Depot and number 2 RC Recruit Centre.

14:00 Most of the recruits were in canvas under tents. The permanent air force people lived in luxurious accommodation on the other side of the road. The recruits got marched from morning until night and actually one of the fellows in our intake was a fellow by the name of Frank Gothidge, who later became known as ‘Chips Rafferty’, so we had Chips in our unit.

14:30 After about, I forget how long, probably a month or two months at Richmond we moved holus bolus, the whole recruit centre moved from there to Williamtown, just north of Newcastle. It was a new aerodrome just been established. The only aeroplane there was the CO’s [Commanding Officer’s] Tiger Moth in a hangar. There were no aircraft at all at that time, but ultimately it became very big and still is

15:00 major airport for the air force. Finished the recruit training at Williamtown and after passing out went to Melbourne to do what is called the Number 1 School of Technical Training. We were housed in the Exhibition Building up at Carlton Gardens and marched everyday to the school at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. So in six months we did this radio technician training course,

15:30 civilian instructors, terrific instructors. Very early on we found that if you were thinking this was an avenue of getting into aircrew it didn’t work because all the guys that flunked the course got out and they made them into cooks, guards and mess men, so there was a lot of inducement to finish the course, which I did. The war with Japan started at the end of 1941.

16:00 Prior to that our expectation was that we would all go to England, Europe was the only, where the war was but once the war with Japan started we, the bulk of the people from the training school were posted to units in Australia. Another fellow that enlisted with me, another boy from Parramatta High School,

16:30 his name was Cliff Patton. His father had an accountant’s practice in Parramatta and I went to school with Cliff. We had more or less had co-joining numbers in the air force and we did the same course and we kept in touch with each other during the war. He was posted to Number 10 Squadron, the flying boat squadron in England and an Australian squadron, which was supposed to come to Australia, but in view of the war situation at the time the 10 Squadron never came back to Australia,

17:00 it remained throughout the war in England. I was posted to Number 5 Squadron, a new squadron just formed at Laverton as an army co-op [co-operative] squadron. It had been an air force squadron with flying boats, flying Walrus amphibians off the naval cruisers, but based at Richmond but the new 5 Squadron was formed at Laverton. When I first went there we

17:30 still had even a couple of old Westland Wapatis, an incredible old aeroplane, but the squadron was fitted with, we eventually refitted with Wirraways and went to Toowoomba in Queensland to join the 1st Australian Army, which was based in the Brisbane Valley and we did exercises all over the place with the army. That was our function, we had to learn what the army did and the army had to learn what we could do so we had an army liaison unit attached to the air force and

18:00 on exercises with the army we had vehicles, jeeps and weapon carriers that went with the army brigade headquarters with air force people. There would be a pilot, and a navigator and radio operator and technician, generally a small group of people to communicate with the aircraft and liaise with the army so it was quite interesting and we exercised with a lot of Australian Army units. We went to Rockhampton and exercised

18:30 with the Americans. I spent quite a lot of time at Rockhampton. Not the whole squadron, the squadron consisted of three flights of six aircraft each so we had 18 Wirraways, A, B and C Flights and we had a service flight which did the major servicing on the aircraft and we had six Tiger Moths, two Tiger Moths allocated to each flight just for liaison communication work

19:00 They weren’t actively used on exercise with the army. When we went to these remote areas like say going to Rockhampton we would only take the Wirraways. The Tiger Moths remained at Toowoomba. Then the Australian Army formed the First Armoured Division and did its working up exercises out from Narrabri, the Narrabri Moree area so I had been with detached flights at Rockhampton and then down at

19:30 Williamtown. It was a thing called JOOTS, Joint Operational Overseas Training School. It was an active air force station but JOOTS was the detached part of it and 5 Squadron Flight went there to provide aircraft to take navy people and army people flying to show them what it was like from the air and then we would do exercises like dive bombing, shadow gunnery and just more or less

20:00 to give all these people from the other services a look at what the aeroplanes were like and if they upchucked up they had to clean it up so that was the penalty for that. If they didn't like flying that gave some inducement to take something along with them. But anyway I spent, as I say Rockhampton and Williamtown and then back to Toowoomba and the squadron moved to Narrabri. Again we had detached

20:30 flights, back then. While I was at Williamtown on one of the JOOTS exercises the squadron moved from Narrabri up to Kingaroy and it was again a staging part there because by this time three divisions that were in the Middle East, the 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions had all come back and were up on the Atherton Tablelands working up for jungle training and beach landing.

21:00 Our other army co-op squadron in Australia, 3 Squadron was in the Middle East, an army co-op, and 4 Squadron was formed at Richmond and 5 Squadron went to Toowoomba and 4 Squadron had gone to Lowood. In the meantime while we were doing all this exercising 4 Squadron had gone to New Guinea because of the critical situation up there and they provided close support for the army while on the

21:30 Kokoda Trail, the Kokoda Track and Milne Bay, 4 Squadron. Our two crews interchanged. After they wanted some rest and recreation the 4 Squadron crews would come back to 5 Squadron and our crews, this is the air crews would go up to New Guinea so we virtually had between the two squadrons the same crew, apart from the ground staff which stayed with their squadron. When the three divisions from the Middle East returned

22:00 5 Squadron got itself altogether again at Kingaroy and they put us on a train and we went up to Cairns and from Cairns we unloaded. We were a mobile squadron. We had I think eighty vehicles, trucks, utes and all sorts of things. We went up from there to Mareeba. Mareeba had been a huge American air force bomber base. The Battle of the Coral Sea was virtually fought from Mareeba. They had hundreds of Liberators and Fortresses there, there was still a few there when we arrived,

22:30 two very large runways, so we settled in there after the Americans moved out and while they were moving out started working out with the three divisions on tactical reconnaissance, artillery spotting, beach landing down at Cairns, tropical trials establishment out on Crowley Beach, out from Innisfail so we were involved

23:00 again in all sorts of areas with the army, just doing the same thing that we had been doing. With army liaison people with us and air force with the army units. Then in 1944 the 3rd Division had been formed and went to Bougainville.

23:30 The Americans had established a perimeter at a place called Torokina. They didn't really try and capture all of Bougainville, they established a perimeter and moved on. MacArthur by this time was up getting closer and in fact I think he had arrived at the Philippines but he didn't really want the Australians with him and any diversion to keep them tied up so the 3rd Division were mopping up or extending the perimeter at Bougainville. 5 Squadron was

24:00 sent there as part of 84 Wing, which consisted of a transport flight of Beaufighters. 17 AOP by this time was called an Air Observation Post, they had Austers. We had two New Zealand squadrons of Corsairs, they were a fighter, but a very efficient bomber. We had re equipped with the meantime, we had done away with Tiger Moths we had Boomerangs and two

24:30 Wirraways. We still had six Wirraways so we had two Wirraways and six Boomerangs in each flight. We packed up at Mareeba and moved down to Cairns and a Liberty ship, I think two Liberty ships came in and we loaded all the stuff on them and the aircraft were flown to New Guinea and the ground crew went on these two ships off to Torokina. But while loading the ship I

25:00 had slipped on a box and came down and dislocated my jaw. So I was in hospital and at the same time I developed pleurisy so I stayed in hospital, so I was left behind and so nobody owned me and I didn't belong to anyone so eventually I got myself down to Townsville to an embarkation depot and sat around and waited for a ship. An American ship, the Shawnee came into

25:30 take troops to Lae in New Guinea so I managed to get on the Shawnee and went to New Guinea. We sailed unescorted. The ship could go like the clappers so we didn't have any convoys or escorts, just went like anything across the Coral Sea and up to Lae and again I had nothing much to do so I had a team of New Guinea natives and we were putting a transit camp together, putting oil drums up

26:00 and building a wooden platform and putting tents on them for overnight accommodation for people transiting through Lae because it was the place where ships brought lots of people in. Most of the action was up further, up the valley at Nadzab, up the Markham Valley from Lae. Lae was essentially by this time a staging post. Further down the Huon Gulf was Finschhafen and then on the other side of the coast was Wewak, Tulagi, all the operational places then because the Japs had virtually been pushed out of there.

26:30 We had a transport squadron, 36 Squadron with DC3s based at Lae who used to do flights every day to various units. One of their flights on a fairly regular basis was to Torokina and I got to know the people there and got myself a ride to Torokina so I got back to the squadron.

27:00 By this time I had been a sergeant of course for a number of years. I was the senior sergeant in charge of the radio maintenance group and I had about twelve technicians of various ranks but they managed quite well without me. But I was then posted after, I had been at Bougainville for about six months and a new unit was formed at Lae called the 38th Operational Base Unit getting ready to go to Borneo so back I went from

27:30 Torokina, back to Lae and gradually some of the people from the unit arrived. I think we might have one officer, I can't think of his name of his name now, a flying officer. We had a warrant officer, and we had about fifteen people, the basis, the beginning of the unit, we certainly weren't all there. We had a couple of jeeps, not a lot of equipment because we were just being put together.

28:00 So we loaded the two jeeps and as many bods as we could on a DC3 and we went flew one day from Lae to Morotai, took us all day, from the length of New Guinea and out to Biak and Noemfoor and eventually got to Morotai just about on dark. Morotai is a mud covered lump of coral, it is pretty ordinary, but huge airstrips were there, a lot of Americans there.

28:30 That was the first place we had to drive on the wrong side of the road because the Americans were driving on the right hand side of the road there and that took a bit of learning. But while we were at Morotai various other members, the duty pilot officer. The operational base unit the air force had was virtually the control tower and communication systems for an airport. The three areas in Borneo that

29:00 the Australians were to land at were components of the 7th and 9th Division were Labuan, Tarakan and Balikpapan. The first landing I think was Tarakan and the next one was Labuan, that was over on the Brunei side of the island and Balikpapan was the last one. We landed at Balikpapan I think it was early July of 1945. They had,

29:30 by this time, before we got on board the ship to go there, the rest of the members of the unit gradually arrived, mainly drivers for the motor transport vehicles, the duty pilots who were generally, pilots but not commissioned, usually sergeants. We had about twelve people, wireless operators.

30:00 We had some cooks and messmen, the total strength of the unit and met office, we had a met officer and a few people and we had a medical doctor and a small medical unit and the total strength would have been eighty or ninety people. We had a fire tender and fire crew. We had all those bits and pieces that go with aerodromes. Because Balikpapan was an oil refinery and the refinery, the storage tanks were built up on the hill it was

30:30 thought that the Japanese would let the oil go and burn the whole place so the idea of taking our unit early on in the landing with the fire tender was to put the fires out but our fire tender was only a normal two wheel drive old Bedford. We got off the landing barge, we went on a LST [Landing Ship Tank]. The LST ran up the beach and ran the vehicles off. It was a sandy beach. The American SeaBees [US Naval Construction Force] and people had blown up all the wooden

31:00 barriers that the Japanese had implanted, the whole place had been blasted with rockets and shells and bombs and you name it and it was just shredded. So we landed and promptly got bogged and there we stayed so we had our cruiser, the Shropshire and another one shelling the Japs and they were shelling them so we just stayed where we were and we couldn't move anyway so that was how we landed at Balikpapan and that went on for a few days.

31:30 The rest of our unit landed a few days later and we gradually found each other and got ourselves together and went driving and found a place to pitch a camp which it was amazing to me that in retrospect you would go and find a piece of land and say, "This will do," and pitch a tent here. So we found a beaut spot at the mouth of the river called the Sepingang Besar. Sepingang was the name of the locality where we were going to build the airstrip

32:00 and Sepingang Besar, Besar meaning the "big," the big river. There was a small Sepingang, I can't think of the small one's name. But it was a nice bit of road there and it joined the beach so we found ourselves camped, my tent was right here and I could jump out of there at high tide and have a swim, we were right it was terrific. Talk about a water front, we really did have and the whole camp was pretty nice there, close to the airport.

32:30 We only had to cross the Sepingang and the end of the runway was only within half a mile away. All they did, the Number 5 Airfield Construction Squadron landed with heavy equipment, bulldozed what was left of the coconut plantations and houses and everything, bulldozed it down and laid marsden matting and about four weeks later we had Spitfires and Boomerangs and Mitchell bombers and aircraft and we were operational.

33:00 So the Japanese as far as air power was concerned there was very little. We had a couple of air raids but really nothing much happened. It was generally at night time when you went to the pictures, there would be an aircraft come over at twenty thousand feet and hey would switch the film off and we would all duck for cover. One night we all ducked for cover and we found we had a couple of Japanese there hiding with us. They had obviously decided to come and watch the pictures.

33:30 By and large we didn't really, I mean there were a lot of Japs around there and the army people really had some tough fighting but as far as the air force was concerned the only action was from the Number 4 Squadron Army Cooperation Squadron. And Manga Airstrip which was the permanent airstrip at the Manga River just north of where we were the Japanese had been using but that had been

34:00 so thoroughly shelled it was unusable but the control tower was still standing and the Japanese had very large guns on tracks in the mountains in the hills at the back of Manga and every time our Armoured Division people went there with a tank they just knocked them out. So the army had an officer planted in this tower ranging for the two cruisers, the Shropshire and I can't think of the other one that were shelling the place and eventually

34:30 they knocked the guns out and then peace prevailed after that, well virtually, I mean as far as the heavy shelling because the aircraft bombing couldn't find these positions in the side of the mountains. Everything the Japanese had there was underground, all their transmitting equipment was all in tunnels under the ground. I went and looked at it, and it was quite incredible how much of it that was there. It was extraordinary, the tunnels

35:00 went for miles in the hills underground, everything was, you could have bombed it, well the place had been bombed for months but it wouldn't have hurt anything it was so well protected. But anyway then, that was virtually the action and in August the war started to end. Well you weren't around when war ended in Australia but one day the war was over and we'd be getting drunk in the mess that night and the next day the war

35:30 would be on again. We never really knew when the war was over but a sudden sense of "well what do we do now?" We had nothing much to do but the war did end. I think it was about the 12th or 15th August so the action at Balikpapan was only about six weeks and it was all over, things started to wind down. For a while there the airport became incredibly busy with repatriating prisoners of war

36:00 from Singapore, from Sandakan, from all the prisoner of war camps came through Balikpapan. We had a visit from Lord Mountbatten and Lady Mountbatten and all these people, Gracie Burns and you name it, everybody came in aircraft and I guess a lot of them were making the most of it, their tourist visa after the war.

36:30 But the prisoners of war who came through there was pretty horrible. It was, they were really in a bad way some of them. But anyway when that period, that lasted for about another month or six weeks I suppose and we started then restoring the fish traps that the natives had on the beach which had all been destroyed when we landed on them. We started putting them together again and going out each day and

37:00 we just went surfing and swimming and at low tide with the fish traps we would go out and get fish so we lived fairly well. One day I trod on a string ray in the fish trap so I still have a bit of a hole in my leg. I had then applied to go into the Occupation Force to Japan but when they came around to do the medicals I was in hospital so I didn't go.

37:30 And January I think it was then, no end of December actually, in December the Manoora came in and they just filled it up with troops and air force people and sailed back to Brisbane, through the islands, down through the Barrier Reef and into Brisbane. We got off and marched through the streets of Brisbane and went out to Sandgate, had a week or so there and then on a train down to Sydney

38:00 to Bradfield Park and went through the process of demobilization. Everything you had to do was involved queuing up, miles and miles of people, queue up to get your ration books, queue up to get this, and queue up to get some money and this goes on for a week or a fortnight. One day in a long queue

38:30 I was standing there with about a hundred fellows in front of me calculating how long it would be before I got to the end of the queue and I heard a voice from away back calling out, "Hey Piper," and there was Cliff Paton, the fellow who went to 10 Squadron. He had come back on a troop ship and there we. We got in the same day and we got out the same day. So we had kept in touch with each other during the war.

39:00 We weren't frequent correspondents, but we did write and there we were so I don't think I've heard from Cliff since, no doubt he would be retired now. He wouldn't be an accountant in Parramatta.

Tape 2

00:35 **Okay Jack, we were just finishing off your discharge, what happened with you after that?**

Well having been discharged from the air force I then had to find a job. Anybody that had been employed or was in permanent employment and joined the service, the employer was obliged to take them back at the end of the war. That was

01:00 a condition that applied to any organisation so I went back to ST Lee and Company and I had completed

two years of my apprenticeship in lithographic printing. At the end of the war and by this time I was twenty three, '46, I was just turned twenty four and when I went back to ST Lee, they said, "yes you can come back but you have got to finish three years of an apprenticeship."

01:30 Well it was a job that I didn't like anyway so I decided I'd look elsewhere. Both my brothers, both my younger brother and older brother had joined the PMG [Post Master General's Department] as telephone, they were called telephone mechanics originally but the name mechanic generally was dropped and they became technicians. Now the work I had, the radio work that I had done in the

02:00 air force covers somewhat similar grounds so I decided I would go to the PMG and see if I could get a job which a lot of ex-service people also did because it was the only available area that offered employment because most of the technicians and the work had been done by women who had been employed during the war years to fill in for the gap in the labour for them because the number of male staff

02:30 had enlisted. Both my brothers were never allowed to enlist. The PMG placed a ban on certain categories of staff so they couldn't enlist anyway. Colin, my elder brother, I saw quite a lot of up in North Queensland when I was at Mareeba, he was working around the various American army and Australian Army places and he used to come out to the mess at Mareeba so we did keep in touch but that was mostly work doing telephones. I went to the PMG.

03:00 I got a job called an exempt trainee technician. I don't know what exempt meant but that is the term they chose to use. So with about forty other ex service people, mainly air force, a few navy and I don't know that there were any army, essentially it was air force and navy people and out at Alexandria they had a training school and we went there and started learning basic telephone stuff.

03:30 And after a course of about six weeks I was employed at the City South Exchange in Castlereagh Street in Sydney, right next to the Central Fire Station. At that time my younger brother was at City East and I think my older brother, I am not sure whether he was still in Queensland or City North but the three city exchanges so if you were talking, apparently I sound very much the same as my younger brother so if you were talking to any of the linesmen on the thing they couldn't

04:00 figure out where these Pipers were because everywhere they went they were getting a Piper on the end of the phone. Anyway it wasn't much of a job but it was a job and City South Exchange was not like today's standard high rise building. I think it was about ten storeys tall and it had a flat roof and with the other guys, the other air force people we used to

04:30 go up on the roof and have lunch everyday and there was an aerial system on the roof of the building which I didn't know what it was. It was a little hut that accommodated some equipment. One day we were having lunch and two guys came and were working on the equipment so we wandered over to see what they were doing and what this thing was. And it was part of the landing system, the instrument landing system for the airport at Mascot and it was the outer marker for a very primitive radio range system that

05:00 operated at that time. And so we got talking to them and we indicated what we had done and what a lousy job we had there at the PMG and we were offered a job, so virtually after having an interview with them I stopped work one Friday and started work on the following Monday with the DCA [Department of Civil Aviation] at Mascot Airport as a radio technician. And it was just the same job that I had been doing in the air force,

05:30 only yeah, slightly different, a lot more travelling. I used to do country maintenance. After working at Mascot for a little while, the air radio and transmitters and stuff which were out at Brighton where the International Terminal is now, we had a transmitting station there in those days. But I used to look after Dubbo, Canberra,

06:00 Holbrook, Yass. We had a non directional beacon and the prototype DME [Distance Measuring Equipment], the Australian distance measuring equipment, which was developed by the radio physics division of the CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation] and AWA [Amalgamated Wireless Australasia] and Civil Aviation. The first beacon in field testing was located at Yass so I used to do a little bit of work on that, just more or less switch it on when it was off and switch it on as required because they were only

06:30 I think about three or four aircraft that were fitted with the airborne equipment and they were using this for field trials so the equipment didn't run all the time. So I knew what it looked like and I knew where it was housed. And we had other equipment there. We had a non directional beacon. Canberra was just starting to build up, the air force had provided all the communication facilities during the war

07:00 but Civil Aviation Holbrook was their main air radio station for the southern area but Holbrook wasn't put there to provide an airport for aircraft use because Holbrook was only a piddly little town, a couple of thousand people but because it was on the air route and kept the aircraft well away from the mountains and then they tracked from there down to I think Seymour on the way to Essendon. It was strategically situated in that flat country to keep

07:30 the aircraft away from the high country. So Holbrook diminished in importance and Canberra started to build up so more and more time I spent at Canberra. It was first of all just a temporary table in the

corner of a hangar but it gradually evolved to a full blown radio installation. So while I was doing that we had some technicians up at Darwin. At that time the international flights to Australia were all with Empire Flying Boats.

08:00 The boats would come from Singapore to Darwin, Darwin to Groote Eylandt, Groote Eylandt to Kurumba, Kurumba to Bowen, Bowen to Brisbane, Brisbane to Rose Bay. It took about seven days I think to get from Australia to England by flying boat because they only flew during the day. Darwin became a fairly important boat base. We had a couple of crash boats there.

08:30 The old transmitters that the air force had Civil Aviation took over some of them. The civil airfield at Darwin was at Parap, which had been bombed. All that was left at Parap was the shells of the buildings. The new airport was the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] installation, which then they decided to build up and make the permanent civil aviation installation co-sharing with the RAAF, a similar basis to Canberra.

09:00 We had three or four technicians. A friend of mine was up there, Charlie Hale and his wife, living in some of the bombed out buildings at Parap. I think there was a South Australian guy and one other, an ex naval fellow. They managed to roll a jeep over going out to the Eleven Mile transmitters one day. A couple of them were badly injured and flown out. Charlie Hale was injured, but still able to

09:30 work, so in a great panic another fellow, Bill Chan, an Australian born Chinese fellow who'd been born in Darwin, been in the air force during the war, and he and I were in a great flap [panic], sent from Sydney to Darwin to help out with the problems up there, so we lived in these bombed out buildings at Parap and I learnt my way around Darwin. We worked down at the harbour on the crash launches.

10:00 They had radio equipment on them because they were like a mobile control tower for the flying boats coming in. If they arrived after dark we used to have to lay a flare path for them and the harbour was full of wrecked submerged boats and partly submerged boats so finding a track to lay a path to lay a track for flying boats was tricky because the rise and fall of the tides there was twenty odd feet and the currents are quite enormous, so it was an interesting technique.

10:30 We'd have all these flares and they were like a rubber tyre with a light in it and a battery and an anchor. The boat would line up the course into the wind to lay the flare path and you'd lay the tee bars at the end to indicate the length of it and a line of floats, drop them over and of course you couldn't calculate of how much water or where the tide was going. So you'd wait at the end and see which way they all drifted and try and tow them backwards and forwards to straighten them up. You never did get them straight

11:00 but at least there was a flare path of some sort. When the boat landed, sometimes you would be sitting out there for hours. All the passengers would be taken off and taken to a hostel accommodation out near Barry Springs. In town there were only bombed out hotels and there was nothing in the town of Darwin, it was just a wreck. The pubs that did remain, that was just the skeleton, they sold a lot of beer but

11:30 no accommodation. It was a real cut throat town. This was in 1947. I supposedly went there for three months but I stayed for about six months. Got back to Sydney and had a holiday. This is where I met the girl who was to become my wife. I was on holidays up in the Snowy Mountains and Diana was up there with her mother on holidays and a couple of other girls,

12:00 nurses from St Luke's Hospital in Sydney, so we became engaged. She was doing her nursing training at St Luke's and we were planning to marry in, this was '47, '48. '49 when she finished her nursing, she had about twelve months to go at that time. Anyway in the meantime while I was in Darwin a job at Norfolk Island came up. Norfolk Island

12:30 was built in 1942 because New Zealand and aircraft transiting the Pacific didn't have the range to fly from Australia to Fiji and New Zealand aircraft didn't have the range to fly to the Solomons or to Bougainville or the islands so the Americans supplied the money and the equipment and New South Wales supplied the crew and they built an airstrip on Norfolk Island. At one stage I think the New Zealand air force

13:00 had as many as a one thousand people there. It became a very, very busy airport. At the end of the war after all the New Zealand air force people came back from the islands, back to New Zealand its importance diminished rapidly. It had no strategic importance because the war was over, we don't need an airport. There was no air service from Australia to Norfolk. The only air service on a regular basis that went through, there was a

13:30 DC3 used to fly from New Zealand to Norfolk once a week overnight on the, get there on the Saturday, overnight on the Saturday night, Sunday it would go up to Tontoota and then on its way to Fiji, and Tonga and Rarotonga and all there and come back a week later, so it wasn't actually a very busy airport. But New Zealand air force still had all their equipment there and they wanted to go home so there was an

14:00 inter government agreement that Civil Aviation would take over and operate the airstrip. The job was advertised and people from all over Australia applied for it. I didn't apply for it. I didn't know it was even vacant. I wasn't really interested but because there were no medical facilities on the island and no air service to the island all the staff that went there and their families had to undergo a fairly strict

medical. Keith Sherlock, the senior technician that had the appointment

14:30 had a wife and two kids. Their passage was booked on the Miranda. It went every six to eight weeks, the Burns Philp ship from Sydney, it carried about thirty passengers. It went to Lord Howe [Island], Norfolk [Island], Nichem, Tanner and then on up through the Hebrides and the Solomon Islands, come back a few weeks later back to Sydney so that was the only shipping service. Keith's wife in the medical they found she had cancer

15:00 and that was the end of that. Well this was the week before the ship was to sail and without a technician it was a waste of time anyone going so it was a great flap to get somebody to go Norfolk. I thought, "Oh well, I'll go," and I didn't even know where the place was really. I had no idea. I knew there were islands out there. I knew there was a Norfolk but I didn't know anything beyond that. And I thought, "Well I can go there

15:30 and come back and get married, no problem." I said to the boss, I said, "Well I can come back next year to get married, can't I?" And he said, "No, if you go you are there for three years." So I said to Diana, "Well we either get married now and you come over later or we wait till I come back if you want to wait." So anyway we got married and I got on the ship and went to Norfolk and she stayed and finished her nursing and came over later.

16:00 So I had three years then on Norfolk Island, doing the same work. I was on my own actually. I had no other technicians, so I did the electrician's work and I did the cable work and I did everything. It was a great experience. And I got to know the islanders. Diana came over and Ian my eldest son was born there and after three years they

16:30 offered me a job in Melbourne, so I came back. By this time an air service had started so we, I had flown back a couple of times because after we had been there a few months Qantas [airlines] started flying these converted Lancaster bombers there, they called them 'Lancastrians', once a fortnight for Code 9 passengers. It took them about four hours from Sydney to Norfolk and that service started operating and they carried a lot of freight because the bomb bay

17:00 you could fill up with heaps of stuff but very limited passenger accommodation, very noisy aircraft and terrible way to fly. Then they got Skymasters on that service, the DC4, that operated then from '48, yeah early '49 the Skymasters service started again, once a fortnight and they only had about twenty seats, filled the rest of the cabin up with freight but it was quite a comfortable aeroplane but five hours from Sydney,

17:30 a long time to sit in an aircraft. One trip there people left Sydney and got to Norfolk and they couldn't land at Norfolk and it was Auckland or Tontoota but they flew around Norfolk for awhile and both the other places closed so they turned around and went back to Sydney so that's about ten or eleven hours of flying and when they got back to Sydney they couldn't land there and went on to Melbourne so they spent about twelve hours flying from Sydney to Melbourne. I don't think that would have been a very happy lot of passengers.

18:00 It is better than coming down in the water I guess. But anyway after that, that was 1951 I came back from Norfolk. I didn't want to go to Melbourne so they gave me a job at the training school. I was instructing for a while but I didn't like instructing very much and there was a job at Coffs Harbour. Coffs Harbour had an interesting history. It evolved again by accident. The original North Coast Air Radio Station

18:30 was Kempsey but we had a series of floods in those years, in the immediate post war years '47, '48 and so on Kempsey got flooded time and time again and all the equipment went under water and in great haste they just abandoned Kempsey, just walked out and Air Radio moved to a very temporary installation at Coffs Harbour sort of overnight,

19:00 just stuck together with ticky tack. It wasn't planned, it wasn't organised, it just happened but the fellow they had there as a technician came from AWA to the DCA. He was technically quite competent but unfortunately he was an alcoholic and he didn't look after the place very well. In fact by ten o'clock in the morning you were wasting your time talking to him. So they wanted somebody to go to Norfolk Island and again a similar situation, nobody wanted to go,

19:30 not to Norfolk Island but to Coffs Harbour. Nobody wanted from Sydney wanted to go to Coffs and I didn't, by this time it didn't worry me very much, but Coffs Harbour sounded better than Melbourne so I said, "Coffs Harbour," so I got the job at Coffs. I stayed then at Coffs Harbour until my kids finished high school. Christopher started, they went right through school. I remember when I was a kid I went to umpteen schools and didn't enjoy any of them.

20:00 My kids went to one school, kindergarten, primary school, high school and Coffs Harbour was a wonderful place for kids to grow up in. They could go surfing and sailing and swimming, wonderful climate, beautiful place now because it is so nice it has been overdone, it's rather spoilt but at that time it was bliss. So we were at Coffs then I decided to stay until Chris finished his high school and a job at

20:30 Cairns had come up. Now Queensland as far as the regionals were concerned, Queensland region was sort of a closed shop. The engineer in charge very much kept Queensland for Queenslanders. If you were an interstater they didn't want to know you but I had got to know Dan Baxter, was the fellow's name. He had been in the PMG, sort of PMG engineer and he used to always visit and talk to me at

Coffs and anyway he sort of head hunted me and

21:00 asked me about the job and I reluctantly I said, “Oh yes.” The job at Cairns came up. The reason I got it was because at that time promotion, it was a promotion from the position I held, you had to qualify by seniority plus experience by qualification. And they had a fellow, under the ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organisation] arrangement the Civil Aviation Australia supplied staff, technical staff

21:30 for Indonesian, Malaysia, Fiji and somewhere else, I can’t think of the other one, but Fiji was one of the important places. We trained a lot of the technical trainees at the Training School in Brisbane and New Guinea was the other place, we were training indigenous for the New Guinea jobs. A lot of my friends had been to Indonesia, to Jakarta and a lot had been to Kuala Lumpur.

22:00 Most of their radio installations and their regional setting up of the things was all done by Australian staff. Some of the guys had some pretty terrible experiences up there but it was interesting and well paid. But this fellow had been to Fiji, he was a Queenslander, I can’t think of his name but for whatever the reason the Queensland region people didn’t want him, they didn’t want him at Cairns so they didn’t have anybody in Queensland with sufficient seniority to keep him out. I

22:30 had a lot of seniority and had a lot of experience in different places so Dan reached an agreement with me that on the day the applications closed they didn’t have my application for the job and he rang up me up and said, “Send us a telegram to say that you are applying.” I said, “But I said I can’t go until Chris finishes school.” He said, “That will be right,” so indeed they did, they arranged that and I acted in the position and Chris finished school and then we went to Cairns at the end of the year.

23:00 I then stayed in Cairns for thirteen years and retired from Cairns so that was my civil aviation life. I had Norfolk Island, Coffs Harbour and Cairns, so most people would pay a lot of money to go to those places.

Absolutely and they do.

Yes, yes, they do indeed.

Well Jack I will bring you right back if I could, back to your early days in Sydney growing up there. I mean you mentioned that

23:30 **you didn’t have too many memories of Guyra because you were so tiny?**

Oh very early, yes, yes. I have a very vague memory of that.

But you got around Sydney from Darlinghurst to…?

Oh well yes, see when my parents moved from Guyra down to Sydney they rented a flat or a unit or whatever it was called, a flat I suspect at Darlinghurst, right next to near Kings Cross actually because country people, they were both, my mother from Tumbarumba

24:00 and my father from northern New South Wales and they had no prior knowledge of Sydney as such but he would have got work. His first job I think was at the Kent Brewer as an accountant of some sort and then he got this job with Bennett and Wood who are big motor dealers, motor bikes and push bikes. But I am rather unaware what Sydney was like apart from Maroubra where I started school. I have great memories of the old Rifle Range.

24:30 **I know Maroubra today but can you give us a bit of a picture of what Maroubra was like back then?**

Oh right, yes, well we lived in a street called Irvine Street and Fisher Street ran up to the tram stop and between, we used to walk to Maroubra Junction school and on the other side of the tram line at that time it was called the Old Rifle Range. It was just a huge area of swamp, water and way up in the hills over towards

25:00 Lurline Bay, there were sandstone quarries, a lot of sandstone was quarried from there, huge cranes. At certain times I remember around Christmas time there was Christmas bells grew across there. It was all native heath country and my aunt’s fiancé is buried in the cemetery at Coogee. We would walk from where they lived in Irvine Street across the Old Rifle Range, as long as we didn’t get in the water and in fact to move sand,

25:30 a lot of sand was quarried there and they had a built up levee with push wagons on it and we could walk across that, a narrow gauge tram line where sand and stone was brought in. The army had a, in the corner of Avoca Street they had a big depot there but we would walk round the back and walk up to the cemetery above Coogee there. Going to school we

26:00 were forbidden to cross that tramline because of all the water, now of course there is houses by the mile, nobody would even dream that it had been so much under water. Maroubra Junction itself was sort of growing a bit. The old Maroubra Speedway is still functioning. I remember from the flat we had above Maroubra Beach watching the cars and motorbikes racing around the Maroubra Speedway. Well the remains of that were there for quite some time, even after the war,

26:30 before that was demolished and all built on. But of course the Rifle Range had moved from what they called the old Range out to Malabar where it probably is still today, I don't know what's happened out there.

The little flat that you were in, were you actually on the beach or overlooking the beach?

No, no, we could see the beach but it more or less overlooked the Speedway, back from the beach by about a mile. The bus, a fairly steep road came up the side, the buses from the beach used to come up there loaded with people. If they couldn't negotiate the hill half the fellow's would

27:00 get out behind and push to get it up the hill. I remember that quite clearly but the beach itself was fairly basic. I think there was a pub down there, and a fish and chips shop and a milk bar, that's about all, at Maroubra there was nothing really much down there. The southern end of Maroubra beach there was nothing really down there. It was just natural heath and sand dunes at the back of it. We would go down there sometimes at night time. The surf crew used to go out and people used to put cars with

27:30 lights on and light up the bay so you could see the surf boats. But it wasn't, it was fairly primitive beach but always a good surf beach at Maroubra, it was in those days. Later on when I started work and with some friends I used to swim all the year round at Maroubra. I was sort of junior in the surf club there, never really became terribly active

28:00 in the surf club, but started off the preliminary bits. But before I started work actually I had been involved a little bit with the scouts, not that I ever joined the scouts, but they had scouts called the Rover Scouts, the seniors and when I started work the fellow that I was

28:30 working with lived at Maroubra and he was keen on bush walking so we used to go with some of the Rover Scouts on some of their hikes up in the mountains and get on a train out of Sydney on Friday night and go up to Katoomba or Medlow Bath and just go for hikes down the Megalong Valley. We'd stay with, Carlings had a property down there and we'd go to Blackheath, go down Perry's Lookout and Govets Leap, and

29:00 spend three or four days camped down there and explore all that. So I really did enjoy the bush walk but then again we weren't as organised as part of the Scouts but because of Ray's association with them it was generally with some of those people that we used to do all this bush walking. My brothers were never really into that sort of activity.

Did you spend much time with your brothers making fun for yourselves?

Not as kids, well at home

29:30 not really. We all had our own interests. We all went our own sort of separate ways really. Colin was interested in bands. He joined the Paddington District Band. He played a trumpet of some sort. Keith, I'm just trying to think what Keith's interest was. Keith was a jitterbugger, he was mad on dancing and stuff which I wasn't. For some odd reason I was only ever

30:00 interested in classical music so I used to go to concerts in town hall, art galleries and stuff like that. We just had different tastes and did different things. They were not into swimming and I was keen on tennis so I joined the tennis club and played tennis. They never ever got involved very actively in sport because there is a genealogical thing with

30:30 the Pipers. The Pipers seem to all have hernias and a lot of Pipers have died with strangulated hernias. Colin was born with a hernia and he always wore a truss when we were kids. I never had a truss. I didn't have that problem. I didn't get the Piper genes, I got the Mitchell build so both my brothers have had trouble with hernias all their life so they were not allowed to play football and stuff like that which I did.

How were they treated back in those days?

Well in those days where your hernia popped out they put a

31:00 thing on it and it was called a 'truss', with a kind of a Bakelite sort of pad that he wore down here, down in that area. I always used to pinch his truss because I didn't have one and I wanted a truss so I was always getting in trouble for wearing Colin's truss but I didn't know what it was and when the older brother has got a truss and you haven't got one you feel deprived. But that was all they treated, surgically they can do things now and fix them up but

31:30 Keith has had a couple of operations to repair hernias but they have to be even careful if they cough at that time because you notice they hold themselves, they cough because the pressure tends to cause their stomach lining to pop through the lining. It is obviously a built in defect which I fortunately didn't acquire. I remember earlier on, similarly about my eye sight it is quite extraordinary, the air force were very fussy about eyesight and

32:00 I had all this trouble in my eye when I was at school and when they asked if you ever had any problem and I said no and they did all the tests. I wasn't colour-blind and my eyesight is perfectly good. Even today my eye sight is improving. I wear these glasses for distance but I don't really need, but each time I go for a checkup the eye specialist says my eyes have improved so I am fairly fortunate. I thought once your eyes got crook that is the only

32:30 one way they went, was worse. I know my mother lived until ninety eight. She only died fairly recently, oh a few years ago and she had good eye sight right up until the time she died but in the family there is a history of glaucoma and I do indeed have glaucoma but today it is very easily treatable so it is not a problem.

Jack can you tell us about the Burnside Homes and I guess your times there and how that worked I guess?

Yes, the Presbyterian

33:00 Church administered the Burnside Homes. Sir James Burns, the founder of Burns Philp made a fortune from shipping and copra plantations, basically shipping in North Queensland through the South Pacific. Burns Philp were everywhere. He made his fortune and he was knighted but he was a dour Scot and he established with a few other people, Scottish people from Sydney

33:30 and merchants of various sorts, Gardeners, I can't think of all the names off hand. I've got a book on Burnside here somewhere that I could look at but Sir James had built himself a home called Gowan Brae on the hills up on Pennant Hills Road, out from Parramatta. Gowan Brae was a mansion and he built a tower up on the top of it with turrets and he had a telescope up there and he would look down the Harbour and see the Burns Philp ships in those days. I doubt whether you could today but at

34:00 that time he could. He had all this land and he was very much involved with the church his wife was killed and they had a lodge into the gates at Gowan Brae and a gravel drive it went up to a big turning circle to Gowan Brae and came back down. He had coach and horses that they used to travel in. The horses bolted on one of his journeys, I don't know whether he was in the coach with his wife but she was thrown out

34:30 and it overturned and killed. He never remarried so he obviously had no children or he may have, I don't know. I couldn't be sure about that. But anyway, he and others, on the land that he had bought as part of Gowan Brae he established an orphanage, cottage style homes each one administered by a Matron with a Deputy and one side of the road were girls and the other side of the road were boys.

35:00 Each home accommodated roughly about thirty. They were two storey buildings. a large common dormitory upstairs, bathroom accommodation upstairs. Downstairs, dining room, kitchen, scullery and a cupboard recreation area and toilets again downstairs and each set in parks. I don't if you've ever seen it but each home is separated from his neighbours by probably two hundred or

35:30 three hundred yards so each home became an entity in it's own right and it had its own grounds and there was great rivalry between the kids of the various homes. I mean the fellows next to us we were always having fights with them and likewise but the school was co-educational. He built his own school for Burnside, but it was open for kids. There weren't many non Burnside residents around at that time. That district was largely orchards out in the bush,

36:00 citrus, stone fruit. There was a bus service from Parramatta but Burnside was virtually self contained. It had a dairy, it had vegetable gardens and the boys had to go and work in the vegetable gardens and work in the dairy. My uncle, that's my mother's brother, he lived in the lodge and he was in charge of the gardeners. I have a photo him with a horse ploughing.

36:30 He would have twenty or thirty kids, the boys would have to go and work in the gardens. The girls, they had a small basic hospital there, the girls had to go and work at the hospital and they had also learnt cooking skills at each of the homes. We were never taught how to cook but we were taught how to wash up though in our home. Each home, there was quite considerably rivalry between the homes, not in sporting activities. I think that perhaps

37:00 evolved later on. There was a central assembly hall. Dr Macintyre was the overall Superintendent and he was a Presbyterian minister, ordained minister but he was in charge of the homes. His second in charge, I can't think of the man's name now. He was the one that virtually ran it. Macintyre was overall, he was up there with God sort of thing.

37:30 They were responsible for the administration. If you got sent to Dr Macintyre you knew you had your pants down and got a whack on your bottom, probably did us a lot of good. I don't think I ever got it once. My older brother had to front up once for doing something stupid.

Was that because you never got caught?

Probably never got caught or maybe I worried about the cane, an inducement to being good, a bit like Parramatta High School, the same thing I guess.

38:00 In those days there is nothing like the threat of a cane to maintain discipline. Today if they did that I would hate to think what would happen but really it was good. I have no problems with it.

Can I just ask you Jack, were you aware at the time was there much sort of competition or waiting list to get into Burnside?

I think there was. I know for a long time before we got in my mother had been into an office in the city,

38:30 part of the Presbyterian church. As you can imagine as small kids we were taken in and we sat and sat and sat and wondering what was going on. I had no idea what was in store for us. Mother didn't really told us what we were doing or why but I recall after one or two visits we all got paraded in, and inspected and vetted and looked at and probably asked to say something. I can't recall any detail we didn't know what for and why. The next thing we were aware of we were on the train up to Parramatta and on the bus

39:00 and there we were at Burnside but it was no big deal. It didn't seem to be. I think Keith, the younger one, the younger brother, he was a bit upset. He was not far out of nappies and I guess it would have been a bit upsetting for him.

Why would have it been upsetting?

He was taken from home and left there with a lot of strangers. He wasn't with Colin and I. We were in Blackwood. We were together, it was

39:30 no big deal for us, but Keith on his own I think that might have been a bit of a trauma for him but he got over it once he joined us at Blackwood.

Tape 3

00:33 **Jack now we were talking about Burnside, can you tell us how long you actually were there?**

Four years I think, from 1929, I would have been seven, I'd have to check up on that. 1929, seven, I would have been eleven, yeah I probably would have been eleven, so

01:00 it would be 1929 to 1933 I would think when we left Burnside and went to Eastern Creek.

I have to ask you after the four years what enabled your mother to bring you out of Burnside?

Oh because she formed a relationship with this gentleman, George Neilsen. So we had, George was about the same age as my elder brother so there were four boys and we went from Burnside and made an incredible

01:30 journey. If I saw it today I wouldn't believe it but he had an old Indian motor bike with a side car and we all somehow or other, there would have been six of us all travelled on that Indian bike and side car. I think George senior was driving naturally, and I think sitting in front of him on the tank was my elder brother, Colin and I think sitting behind him was George Neilsen, junior.

02:00 In the side car was my mother and somehow or other Keith and I were both in the sidecar. There were three of us in the side car. I often think back if you saw that today you wouldn't believe it but there were six of us.

You must have thought it was exciting?

Oh we did, the most exciting thing in those days, because I think we had been in a car once or twice but I don't think I had ever been to a petrol station and got petrol. And in the

02:30 motor bike George I know pulled up on the great Western Highway somewhere out from Wentworthville or Pendle Hill or somewhere, I can't remember, to get petrol and you had to pump and a thing that measured the petrol up the top and you set it to how many gallons you want. And you operated this pump and the petrol came up and all these bubbles and it was generally a nice pink colour or

03:00 a green colour and we all thought it was magic watching this glass bowl fill up and then you put the hose in the tank and turned a knob and all this petrol ran out of there into your tank. And then you got the hose and virtually squeezed it all the way down to get the last drop so I think that was one of the highlights seeing how you got petrol out of the… And today fill it up and press a button and hold a thing and that is it but a very different world in those days. Actually seeing the petrol before it went in was quite a thrill, which is something

03:30 you never do today. You don't even see petrol. Nobody would know what colour it is but that was great. I mean I thought it was.

How did you get along with your mother's new man?

Very good. He was a brilliant man. He was stern as far as discipline was but he was inventive. By trade he was a woodworker, carpenter but he could

04:00 do anything in the way of handcraft. He was great on plumbing. He made all the brooders and he made an egg cleaning machine when egg cleaning machines had never been invented. He was a most extraordinary man, very energetic. He could harness a horse and plough and milk a cow, he could do anything.

Your mother, do you think that she loved him?

04:30 I don't know, I really don't know. I think it was an association of convenience. I don't know how far the relationship extended. We never went into it but no, he was a terrific man. I have nothing but admiration.

You were very lucky I suppose considering that a lot of stepmothers or fathers are not considered good by their…?

See they couldn't get married because his wife was still alive

05:00 in the mental home so there was no way they could get married. Mum couldn't get married. She did marry later on during the war years but because her husband had disappeared and before she could marry she had to have his, some certification by law so that people generally regarded my father who was Colin James Piper his death was virtually registered in 1944 or

05:30 something but he had disappeared for twelve or fifteen years prior to that.

This is a fascinating story Jack. Excuse me for interrupting but I mean this is fascinating in that your father went away to see his folks and never returned. I mean has it ever turned up or anyone done any research that perhaps there had been a murder?

No.

He could have been?

He could have been. We don't know. It has never been established. We, see

06:00 the trail is well and truly gone. At the time, people today are amazed that the person didn't turn up at their destination and nobody knew about it, but it was a very different world at that time. Given all the circumstances there was nothing unusual about what he did. He was going to work at Bennett Wood. He gave mother the housekeeping money that morning before he left, five pounds I think was the sum. I think he only earned about seven pound a week.

06:30 I think he gave her the housekeeping money, ostensibly he was getting on the train Friday night. He would have been up at Llangothlan Saturday morning and it would have been Saturday, Sunday, Monday night he would have got on the train and gone back and come to work. He wouldn't have gone back out to Maroubra and then gone back in. He would have got off the train and gone straight into the Bennett Woods office in town so Mother wouldn't have seen him anyway until Tuesday night.

07:00 Now as I said the fact that he didn't arrive at Glangothlan the people up there might have thought, "Well he didn't get on the train," but they would not have been concerned beyond that, the fact that he didn't arrive. He had probably written to them because in those days you didn't ring up people, you wrote a letter. That was the way he kept in touch, letter writing. When he didn't come back Mother may have been concerned. She probably was,

07:30 no doubt when he didn't arrive on the Tuesday night but she would have thought, "Oh well perhaps he is ill. He will be home next weekend, perhaps he is up at Llangothlan." You couldn't ring up and would not have rung up. It would have been probably quite some time before a telegram was sent. She may have sent a telegram to try and find out, "What has happened, where is he, when is he coming back?" By that time it could have well been a lapse of a week or a fortnight. Then some little

08:00 time would have passed before they even went to the police.

She didn't say that they had an argument or anything else?

No, no, I've never heard anything like that.

And they had a good relationship?

I don't know how good the relationship was but knowing my mother I would be surprised if they had a good relationship because she wasn't an easy, in her older age and in fact all her life she was a very erratic sort of person. I wouldn't have liked to have a relationship with her myself,

08:30 in that sense. She was a very difficult woman and it could well be he had decided that enough is enough and went but where he went and how he went I do not have the vaguest idea. Oddly enough when I started, my younger son, Christopher, the fellow that is living now in Canberra, he was working for Elcom at the Power Station at Munmorah Power Station

09:00 down in the south of Newcastle on shift work and he had quite a bit of spare time and he decided for whatever reason and I think he, like a lot of other junior members of the family decided they were going to solve the mystery of Colin James' disappearance. My brother's grandchildren have done this and Christopher started it, "Oh they'll find out." Anyway I think Chris, partly with that in mind started

09:30 ringing up on the phone, ringing anybody by the name of Piper and he started putting together a bit of family history and that is how we got involved with this book because in Campbelltown there were descendants of Mary Wade Muster and Chris went to a couple of those meetings so all of our family history got well documented in that book. But when he had three children and his job changed and

10:00 he ran out of time he dropped the family history stuff and I didn't really ever want to have anything to do with computers but when I started having grandchildren and they wanted computers and because I know how they work and I understand the technical part of them I started getting old computers and fixing them and giving them to all the grandchildren. And then I had a computer, in fact it could well be that one. It's been there a long while and I started doing picking up the threads of

10:30 of the family history research and the way Microsoft does things now everything becomes obsolete and if you want a better scanner you have to have another computer and you have got to have something better so they have got you by the throat. If you are going to stay with it you really have to keep getting something bigger, better and brighter but really an old 286 computer or an old Commodore would have been more than adequate but just because I wanted to do those sort of photographs

11:00 you have to get something better. But anyway in the process I was looking at the New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages I found in the 1940's a record of a marriage of a Colin James Piper to a somebody or other, not Beatrice Stuckey, I can't think of the surname now but Beatrice somebody and I wrote to the New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriage and got

11:30 the transcript of the marriage registration and it is a different Colin James Piper, quite extraordinary, not even connected to our family. That was as close to my father that I ever got. Everybody when I said I found Colin James Piper married in 1940 something we all thought we had found him. The other thing that went through the family, one of these legend things that different members of the family, some inter married with family and

12:00 their names were Handybow and Hodder and one of them enlisted under his own name and for whatever reason was discharged early in the war, then re-enlisted under a pseudonym, under a different name altogether. He was captured in Singapore and on a ship, the Japanese were moving prisoners from Changi to somewhere up into Japan or China and the ship was sunk by an American torpedo and

12:30 he and supposedly his cousin, Colin James Piper. This is only a legend. There is no factual evidence, they were supposed to have drowned. I mean all the prisoners did indeed drown on that ship but for what it is worth it is only a story and it cannot be established.

He just joins the archives of thousands of missing Australians I suppose?

Well he could have enlisted under any name whatever. There is a story in the family but this again is how

13:00 stories in families go, aunt so and so has told aunt so and so stories do get confused. It is not based on any factual evidence.

Oh well, it's is all fascinating though, isn't it? Can you tell us about Burnside having any special mentors or people that when you look back now it is not a sad or dark episode, what made it all right for you?

13:30 I don't know that we had much. We didn't have much in the way of expectations. I mean today if a kid can't have a car by the time he turns sixteen he is not with it but I mean we never ever at that time it was just something that sort of world, those sort of things were just beyond our comprehension. We were well fed although we were always hungry, kids are always hungry.

14:00 We used to organise, there are a lot of orchards in the hills in the bush away from there and the big kids and the little kids we would organise these raiding parties and come home with our shirts full of apples and pears and oranges and hide them down the creek and then the little kids would be lurking in the bull rushes and know where we'd hidden them and they would go and eat them but that was an adventure. The Burnside Homes itself very keen on

14:30 Scottish stuff, the Highland gatherings every year we went down to Sydney to Moore Park to the Highland gatherings because Burnside had a pipe band. The Pipe Major, Gary Moore was in our home, 'Gaffy' Moore was a big fellow. Kids that were interested learnt to play the pipes and drums, girls went into Highland dancing. Highland games were a pretty big thing, both at Sydney at the Highland games,

15:00 once a year and another function down at Parramatta Park. I can't remember what, it could have been Australia Day I suppose or Anzac Day and we'd all be marched down to Parramatta Park and that sort of thing would be on, there would may pole dancing and pipe marching and stuff.

Was it at Burnside that you became interested in of all things aviation?

No, no.

When was that?

Not a bit interested.

15:30 Later on I think when we left Burnside and I started work in Sydney and I started boarding with my grandmother at Kingsford and I had a push bike and I used to ride over to Mascot. This would have been in 1934, I remember going to Mascot. Now I would have been twelve so I couldn't have been working then. The Melbourne Centenary Air Race was on and I don't know who took us to Mascot but it was an all over grass field.

16:00 There wasn't very much there but I remember seeing Scot and Campbell Black's Comet, the aircraft that they won the race in was there and a lot of other aircraft that went through on that Melbourne Centenary Race were there. When I started work at Sydney and then I went and boarded with my grandmother in Sydney most weekends I went home, back to Blacktown but sometimes we would stay in Sydney and I would ride my push bike over to Mascot. I just got interested in the aeroplanes there

16:30 and looking at aeroplanes generally because there was nothing to stop you. I mean today they scan you all over but at that time you could walk up and I remember Kingsford Smith's Southern Cross was there and I wrote my name on his tail but you were allowed to do that then. You could go and sit in the thing, you could do anything but crikey get near an aeroplane today is a real challenge but at that time aircraft were just fascinating and

17:00 I mean the kids that went to the airport were quite encouraged to go and look and climb in and it was just something to do.

Did you think "I would like to be a pilot"?

No, never dreamt, never even entered my head.

It is interesting isn't it though because you made a career?

Well I fell into it really. When it came in terms of

17:30 enlisting the war was over in the Middle East and Europe. "If I am going to enlist, what am I going to do?" And I didn't think I would like marching so I thought the air force would be better, you can go flying. Having got into the air force but not into what I wanted to do, I took what for me was second best, was this radio course but as it turned out I liked it, I enjoyed it, it was something that enjoyed.

18:00 I found a job that suited me which I did for the rest of my life. So as for flying I did indeed do some flying, both my sons, Christopher has his own aeroplane, Ian learnt to fly, they are both into flying. I did all the flying I wanted to, in fact when I was in Cairns flying became a pain in the 'thingamy' and I just didn't. I mean everywhere I went in Cairns

18:30 Thursday Island, Weipa, Cooktown, wherever, I had to fly. You couldn't get in a vehicle and drive anywhere up in the Cape so I did a lot of flying but with somebody flying me of course but I must say there comes a time that I am glad I didn't go flying aeroplanes as my career. I rather enjoyed what I was doing rather better. I got mixed up with aviation but not actually flying.

Did you know about,

19:00 **you were talking about you were twelve in 1934 and as you got older in your teens did you start to become aware of the kinds of incidents and troubles brewing over there in Europe towards the war?**

Oh the war, when the war came along all this stuff about Hitler and that and Mussolini that was very well publicized, every time you went to the pictures and papers and the radio. Well aware of all that but

19:30 really at that age none of us took it very seriously. We all thought when the war started well in twelve or eighteen months it would be all over. We never imagined that, I think it was 1938 or '39 when the war started and I was sixteen thinking. "There is nothing to worry about, it won't involve me," but when I turned eighteen and you start then having to reconsider.

20:00 Again it was, at that time it was not Japan, the war with Japan hadn't started. It hadn't even been contemplated that there would be a Pacific war. The idea was to enlist and possibly get to England somehow or other, that was going to be where we would go. I would see the world but I did, a different part of the world.

What was the feeling in Sydney in that time 1938, 1939 with all the things that

20:30 **had been happening in Europe? Was there a feeling "we are going to go to war" or was it a…?**

Well immediately all the people enlisted and then we were called up and it was frightening and terrible the things that happened in the Middle East, particularly in Crete and Greece. We all had family members that had gone away and that did cause concern but not to Australia as such. There was no sense of, "The war is so far away

21:00 it is not going to have any direct impact on us." Even to the air force at that stage, the air force weren't worried about the fact that all we had was some Wirraways that could fly and beyond that we had nothing. There was no sense of foreboding. The Empire Air Training Scheme which was operated in Rhodesia, Canada, New Zealand and Australia for aircrews for navigators and pilots

21:30 that again was regarded as a bit of a holiday jaunt. You will go to Rhodesia and learn how to fly and eventually you might get to England or Canada. The expectation was that the war is not going to last that long but how little we knew. Once the war with Japan started there was a dramatic change in attitude and the feelings to Australia, quite extraordinary. But when you are in the services, this is the odd thing, in retrospect

22:00 And talking about the war with Japan, I was in Melbourne at the time. There was no build up to it really. The 7th December when they bombed Pearl Harbour and sort of all hell let loose

22:30 immediately in Australia of course, the great panic was on. Melbourne and Sydney sort of had blackouts and brown outs. The cars, the headlights had little slits of light. I don't know really what happened in Brisbane because I wasn't up here at that time, I was still in Melbourne. It was some few months before I came up to Toowoomba. But as I said, in retrospect I never really knew why we went here, there or anywhere. You were told to go and we got

23:00 on a train, coming into Toowoomba, we got on a train at Melbourne, at Spencer Street. I don't know that many of us knew exactly where we were going. We didn't come up the coast way, we came up all the inland tracks and finished up at Toowoomba so we got off the train at Toowoomba and we set up a bit of a camp at the showground. It was May, freezing, terribly cold and then we set up a cap out on the Oakey side of Toowoomba. But nobody goes round and says, "Righto fellows

23:30 get yourself packed, you are going to Toowoomba. You will be there for so long and then do this." Then I think I was talking about how I went on detached flights. Well I assumed that I belonged to the Number 5 Squadron but looking at the papers I found that we were seconded to the American units when we were at Rockhampton. I thought, "Well I never knew that," because they don't tell you these things and in fact the whole business of being at war,

24:00 once you're in this kind of situation I guess somebody up top knows what is doing, who is going where and why and what they're doing really the individuals doesn't really know. You don't know until you get there and when you are there you don't know why you are there.

It has been very common hasn't it that a lot of people in the service are the first to say they have no clue what is going on?

Yeah, yes, well you really didn't get a lot of news, apart what you could pick up on the wireless. You didn't get papers or television, there was nothing like that

24:30 to let you know what was going on. Today you can see the bombs being dropped in your lounge room but at that time it was very different. It is just what you did.

Can you tell us about your grandmother? Was she your mother's mother?

My mother's mother yeah, Emma Mitchell, yes.

And was she supportive of you and your life?

Oh yes,

25:00 very much, very much, yes. Her husband died, my grandfather died in 1919, in an outbreak of flu after World War I. He at that time, they had been gold miners and at that time they had established a dairy farm on the outskirts of Tumbarumba. And my grandmother, Nanny we called her, and Aunt Mabel, and my mother was not there at the time, or it would have been shortly after,

25:30 she had been working as a domestic as a maid for the Manager of the Bank of NSW at Tumbarumba. And he was transferred from there to Guyra so mother would have been at Guyra working in the Bank Manger's residence and that is where she would have met Colin James because he was a teller in the bank but Mum would not have been aware of what was happening at

26:00 Tumbarumba. My grandmother, very tiny little person, her eldest daughter Mabel and I think perhaps Uncle Arthur, my uncle, an older brother of my mother's, would have been working there or helping but they couldn't run the dairy and again my grandmother had a fall and broke her wrist and they had to sell up and move to Sydney. They just sort of sold the farm and the house and everything for virtually whatever they could get

26:30 and moved to Sydney and brought this house at Irvine Street, at South Kensington as it was then and from there they just, my Aunt Mabel was an expert milliner. She got a job with Sarwood Gardener's Hats. Ladies hats were very big in those days and Aunt Mabel was in charge of a work room of about fifty girls doing millinery hat making.

27:00 **Can I ask you did you have an interest then in girls before you enlisted?**

Not really, no. I knew they were there but I didn't have any, apart from a little girl at Burnside.

A little girl?

A very little girl. When I first went to Burnside, I don't know how old, I might have been seven or eight, yes,

27:30 Garry Moore, the fellow in our home was the, Garry was the big, tall athletic bloke and he was the drum major of the pipe band and wore the big beaver hat, a very imposing figure. His sister Beryl was in the War Memorial Home.

28:00 Yes well I started school at the Burnside School and Beryl Moore, Gary's younger sister, she was quite a

few years younger, she was about my age, Gary was perhaps five years older than me and she sat next to me and she obviously fell madly in love because all I can recall of school is she sitting there, kissing me all day which I didn't enjoy very much but in retrospect I think I should have paid more attention.

28:30 I often wonder what happened to her since, because she really was, my recall of Beryl was she was a very pretty little girl. You know what boys are like, girls, you didn't want to have anything to do with them then. So that was really and then we had to go to Sunday School for some years after at Eastern Creek and Quakers Hill and there were girls there but I really don't know that I ever had any interest much in girls until

29:00 I went to Parramatta High School.

Now this is interesting because I grew up in that area. I grew up in West Ryde.

Did you?

Yes, and I was born in Blacktown, Lalor Park actually so I am curious to know what Parramatta, I mean Parramatta now is the biggest city in Sydney so what was that like just before war broke out? Can you tell us, I mean it must have been a lot of country then?

At the Marayong Station there was only one house. A fellow by the name of Frank Cummins lived there.

29:30 Marayong, there was nothing there. I used to go over there. We lived in Osborne Road and we had five acres and there were only so many houses in Osborne Road and now it is all wall to wall houses but between where we lived and Blacktown, along the Old Windsor Road is it? There was a golf course, golf links, Saint somebody's golf course on the left going into Blacktown. We used to walk or ride our bikes in.

30:00 Saturday night's we would go into the picture theatre and generally walk, all the way. It was a rural area. People had dairy farms. We used to grow tomatoes and then ride our bikes round when we had a lot of tomatoes and try and sell them we would ride for miles and miles and not sell many tomatoes, two [shillings] and sixpence or something. It was all poultry farms and small farming. To go to Quakers Hill Primary School

30:30 from our place we would walk down, and walk along the Creek and through Arthur Voss', it was a real estate place and they had about twenty five acres. We would walk across there to school. At Quakers Hill the school there were two or three kids rode their horses to school and tied them up in the yard. It wasn't an urban sort of situation at all, it was all bush and country.

And what about Parramatta High, was the Parramatta High now,

31:00 **I think it still exists?**

Oh it still exists, it definitely exists.

It's huge, what was it like?

It was a big school. It was one of the few schools in Sydney that was coeducational. See Sydney High School was Sydney Boys High and Sydney Girls High, two separate schools even though they were co-located. Parramatta was co-ed, where boys and girls in the same class. The year I was in first year I think I in the first year

31:30 intake each class would be roughly twenty five or thirty people and I think there was one A, B, C, D, E, F, G; A, B, C, D, E, F, G, there were about eight, eight classes of twenty five kids so what's that? That adds to a couple of hundred kids per year. Well you can work that out. In those days most of them, of my lot, would be leaving school at third year. From fourth and fifth year

32:00 year there would be only a handful of pupils would stay on. The object was to get the Intermediate. If you are fourteen get out and get a job and if you got your Intermediate you were lucky. That was as far as you could go at school. If you wanted any further education you went to night school or night tech college classes.

What about if you wanted to be say

32:30 **a medical doctor?**

Well you would have had to have a very wealthy family behind you and you probably wouldn't have been at Parramatta High School. You would have been at the King's School. People with money, the ones that became doctors and lawyers and dentists and things like that, they were across the river at the Kings School. I remember we had some interesting times with the boys from Kings School because they were in the Old Government House in Parramatta Park before they

33:00 moved up.

They are still there.

Are they still there? I thought they left there.

Kings School?

I thought they moved up to Gowan Brae. They moved up to Gowan Brae at Burnside. The Kings School in Parramatta was at the old?

Pennant Hills Road?

Yeah, Pennant Hills Road now and that is where Burnside is.

Oh okay, yes they did move then, yeah, you're right.

They used to be down at the Old Government House in Parramatta Park and they used to march up the Parramatta High School to do their Intermediate and Leaving Certificate exams,

33:30 all in uniform, so all the kids at Parramatta High School would be up the peppercorn trees spitting on them as they marched by. And down in the river they would be out in the afternoon in their boats practising rowing and we would be out there swimming, tipping them over so there was no love lost between the Kings School and our lot.

So it wasn't exactly, let's say equal opportunities for all in those days? There was no free education or?

I mean we had some people with brains.

34:00 I can't think of his name, I'll have to think of it after, one fellow who is quite famous now and he has written books and he was a Professor, and same year as my brother but by and large Parramatta High School kids were working class kids. And as I say by the time you were old enough to go to work, the Intermediate exam at the end of third year, you would generally be no more than sixteen by then

34:30 and you'd leave school and go to work and that was it.

I will just ask you then, I mean it was a very difficult kind of culture in Australian then because it seems very class conscientious, in the sense that University students were only the ones whose families had monies, and it was a similar sort of situation at Duntroon, all that kind of officer material?

35:00 Very much.

I mean, going into the air force though it seems to be a little bit more, tell me if I'm wrong, it was more of a sort of genteel service to go into as opposed to the army which was very working class. Were you aware of that at the time?

I wasn't really aware of it but the air force was generally considered to be a bit more up than the army, there is no question of that. A lot of people were discouraged from joining

35:30 the air force because they didn't have the technical background and the aptitudes that the air force wanted. If you were going into an aircrew in the air force there was very strict medical conditions and also education level was fairly important. Going into the area that I went into, the trades areas, again it was the aptitude and education level that was important. A lot of people from that vintage, from that era

36:00 would not have got into the air force simply because they didn't have the education level required and that wasn't because the kids didn't want the educational level, it was that most of them didn't get it. It was as soon as you were old enough you went to work. Now George Nielsen, the son of our foster father, he wasn't very bright academically. See you couldn't get to high school without passing a competitive exam. It was what they called the

36:30 QC, the QC was the exam, the Qualifying Certificate. Now if you could pass the qualifying certificate from your primary school to reach a sufficient level to go to high school, that is where you went. If you couldn't get past the qualifying certificate level you went to boys went to the Westmead Technical School and the girls went to the Parramatta Domestic Science School. And the boys

37:00 that didn't get there that was their lot, they just didn't get to high school so there was no way they were going to get the education level required unless they got sufficient motivation themselves to do it afterwards. The girls went to the domestic science school and virtually all they taught them was how to wash and iron and cook and peel veggies. It wasn't an academic course that they got there because the outlook then was their career path was that you will be a domestic servant which

37:30 at that time still most people, if you were a doctor, you had a servant, totally different today.

I guess the other word for domestic servant then was wife?

Yes, I hadn't considered that but I mean you had to do something unless you got married very young but by and large generally speaking the girls that didn't have a career path for them at all,

38:00 I worked, as I said, at the Tobacco Factory in Sydney and at WD & HO Willis in the tobacco factory, in what they called the 'stemmery', where all this tobacco leaf came in, there were a hundred and fifty girls in there, lined up on high seats and benches with tobacco leaves, pulling stems out of it all day long. Their fingers generally all wore through. They all wore sticking plaster on their fingers to stop their fingers wearing out and they were on piece work. They would start work early morning, eight

o’clock and

38:30 the more they worked, the harder they worked, the more leaf they stemmed and cleaned up and the more money they got so there was a lot inducement to work hard. I have seen girls sitting there and working hard and wet the floor rather than go to the toilet. One girl, we had a glass thing between where we were we were, over on the side where all the leaf was treated and processed before it was made into cigarettes, after the girls had stemmed it, and one girl we called “non stop” because she sat there she never got off, she never went to the toilet

39:00 generally there was a puddle on the floor, so it was really…

They needed the money?

Oh well yes, everybody needed money and it was a lot of pressure on to stay and work.

Can you tell us Jack this, with you were working at Wills when the war was declared, is that right?

Yes, well I went from Wills to SP Lee, the Printing Works, yes,

39:30 still the same, the tobacco factory owned the printing and everything. It is not a different firm.

Okay, can you tell us where you were when you actually heard about war being declared?

I would have been working at SP Lee. Yes, yes, 1930, ’22, I would have been employed at SP Lee. I would have started my apprenticeship probably. I worked for about twelve months before I started my apprenticeship there. Yes, I was an

40:00 apprentice lithographic printer. Not many people from there enlisted at that time because there wasn’t a great deal of pressure. I mean the printers was a skilled trade and we had a big machine, engineering machine shop to maintain. We had letterpress and lithographic printing so we had a lot of machinery. Across the road in the engineering maintenance workshop they had lathes and milling machines and before the war with Japan started

40:30 most of that had been converted to munitions and they had men and women both, working in there day and night, shift work, right through, twenty four hours a day, every day of the week, as well as being doing the maintenance on the Rally Park equipment, that’s the tobacco company’s and SP Lee and they were making shell cases all the time. All the lathes and all the machinery was fully employed at that time, before the

41:00 war with Japan started, before I ever enlisted.

Maybe they knew something else that no one else did?

Oh well I mean they’ve got to have bullets to fire at somebody or shells to throw out of guns so any machinery that was available was turning out shell cases.

Tape 4

00:33 **Now you mentioned earlier, I think it was to Heather [interviewer], that you didn’t enjoy your work at the printers?**

I didn’t, no. The main reason I guess for not enjoying it was a noisy environment, a lot of pressure. The job is on you to get jobs out on time, the pressure on you, the machine had to be kept running and it was, apart from

01:00 the technical part of the printing which you learn very early on, it just becomes tedious and once the machine is set up and running all you are doing is standing there and watching it. It is like counting trees as you drive along the road, there is no great thrill in it and it is filthy. That was the worse thing because to clean up the ink and the mess and change the jobs your fingers had printing ink in them and it gets ingrained

01:30 into your skin and it is just the whole thing about it is just very uninteresting, well it was to me. Perhaps some people get carried away with it. I think people stayed there at that time because once you learn a trade like that you are captive to it for the rest of your life, it is pretty hard. The best you can hope for is to go from a little machine to a big machine or a faster machine and beyond that there is not a lot so

02:00 I was pleased that I managed to escape. The war in that sense did me a very great favour. It was a chance to escape from a life that I did not enjoy at all. See both my brothers had chosen, not so much chosen but pushed in the path it turned out in the PMG, which is Telstra now but in that day both of them started

02:30 as telegraph messengers in Sydney delivering telegrams. That was a huge industry before the war and then my elder brother first started because a fellow who lived near us in Irvine Street at Kingsford

there, Barney Hammond, Len Hammond he was in charge of the bike shop. The PMG used to make their own push bikes. Len Hammond he was a great push bike rider in his day and his son

03:00 Barney who was my age, he went on to become a well known bike rider after the war but anyway Len, his father got Colin into the factory, the PMG bike factory, at the end of Cleveland Street. Colin started working there and he graduated, promoted to be a telegraph messenger, riding one of the wretched bikes and then the opportunity came along to do a

03:30 telephone technicians course. He went to the telephone training school at Sydenham and Colin when he finished his training there was at City North in Sydney, that was a large telephone exchange in Sydney and then when the war came he got the opportunity to come up to Queensland working for them. Keith on the other hand had started. He was a bit, a few years younger than Colin because the war would have been over before Keith would have been old enough and did the same course but the

04:00 rules had changed and he was able to sit for his technicians exam before he finished his training, so he came out of his training as a qualified senior technician and they both came, Colin, my elder brother was a principal technical officer in Brisbane and Keith was, I think he might have been a principal technical officer at Newcastle. But they both and I must say that job would have been a lot more interesting than I was destined to do as a printer but having got into what I

04:30 did with the air force and then into Civil Aviation was even better because I went to more interesting places and I think did more interesting things.

Can you tell us Jack, I mean you told us how you found your way into the wireless gig but I am curious how long into your service did you actually get that opportunity? Did you have to do basic training as well?

Yes, yes, after we did the recruit training at Richmond and

05:00 Williamtown then we were posted, I went to the Number 1 School Technical Training in Melbourne and lived in, accommodated in barracks type accommodation in the Exhibition Building. We went to the Radio School part of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. It was staffed with civilian instructors. We did, in the air force we did what was the civilian

05:30 four year course, which was done part time at night time. I don't know how many hours per week but we crammed all that into six months because we used to start at 7.30 in the morning and knock off at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and there was a lot of pressure on to pass exams because if you looked like failing you were re-mustered into a general hand or a guard or a cook or a messman, jobs that were

06:00 very, very ordinary.

What kind of equipment or gear were they instructing you in, in those days?

Well they had the old broadcast transmitter form Hamilton there. We had some old marine spark transmitters. We had super heteronom, normal radio receivers that were in households of the day which they put faults in and we had to fix as we progressed. Basically we started off with basic theory. They assumed you

06:30 knew absolutely nothing so we had to first of all learn basic electron theory. 'the Bible' as such was what they called the Admiralty Handbook of Wireless Telegraphy. It was a book published by the Admiralty and it is still used to this day as a text for everything you needed to know about radio. It took you back to basic electron theory, a lot of mathematics, trigonometry and geometry involved, logarithms which today if you asked a kid

07:00 to do some log tables they would go out and pick up a piece of wood but at that time we didn't have calculators. We did have slide rules but we weren't allowed to use them. It was considered cheating. A lot of mathematics involved in basic radio theory so that was really pushed. Then in the six months course you really had to try and keep up. If you looked like flunking the course they didn't put you back

07:30 and repeat unless some valid reason if you were ill or something like that or family problems but by and large if you failed the exams at the end of each month you were out, so there was a lot of pressure on to get there. I must say it was good that when we went back to the barracks we marched. The whole unit marched from the accommodation, the Melbourne Tech [Technical College], down to the RMIT [Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology] and the various other trades courses went to their schools, and the radio people

08:00 went to theirs and the electrical ones and so on and we were all marched back and after that you did homework so it was a pressure job. The only time you got off was weekends. You were stood down. If you stayed on the barracks over weekends you were taken on a route march every Saturday morning all around the slums of Melbourne so the thing was to avoid that and generally got a piece of paper and walked around looking for someone to give a message, so every time, "Where are you going Piper?" "I've got a message," and you kept going

08:30 so you didn't get roped up so all the fellows had to go for route marches. And I think I only ever did one of them but they were all right. You just marched around the slums and got abused and yelled at by everybody.

What would they say to you?

Well in that area of Melbourne there are brothels and prostitutes and they would give you a bit of a serve as you went by I guess. But it was just a lot of blokes route marching, it wasn't a lot of fun. If you,

09:00 that you meant that you had generally Saturday afternoon and Sunday free and we used to go out to St Kilda and go skating or whatever, swimming. Gradually we got to know families. There was a very nice family at Elwood that we, they had three girls in the family, four girls actually. McClellan family, the father, the husband he died but Mrs McClellan was still there and he had been an engineer at the Metropolitan Board of Works in Melbourne,

09:30 a fairly well to do family and very nice girls, the four girls. The eldest one, Eileen was the ballet dancer in the Borowancy [?] Ballet, so that suited me. I used to go to the ballet with Eileen. The others, we used to go skating, it was great. We would go out there weekends and stay there. And then occasionally we would get weekend leave and we could travel back to Sydney on the train but

10:00 the six months in Melbourne went fairly quickly because it was very intense study and you really had to work to keep at it.

What were the toughest bits of gear that you had to get to know and work on?

Oh well the actual course wasn't bad because we were in fairly civilised conditions. We were in rooms and it was dry and quite comfortable but the worst part and the most learning you had to do was when I was posted to the squadron when we came up to

10:30 Toowoomba. At Laverton we were in a hangar and it was all right, but at Toowoomba the aircraft was sitting out in the open and you had to work on them hail, rain or shine, hot, wet cold or whatever and we had very basic conditions. Of course all the theory in the world doesn't help much until the crunch comes when you actually work on the equipment that you are actually going to have to work on and new equipment came along fairly rapidly. The early equipment that we had was English

11:00 equipment, what they called TRF, Tuned Radio Frequency stuff, fairly primitive and basic stuff. When the aircraft were refitted from AWA, made more updated equipment, we had to learn some new tricks because they didn't send you to do a course, you learnt as you went along. Just working with aeroplanes you had to crawl into places where you could hardly move and it was always uncomfortable and it was always hot and there was always flies in your face, there was

11:30 always something wrong and it wasn't easy. They expected you to have arms ten foot long and fingers like vice on the end of them. Aircraft are terrible things to work on so that was the worst part of it.

And what did you know of radar at that stage as that was a new invention at that time?

Yes, the radar people did the same course. The courses were started fortnightly,

12:00 1WM, One Wireless Mechanics, a fortnight later 1RM, Radar Mechanics started and then 2WM and 2 RM so it was a lottery for which one you started on. I started on radio and friends of mine started on the radar. We did the same course in Melbourne. One of the fellows who was in Melbourne, George Nettle, I didn't see until I was working after the war at City South and George turned up there

12:30 and I went to the DCA and I partly influenced George Nettle to come along. He came in afterwards but anyway radar was very secret but of course in Melbourne there was no secrets because we did the same course. They then went to Richmond to learn the secret part about radar. We were not taught anything about radar. Later on when we went into an operational area when Number 5 Squadron went to Bougainville

13:00 we had a secondary radar put on each aircraft. It was called an IFF, Identification Friend or Foe, and there was a code for each day. You set up the code number, pressed the button, the pilot pressed the button, he didn't know what he was doing but all that did was set up a code in the transponder, the airborne radar equipment, which sent back certain code of pulses to the ground radar. When the radar found them and if they got a blip on the radar screen and they wanted to know if it was one of theirs of one of ours

13:30 before they got the ack-ack [anti-aircraft] guns firing they interrogated it and coming back from the responding blip from the aircraft on the radar was this code of pulses identifying the aircraft. And that code changed everyday so even if the Japanese learnt how to figure out what this IFF was, they would not have been aware of each day's code change, so that was how that thing worked. So all aircraft, single engine aircraft, bombers or whatever

14:00 all carried a transponder in the latter years of the war, probably the last three years of the war only in the operational areas. In Australia we did not have IFF. I think we had some aircraft fitted. Now that equipment was armed with a detonator. It was an impact thing even some of our aircraft did a heavy landing, did a hell of a bump you would finish up with a box full of bits. The detonator

14:30 would go off and destroy the innards and of course we weren't allowed to get inside them or touch them. They had to be very carefully removed which you did very gingerly and sent to the radar people to deal with. You weren't allowed to touch them. So radar during the war remained very, very much a

secret apart, from the radar techs that worked them on the radar stations. The aircraft as I say, the only radar equipment on aircraft generally apart

15:00 from the search aircraft, like the Catalina's, all the other aircraft only had this IFF equipment. Then after the war when I joined DCA, radar became anyone's toy. You didn't have to be a secret service to go near it, it was open to all comers so very different attitude then.

Absolutely, now with the exams that they put you through for that course were they, was it a means exam

15:30 **in that it was assessed on top percentages or was it just a flat, that you had to get?**

Oh you had to get a certain percentage, it was established on percentages and you had to pass at levels. The basic stuff was science, maths and physics, electron theory and then it got into the specific areas of receivers and transmitters, all fault finding and stuff so it was progressive. I have a certificate somewhere. After the war

16:00 we learnt basic electrical theory, naturally and then after the war in the Civil Aviation Department they didn't employ electricians because the radio people, the people employed by the Civil Aviation, the Civil Aviation as such only came into real existence after the war. Prior to the war all the air radio stations that existed in Australia were operated by AWA.

16:30 or ex AWA marine radio operators who generally did their operating and their maintenance themselves. And then after the war and the great expansion of Civil Aviation and the introduction of new equipment they had to get people suddenly who knew something about this stuff and therefore the air force was the natural avenue for these people to come from. A few came from the navy. I don't think we got any at all from the army because the army didn't have any of that sort of equipment in those days

17:00 and the navy only a handful of people but most of them were ex air force, all of them. They were either air crew, Rus Reed, my counterpart in Wagga was aircrew, quite a few ex air force navigators who had generally done radio theory stuff before they went onto navigators, so similar sort of things to what I had done

17:30 apart from the fact they served their time in air crew. So when I joined DCA it was just virtually back in the air force. The air traffic controllers were ex pilots and then when the flying unit was formed. Funnily enough one of the very early jobs I got in DCA I got out of the air force into the PMG for a short period and then into DCA and, "Thank god I don't have to work on aircraft"

18:00 but the Civil Aviation Department bought two ex American DC3s ,C47s and Arthur Butler, Butler Air Transport used to have an air service in New South Wales based out at Tooraweenah but he had a hangar at Mascot and he got the contract to convert these C47s to civilian use. They got names but in those days it was a very small group. The Air Minister, his name, a politician, his name was

18:30 Drayford, Arthur Stanley Drayford, so the first aircraft was registered as VHASD [VH-prefix; ASD-initials], he named the aeroplane after him. The second one, Daniel McVay was the Director General so the next one was VHDMV but that all got scrubbed. They got CA prefixes then, they got CAA, CAB, CAC and so on. The two C47s that Butler Aircraft had in their hangar to convert I was sent over there to strip

19:00 all the war time radio equipment out so they could install the civilian stuff. I thought, "My God, I am out of one frying pan, mucking around with aeroplanes, and I am into another." But anyway that didn't take long. I suppose that job lasted thee or four weeks and I got all the radio equipment out and that was the end of that.

Just going back to your initial training for a sec, because you had gone to a number of schools and didn't really like them terribly much, so how did you

19:30 **sit initially with all this theory and maths?**

A lot of incentive to not be a guard. Well I think I went to night school, I got the night school examination equivalent to the Intermediate which really to get any sort of job you needed the Intermediate as the basic minimum qualification and it was mainly I think I just found something I liked doing.

20:00 It was just pure chance that I hate to think what might have happened if I had not done that because I really did find the job very satisfying and a job that I enjoyed very much.

Was that surprising to you considering you really hadn't thought about it before?

Oh yes, yes. I still think I was lucky. I still think it was extraordinary that I fell into something that I found satisfying. Oh yes, I am grateful

20:30 the air force chose to train me. But it is interesting, a lot of people, now one of the fellows on our course was a chap by the name of John Shortland. Now his father was a Judge of the High Court of New South Wales, Justice Shortland, he lived at Strathfield. Now judges were fairly upper crust sort of families but John did the same course as we did. We had a few fellows like that.

21:00 He would have had much higher academic education but he had an eyesight problem. He wore thick

glasses and he would never have got into aircrew but he was quite capable of doing radio work. I mean the fact that you wore glasses didn't affect your ability, as long as you weren't colour blind. That was the main thing because everything depended on being able to distinguish colours because wires are coloured coded, resistors and components all colour coded so they were very fussy about how well you could see things, not

21:30 so much for being able to see things in distance. So if you were colour blind there was no chance of getting into aircrew. If you had hearing problems there was very little chance of getting into aircrew.

What did you know about 5 Squadron before you got posted, or as you got posted?

I didn't know anything about 5 Squadron. I didn't know what squadrons were until I was posted to it. I didn't have a clue. It is only after that I found out what 5 Squadron was and how it formed

22:00 and a little bit about it. It is strange, some of the squadrons were formed in cities. The air force prior to the war was a very tight knit little club. Each capital city had a University Air Squadron. In Melbourne I think it was 22, no, Melbourne might have been 21, Sydney was 22 and Brisbane was 23 Squadron. They had whatever aircraft were available usually for

22:30 the University students. It was a kind of a weekend activity and it filled in the months during the year. Fitted with Hawker Demons or Wapatis or whatever aircraft, probably Demons and then Wirraways but a very good friend of mine from Coffs Harbour, he was a doctor, he was in the air force but before he became a medical officer, while he was doing his university in Melbourne he belonged to the

23:00 City of Melbourne Squadron based at Laverton. And he learnt to fly and when the war came along he had finished, he got his degree in medicine. He had been in Grafton for a very short period of time when he got called up because he was on the air force reserve. He got called up by the air force, not as an airman, he was a fully qualified pilot but as doctor.

23:30 So his initial posting was a flight lieutenant as a medical officer, probably to Laverton. I don't know where he went and I ran into Rainey up at Townsville. By this time I think he was a Group Captain, a senior medical officer for the north eastern area headquarters, very senior. Now he always maintained his interest in flying, even in Coffs Harbour when I went back there. Strangely at Coffs Harbour Roy Riddell was a dentist, he had been an airman pilot and

24:00 went onto become a squadron leader. George Murray, a fellow I knew before the war he had been to England flying Wellingtons all during the war. He came back as a solicitor. After the war these people were all offered post war reconstruction training courses. If you have your Leaving Certificate and your tertiary entrance to go to university, George Murray did indeed have that, Roy Riddle had to do a year to get his Leaving Certificate,

24:30 Roy did dentistry in Brisbane, came to Coffs Harbour. George Murray went to law school, won the University Medal but before the war George worked in Lustre Hosiery up at Kings Cross as a clerk, just a gopher job, a nothing job but the war. For the guys that had the skills and the ability the war was wonderful because George would have never got to university any other way. Roy Riddle wouldn't have got there. I didn't need to really to go to

25:00 anything because I found what I liked doing and there was no point in me going. I didn't want to go to university but I had achieved a level that got me a job without having to do that so you can be lucky sometimes.

Yeah, absolutely, now what I know of 5 Squadron it was one of the few that was specifically linked if you like, for want of a better word, to the army. What did you find when you first got there or when you were first posted?

Well it had not been

25:30 linked in any way to the army when it was formed. Number 3 Squadron was the army co-op squadron, the only one that existed specifically as an army co op squadron was in the Middle East with the 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions. When the war with Japan started and they formed the 1st Australian Army here out from Brisbane to try and set up some sort of defense against the Japanese, 5 Squadron which had,

26:00 didn't even exist, it was suddenly reformed. In its original form it existed as a maritime squadron with Walrus flying boats on the old aircraft carrier but it had lapsed. I don't know what 4 Squadron aircraft were. You can find that out but anyway 5 Squadron formed at Laverton. They got Wirraways, they got the aircrew and ground staff together at Laverton within months. I suppose at the end of '41 and early '42 the squadron started to form. Well I joined the squadron at

26:30 Laverton about January, February, March, I'd say about April because it was May when I came to Toowoomba. I would have had a few weeks or so down in Laverton. And all we were doing there at Laverton because most of the crew were just training because they got navigators posted and they were just doing exercises round over the Bay, what they call TACR, tactical reconnaissance. We were not actively working with the army because there were no army units there to work with but when we came to Toowoomba

27:00 it was full on training then. Aerial photography was important. A lot of the aircraft were fitted with super dooper cameras. We had a big photographic section photography, tactical reconnaissance,

artillery spotting, that was watching artillery flying and aircraft radioing back to the artillery people, “Up a bit, down a bit, left, right,” or whatever. That was the work we did round

27:30 here and then as I say we did some working up. I never really understood much what we did with the Armoured Division but it would have been similar things, tactical reconnaissance. The army had these things, Matilda tanks, Australian made tanks. I don’t know whether they were any good or not but they formed at Narrabri and exercised there and we worked with them. We went to Rockhampton to work with the Americans mainly to give them practice, at

28:00 the Rockhampton airport. There were 40,000 Americans at Rockhampton, troops everywhere and around the airport perimeter they had ack-ack batteries, all the way round and we were exercising with them using the aircraft, just diving them so they could get the hang of it. We weren’t live targeting, drogue targeting and stuff like that but that was working up with the Yanks and I think they did some beach landings exercises with the Americans. I didn’t go on any of those. I was with the

28:30 airport. I know some of the aircraft would come back and they would have salt water running out of the engines so they had been pretty close to the waves. But it would have been exercising with amphibious operations. See laying smoke screens that was another thing and all these beach landing exercises, the aircraft would fly parallel to the beach and lay a smoke screen so the landing craft could approach through the smoke screen not visible to the shore and stuff like that. Again that was a lot of the stuff we were doing in

29:00 Cairns was based on that sort of exercising and also the aircraft would be firing live rounds in front of the landing barge to give the troops an idea of what it sounded like, what it looked like but hopefully no friendly fire. And again on the larger scale exercises where divisions were involved

29:30 there were lots of troops, tanks, people marching and advancing on positions and the aircraft would be bombing the position with smoke bombs in front of the advancing troops in close support, that is coming in behind them and firing just beyond them just to give them a sense of realism as to what they were going to find when they went to the islands.

How did it work in terms of working with the army as a co-op force when you first went to Toowoomba?

30:00 Well we had this army liaison unit attached to the squadron. Generally the ranks were about three officers. The highest rank would be a major or something like that, a captain and a couple of lieutenants, a couple of sergeants and a couple of ordinary privates. There would be a group of about a dozen or so, fifteen army people virtually living with us. Now through them

30:30 the army would do all their communication through the air force. They would want so many aircraft at such and such a position and, “We want to do such and such an exercise,” just virtually arranging a schedule and saying “Can we,” or, “Could we have such and such at this area, during this period to do whatever?” Drop bombs, lay smoke screens do these things. When it came to the actual exercises where we were exercising with the army

31:00 then the air force, we had I think four or six things called weapon carriers with radio equipment on them. They were overgrown jeeps, four wheel drive things. We would have either a pilot or a navigator, a radio operator and a technician, one of my blokes. There would be a crew of about four on it and they would go out the army brigade headquarters or wherever it was located and sit with them. They would be in charge

31:30 of the field operation. Now all the time they would be in touch with their field commanders and a message would come back to us which would relay through us to the aircraft. Now if there were problems with the aircraft we were the chain of communication, just a means of liaising. At that time the army and the air force were very jealous of their own areas, “That is ours,” and, “That is yours.” Now the army have their own helicopters and aircraft and do all this stuff

32:00 themselves.

How did that translate into day to day operations?

It worked fairly well, it worked very well actually and quite often the army people would want to go and see what it was like from the air. That was the reason we had these Tiger Moth aircraft so you could put an army bloke in the back and fly him around and let him have a look to see what you could see from the air because you get a very different perspective from up there looking down to what you are seeing on the ground. A lot of the army people

32:30 cherished the opportunity to go for a fly and see what it looks like. It is a different sort of world.

That would have been greatly beneficial actually?

Yes. And the other thing that we exercised a lot with the army they brought up these things they called storepedoes. The Wirraways could carry I think two 250 pound bombs. The torepedoes were a cylinder about this long with a pointy end on it, made out of cardboard and veins out the back, so it would drop

33:00 more or less straight and it would be packed with food, rations, medical supplies, all sorts of things and

when the army were out exercising they might require something so we would generally bring the army people out to the strip, say at Mareeba. This started when we were in North Queensland and the army people would come out and see how the stuff was packed and loaded. Some of them I think they had a little parachute that opened, others relied on the thing slowing up enough but quite a few

33:30 after it was dropped the parachute deployed and it slowed it up. But it was to give the army people an idea of what to expect at the end of it, with this thing coming down, don't try and catch it, it is coming down it is hard and it is fast but that was another just another means of showing them. And always whenever the army people came out to the airport they were always crawling over the aeroplanes looking at them.

34:00 They just wanted to know what they looked like and what they did and so on, so it was fairly good really.

It sounds like a bit of success actually?

It worked fairly well. 4 and 5 Squadrons I think did really quite well with the army units during the war as far as I gather.

And what about the other way around, would some of the air force fellows…?

34:30 We were not particularly interested in what the army did. I don't know that many of our people wanted to go out to the army and see what they were doing. I don't recall anyone. No, I think we thought we were a bit better off than they were, so we didn't really. On the tablelands there was really not much time for social activities. We did have concerts. Concert groups would come around and we would generally have a big thing like a semi trailer set up and we would make a stage

35:00 and we had the army paratroops camp was just across the road from us on the Bowen River and they would come to our concerts. Pictures, we would go other units picture theatres. Generally word got around with a bit of paper that came around to say what unit was showing what pictures so you would go and follow them. If there were concert parties, if there was an opportunity we would go around and visit each others concerts but beyond that we didn't. We did play a little bit of sport, football.

35:30 Most of the fellows in our squadron were Australian Rules players and if you come from New South Wales we didn't want to know anything about that, that was a funny game. I never did understand it so we didn't play Aussie Rules but the squadron formed in Victoria so it was mainly Victorians and South Australians in 5 Squadron.

Was there ever much rivalry, fun or not, between the army and the air force?

36:00 Oh well rivalry, sports we did have swimming carnivals out at Lake Barine. We used to have swimming carnivals, the air force and we would enter some people there if you had some good swimmers. Yeah, there was rivalry in that extent, sporting and so on.

What about social and operational, even at exercise level?

I think you met with them while you were there and that was it. Beyond that I don't think we,

36:30 see in the towns in North Queensland at that time the chance for social activities was pretty minimal. The pubs only had beer and things in what they called sessions. So in Cairns, I don't know how many pubs there would have been during the war, probably thirty or forty pubs round Cairns, and if we were on leave or if we happened to be down in Cairns we did spend quite a lot of time down there, word would get round what pubs with sessions on and they generally lasted for an hour. They didn't have

37:00 glasses. If you didn't take a container with you, you didn't get a drink. So these things they called Lady Blamey's, beer bottles with the tops off became the conventional weapon of choice to take to the pub. But they would fill anything didn't matter what it was if it was an old beer and put it on the counter they would fill it. You only got one, one of whatever. They would generally have a guess at how much beer they put in and you went outside and that was it. So that was the only social and that was a kind of a queue up to get

37:30 in so you didn't fraternise very much with the army people. I wasn't a beer drinker. I didn't really, I did go to the odd one but I didn't really ever get into drinking beer very much.

Now I have heard about the Lady Blamey's quite a bit. How did they actually drink them?

This was before stubbies. You got a piece of wire and bent it to diameter of

38:00 the jar and left it a little bit open. You put the wire in a fire and got it hot and ran it around the side of the jar and dunked it in water and the top came off. Because the heat was absorbed by that bit of glass the top came off and then you had a piece of sandpaper or whatever and smooth it down so you didn't get cut lips. But my grandmother used to do this long before the war because they couldn't afford to buy jars but in their backyard at Maroubra they grew tomatoes and onions and they had a nectarine

38:30 tree and they made jam. They had oranges and lemons and it was like a farm in the suburbs. They grew everything, and we were doing this years before the war, taking the tops off beer bottles and they would fill it with pickles or chutney or whatever and put some wax on it and seal it and write the date but that is how they made them, so it wasn't a new technique. It was something that evolved from necessity. See the Depression years, today if you wanted a

39:00 to make preserves and jams you would go to the shop and buy a Vacola Bottling outfit but in those days you had your copper in the backyard and some beer bottles that you scrounged or picked up and made your own bottling outfit. Even in Sydney when we lived there my Grandmother made her own soap. All the chops and things she got from the butchers she would pick out the fattest ones so all the fat would be saved and rendered down and make soap and all the washing was done in the

39:30 open copper in the backyard. If there was a box anywhere Nanny would say, "Jack, get me a bit of deal," a Scottish word for wood, so you'd go out and get some wood, any box or any bit of wood that you scrounged and boil the copper and the clothes would be washed there and pegged out, so that was how we lived. As for the 'Lady Blamey's', they called them Lady Blamey's but any child of the Depression knew how to make them.

Why were they called Lady Blamey's?

40:00 It was a name, because when this thing started in Queensland, in North I don't know how far the pub sessions came down. I don't recall it happening in Rockhampton, I don't think it did but certainly Townsville and Cairns very much. Once the 3 Divisions came to North Queensland sessions at the pubs became the things and the pubs just didn't have enough glasses. I suppose the troops had souvenired all the glasses

40:30 so then the rule was that the keg would be on the counter, the doors would open, the troops would be let in, when the beer ran out it ran out and that was that so that was called a session. And the pubs generally staggered the sessions so that throughout the day somewhere if you were prepared to walk and follow and find you could go to another pub and get another beer somewhere if you joined a queue, if you were lucky to get there. You never got in the front of the queue, queues formed like magic.

The original pub crawl?

41:00 Yeah, but probably the army people called them Lady Blamey's because that was, see a lot of them would have been city blokes and would not have seen this technique of making them but that is how they made them.

Tape 5

00:32 **Now Jack earlier in the day you talked about establishing the joint overseas training school at Williamtown?**

I didn't establish it. It was an organisation at Williamtown.

What did you have to do with it then?

Well it gathered up people from army and navy, from American and Australian services. They went to Williamtown to give them some familiarization with air force operations,

01:00 with aircraft operations and one flight from Number 5 Squadron, C Flight from 5 Squadron, when we were at Narrabri was allocated to this thing called JOOTS. That was six Wirraways went Williamtown and Williamtown was already an operational air force base but we had nothing to do with the normal air force station. We worked more or less exclusively with JOOTS taking army and navy

01:30 officers for flights in aircraft, showing them what it was like to fly in aeroplanes, what you did, what you saw and how you did it. But I had nothing to do with the organising of it. It was part of the structure in the war and we happened to be squadron with aircraft available to demonstrate what the air force did and how they did it. That was what it was all about.

02:00 We were on the station, but we didn't belong to the station.

Like the Jesuit Priests, you are in this world, but not of this world?

Yes. That is exactly right.

I know what you mean. Okay, now so you did quite a bit of travelling there going up to Rockhampton and all around there and this was all around 1941, '42?

02:30 No, it was '42, '43.

Now okay, what were these, now they are called obviously cities or big towns but in those days what was it like visiting these places back in 1942?

Fantastic because we got to places where there weren't any troops. I mean away say from Toowoomba to Rockhampton our first overnight stop would be Nambour. We would stay the night at Nambour and of course the locals when they

03:00 see a team of trucks and vehicles arrive and a lot of blokes get off they put on a special night for us and

we would camp generally at the showground or a sports field or some place like that but the locals would invite us out for all sorts of things. Another very popular place because we did a number of trips to Rockhampton and another place we used to enjoy every much was Miriam Vale, up near south of Gladstone I think, a little town on the highway.

03:30 Because the highway was mainly dirt road, I mean apart from us on the road there wasn't a lot of traffic so those sort of trips were great. And being a detached unit from the rest of the squadron meant it was fairly informal. I mean there was an officer in charge, the CO of the flight. He would be a flight lieutenant or a squadron leader but it was very informal, we didn't. I don't think in all the years since I left

04:00 Laverton that I had to go on a parade in the air force. It was just get up in the morning and do what you did and go back in the afternoon. It was a very casual sort of life.

So there was a big difference between being on airfields and being RAAF?

To what we were doing, yes. Well we were very rarely on an airfield. Toowoomba wasn't an air force station, it was just an airfield. We went there and operated there and worked with the army but then we came to Toogoolawah just out here near Lowood.

04:30 The CO and one of the other pilots flew around and saw a piece of land and said, "Oh yes, that will do us," because it is near the 1st Australian Army and the Queensland Mains Roads people knocked the trees over and built a bit of an airstrip and we operated there. We set up a camp right by this strip but it wasn't an air force station if you know what I mean. It wasn't like Young or Amberley or Richmond, it was just 5 Squadron. We just camped there. We had all sorts of interesting things.

05:00 While we were at Toogoolawah one of the fellows picked up a wallaby that had been knocked down in the road and it had a joey in the pouch and we reared the joey. It was fixed on the blokes in our squadron. It used to live in our tents with us, a few of us there. Whenever we went to Rockhampton he would come with us and of course the Americans very keen on Australian fauna so we would sell him. I don't know how many times we

05:30 sold him, but he always came back to us so that provided us with a little bit of spending money too. Any American that expressed an interest we were very happy to sell him because we knew after he found his way back he would come back, so we had him. Then up at Mareeba, somewhat similar, when we were out on exercises with the army in the fresh water lagoons they would generally have a net and we would drag it and we would get these fresh water little crocodiles

06:00 and take them down to Cairns and sell them to the Yanks. They used to love to buy anything like that.

What would they do with them then?

I don't know. I have no idea, it was just the novelty of having a crocodile. Little baby ones about this long.

They still bite though?

You put a string around their jaws and take them down to Cairns. This was, I suppose today the greenies would be very upset, in fact it would upset them but I mean at the time we didn't think that much of it.

06:30 **Can I ask you about the fun and entertainment that you had in Rockhampton? I mean the Red Cross was responsible for a lot of that, weren't they?**

Yes, Rockhampton was pretty impossible in town, so many Americans there, the town, you could hardly walk. It was just Americans everywhere. At weekends we used to generally organise one of our trucks and go out to Yeppoon and go swimming. There would be a group of about twenty five, thirty blokes, fill one or two

07:00 trucks, just go out to Yeppoon. Out at the airstrip at Wandal, it is quite close to the town, there was a tram service out there during the war but usually when we knocked off in the afternoon we would go and play softball with the Americans because they were all camped with their anti aircraft guns all around the airstrip and they enjoyed teaching us to play softball and we enjoyed playing softball with them. The same sort

07:30 of thing happened up when we first went to Mareeba. They used to love Americans there so that was our entertainment. I mean we could only go into town when there was organised transport. In the smaller flights it wasn't all that difficult but the squadron as a whole was at Mareeba it would one truck and as many people who could get on would go into Mareeba for the night, that sort of thing. Civilian transport

08:00 was almost non existent because there was severe petrol rationing and even in North Queensland at that time the local civilians were not allowed to travel by train anywhere. If they wanted to go anywhere they had to go and get a permit to travel. It was all from Townsville north was virtually on a, oh I think from Mackay really, not that I was ever at Mackay but it was virtually on a war footing. Even on the local rail somebody living in Cairns couldn't hop on the train and go to Innisfail.

08:30 They had to get a permit to travel and with the inter services like airmen and army people we could get on a train and go to Cairns when we were on leave without any nonsense like that but civilians were very, very restricted in how far and where they could travel.

What about the Salvos work?

09:00 **I think we had a Salvation Army officer attached to the squadron for quite awhile, but in the towns there was an organisation called TOC-H, during the war years. They were very good. They provided rooms and organised entertainment. There would generally be a list posted up where people could be, there would be a bridge party, cards on such and such a place and they would ring up and say yes or no, similarly that happened in Melbourne, anywhere you went, Red Cross,**

09:30 **Salvation Army, TOC-H, all those people organised. They had rest rooms and you could go there, have a cup of tea.**

What did TOC-H mean, do you know?

I have no idea. It is a very old organisation. You can look it up on the internet if you wanted to find out.

Well I've never heard of it.

Haven't you? Oh TOC-H was very big during the war, they were everywhere.

I wonder what happened to them? Maybe they changed names?

T-O-C-H, TOC-H, but during the war years

10:00 it was established everywhere.

It is interesting, you learn something new every day. I hadn't heard about that organisation at all. Now did you make mates with any of the Americans that you met on your travels?

Not close, certainly we were good friends with them. I knew their names there and then but not on the basis of continuing any sort of association with them, but while we were associated with them we were friends with them.

10:30 Oh yes, no problems we got on quite well.

What did you think of them professionally?

I thought they were a bit strange really. They had, compared to what we had in the way of facilities and being looked after and so on they were way ahead of us and as far as, when you went into town and the Yanks were around you knew you wouldn't pick up a girlfriend too easily but no, they were all right.

11:00 We got on quite well with them.

Now why do you say you wouldn't be able to pick up a girl, because they looked better?

No, they had more money and they had smarter uniforms and perhaps they looked better and they had a different way of talking and I think they generally they had more cheek, so it was just a different attitude, an attitude thing as much as any I think with the Americans. As far as the uniforms were concerned they left us looking pretty scruffy.

11:30 **I mean I have heard of some riots or some activities in Brisbane city between the…?**

Well that was between drunken army and Americans. Well that can happen anywhere but that was in Creek Street in Brisbane and there was a huge fight. I wasn't in Brisbane when that was on. I think I might have been at Kingaroy or Toowoomba but no, I never saw any of that. We thought the Americans were a bit up themselves I suppose for want of a better

12:00 word but we got on all right with them.

So there was no fisticuffs up in Rocky [Rockhampton]?

Not that I am aware of. See the Australian Army didn't have anything there, virtually as far as the Australian services were concerned at Rockhampton I don't think there was anybody there apart from this one detached flight of 5 Squadron at the aerodrome. I can't remember,

12:30 I have a feeling the aerodrome might have been still under civil control, I'm not sure about that. There could have been a small air force unit there but not a lot of American aircraft based, in fact I don't think there was any aircraft based at Rockhampton. It was a very busy airport for flights ferrying through, like going north, lots of Air Cobras and Kittyhawks and smaller aircraft like that would ferry from Brisbane to Rocky,

13:00 refuel, go onto Mackay, refuel, onto Townsville, Cairns and so on. But Rockhampton itself had mainly American army there, huge American army camps and bases all around Rockhampton and even today I think that Rockhampton, just north of Rockhampton, the Australian Army training base, I think that could well have been used in those days for beach landings for the Americans because they had to do similar exercises to our lot

13:30 to learn how to land on beaches and do their things. So I guess that was one of the reasons they were there but no Australian servicemen, apart from just a handful of us so we really didn't have much to do in Rockhampton itself. It was just too crowded with Americans.

Now at that particular time

14:00 **you were going around Rockhampton and Cairns, all up around that area and then you reformed at Kingaroy?**

No, we only went as far as Rockhampton at that stage. The squadron was still basically here at Toowoomba and Toogoolawah. When I went to Rockhampton it was still based down here. 4 Squadron had gone to New Guinea and we were exercising with, down this area with 1st Australian Army, then these other little excursions to exercise

14:30 at Rockhampton with the Americans and Narrabri with the Armoured Division and they were kind of down to Williamtown and they were just little deviations waiting for the thing to get more serious when the squadron gathered itself together again at Kingaroy. The two flights and service flight were left at Toogoolawah moved up to Kingaroy where

15:00 again at that time we happened to be at that time at Williamtown. I think I had three or four detached flights to Williamtown. We came back to Kingaroy and within about three or four weeks perhaps a month, six weeks, after getting to Kingaroy we loaded everything onto a train, all the vehicles, flat top wagons onto a train to Kingaroy and it took us seven days to get to Cairns because

15:30 everywhere along the track we would be shunted off while trains going south with troops and people going on leave would go past. And then we would get going again and up the track a little bit further and left there again so it took us quite a while to get to Cairns. Then we arrived at Edmonton, just south of Cairns, about midday and by the time we unloaded and the ladies at Edmonton, the Country Women and people there came

16:00 out and put on a great feed for us.

That would have been nice?

Then we got all the trucks and vehicles off the train and set off to Mareeba. None of us had a clue where Mareeba was or anything. We went up the range at Kuranda and found our way to Mareeba and we were at Mareeba there for twelve or fifteen months exercising there with 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions, who did jungle training up on the tablelands

16:30 and up around Yungeburrow and Milandra and all that area. Open area training generally around Byburra, Dimbula and then beach landing down on the beaches between Cairns and say about Port Douglas really, not quite as far as Port Douglas. The popular beach to land on was Trinity Beach for the troops.

Why?

Because there was a pub there. The pub is still there.

Really?

That is all there was during the war years.

17:00 There was one pub at Trinity Beach and the troops that landed there thought that was heaven. There were two or three ships in Cairns, the Westralia, I think the Kanimblq, these are converted passenger ships into troop landing ships. They took most of the life boats off and put landing craft on the davits. The troops they would be climbing nets, drop down from the ship and the troops would go over into the landing

17:30 barges, form up and then go on and land on the beach. The troops would be fully equipped with their all food, haversack, rifles, weapons, grenades, everything, more or less to get them established in jumping out of these landing barges and getting wet and scrambling up onto the beach. The aircraft part of it was generally involved in doing laying a smoke screen

18:00 as the convoy approached so from the ships they would be barely able to see the shore. The smoke screen was laid low down so the craft approaching the beach had smoke cover, then as the boats came in the aircraft would do strafing runs in front of them and simulate the sort of fire they would get and that would generally occur starting about eight or nine o'clock in the morning

18:30 and go to about midday or two o'clock, generally a morning thing. And by the afternoon all the troops would be off the ships to go back into Cairns and they had trucks to cart the fellows back to their camps. That went on for quite a long time because I think each division, I'm not sure of the numbers but I think probably there would be ten or twelve thousand troops in each division and they all went through this beach landing stuff.

19:00 **So you were at Mareeba?**

We were based at Mareeba when all this went on, yes.

And that was a good thirteen months did you say?

I think in total we were there for nearly fifteen, eighteen months, I can't remember. We went there in, I can look it up, but

19:30 I think we went there at the end of 1943, so it would have been most of 1944 there. I would say probably about fifteen months at Mareeba.

So what were your feelings and your mates feelings your next posting, going overseas?

We didn't know really, we didn't now what was happening. When it came time the general word went round, "We are going to Bougainville"

20:00 and none of us knew where Bougainville was, "Pack up," we packed everything up and world came round and we went down to Cairns. We camped where the Tobruk Pool is now. There was a bit of open land there, we just set up camp there. Each day we went down to the wharf and loaded the ships, a couple of ships.

Just before we start talking about there and going overseas, can you tell us about, I mean with your work now you must have been a handy friend to have as well when people's radios

20:30 **got busted?**

Oh yes, yes.

Did you end up doing some handiwork on the side for your mates?

Well in the unit itself nobody had radios. There were no transistors. They hadn't been invented so nobody had radios in their, like today where you pick up your radio and take it with you, they didn't exist. The only radios that existed generally were if you went to the Salvation Army or the Red Cross or TOC-H or

21:00 one of those comfort fund places. They would have an old radio playing there. Some of the blokes used to sit and listen to music and stuff and quite often those radios didn't work very well and we would take them back to camp and fix them for them. That was the only radios that were available. We were a mobile squadron and we were not on a station and we lived in tents all the time and we didn't have permanent buildings as such so really we didn't have any home comforts like that.

21:30 **You were kind of this interesting mobile unit weren't you, very self sufficient? But I mean you were with the army but…?**

Well the army were under similar conditions. They were always in tents, they were not much different to what we were.

That's right but you were still air force with the army, working with and collaborating with the army and you mentioned before the 1st Australian?

The 1st Australian Army was formed here

22:00 after the war with Japan started, yeah.

So I mean it was quite an interesting name in itself, the 1st Australian Army? I mean can I ask you?

That would have consisted of a number of other units. You see the Second World War divisions, there was the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th, four divisions. Now the, I think the 8th Division was at Singapore. It was captured and interned so that left 6th, 7th and 9th in the

22:30 Middle East, three divisions overseas. There were no more in Australia. The 3rd Division was what they called a sort of militia division. It was the one that formed after the war with Japan started to get ready for New Guinea. The original troops that defended the Kokoda Trail and all that sort of stuff they were all militia units. They weren't part of the divisions that had gone. They were all overseas so when the war with Japan started and Australia at that time had to

23:00 recover the troops that were overseas, this 1st Australian Army, what it consisted of I had no idea. Some army people could tell you that but we were part of the 1st Australian Army which was training here in the Brisbane Valley basically. What we called the Armoured Division, the other unit that formed and exercised with at Narrabri, that I think formed down at Puckapunyal in Victoria and I don't know how many troops it contained it was but it was essentially an Armoured Division.

23:30 Now where Australia was fighting during the jungle wars, the war in the islands there was really nowhere to use that equipment. The islands and the landings that we undertook we had, Australia had no ships capable of carrying tanks and landing them on islands, not like the Americans, apart from LST, Landing Ship Tanks, but Australia was dependent entirely on the Americans to provide that sort of support. The army itself had nothing to

24:00 do that with that sort of exercise so I am not sure what the Armoured Division ever did. I don't think it ever fought as a division, bits and pieces of it may have gone to Labuan, Balik [Balikpapan], or Tarakan. I know at Bougainville I don't recall ever seeing any tanks at all because it is a very rugged island and if tanks did go there indeed I don't know that they were utilised very much.

What happened to that name the 1st Australian Army?

24:30 I have no idea.

That is not used any more either?

No, it doesn't appear to be. After I went to north Queensland, to Mareeba, I never heard of the 1st Australian Army ever again. It was when we were down here at Toowoomba and Toogoolawah that we were exercising with the 1st Australian Army so you will have to find out from the army records if you want to know what their history is. I couldn't even tell you what units it consisted of, I have no idea.

25:00 **It is just an interesting name and title I suppose that disintegrated?**

I can tell you the name of the division at Rockhampton that we went too, that's in my movement papers.

Oh that's all right, I mean this mobile unit?

Well we were a mobile squadron as far as, we were set up to be able to live with the army off air force bases, operate entirely and without any. Most air force units require

25:30 an air force base to operate from. The way that these Number 5 Squadron was formed and 4 Squadron, not to the same extent of mobility that we had was to be able to operate independently of other air force units, which we did.

So you were fixing, you were maintaining the radio equipment for the air force

26:00 **but also for the army?**

Only with the mobile vehicles that were detached with the army, that's all. I didn't work on any army equipment, only the air force vehicles.

What would be the equivalent person in the army of your position?

I don't know what the army signals, they'd be in the army signals unit but what their structure compared to the air force, I have no idea but I presume that they would be something similar.

26:30 But in the army units the radio equipment that they would carry would be those hand held portable things or things that they put on their backpack, a microphone and headphones to communicate within the platoons and whatever the next step up the level is. It would be that sort of communication. Essentially the army signals units would be all sort of mobile stuff whereas the air force generally speaking, on the air force stations the

27:00 air force would be fixed, so they would have communication back to their north eastern area headquarters and so on like that. Whereas we provided our own communication within the squadron, say from Mareeba to the aircraft flying around there, we would have a control tower and we'd have one of the pilots would be the duty pilot on control in the tower to give traffic information to other aircraft because as well as 5 Squadron the American aircraft used Mareeba and a lot of aircraft ferrying through there

27:30 would use Mareeba so it was just like a normal air force base as far as that was concerned. But our squadron would provide the people to operate the equipment. I installed it and maintained it and along with the fellows who were working with me and that is the way the system worked. Then we had our own signals office with twenty four hour watching keeping with wireless operators keeping contact by Morse code back to north eastern area headquarters because telephone

28:00 communication was fairly negligible so mostly we relied on radio for everything to do. Even with all administrative matters was all passed by wireless. We had people called cipher clerks, an officer would write out a stores request or an order or something about they needed medical supplies, well the cipher clerk would transpose that into code, it was a four or five letter code, numbers and letters, and that message would be transmitted by Morse with the Morse key

28:30 back to north eastern area headquarters. And from there it would get into the system and it would go back to the stores depots somewhere and the equipment would come back so all the transactions from the squadron were done virtually by radio, point to point radio communication. That was based at the camp area the at the aerodrome, at the control tower, we just had our local flight information service which Civil Aviation do today but that was provided

29:00 by pilots or navigators. I would organise, we ran telephones from the airstrip back to the camp to the hospital. We had a doctor in the base hospital and a couple of medical aids so communication in the camp was restricted to probably to about twelve or fifteen phones. The CO would have a phone, the Adjutant would have a phone, the airmen's mess might have a phone,

29:30 and there would be each flight A, B and C Flight would have a phone. That was it, just a field telephone,

wind the handle and talk back to somebody and they would relay the message but you didn't have any communication to the outside world with these telephones, it was just within the camp area. We just laid the phones through the bush and hooked them up and away we went, that was it, like field telephones.

Was there a difference in the behaviour of the men that drove these trucks in the army

30:00 **with you that were also mobile that you were working with and the pilots and the aircrew and the men that worked in radio, did everyone stick to together or did you have friends outside?**

Within the squadron we all knew each other very well. The structure was there were three messes, the airmen's where AC1s, LACs and up to the rank of corporal,

30:30 they messed in the airmen's mess. The sergeants' mess was for sergeants, flight sergeants and warrant officer. In 5 Squadron well that included a lot of the air crew, all the senior trades people, the armourers, the fitters, the instrument makers, the engine fitters, the radio, the telegraphers. So we had a pool I suppose there would have been within the squadron a couple of sergeant pilots, airman pilots, we would have had about thirty five, forty people in

31:00 the sergeants' mess and we had our own cooks and messmen, similarly the airmen's mess they had cooks. They didn't have messmen and the officers had a similar setup. There would have been probably more officers than sergeants but again a similar structure but more privileges for the officers. But generally it didn't matter whether you were a pilot or instrument maker or a navigator or whatever, it was just

31:30 a group of fellows, there was no sort of class distinction as per se, not even amongst the officers. We were very much on a level footing in the squadron.

That is a nice thing to remember then that you were all sort of…

Oh yes, it wasn't, there was no, "We are better than you, salute when you pass us!" I don't think I ever saluted anyone in the squadron at all, that sort of thing didn't happen.

32:00 **Okay now you were sent over to New Guinea?**

Oh well the squadron left without me.

Now that is because you slipped on a package or something?

Yeah, because I was in hospital when they sailed.

Yes, can you tell me what happened up to here? You are up at Mareeba for fifteen to eighteen months, something like that and you came back down to Cairns and then where?

32:30 Well after I got out of hospital at Redlidge, I was in an army hospital there, I had some leave, I went back up to Mareeba. I had some girlfriends up there that I visited.

Oh no hang on, we have missed something here then?

I only went up there on leave. The squadron had left and I had a few days off. See the girls on the local telephone exchange at Mareeba, there was Lorraine Francis, Carmel Gangley, Eileen Gangley,

33:00 two sisters, three, they were about five girls that we knew very well.

Don't tell me they were all your girlfriends?

Well they were sort of girlfriends. Because I was in the radio unit we had a lot of contact with them on the telephone because the girls on the exchange, at the Mareeba Exchange, were our link with the outside world. And they were really nice girls.

33:30 We became good friends, all the fellows in the signals office did because we used to talk to them on a day to day basis and Lorraine's father was a particularly good friend because he owned a pub so Lorraine was right at the top of the list. Because the girls couldn't trave, the restrictions on civilian travel, quite often we would have exercises down on the beaches down at Babinda and Mission Beach and places down there, well

34:00 we would put the girls in old air force beret on their head and we had to go through check gates all the way so they were part of the air force, that was another airmen in the back. They would come down and stay with relatives in Babinda or Tully and we would be away exercising for a week and pick them up and bring them back up the Partisan Highway, back to Mareeba. So they were just one of the fellows, and two of the girls made

34:30 their debut, they were Catholics, all good Catholic girls and the Bishop of whatever it was, I can't think of his name and I know the girls had to kiss the Bishop's ring when they made their debut but I partnered one of the girls. I don't know whether it was Lorraine or Carmel Gangley, at the Atherton Town Hall.

Now you weren't interested them perhaps as a potential wife?

Oh no.

Just a

35:00 **mate kind of thing?**

Yeah, just a mate. They were really nice girls and their families were very good to us. Well we would go in there and have a meal and it was just like a social night out and play cards and that sort of thing.

How come you weren't interested in them as a potential wife? Because you were too young and not interested then or they didn't take your fancy?

It wasn't that, but I mean it was pretty uncertain during the war. You wouldn't have wanted to made a firm commitment in the war years because

35:30 you never knew from one day to the next where you are going, where you are going to be so the girls were just company that is all.

I guess it depends on your philosophy though, Jack, don't you think? Because some blokes said they just wanted to get married because they wanted to try sex before they took off to the Owen Stanley Ranges, let's say, or somewhere like that?

Some fellows would be like that.

36:00 I mean I can understand that but I don't really, I mean I never even gave it much thought. I never intended to get married during the war years and it wasn't that I didn't like girls and didn't have anything to do with them, but it was just that I didn't think that it was, I had nothing really apart from the air force. I had no money and I didn't have anywhere to live when I got back after the war

36:30 I didn't have a house to go to, it was all pretty uncertain. If you got married, crikey, you would really have to give it a bit of thought of how your wife was going to cope or what was going to happen so it was just never a factor, that situation just didn't ever arise.

Okay now I interrupted you and I apologise for that. I was interested in the girls that you left up there. After hospital up there what happened?

37:00 After I got out of hospital at Redlige, as I say I had a little bit of leave and I went to Mareeba and stayed with the Gangleys I think or at the pub. I can't remember whether I stayed with Francis. Anyway after my leave was up I got on the train and went down to, you have to go to the TMO, transport and movement officer in Cairns and get permission to travel. I think I got on the train. Sometimes we used to go out and do a thing called strip sitting. You would go out to the air strip

37:30 and sit around until an aeroplane landed and when the aeroplane landed you asked the pilot where he was going and if he is going to where you wanted to go and he had a seat you would go on the aircraft. A lot of people made their way all around the Pacific Islands and Australia during the war. I did a few of them but I think I went by train down to Townsville. I went to the Embarkation Depot which was on the Ross River, just out of Townsville and

38:00 hung around there until there was a ship going to New Guinea and we went on the ship to Lae. A lot of army people, mainly army and a few air force, not many air force, mainly army up to Lae. We disembarked at Lae and I went to the CO at the airstrip and told him who I was and what I was and where I wanted to go and he couldn't get me anywhere so

38:30 he gave me some New Guinea natives and a bit of timber and some drums and showed me where they wanted to build tents so I had these fellows working for me and we just put up tents and things like that around the airstrip. Then I got to know the people in 36 Squadron who were flying these courier flights, from Lae down to Bougainville and one day there was an empty seat and I went and got on the aircraft and went to Bougainville.

39:00 **But I mean what happened to the person that you answer to, wouldn't he be worried that you haven't rocked up yet?**

They were in Bougainville. They couldn't do much about it if I couldn't get back there. I could have gone wherever I liked if in fact if I wanted to. If they couldn't, see there was no transport from Australia to Bougainville, not directly from where I was so if I didn't

39:30 get myself organised I wouldn't have got there and I don't know that it would have worried them terribly because there were twelve other fellows in my unit. Somebody would be doing the work I would be doing anyway so really it is just a matter of organising to get back. So I got back to the unit and settled in again and I thought, "Well here we are."

40:00 I had been in the same squadron since I was posted to it from Laverton.

Tape 6

00:32 **I want to talk to you mainly about Bougainville but before I take you there I was just curious when you were in Mareeba and they were training for the jungle, what training, if any, you had to do personally with your unit?**

I didn't have, we didn't have to do any of that stuff that the army people did. The pilots, the aircrews, probably their training and working up with the army was

01:00 to develop an understanding with what the army wanted the aeroplanes to do, but for us, the ground staff of the squadron, we had no real involvement. I went out on some of these shoots and exercises, only with our liaison units but we weren't really training. We were providing just the communication link between the army brigade or regimental headquarters back to the air force base at Mareeba or to the aircraft involved on the exercise.

01:30 but we were not training as such. We were just there functioning as a liaison unit for these exercises. When the army were actually in the field doing it seriously they would not have had air force people liaising with them out there. The idea of all this training on the tablelands was to get the army people trained up to the situation of what it was going to be like and we were just providing aircraft

02:00 to either simulate enemy aircraft or friendlies, helping them and some aircraft impeding them, that was the whole, whether it was beach landing or whatever, our aeroplanes were just simply there to give a bit of reality, a sense of realism to the beach landing, so the troops would experience being strafed or having aircraft come down at frightening low level over them and stuff like that. That was really the whole purpose,

02:30 more for the army's benefit I guess in a way but our ground staff were not involved in any training.

But did you unit get any kind of briefing at all about the islands before you went up there?

I don't recall any. The aircrew could well have done but I doubt that there would be much information available because Bougainville was a very primitive place at that time. The island of Bougainville was,

03:00 there were no copper mine, the big copper mine that all the fuss was over, I can't think of the name of it now, was not there. It was just an island of the Bougainvillians. The people they are not the same as the Papuans. They are Melanesians I think, very black, certainly different to the Polynesians and I doubt whether there would have been a few copra plantations,

03:30 very, very few on different parts of the island. We were only on the western side of the island and I don't know what was on the other side. Between us and the other side of the island was a very large active volcano which was letting off steam all the time. The strips there were carved, the Americans landed on the beach and established a perimeter of about ten or twelve miles and within that perimeter they fortified against the Japanese and established three airstrips,

04:00 Peva [?] North, Peva South and Peva something else. They didn't really go beyond that. It was just a place to isolate the Japanese. The Japanese kept their troops supplied from Rabaul, which again had been largely isolated from the rest of the Japanese army and air force units because of the bombing that it copped but there was a submarine at Rabaul that used to come down nearly every night to the island north of Bougainville called Buka. Between

04:30 Bougainville Island and Buka there was a narrow strait, the Buka Passage, the submarine would land on Buka and land the supplies there and the Japanese had barges covered with jungle and stuff and try and get across to Bougainville. The purpose of the 5 Squadron aircraft, particularly the Boomerangs was to bomb and strafe these barges. The Austers, the smaller aircraft, generally

05:00 were required to go out on the intelligence they got from army patrols where the Japanese encampments were or if seen from the air. They had, the Boomerangs we rigged up facilities to drop smoke bombs, small bombs about twenty pounds each and the New Zealand aircraft, the Corsairs, a very large huge aeroplane, single engine, they were a carrier born aircraft but they could carry

05:30 five hundred pound bombs. They could carry a lot of armament but very poor visibility because they had a lot of aeroplane in front of the pilot. They would come over at high level and the Boomerangs would generally go in and mark the area of jungle where the Japanese were camped. There would be an Auster with an army officer on board as well as an air force pilot would have marked out the area and he would have directed the Boomerangs where to plant these smoke bombs and then the Corsairs would dive down and the Boomerangs would correct them. It was like aerial

06:00 artillery, "Left, a hundred, up," so that was why the squadrons worked in more or less close cooperation, mainly on the requests from the army as to what they wanted bombed because there were no roads as such. It was a really primitive island. You couldn't drive anywhere. There were trails you could walk along but you couldn't go out for a Sunday drive. There was no roads. Outside the perimeter it was just jungle, just bush. Most of the transport from various places

06:30 would have been by boat around the coast rather than across the land.

What did you find when you finally got to Bougainville in terms of the camp itself?

Well the camp was well established when I go there of course. I was a couple of months, they had been

there a couple of months. Everything was set up, just little clearings set up in the jungle. We had a hut there with the radio maintenance unit in it. We had a couple of vehicles and all the blokes were already doing their job. They had been there before me and they knew what they were doing.

07:00 The Americans were evacuating the place very quickly. They were moving out as when we moved in and as the units moved out the Americans never valued their equipment very much. If they had a couple of jeeps they didn't want they would throw it in the jungle and dump it. In fact where we were, we clearing the jungle and there were jeeps and weapon carriers and all sorts of things up there. Most of the fellows managed to get a jeep and go driving in it. The Americans were very,

07:30 equipment costs, accounting, I don't know what their store system was like. It was certainly different to ours. We had to account for everything but they just left everything behind and went and the New Zealand air force, Australian air force and the 3rd Division, Australian Division went on fighting the war the way Australians do it. That meant, the idea was to mop up the Japanese camps so they

08:00 gradually got out in the jungle. They recruited some natives after the aircraft, if the Austers saw a Japanese encampment anywhere they would generally get some natives. The intelligence people would talk to the local natives to go out and capture a couple of Japanese for them. They would bring them back and interrogate them and find out what their strength was and how they were armed and all this sort of thing but the natives had a different attitude to

08:30 us. They sent one lot out and they were away for about a week and they came back with a couple of Japanese but because these Japanese were screaming and yelling the natives sewed their lips up with wire so they got them back but they were useless because they couldn't talk. When they pulled the wire out they had to go to hospital so that was a failure but they would have to give the natives a bit of a course on how to capture them without hurting them

09:00 but that did indeed happen.

You have to watch what orders you give?

Yes, there was not much response from those Japanese but that was more or less the exercise in Bougainville. MacArthur had moved on with the Americans and the idea was to give the Australians some diversions because really it had no strategic importance. There was no Japanese navy and if they had aircraft it would have been one or two. They had nothing of any military significance.

09:30 It was a mopping up exercise.

Was there much I guess horse trading and swapping between you fellows and the Americans?

Oh yes, oh yes, the Americans had a thing, it was Hoskins Field or a name like that, you know these Sunday flea markets around Brisbane? It was just like that. You could go there and swap anything or buy anything.

And what would be on offer on a regular basis?

Watches, American watches, the

10:00 Australians would sell them some beer or clothing. The Americans were very keen to get any bits of uniform. If you had your uniform you could sell that. Trivia souvenir stuff, the Americans are great souveniring people. They were just collectors, "Say guy, have you got…?" That was, very different sort of background to our people.

10:30 I don't know that, there were a few of Australians, great scroungers. They would pick up things and scrounge things but the Americans just liked collecting things, knick knacks, stuff to take home with them. I think it might have been when I was at Morotai there was one of these Curtiss Commando aircraft. I can't think of the name, C something or other, and they were like an overgrown DC3. They had two hatches. There was an upper deck and a lower deck and the American pilot was supposed to have

11:00 shoved a jeep on board that and took home with him. I don't know how true that is but he could well have done but I thought that was a bit ambitious but all this stuff was dumped. Even, I believe at the end of the war, I went to Borneo so I can't speak for sure although I did see photos but at Bougainville all our aircraft they just abandoned. They just pushed all the Boomerangs into the jungle and they didn't fly any of them back.

Incredible!

11:30 Yeah, just pushed them, and the Americans were doing the same thing when they left.

Can you give us a picture of I guess a day in the life of you in operations with the radio maintenance unit in Bougainville, what would happen on a regular day?

Well every morning, there was total strength of our unit, the radio maintenance unit of about twelve I suppose at the most. I was sergeant in charge

12:00 and there would have been two corporals, Wally Ellis and Don Cordell, probably four or five LAC's,

leading aircraftsmen and then some AC1's make up the strength. Now each flight, A, B and C flight would be allocated, before they fly each day each aircraft had to have everything checked, armament, engines, instruments, radio and

12:30 the bloke doing the inspection would have to sign, EE77 I think was the form, certifying that the equipment was serviceable and ready to go so that every morning before there was any flying the aircraft, two of these fellows, the LAC and the AC1 as a rule, generally needed two of them, would go with a minimum amount of checking equipment to check the radio, the IFF, if it was a Wirraway check the intercom from the front seat to the back seat, check

13:00 the pilots things, make sure the frequencies, there were a number of frequencies pre selected for pilots. Just establish that there was no damage to any of the equipment and if it was serviceable. If it wasn't they were expected to replace it and bring it back to the workshop to service it. They would have therefore six aircraft would take them an hour and a half I suppose, an hour, an hour and a half to get around all the stuff. No, there would be eight aircraft because we still had a couple of Wirraways with each flight.

13:30 That would be the routine part of it that they would do every morning. Because there was no power everything would be run with batteries. We had little Briggs and Stratton engines charging batteries. We always had maintenance on lead acid batteries, either rebuilding them or fixing them or trying to fix them because batteries were always difficult during the war years with the adverse conditions and the technology that was involved with batteries then wasn't as good as it is now so batteries

14:00 were a huge problem, so there was always work involved there. In the workshop itself I would be responsible for ordering stores, replacements valves and parts because this is the days before transistors. Today radio equipment and electronic equipment generally is like computers. If a part is crook you pull it out and throw it away and plug a new part in but that wasn't the case. We had to get in and fix them so you had to have a soldering iron and

14:30 pliers and find what was wrong and replace it and then check it and recalibrate it. So there was not a lot of spare time really for those dozen odd blokes. As well as that we had to maintain our base signals office where there were a number of receivers and transmitters used on point to point circuit. So as well as the aircraft and when the aircraft came up for their two forty hourly inspections that meant you stripped all the equipment out of the aircraft

15:00 and bought it back to the workshop and you went through it piece by piece and checked it and rebuilt it and put it back because the engine and airframe fitters it would take them the best part of perhaps a fortnight to get the aircraft serviceable and back ready to fly again.

This is even if some of the instruments are working, the two hundred and forty hour check?

Oh yes, everything regardless. Even though they are still serviceable they would be removed and checked. The engine would possibly be

15:30 stripped down and its performance would be checked. Yes, that is pretty detailed. They really pull it apart and rebuild it. The propeller would be checked for balance, all the guns would be removed and dismantled and reinstalled. It is a major inspection, the two forty hourly, so the service flight that would be responsible for all the squadrons' aircraft and similarly with the radio equipment and intercom and stuff, we were responsible for all that.

16:00 Our job was probably not as big as the engine people but just the same, a fair bit of work.

There are a lot of instruments in a lot of planes?

Yes, well the instrument section would be checking the calibration of all the turn and bank indicators, the barometers, the height, every instrument would be looked at and checked.

And were you within, I guess the routine of your day,

16:30 **would it be a day where you would not get on and off for meals or stuff or would you be on the go all the time?**

Well lunch at the mess would be at midday and we would all knock off wherever we were and head back to the camp to the mess. Go to the mess, swallow your Atebrin and salt tablets and eat whatever meal they gave you, if you could and then go and lie down because by the middle of the day it would be hot and sweaty anyway but

17:00 that was the routine. You generally had a lunchtime nap if you were lucky and then about an hour you had for lunch, back into the vehicle and back down to the strip to your work area and back at it. And all you'd be wearing was a pair of shorts, that was it, a pair of shorts and most of the blokes would be bare footed.

Now did you have a dedicated workshop as part of your unit?

17:30 Oh we made our workshop out of whatever we could scrounge. Sometimes we had a couple of Chev [Chevrolet] trucks with a box like a caravan thing on the back but no, hardly enough to house things. When we went to Mareeba we found an abandoned hut that the Americans had left behind in the bush

so we set up our camp down near that and used it. At Bougainville, I don't know where

18:00 the fellows scrounged this little hut from. It was a prefabricated sort of thing, a thing that the Americans had put it together. They probably got it from the Yanks and put it together in the bush, just off one of the taxiways, the flight strips and set up camp there. We had a little clearing around it where we had room to park our vehicles and that sort of thing.

How big was the prefab hut?

About that area, yeah about that size there.

About 6 by 6?

18:30 Say ten feet by twenty, I guess, six metres by three metres would be roughly the size.

And what was the range of tools that you actually had to work with?

Valves, spare valves were the biggest consumable item, a limited range of resisters and capacitors, not a lot, mainly components that were prone to fail like

19:00 electrolytic capacitors didn't like the tropical climate much. The airborne equipment that would generate the power for transmitting and receiving they had a thing called 'geni' motors, a little geni motor that was driven by the aircraft were twenty four volts and the output was two hundred and forty volts. It was sufficient current to supply the receiver which would be two or three hundred mils. The transmitter was a much bigger geni motor,

19:30 quite hefty in fact and incorporated in the base of that as well as the filtering equipment to filter out the noise and components from generating, to stop it getting into the radio equipment there would be a number of relays because when the pilot pressed to talk that would start up the transmitter geni motor. See we had HF equipment on the aircraft as well as VHF. The HF equipment was

20:00 a bit simpler but just the same it did occupy space and they have valves. The valves by this time getting towards the end of the war, the valves had shrunk from valves that stood this tall to ones about this size, so the component size was shrinking. But the pilot in the Wirraways, the wireless operator or navigator, his seat turned around and he was expected to tune the equipment to different frequencies and he had to turn the seat

20:30 around and tune the aerial coupling which was behind him and quite a bit of work so we had to sort of train some of these guys on how to do it. Generally we had a table with preset calibrated knobs that you put in position so they could preset them that way. But for the pilots that couldn't do that in the air control unit they would have four frequencies preset, crystal locked so that the frequency was determined and the transmitter and receiver would be both crystal controlled and he would have

21:00 four VHF frequencies. And he would have buttons that he pushed down, actually physically pushed down buttons and those push down buttons operated stepper motors in the equipment at the back which would change, like a relay that is set around and change the relays physically. So it was not the most reliable equipment but it worked.

Now in the maintenance that you were doing are you part of the

21:30 **evolution of technology or in modifying things?**

Not really, after I finished my training in Melbourne at the Melbourne Institute Technology, RMIT as it is now, I don't think I ever did another course in the air force. You sort of learn as you went along.

22:00 You got new equipment, you got new handbooks, you read it up and learnt your way around. No, I didn't ever do another course in the air force. It was only that first six months course and after that you learn by experience sort of thing.

Was there things that you had to do, like to improvise on the side because of restricted bits and pieces?

Yes, inevitably, particularly once you went overseas,

22:30 yes, there was a lot of improvisation went on because there was no readily available stores depot to contact and say, "Please send me a part." If we wanted a part at Bougainville it would be I think the best part of a week to ten days before it got there. See I had a priority system with ordering parts, any parts for an aircraft. The greatest priority was a thing called, if you went to the store and you wanted something and it wasn't there

23:00 and the storeman would ask you, "Is it AOG?" Aircraft operationally grounded and that meant the aircraft couldn't fly until that part was provided and that was supposed to mean that the store system would move heaven and earth to get it to you. AOG, well we didn't often have to do that but occasionally because we did have some spare equipment and invariably if an aircraft was for,

23:30 eighteen aircraft in the squadron and there would always be one or two in service flight, and you would

take the equipment from them and shove it into another one. The aircraft didn't own the equipment so you by a lot of jockeying around you got by. And certainly, as I say, with batteries there was a lot improvising to do, you really did.

Can you give me an example? What sort of things would you have to do or could you do?

24:00 I am just trying to think off the top of my head what sort of things would, but off the cuff I can't think of anything. It will probably come to me. But I know much the same situation came about, well improvising with aerials. See up there we had nothing permanent. We didn't have proper towers put up. We had plywood, prefabricated plywood poles with stay wires on, which we would haul up and hang aerials on them.

24:30 And inevitably if we got a cyclone or a strong wind it came down and then we didn't have any line staff and then we would have to run around and re-rig the aerials and put it all back together ourselves. Odd things, odd catastrophes could over take you and one day, where was it? This was at Balikpapan, the duty pilot in the control tower, the local natives were working on the air strip

25:00 and there were some aircraft coming in and he used to put his head out the window, well he didn't have to put his head out the window, it was just open air. He was yelling at them and all they were doing was waving back at them but the aircraft was in the circuit wanting to land so in a great rush he grabbed a Vearing pistol. I don't know if you've ever seen a Vearing pistol? They have a cartridge about that round and a little short pistol like this and they fire these flares, so he grabbed the Vearing pistol

25:30 which was there with a rack of cartridges and shoved the cartridge in the end but because of the damp climate and the building wasn't protected from the damp weather, the cartridge had swelled up and it wouldn't go in. So he put it on the end of the table like that and jammed it down to close it so he could fire the trigger and as soon as he did that, the pin hit the cartridge and exploded and right in front of him, on the counter right in front of him was all our radio equipment so the flare went off and into that and burnt the whole lot. So then he had to yell at the natives because he didn't have a flare and he didn't have

26:00 any radio equipment then so that meant a great flap then to make up a new console and make up a new thing and run wires and do it as quickly as you could. Because we had, at that particular place at Balikpapan we had a Dutch squadron, Number 18 Squadron, flying Mitchell bombers from there and a lot of them they didn't have really good English. They had some English but with a heavy Dutch accent so the control tower was pretty important there and

26:30 there were Spitfires and Boomerangs. There were quite a number of aircraft operating from there. That is the sort of thing could happen anywhere, at any time. Also working on aircraft, there were a number of trades working on them. There was some overlap between the electrical people's work and our work and the instrument makers so quite often they would do something that would upset some of our inter-wiring with the radio and communication equipment.

27:00 So you had to do a lot of liaison and keep in close touch of what other people wanted to do with the aeroplane.

It sounded like from what you were saying before that sometimes the work you were doing extended beyond the brief of radio maintenance?

Oh yes, yes well we had in the squadron, as I said it was a mobile squadron, most stations on bases they had piped music for people's entertainment, a

27:30 sound system and some guy in the signal office would be putting a disc jockey of records, old 78s [78 revolutions per minute records], and music of various sorts so if they could get a short wave station with music on they would transmit that but most places had music in the background. Well we had speakers with cones on them and one speaker, a roller, I can't think of the name of the speaker, with two cones and poles and these were put round the camp and we would run wires to them

28:00 and set it up and play records, just to put music around the camp for the various messes and stuff like that. That would be our job because it was our sort of area. The air force supplied the equipment and where it went and how it went and how it was used depended on the CO and the same with the signals people because it had to go back to the signals office where there were some wireless operator blokes that they could look after it,

28:30 because their shifts meant that they were tied up to the signals office all the time.

Now what kind of 78's were being played? Did you get much classical?

No, not a lot. No, no, we didn't really, classical music is kind a private thing. Not a lot of people enjoy it. We had some very good concert parties. A classical pianist came around and it was advertised for the army and everything and I think there was about twenty of us turned up out of

29:00 potentially, if you get a proper concert party with girls and singing, there would be thousands there but not classical music was, I must say it didn't receive a lot of enthusiastic support from the troops. I don't know that they objected to it but there wasn't much interest. I know in our squadron, within the squadron itself, we would organise concerts ourselves within the squadron and we had some very good musicians. We had

29:30 a engine fitter, an old fellow, surname was Robinson and I can't think of his Christian name now. He was in the permanent air force and he was a brilliant violinist and he would do classic music violin recitals. We had some very good singers, singing voices and we would organise, within the squadron we would organise concerts occasionally. Perhaps two or three a year, not a lot but

30:00 it just depended on, at different times there were people within the squadron that had the skills and interest. A couple of the messmen and a couple of the cooks were good musicians. We had a few of those at Mareeba. I am not sure about Bougainville because as I said I didn't spend a long time at Bougainville. By the time I got there it was only a month or two later that, a couple of months after I got there that I was posted back to Lae.

30:30 **Now how did you, I imagine the weather up in the islands caused a bit of havoc. What were some of the obstacles that you had?**

Malaria was the biggest problem. All the meals you were allowed to eat. Each day in the camps there was a roster, an orderly officer and an orderly sergeant and your duties were, in particular the messes, to make,

31:00 you would go round and inspect the camp and make sure that washing was hung up properly and the tents were tidy and generally a discipline thing sort of thing as far as the camp but at the meals, the airmen's mess, you had to go in and check what they were eating and see what the cooks were dishing up and then go up and down the tables, "Orderly officer, any complaints?" And if any of the fellows had a complaint you had to make a note of what the complaint and then go to the cook and find out if they could

31:30 sort it out. So they were very fussy with that sort of thing and then when the airmen came for their meal, the I think the doctors or somebody from one, of the medical orderlies used to have to make sure all the people queuing up, you queued up for your meal and the Atebrin tablets and salt tablets would be put there. You had to swallow an Atebrin tablet every day and maybe more than that and a salt tablet because now

32:00 obviously that was because of the high perspiration and salt loss. That was done meticulously because whether you took an Atebrin tablet or not it didn't stop you getting malaria but it stopped the effects of malaria but you did a funny coloured wee, it was very yellow and your skin went yellow, everything went yellow.

What about your eyes?

Yes, your eyes went yellow. You looked like you were jaundiced. All the blokes had

32:30 a very strange complexion because it did have quite an effect but beyond that I am not sure that it had any after effects from it but that was all the time in New Guinea and Borneo. I know I had one attack of malaria after I got out of the air force. I got crook going home one afternoon from town but beyond that I don't think I have had any after effects.

33:00 **And what about the effects of the islands on the equipment and things like that?**

That was, the climate was pretty severe on the electronic equipment because of the high humidity and the extreme temperatures. Yeah, it was very, very difficult. Yes, not a lot we could do about it but certainly today all the electronic equipment we had at Cairns with Civil Aviation was all in air conditioned buildings and all kept nice and cool and

33:30 an equitable climate all around. But no, just had to suffer. There is nothing you could do about it, moisture and condensation was the worst problem.

Out of the Wirraways and the Boomerangs and all the other gear you were looking after was…?

The air frames would have suffered just the same because they weren't hangared, they were left, the aircraft were left sitting outside, out in the open. They are parked in dispersal bays so the airframes and the condition of the aircraft generally would have deteriorated while they were there,

34:00 even though they were still flying but that was the one reason when the war ended they didn't bother to bring them back home. There was no need to, they just pushed them into the jungle because the deterioration of electrolysis and generally, because it is a very, very wet season, it is quite severe and the Wirraways and Boomerangs had fabric covered control services.

34:30 The fuselage in the Wirraway was fabric and the rudder and elevators were all fabric. The Boomerangs were a plywood fuselage. They were all metal frames but the skin was just plywood and the tropics didn't agree with that very well either.

Were there particular planes or bits of equipment that were the worse to work on that you really

35:00 **didn't like to work on?**

All aircraft are difficult to work on because of the need to run wires through in inaccessible places and fit them out and fit plugs. And the radio equipment in the Boomerang was housed in a whole in the back. You had a little square panel with a zizz fastener that you undid and if you were lucky enough and small enough you could get our head and arms in to get at it but almost impossible to work on the equipment whilst it was in the aircraft.

35:30 If it anything went wrong with it, really all you could do was take it out and take it back to the workshop and really you couldn't service anything on the aircraft itself. That basically applied to all aircraft, that type of aircraft. The only aircraft that offers physical room to get inside and work on the equipment are aircraft like DC C47's or Catalina's, large aircraft you can get in and walk around, and the equipment is housed in racks reasonably accessible but

36:00 fighter aircraft and small aircraft, quite impossible.

How about I guess the Kiwis [New Zealanders], because the Kiwi Corsairs were there?

The New Zealanders had two Corsairs squadrons there, yes.

How did you get on with the Kiwis?

Well we didn't, apart from the fact that we flew with them I could have been talking to a New Zealander and wouldn't have know it to be honest. I mean it is pretty hard to tell

36:30 who anybody belongs to when all he has got on is a pair of shorts and a pair of dog tags. He could be anybody and they spoke like we spoke and they look like we look. I am not sure that I would have known a New Zealander if I fell on him except that if he was in one of the aircraft I would know he was a pilot. But generally at Torokina, at Bougainville it was just hot and sweaty, you just didn't wear clothes, it was just one of those places.

37:00 Out on the strip everybody was dressed the same, they all looked the same.

A pair of shorts?

A pair of shorts, that was about it.

How about I guess letting off steam in the moments where you actually had a bit of time, what would you do?

Well I am not sure at Bougainville that we could do much. We could go to our mess

37:30 and I think some of the fellows really felt a challenge, all the drinks were lined up you would start from the end and go all the way along and then come back along the next shelf and if they were still standing they would go around again but beyond that, that would be just a drunken binge, but beyond that I am not sure. There were no shops, there were no town, there was no, well there was a beach but I don't think anyone was game to go into the water. I'm not sure that I saw any swimming.

Because?

There would be sharks and or crocodiles and it was black volcanic sand and it didn't even look

38:00 very nice. It was absolutely black. It wasn't like a white, sandy beach, like the tropics. It was just black and very wet. The day I arrived there, we had hardly touched down when the rain started and there was water everywhere, bucket down. They reckon they had six inches in an hour. I don't know whether that's right but the guys there said, "Yeah, it happens like that every day." It didn't quite happen like that every day but

38:30 I would say within a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes it stopped raining. All the water had gone, the ground just sopped it up like a sponge.

It would be dry again?

Yeah, all this volcanic sand from, the island existed from volcanoes. There was nothing. Bougainville wasn't one of the nicest places to be.

Tape 7

00:32 **Jack, I want to talk to you about moving with the unit over to Morotai, but before we talk about that I want to check a few things. Now, did you have the American entertainers come over to see you?**

Yes, yes, we did.

Was that the Bob Hope?

I was at Williamtown when Bob Hope's aeroplane

01:00 came down and made an emergency landing at Old Bar, Bob Hope and I can't think who the woman was with him. They were on their way down to Sydney I think their aircraft false landed at Old Bar and he came to Williamtown. But while we were at Morotai we had some American film stars as an entertainment group came there.

01:30 **What did you think of them?**

I thought they were pretty good, yeah, it was good, good fun.

What about Australian entertainers?

We didn't have any Australians there from my recall of Morotai. I don't remember any. They could have well have gone there but Morotai for most of us was just a staging place. The Americans were more or less permanently there but Morotai for the Australian air force people it was just

02:00 somewhere to be and the army on their way to Borneo so Morotai didn't… It was really an American place, more Americans certainly than Australians.

That is in Morotai?

At Morotai, yes.

Tell us what your first impressions were of Morotai when you arrived there?

As I said a mud covered lump of coral. I don't know how big a place it is, the island, I don't know.

02:30 We flew up there from Lae in a DC3 stacked full of jeeps and people and we landed everywhere between Lae and Morotai. We got there late in the afternoon. I think we spent more than twelve hours on that aeroplane that day. And we crossed the Equator too, which we didn't know but we did. We didn't see Neptune when we did it. Anyway when we

03:00 arrived at Morotai it was late in the afternoon and I honestly say sitting sideways in a DC3 you don't look out and look at the scenery while you are flying along, so I don't know what Morotai looked like. It is near the Halmaheras, you could actually see the Halmaheras, a beautiful island. The Japanese still had them and any shipping that went up and down the passage there generally got shelled by the Japanese from their positions in the Halmaheras.

03:30 We weren't on Morotai more than I would say eight weeks at the most, six or eight weeks. The unit was formed at Lae but not with many of the staff. It was at Morotai that most of the people posted to us arrived. Morotai was part, as far as the air force structure was concerned was called the 1st TAF, the 1st Tactical Air Force, which

04:00 consisted of a number of squadrons of bombers and fighters and OBE and all sorts of things. And I don't know what 1st Tactical Air Force consists of but it is an American sort of thing of gathering of all different units with a wide range of diversity and they become the 1st Tactical Air Force. So when the Borneo landings started I think Labuan might have been the first,

04:30 it was either Labuan or Tarakan, those troops moved out, the air force operation base units and airfield construction squadrons. I think there were three of them. Each air field construction squadron went to one of those landings to establish an airstrip as soon as they landed. The places were bombed and strafed and hit with everything prior to the landings and then the LSTs, it was

05:00 about, how many days from Morotai? I think we were on the LST for about three days, from Morotai to Balikpapan, so the other Tarakan and Labuan would have been roughly the same, three or four days, more or less go across the bottom of the Philippines, round Zamboanga, whatever the name of that sea at the top of Borneo. Back at Morotai the rest of our people arrived,

05:30 fairly small unit, I think the total strength of our operational base would have been perhaps seventy, perhaps eighty people, if that. The officer in charge, the CO, the commanding officer was a flight lieutenant, not a pilot. He was an admin fellow. The duty pilots were generally airmen pilots so they could man the control tower and then we had a fairly large wireless unit because we had a lot of wireless telegraphists and

06:00 technicians, about three or four. A lot of drivers, trucks. We had an ambulance, fire equipment, all that sort of equipment for the airport so we all collected at Morotai and then the day came for the landing at Balikpapan. It was the end of June we started to pack up. I can't remember precisely what date we left but it would

06:30 probably been about the last week of June. The camp was broken, everything was taken apart, packed up and put on trucks and taken down to a landing ship. The vehicles were put on board, in the reverse order to what they had to come off, last one off was the first one off. And they had to be reversed on so that you could come off front wards because we were going to do a beach landing. At Morotai they had a ramp sort of wharfage facilities.

07:00 After all the vehicles and equipment went on, the troops went on. On the LST there were only two meals, one in the morning and one in the evening because there were so many troops on board the

kitchen was very tiny and very small so you just lined up and they threw something in one of these square things and you ate it. I don't think we had a wash or a shave or anything on that trip. It wasn't bad. We sailed in a convoy. There was a number of LSTs,

07:30 Air Sea Rescue boats and all sorts of boats in the convoy. Morotai didn't impress us. I think it was a staging post, that's all it was. The Americans had this huge air force base there but the Australians were more or less just passing by.

We heard about Americans getting ice-cream flown in, did you witness any of that?

They very likely did. We were on American canteen rations there.

08:00 It is a bit different to the Australians. The American canteen rations as they called it consisted of each week you got a carton of Lucky Strike cigarettes or something like that and American beer in tins which was pretty awful. That's about all I can really remember. I know all the food was American food. The Australians didn't provide any rations. The rations that were drawn

08:30 for our unit came from American rations and it was all this Spam. We ate Spam. Spam is not very nice to eat but it's not very nice to get but that was the American rations. It was good if you were an American, it was great.

Actually I remember Spam. We used to have Spam, growing up.

It is marginally better than bully beef, very marginally better.

09:00 It wasn't much. You didn't have to worry in the war years about getting over weight. There was no need for Jenny Craig because everybody was thin. You only had to have cooks like they had in the air force or the army and you had no problem with weight. You didn't see overweight airmen, I can tell you that.

They should re-employ the old army and RAAF cooks as dieticians.

You would do Jenny Craig out of business. You'd lose weight a lot more quickly.

09:30 **I have heard about a lot of you having trouble with vehicles in Morotai because of vehicles getting bogged?**

Yeah, well as I say it was called a mud covered lump of coral, which it was. It was very wet and very boggy. The roads were pretty terrible. Where we set up camp we tried to dig, ordinarily when you came to a new place to set up camp the first thing you did was a hole in the ground and set up your latrine, that was the first thing.

10:00 And the first latrine was generally a couple of fork sticks driven in either end and a pole laid across it so it gave you somewhere to sit your bum and that was it, you did your thing there. There was no shelter around it, nothing, it was an open air job. Very convivial because it didn't matter if you were an officer or a padre or whatever when it came to nature, you did it. Anyway we tried to, I had a different sort of job there because we were only

10:30 transiting so I didn't have any radio equipment to look after, and I didn't have to do anything. There was a warrant officer disciplinary in each unit who was responsible for the airmen. This fellow Thomas, I can't think of his first name now, he had gone on leave, compassionate leave, his wife was crook and he had gone back to Australia. So I was acting, I was the senior sergeant, so I was acting WOD [Warrant Officer Discipline], which meant it was my responsibility then was to get the holes in the ground dug and get the latrine set up

11:00 and get the showers organised and all this stuff, all the housekeeping stuff. Organise transport and organise someone to pick up the rations, so the hole in the ground was a real challenge. Everywhere we went it is all mud and dirt and you'd think, "Oh yeah, we'll try here." You would get that far and strike coral and you keep pounding away and you can't make any impression. You can't get a crow bar or a shovel or anything through coral. Till eventually

11:30 we found a spot where we hit it and the thing fell in. Underneath was a cave in the coral so that is where we built our toilet and it was bottomless, it went down an awful long way so we built this thing over it and built a room of shelter around it. And we put a division around the middle so the officers had one side exclusively for them and the airmen and sergeants shared the other side, so that was our unit latrine. And each day we had a hygiene squad what you had to do every day

12:00 was take some distillate and pour down and drop a lighted taper in and set fire. We had a chimney at the end of it to let all the smoke come out. There were always tricks with these things and the trick was if you saw the Padre going into the officers' toilet you went into the airmen's toilet and poured the distillate down and put all the lids on the seats and dropped the wick in and he would always come out with soot over his backside.

12:30 Because the thing would go woof and you would hear all the lids fly off the officer's side and you always waited until you had an officer in there and he couldn't complain.

So there wasn't really such a thing as privacy?

No, no, no, the sight of male genitalia was pretty common place. Well there were no women around so privacy as such didn't enter into it. In that same situation then

13:00 that would apply anywhere during the war. They are talking now about letting women get in the front line well that would be absolutely ridiculous, absolutely impossible, and to even contemplate doing that is. I mean women might want to, but I think women that want to are as idiotic as the men that are even considering it. Even at Balikpapan when we were there and it was a reasonably civilised community there.

13:30 There were natives there, the native Borneos or Malaysians or whatever they call them, but we used to go swimming there. The belly tanks off Spitfires were made of wood and they are the right shape for surfboards and there was a beaut surf there. They talk about Bali being a great surf but we had beaut surf at Balikpapan. So we got all the belly tanks off the Spitfires when the war ended and we used to spend our time out on the beach, out in the surf every day, straight off our camp.

14:00 We never wear clothes, we were always in the raw and the natives there they were very conscious of, and they would come down and would be pointing at us as if that thing there was something unusual and they always covered themselves up because they wanted to go in and have a wash. It was quite extraordinary whereas our blokes couldn't care less.

Do you think it was because maybe the missionaries or something had come in?

No, there were no missionaries there. They were all Muslims I think.

14:30 I don't know what they are. The Waki and Makana, we even employed a few of them at our camp as cooks and messmen. They were terrific. They would do our washing and we would pay them a small amount a week because there was no work for them.

Wouldn't you come across native women as well?

Oh yes. Rarely saw them out. The women invariably stayed at home but in the city of Balikpapan there were women wandering around but they had been brutalized by the

15:00 Japanese and they kept well away from the men. We never had any native women come near our camp at all. The men came and they were looking for work, we employed about five or six of them, as sort of batmen, make our beds, do our washing, work in the mess, do all that sort of thing and they were fabulous. Honest as the day is long and they appreciated it because they got some money. They got nothing from the Japanese and we taught them how to play

15:30 two up and took them to the pictures and wherever we went we took them with us. They were part of our lot; whereas the Japanese, they were very subdued when we first went there. They were bowing and scraping and "yes tuan" and "no tuan" and all this sort of thing but it didn't take long before they were on first name basis. Most of the Australian units did much the same. Any of those natives wandering around if we could find some work we would pool all the money and paid for them ourselves.

16:00 In the sergeants' mess we had two working, the officers' mess had three or four of them and I think some of the airmen had fellows working for them.

We are in Morotai now?

No, this is over in Balikpapan. I didn't see any natives at Morotai at all.

So was it very different?

Whether there are any there at all I don't know but I didn't see any. There was no town, there were no shops nothing at Morotai that I saw except a lot of Americans and a lot of aeroplanes.

16:30 But I have no doubt that there would be natives there but if there are we didn't see them and we wasn't there long enough to get acquainted. At Balikpapan there was a Chinese community up the harbour who the Japanese had left alone and there were boats at a weekend and we used to take boats and go up there. We used to go up there and visit and sell stuff from the Chinese. They had shops and everything there and they existed as though the war had never happened, left alone by the Japanese.

What about in Balikpapan,

17:00 **the whole not sort of fratinising with the natives. I mean there were severe penalties weren't there?**

No, there were no penalties. The NLCA, the Neville and Lindsay Civil Administration came with us to Balikpapan because it was part of the Dutch East Industries. The Royal Dutch Shell Company owned Balikpapan, a huge refinery. It was like a piece of Newcastle, big wharves and industries and trains and trucks and cranes, an industrial port,

17:30 magnificent harbour. The buildings that the Shell Company built on the side of the hill for their managerial, their executive staff they were palatial, like palaces. They would have employed a lot of native people but the native village close to the waterfront was absolutely flattened with the bombings and the rockets with the landing so it was just all debris. The bank was blown up and all the Japanese money was blowing around the streets

18:00 and we gathered it up and we had buckets full of money, nobody wanted it. The local native population really had nothing that they could do. The airfield construction squadron employed quite a lot of them on the airfield construction, dozens, in fact hundreds of them and then of course they were very meek and mild when we came and the Dutch tried to treat them in much the same way. They were fairly brutal I thought, the Dutch and

18:30 their attitude to them. They tried to segregate them from the Australian Army and air force people but that didn't work. When the Japanese prisoners were being brought back when the war ended all these natives who previously had been bowing and scraping at them spent their time at throwing rocks at every truck that went past. That is what they thought about the Japanese because they took them all down to a compound that they built on the mangrove area and put them in there.

19:00 **Sorry for interrupting Jack but were you aware of the atrocities that the Japanese…?**

Oh yeah, oh yes, we were well aware of it. In fact you could see evidence of that around Balikpapan, oh yes.

What do you mean by that?

They had their, like these Korean women, comfort women. They had some big homes and all the appropriate equipment and stuff there and I think a lot of the women had been brutalized by the Japanese like that.

19:30 We went through one of those places after. Oh yes, oh yes, we knew that. It is an attitude thing of course. The Japanese thought that Hirohito was gone to God, and they were working for him.

I mean we have heard stories about if you gave the natives some Japanese prisoners the Japanese prisoners may not make it.

I would not be surprised because they really took to the Japanese and they really

20:00 threw rocks and they didn't really like them. These natives we had working at our camp when the war ended with Japan we had to go everyday down to Manga with a truck and pick up Japanese for a working party just to keep them occupied because all these Japanese were in the compound. We would generally have I think twenty or thirty of them we could get in the back in one of those big trucks. Bring them back to the camp and we set them to work on the beach, all

20:30 these old logs and things that they built there as a barrage, our people had blown them up and there was logs and rubbish all along the beach, so we set the Japanese to cleaning them up, picking them and getting them off the beach. You would give them a job and you would think it would take all day but they would do it in no time. They really became a pain in the bum because we had to really create work for them. They were too enthusiastic.

21:00 The natives we had working for us did leave them alone. They wouldn't go near the Japanese. We were a bit worried about what their attitude would be but fortunately they chose not to carry on and antagonize or fight with them. We had the Japanese there from about 9 o'clock in the morning until about 3.30 or 4 in the afternoon and then take them back to Manga. That went on for a month or so after the war.

What were they actually doing there?

21:30 **I mean what did you make the working party do?**

Pick up all these logs on the beach and clean up. See they built this barrage of logs all along the beach, sharpened pointy logs sticking out to stop landing craft coming on the beach so we had them pulling all that out and just tidying up all the mess they had made on the beach. Our particular unit all the other units would have had to have taken Japanese for working parties and I don't know what the others employed them on.

22:00 It was just our particular camp that we used them on that sort of work. They were enthusiastic workers, they did get stuck into it.

Why do you think that was anyway?

I don't know, I don't know. I guess that their humiliation set in and they decided well, you would see six of them pick a log up and one bloke would run off with it. And I would think, God, if it was Australians they would be one bloke would struggle to get it up

22:30 and the whole team would walk off with it. We thought we were giving them a job that would last the day but they really did work remarkably quick.

Did you think they had a respect I mean for the fact your were the victors and they lost?

I guess that would be partly this. The ordinary Japanese I think once reality set in it would have been humiliating for them

23:00 because they had been taught to think, well the way they went for awhile they were all conquering and

their attitude was as conquering heroes was to humiliate the people. I don't think the Japanese attitude to the native people would have been anything like the Australians. The Australians, I am not sure at all Australians but I must say what I saw the Australians treated the local native people very well indeed. If we were going anywhere we would always make sure we would ask them and take them with us, if we were going

23:30 to the pictures or anywhere. If they wanted to come they were as welcome as anybody.

The natives must have actually been treated very badly by the Japanese at some point?

Oh yes they were, very tireless but again I think some of the natives would have probably remembered the way the Dutch treated them too which wasn't anything like the acceptance of them as the Australians did. The Dutch were pretty tough.

24:00 **Can I just bring you back to Morotai when you mentioned earlier today going through the Japanese tunnels?**

That was at Balikpapan.

Oh that was at Balikpapan as well, okay my mistake, beg your pardon. Can you tell me what equipment you used to go into the tunnels?

It was all in there, the tunnel was open, it had been blown up.

It wasn't one of those like in Vietnam?

No, no, it was in the side of a hill, we just walked in.

24:30 You can imagine a hill like that, across there, and in the side of it there is an opening about five or six feet high, fairly narrow, there would have been a door on it and the door had been blown off and we just walked in. And here was a signals transmitting area because the poles, the towers for the transmitting aerials were outside in the paddock. We just went in, this tunnel went away into the hill. It housed all the transmitters. See that building I showed you in Norfolk Island housing the transmitters, they had transmitters like that but all buried within this tunnel.

25:00 **So they must have had pretty good equipment to make tunnels for themselves do you think?**

Oh they had a lot of natives I suppose to do a lot of digging. Oh yes, yes it was, they didn't have a building to house their transmitters. From the air looking down, there would be no evidence of a transmitting station there at all because the poles holding up the aerials but looking down on it from an aircraft without a building you

25:30 would not be aware of the size and the complexity of the communication equipment that was in that tunnel, it was huge.

It also must have been pretty daunting, all the animals and sounds that you would have encountered in the jungle? What about anything really dangerous, did you encounter anything very dangerous?

No, not really

Other than the Japanese of course?

No not really. On this creek,

26:00 Sepingang Besar where we camped, a few of us took walks up along there. The war had ended and we just filled in time with a hike and we found an old sawmill in a camping area probably about ten kilometres up in the jungle. And we just sort of explored it all and looked at it and thought, "Oh gee, look at this." And we saw some orang-utans there, a group of orang-utans, so we just sat there very quietly and they just wandered through the clearing and into the jungle

26:30 and we just watched them. If we came out the orang-utans would have run anyway. They don't jump and attack people but it was interesting to see them.

How big are they?

Orang-utans? Big, big orang-utans means man of the jungle, orang-utan.

Is that right? I don't know why I had an idea that they were small.

They are not as big as gorillas but they are next in size. They are very large.

27:00 **And orange?**

A bright, orangey colour, beautiful colour, beautiful animals.

Gee what an absolute treat.

It was fantastic the orang-utans, oh it was beautiful to see them like that, it was great. It just happened

we were in this old sawmill in the hut, actually this group, there was probably about seven or eight of them just came.

27:30 There probably would have been leader of the gang, it might have been the father and all his family, I don't know. I don't know what their social life is but it was rather nice to see them.

Watch Richard Attenborough one Sunday night or Saturday night. What about being a letter writer? Were you much of a letter writer home to your mum and brothers?

Yes, that was the only communication. Letters would be written say every week, probably two or three letters to different members of the family.

28:00 To mother occasionally, to a brother, occasionally to a girl I wrote to for years, another friend at Brighton I wrote to during the war, another relation in Tumbarumba, yes, letters would be written all the time.

What happened to this girl in Melbourne? Was she just a pen pal?

I met her when we used to stay with the McClellands. She used to go ice skating, I stayed at the house.

28:30 They lived at the next beach at Brighton, she was just another friend.

You had a lot of these girlfriends?

Pals.

I have a feeling you are not telling me something. Now where was it, you told me earlier today that you stood on a sting ray?

At Balikpapan after the war ended.

Oh, okay.

See when we had nothing to do,

29:00 along the beach after the Japanese had cleared most of the logs and debris off the beach and tidied it up a bit, the native fish traps which were all along the beach, separated by half a kilometre between each, out into the water. At high tide you could barely see the tops of the sticks. They were a line of sticks so as the fish at high tide came following along the beach, this line of sticks with mesh and bush and stuff in, wires and things, they would hit that and turn and go

29:30 into the deeper water. They couldn't go up to the shallow water to get around it and as the tide retreated they got forced further and further down and at the end of it there were wings to stop the fish coming out, so they would swim and at the end there was a pen. It would be the width of this room, about this wide, so the fish would finish up in this pen and there would be about this much water in it. You could walk the rise and fall of tide enabled you to walk down and all these fish, all sorts of things

30:00 would be in the end there and we would just go in and gather up the fish to take back to the mess for dinner. One day there happened to be a string ray that I trod on and it got me on the leg.

Okay now, for somebody who is ignorant on stingray bites?

Well at the base of the tail they have a barb. The sting ray is about this size and they have a tail about this long and just a few inches up from the top of the tail they have a barb so I was in my bare feet and it got me there. That scar is

30:30 where the thing got me. It was excruciating agony that night but I got drunk in the mess and I didn't feel it and the next day it felt okay. I went swimming and I thought, "Oh, it is all over." Apparently the venom you get from it is only one component. The main problem is the infection. It infected the leg, puffed up like this and it was all pussy

31:00 and where the wound was it just turned into an ulcer. It never did heal up while I was up there. I was carted off to hospital. The leg was so painful after it puffed up and it wasn't much in the way of treatment, just hot poultices and wait until all this pus and muck eventually got out, and that is how it was left. Where the infection was it just left a bit of a hollow in the shin bone there.

They didn't give you any penicillin?

31:30 I don't know what they gave me. It could have been penicillin, I don't know what the treatment was but I was in there for quite some time. See I had applied after the war ended to go with the occupation troops but when they came round to do the medicals and check the people that were going I was in hospital so again I missed out on the trip to Japan.

Couldn't you have said, "look I will be better soon?

It was an ulcer. It would

32:00 never have healed up. I still had the ulcer on my leg when I came back to Australia.

What about malaria or Ross River fever? Did you get any of those, dengue fever?

Well I would have had malaria but because I was taking Atebrin I never had any ill effects from malaria. I never had a malaria attack while I was in the islands and you are supposed to take Atebrin for a period after, which I did. When I got to Brisbane, I suppose I would have had about

32:30 a month's supply of Atebrin and when I stopped taking it after three or four weeks I guess. I was coming home from the city one day, I'd started work at the PMG and I just had a fever on the tram. I had to get off the tram. I was just about, had a raging temperature and feeling like fading. But that, as far as I know was the only ill effect that I ever had. I doubt that anybody that went

33:00 to the islands didn't have malaria. I would suspect that the Atebrin or whatever course of treatment you were taking, most of the troops were Atebrin, all it does is stops the effects of malaria and the body, if the body system is good enough I think it gets rid of the virus, the malaria thing leaves.

What were your feelings about hearing the war was over? I mean you talked about it earlier today that it was on, it was off, I mean?

33:30 It was a great sense of relief, "Thank God it is over," because it was the atom bomb thing on Japan and Hiroshima that finally stopped it. They had already dropped one and our news was always a bit stale and old. It wasn't as if you get it on TV and see, we hear about it afterwards. As to the actual what day did the war end I don't really know because it seemed to me, "Oh

34:00 the next day the war is not over, back to work," it is still on. But here had been a lot of celebrating because each time you think it is over there was generally a great night at the mess, a bit of a party. That went on from memory for the best part of a week or so until it finally was really over. And also the arrangement then at the end of the war for the

34:30 surrender of the various Japanese outposts, see that went on for quite some time after. And at Balikpapan we were involved to quite some extent because a lot of Borneo, we had Labuan, Tarakan and Balikpapan, three parts but Borneo is a huge island. And the main part down at, the southern part down at Banjarmasin and Java, all the, Indonesia was still under

35:00 Japanese control. So we had based at Balikpapan in the harbour we had a flight of Catalinas. A friend of mine was flying one of them, Brett Hilder, who was skipper of ships through Norfolk. Brett Hilder was skipper of one of the Catalinas, so they had to gather up army officers from the various units at Balikpapan for the 7th Division and a number of troops. And

35:30 they would take a party of about ten or twelve say down to Banjarmasin to arrange the hand over of responsibility from the Japanese commander. That Catalina would leave those people there, come back and take them somewhere else, to the Celebes. See a lot of the islands were not occupied at all and a lot of Borneo was not occupied so all these parts where the Japanese had commanders in them they arranged the takeover, even down to Java.

36:00 And we had all this invasion money in tins under our tents so the Catalina crews would take all this money with them and for awhile that money was still good so they would buy jewellery and stuff and bring back so we were converting our invasion money into jewellery until - I don't know what other currency came in.

Was the black market a bit rife there, over there on the islands?

36:30 Yes and no, to some extent, always a bit of a trade with the local natives to get fresh vegetables with the native population. If we went up towards the oil fields towards, I can't think of the name of that area now. You would go through villages and little houses and we would always stock up with lots of tins of condensed milk, "susu" they called it, it was better than money. You could get anything for a tin of condensed milk. We

37:00 would get bananas or paw paws or any tropical fruit with a tin of condensed milk and bring it back to camp. And WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [chicken], they all had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, poultry, eggs, fresh fruit which we never saw at all in our ordinary rations. We never saw anything in the way of fresh fruit or vegetables so that was I guess a black market but we were right for fish because we were right on the beach but apart from

37:30 that that was the only thing that came fresh.

Did you know how to scale and what do you call it?

Scale and skin them, yeah and gut them.

Did you know how to do that?

Oh yes, I have been fishing when I was a kid, yes, that was not a problem.

I would like to learn how to do that because I think if I am ever stuck on an island I love fish but I don't know how to scale and clean them.

Some fish are easier than others. When we were kids my brother and I used to go out into Botany Bay and hire a boat at the Botany Coal Pier and we did indeed row over

38:00 to Kernel, Weeny Bay and we would catch crabs over there and then we'd go to Bear Island and go outside and catch leather jackets. Now leather jackets are ugly looking fish and a lot of people don't like them but they are beautiful eating and you don't have to scale them. They have a skin, so you cut their head off and you just cut the knife and cut around and just skin them and they are beautiful eating and they hardly ever have any bones. Leather jackets were very popular and flatheads were very popular. We used to catch a lot of them in the Bay but we'd been doing that as kids.

38:30 That wasn't anything new, catching fish and all that sort of stuff, crabs and stuff and so on.

Now what about coming home?

39:00 **Now you actually had to have quite a bit to do with the Japanese prisoners didn't you before you came home?**

That was in the first few weeks after the Japanese were being rounded up and put into the Manga airstrip. That was for about a month I suppose, three or four weeks at the end of the war so that would have been say August, the end of September, perhaps getting on towards October we were virtually finished with the Japanese then. So October that was about the time I trod on the sting ray, about the time we finished

39:30 with the Japanese prisoners. We had November, I think it was late November, early December we came back to Brisbane.

Tape 8

00:33 **Now I just wanted to take you back to Balikpapan for a bit because you were sort of there pretty close, or very close to the initial landing of the place?**

Yes, the actual initial beach landing, yes. The convoy arrived there on the day of the first landing. We landed in what they called D plus 3 but we were in the bay and as soon as the beach was cleared we landed.

01:00 **With the landing itself and once you sort of got on the beach, what did you see or experience I guess of left over fighting or Japanese?**

No, not really, the place had been so thoroughly bombed and shelled with rockets and stuff there was no action left on the beach. Further inland there was, the Japanese had gone to the hills behind Balikpapan, high terrain

01:30 above there, so the cruisers off shore were shelling those Japanese positions and the Japanese positions were shelling our cruisers, but we were underneath. You could hear the shells whistling over but in actual fact in the town the army people had landed and there was no, the Japanese had retreated very quickly. We landed with the fire tender that was destined for the airport, a Bedford fire tender, an ordinary vehicle,

02:00 not a four wheel drive or anything. The theory was that had the Japanese released the oil from the storage tanks on the hill overlooking this beach area and set fire to it everything on the beach would be destroyed by the oil from the fire. And theoretically it was thought we might be able to put some of the fire out but that didn't happen. The aircraft that were bombing there, the Liberators and the aircraft had bombed the place

02:30 meticulously avoided bombing the storage tanks so they could have well been still full of oil, I don't know. But they were high up on the hill overlooking the town we were on the ocean side of Balikpapan and then the harbour inlet was further to the north, no, wait until I get myself orientated, yeah it pointed to the south, the harbour was, from where we actually landed. But this ridge that the oil tanks and things were on overlooked

03:00 the harbour on one side and the beach on the other, if you know what I mean? In the event, we managed to get the fire tender off the landing craft and got it bogged in the sand. There was a steep embankment of sand and we couldn't get through it and we bogged it down to the axle and we had no way of getting it out so we just made up a camp there and stayed there. Lots of other units were still landing, various army and

03:30 all sorts of equipment was coming ashore all the way along the beach. We lit a fire and boiled the billy and had a cup of tea and opened a tin of bully beef and had a bit of a feed. We got off fairly early in the morning. Some army blokes came along, they had lost their unit and they said, "Can we use your fire?" And we just moved out of the way and said, "Yeah, go for it." We had finished. We had boiled the kettle.

04:00 So they stoked the fire up again and got it going and put the billy on to boil it and a land mine blew up, but fortunately where they were standing the worst of it went into the sand at the back of it and they got a bit of shrapnel, but it just shows how lucky we were. We had lit the fire on top of a land mine but we had moved away. We didn't get any of it and the army blokes fortunately only got, no serious

wounds. It certainly put the fire out I can tell you that, but the heat obviously penetrated

04:30 the sand where they had planted this land mines so land mines are nothing new, they were around then.

Pretty lucky though?

Oh yes, oh yes very lucky. When the rest of our unit came off the LST later on that day, I think in the afternoon most of them came ashore, some of the other trucks came ashore, we moved down looking for a camp site so we left the fire tender where it was and found a site

05:00 to set up our tents, just set them up roughly. And started putting our camp together and then went into town and had a bit of a look around but it was just all bedlam. Nobody knew what was there, there was people all confused, “Where do we go now?” Nothing was organised.

No this is other units floating around the place?

Yes well

05:30 inevitably as we land, we’re a unit was consisting of so many vehicles and so many people, but we came ashore in bits and pieces and when the others came ashore they didn’t know precisely where we were so it was fairly disorganised really. With this fire tender we were supposed to be independent and we were going to do our thing and put out fires but we couldn’t and we just stayed there. But as the members

06:00 of our unit came with the other vehicles we gradually got ourselves sorted out and moved down and found a site that we thought would be suitable for our camp. Bill Timmins, the officer, commanding officer, came ashore and I went with him and we had a look in a jeep and we looked at different places. And when we drove into this site there was a bit of bitumen road in there and a beach and I said, “What about this? We can park the trucks there and we have got a beach here and we can have the mess hall there,” so

06:30 we looked at it and thought, “Yes, this will do.” So he went back and gathered up the crew and that is where we camped. We didn’t go and ask anybody, “Can we set up a camp here?” We found a spot that we liked and that was it.

There was no central coordination of the other units in terms of…?

Not to that extent. I mean we wanted to be close to where the airstrip was going to be built but there was no airstrip at this stage. It was just all battered coconut palms and debris and rubbish, just junk everywhere, so we set up our camp and then

07:00 later on, a couple of days later the airfield construction got ashore with their heavy equipment and started clearing the site to build a runway and then as the runway evolved we set up a bit of a building with a signals office and a control tower, built a little short control tower. The road ran right by it and that was where we were.

The control tower, for example, did you actually have all the materials to build that from scratch

07:30 **or were you kind of making it up with bits of timber?**

Local timber, timber available locally, with what we could scrounge, what we could collect, what we could get, pinch, borrow or steal.

And I mean there was a hell of a lot of bombing on that beach before you guys got there?

Before we landed, yes.

Can you give us a picture on what it kind of looked like because you sort of think of landing on a beach and it is all kind of pristine?

Well if you can imagine palm trees, there are coconut

08:00 plantations just shredded, there were bits of trunks sticking up and there would be one with some leaves on it and then next to it there would be nothing, just all pulverised, flattened. These landing barrages that come in they have big racks of rockets on the front of them and as they approach the beach they fire them one after the other. And these rockets just go in and whatever is in front of them they just take it away. So everything that is there, doesn’t matter if it is a building, trees

08:30 or whatever, it just gets fragmented. Prior to that, the heavy bombing from aircraft had been on strategic targets. They bombed the Manga airstrip that the Japanese were using. They couldn’t use the airstrip. It was all just full of bomb craters. Wherever they could establish with authority where Japanese encampments were, they were very heavily bombed for weeks before we landed.

09:00 When we arrived the damage, the immediate damage was from the landing craft, the rockets and shell fire from the ships as we went in to land.

The rockets from the LSTs, is that purely for the benefit of the LSTs and what is on them or is

it actually to get rid of any enemy?

It is to get rid of any possible enemy people in front of you, just to make sure that you are not going to get shot at before you get yourself on the beach.

09:30 Because generally you have to jump off and wade through water up to your waist before you get to the beach. Those big LSTs can't run right up to the beach so you jump off into the water so while you are holding everything up to stop getting wet you are pretty vulnerable, but that was the way you generally landed off those LSTs. There were smaller landing craft as well, running people right up onto the beach and the American Seabees had been detonating

10:00 and blowing up all these wooden barrages to make some beach available for landing craft and for barges to run up on, otherwise they couldn't get near the beach with all the wooden barricades that the Japanese had put on the waterfront. It is quite interesting, very spectacular. Out in the bay, beyond all the fleet of landing craft, LSTs, and an LST is a fairly

10:30 big ship in terms of tonnage, I suppose two or three thousand tons. Pretty big boat, huge doors at the front and a ramp they can run up on the beach and they have probably a hundred to a hundred and fifty vehicles on board plus a lot of troops,so they do carry an awful lot of people and equipment. But beyond all that lot of craft, all the landing ships and things there were frigates

11:00 a couple of navy frigates, the Warramunga or some name like that, the Shropshire was there and another cruiser, a heavy cruiser and they were shelling the place all the time but up shelling the hills beyond us. Those shells were going day and night for the first three days, almost non stop, all night long. Of course as I said we moved out to our camp and then the first thing we have to do is establish a roster and set up guards.

11:30 We had people on duty, the airmen, on a roster basis. Two hours on, four hours off so we would have about six guards around the camp and we had a couple of tents set aside for the guards to sleep in, for the off duty blokes and that is the way it worked through the night and there would be a duty sergeant would be in charge of the guards. You didn't go back to your own tent, you just slept in one of the guard tents so when your shift came around again they would tap

12:00 you on your shoulder, "It is your turn now," and you got up and went out. So that was the way it was organised. There was a lot of confusion and organisation, within the unit we knew what we were doing but within the whole lot I wouldn't have had a clue. It just seemed he is best served he who helps himself so we found ourselves a good camp site nobody told us to go there. We had a drive round and we said, "Yes I like that and we'll have that," and that is what we did.

12:30 **Come time for people to kind of call in the maintenance unit because they needed some help with something, they'd just…?**

We were only responsible for setting up the airport control tower and communications. We were not responsible for the actual operation of aircraft. The Airfield Construction Squadron, Number 5 were responsible for building the runway. As soon as they built the runway, which was just remove the debris, fill all the shell

13:00 holes, level the sand and compact it and lay Marsden matting, steel matting on it and the aeroplanes are away up and running. Dispersal bays were allocated to the squadrons that were going to operate. The first aircraft to come in were fighters, Spitfires. I think we had about twelve Spitfires, I don't know which squadron it was, I can't remember. 4 Squadron came with one flight of Boomerangs so there would have been six of them. They were to provide army

13:30 close support for the army and then the next squadron was the Dutch squadron, 18 Squadron. They had Mitchell B24 bombers, quite large aircraft. That was the basis of the aeroplanes to get operational. When you look at the fact we landed there early July, say the 3rd or 4th or whatever and it was up and running within a fortnight and then the war ended so

14:00 the air force didn't have to do a lot. Within the first week or so we did have a couple of air alerts, air raids, from obviously Japanese reconnaissance aircraft came over very late at night. One came over during the day. The Spitfires were scrambled but they didn't get it, didn't catch him, he was very, very high. The Japanese by that time had virtually run out of aeroplanes and supplies.

14:30 **Were you aware of that at the time?**

I think that we were aware that the Japanese had no aircraft, because Macarthur was up in the Philippines with all his armies and further north at Okinawa and those places and he was pushing on towards Japan, so the Borneo part of it as far as the Japanese were concerned, the ones that were left, they were left. There was nothing they could do, their supplies lines were cut.

15:00 **Was there much chat at the time the fact that Macarthur had buggered off to the Philippines and left the Australians to sort of mop up?**

Not at the time. Really there wasn't a lot of talk. We all thought we were doing something useful but in retrospect it really was a waste of men and money because it made no difference to the war as such had we gone there or not, except that it provided facilities to evacuate prisoners of war.

15:30 Balikpapan and I don't know about Labuan and Tarakan but Balikpapan became a very important staging post for the POWs [Prisoners of War] being evacuated because the aircraft, most of the aircraft to do that job at the time were DC3s, which didn't have the range. Like say like a Hercules today would carry three or four times the number and enough range to fly them back to Australia. The DC3s were struggling to get from Singapore to Balikpapan with

16:00 twenty or thirty POWs and a load of fuel. So it was I guess important in that sense that the facilities, the Australians occupying those places, because there was a big POW camp on Borneo, Sandakan and places like that and there were two or three other places. It did provide facilities that were indeed needed for evacuating POWs.

16:30 That went on for quite some time when the war ended.

I want to get to that in just a moment but I am wondering from a personal level, with the landing itself, was it kind of anxious or exciting, the landing with this fire going on over the top of you?

Quite exciting, I had never experienced anything like it before. It was like what I expected but

17:00 hearing those shells from the cruisers going over it was a new experience I must say, not exactly frightening. I don't know that I was ever in fear and trembling but you sort of worry a bit. I am glad I went there and saw it, it was an experience that I would not have had, had I not gone on that landing but

17:30 you are bit uneasy. Actually soon after we left Morotai the Japanese positions on the Halmahera, the islands quite close there, they shelled the convoy as we sailed out. To me that was rather more frightening than the landing at Balikpapan.

What happened there?

Well the Japanese still had quite large guns there and when they saw this convoy of ships leaving Balikpapan late in the afternoon they opened fire. I don't think they quite reached us but

18:00 we could hear it and see it, so when you are on an LST and someone is firing at you, you don't feel real happy about it.

You were a bit of a sitting duck.

But once we got past that, the convoy was escorted with, we had two or three naval frigates, escorts and we had aircraft patrols during the day so we were pretty well looked after from the air. But I don't think the Japanese by this time had any active submarines anyway but

18:30 the convoy was well escorted. It was a convoy of all sorts of vessels, a couple of air sea rescue launches were in the convoy. The Dutch, the Netherlands, NICA they were called, Netherlands Indies Civil Administration, they had a couple of boats. The old sort of tramp steamer things, all sorts of boats in the convoy because Balikpapan was a magnificent harbour and they could,

19:00 once the place was captured there were wharves there the ships could tie up to and discharge so we had, apart from the landing craft landing on the beach there were a lot of other vessels went in there.

How close did the shells get from the Halmaheras?

I don't know, I don't know.

With Balikpapan itself how long did the threat of the Japanese maybe lighting, damaging the oil refinery and letting go the oil

19:30 **hang over your head?**

Not for very long. Once the army landed and got into the hills they rounded up the Japs fairly quickly. I don't know where they imprisoned them originally because once the war ended and they put them at the Manga airstrip, there was a huge number of Japs but where the original Japanese prisoners of war camp were held I don't know but the army didn't take long to capture these guns that were firing

20:00 that were in tunnels in the mountains and hills at the back. Once they were gone the Japanese had nothing left then and I don't think they really wanted to fight anyway. I think it was more or less, "Let's get out of here fellows." It really settled down very quickly. Any hostilities it didn't last very long.

Did you see or I guess witness anything of or was there much of hatred of the Japanese

20:30 **around the time considering the atrocities that you had seen and heard about?**

Not directly amongst our people I don't think. I mean we didn't really like them much but we had the ones we had to bring back to the camp to work after the war I think we treated them fairly humanely. I think they were tougher on themselves than we were. They made each other lift pretty big logs and struggle away with them. We really didn't

21:00 brutalize them in any shape or form at all, no way. No, I think all we felt was a profound sense of relief

and, “Thank God it is all over,” more than anything. The time has come and that was it. I don’t now why I volunteered to go to Japan after the war. I think it was because I had got so used to the air force and a bit fearful

21:30 about what civilian life might be like. I think that might have been the basic motive for going to Japan. There was a chance, “Oh well I will go to Japan, I can stay in the air force for a while longer.” I think more than anything that was my motivation for contemplating going there.

That’s interesting, but once the war was over can you tell me I guess in detail what you saw of the dealings that you had with the POWs that came to Balikpapan?

22:00 Well we didn’t have, we helped them off the aircraft, those that couldn’t walk or were frail or infirm. We certainly helped them off the aircraft. We had a tent set up with tables and seats for them and we got them into that. The Red Cross were there in numbers, Lady and Lord Mountbatten spent a lot of time there. Quite a number of women from the international Red Cross turned up to help with them. They

22:30 had to get details of where they were from, what they were suffering and what their medical condition was. They were only a basic, they weren’t a detailed examination. It was more or less to decide, “Okay, we have got this group of people, where can we take them to in Australia?” Because they were flying them out as at that time there was no organised ships to return people to Australia, later on there were but just immediately at the end of the war when all the POWs were being brought back, the thing

23:00 was to expedite their return as quickly as possible. And that was basically what it was, it was just a transit place. They would be at Balikpapan and those in urgent need of medical attention would be taken to the field hospital, those that could be safely put on an aircraft and then transported home were, because it is a long flight from there home. Particularly in those sort of aircraft, DC3s, they are pretty slow. It would be a day and a bit or two days to get back to

23:30 anywhere on the mainland beyond Darwin really.

I mean what did you think when you first saw the POWs land?

I felt terribly sorry for them. They were in pitiful shape. I guess we were glad to think that at least it was over and they were coming home but it

24:00 was pitiful to see them. To think those fellows had been, a lot of them had been in captivity for 5 years from 1941, from the fall of Singapore. I guess a lot of them had already given up hope of ever getting back to Australia. There were different stories but a lot of effort went then to getting them back as quickly as possible because they had virtually nothing. They didn’t have anything, they didn’t have their kit bag and at least when we went there

24:30 we had our shaving gear, we had our kit bag, we had our clothes and shoes and boots, those fellows had nothing.

Was there any of them that were really ill?

Yes, quite a lot of stretcher cases, oh yes, quite a number. Well we didn’t see them. The ambulance would be there and there would be perhaps four people put into the ambulance and carted away down to the field hospital then those who could walk or stagger

25:00 would be unloaded. Generally each aircraft would have three or four stretcher cases at least. The others were at least walking and able to move but in pretty bad condition.

Do you think all of them realised what was happening in terms of…?

I am sure they did. I am sure they knew the war was over and that they were on their way home and they were only too pleased to be looking at people who weren’t Japanese I think.

25:30 See that went on for quite a few weeks from when the war ended. It takes some time to, it is such a widespread area where they were held captive and to round them up and bring them back to one place. Balikpapan was, I don’t know what happened at Tarakan and Labuan but I expect that Balikpapan probably saw more transit through there than the other places because they were a bit out of the way going further north. Balikpapan was down to the southern end of Borneo.

26:00 It was more or less on the track down through Java or whichever track they were going to fly down from the top of New Guinea and down to Australia.

Did you get to talk to any of those fellows?

I had a word with a few, but I don’t recall much about what we talked about. You say, “G’day, how are you?” And more or less organise them to help them to get to the table and sit down and have a cup of tea and that sort of thing but didn’t talk in any detailed way with them.

26:30 No, there were a lot of people from the Red Cross and people like that getting down to the personal details and talking with them and we kept out of the way of that. We were just more or less just helping them from the aircraft and that version of a transit lounge. I mean a transit lounge today you could spend time in quite happily but the transit lounge that we had an hour or so was enough in there but that is all it was. It was

27:00 somewhere where we could sit them down and the other people would talk with them and organise from there on where to go and how.

Now you mentioned a couple of times the fact that you got the news that the war was over then it wasn't and then it was,

27:30 **what was that about? Why would you get conflicting?**

I don't know precisely why. I don't think the Japanese knew themselves. I think in Japan at Hiroshima when the atom bomb dropped, Tojo - Hirohito was the Emperor - Tojo was the commander and whether there was a conflict between them as to whether they wanted to fight on or not I do not know. But the word would be around the camp and

28:00 it would come over, we would get in contact with somebody, "The war is over; it is finished." The next day there would be a signal or a message that would say, "It is not over, they haven't capitulated, it is still on," and this went on for quite a few days. I couldn't say what was the defining day when the war indeed did end. It is not as funny as it sounds.

28:30 I think in the scheme of things the allies had dropped one bomb on Nagasaki, a smallish atom bomb that frightened him and then the big one was dropped on Hiroshima, which really brought home to them. In fact after the first one was dropped there were some Japanese wanted to stop the war there and then but a couple of days later Enola Gay or whatever her name was dropped the big one on Hiroshima and

29:00 that really, that was the thing that stopped the war instantly. Or when I say instantly whether who had to decide, whether it was Hirohito or which Japanese person who said, "Okay, enough is enough, it is over," I don't know. History probably tells you something about it but that was the thing. Where we were we were not sure whether it was over or not.

Did you have any idea of what the atom bomb

29:30 **was or the scale of it?**

No, not really. We saw the aircraft, that Enola Gay that got all the publicity, that was at Morotai. There were a lot of those Super Fortresses at Morotai and I have no doubt that others were used in some of those raids. Whether they actually flew from Morotai on that raid I do not know. I have a feeling they would have certainly flown from one of the northern Philippine

30:00 islands rather than from Morotai, but the aircraft themselves were at Morotai at one stage of that phase of the battle.

Now Jack we haven't talked very much about mateship, I mean did you make some good mates?

I made good friends with a lot of people. I kept in contact with some for a period after the war but

30:30 then in this job that I chose in Civil Aviation where I went to Darwin and to Sydney and then I was in the country and then I went to Norfolk. I not entirely lost contact with them but gradually they have gone their path and I have gone mine. We are aware of each other, people that I started work with in Civil Aviation, ex air force people

31:00 that I knew of then, they were in New South Wales and when in my job I came from Queensland and went to Cairns I gradually lost touch with a lot of them. I hear infrequently from them but that is the course of events. I went down for the Centenary of Flight in November, the Civil Aviation in Essendon had an open day at their museum. My nephew used to fly for Singapore Airlines, he has got a Cessna 180 and

31:30 any excuse to go flying he grabs so Peter and I flew down to Holbrook and we picked up Christopher, my youngest son, at Holbrook – he has a hangar and an aircraft at Holbrook – and we went down to Melbourne to this open day. They were mainly technical people and flying unit people in Civil Aviation that were involved in the Museum. The air traffic controllers there is a few of them in flight service but basically there is the

32:00 radio people, the nav [navigation] aids and the flying unit people and our pilots and air crews that used to do all the calibration and the checking of nav aids. I went there and I was talking to different ones and I met people there I hadn't seen for thirty years. I had completely forgotten their names they said, "I know you, you were at Coffs Harbour but didn't you go to Cairns?" I said, "Yes I was at Coffs Harbour and Cairns." "Oh right," they are trying to relate my career with

32:30 what they were. These flying blokes go all over Australia so they meet the local technical staff wherever they go and they do the calibration of the radio range and the DME and they are generally with us for three or four days and we generally go and have a fly with them. But when we get back at Melbourne and all these people were in civvies and not in their uniforms and I had a struggle remembering them but I knew most of them.

33:00 But it was a worthwhile visit, I enjoyed it very much. We had a barbecue and a sausage sizzle there and it was a good day catching up on people who have become part of history almost. Similarly with the air

force now, the squadron did have some reunions. I went to a couple in Sydney just after the war because at that time there was still a number of 5 Squadron people in Sydney but over the years the numbers diminished. Some came to Queensland, some died, some went elsewhere.

33:30 Now the 5 Squadron Association, down at Temora, David Lowey from Lowey's, the millionaire from the shopping thing, David has started an air force museum there and he has a Wirraway in the hangar restored and it is flying and it is done with the 5 Squadron colours. It is BF, it's on my cap, Bravo, Foxtrot, something Hotel say and

34:00 that is in the hangar there. And they had a fly in there when Peter was down there in October and the 5 Squadron Association were having a reunion there that day and I said to Peter, "Well go and talk to them," but in the event he was talking to so many other people he didn't catch up with the 5 Squadron. But that is really the only contact left. There wouldn't be more than a handful of people left now. Don Knudsen, the fellow who lived in Slope Street near Maroubra Junction, he was a pilot in 5 Squadron, he is still there.

34:30 He was down at Temora that day so there is still a few around.

What was it like for you Jack putting your feet back on Aussie soil again for the first time after?

Back to Australia?

Yeah, after the war?

It was strange. We had an interesting trip home. We came home on the Manoora. It had been one of the Adelaide Steamship Company and it used to sail the southern ports and Cairns. There is a suburb of Cairns now named Manoora or Mununda, but anyway

35:00 the Manoora was the ship we came home on, mainly army blokes, quite a few air force. We came down through all the Indonesian Islands, active volcanoes out in the ocean things, through the Torres Straight and down inside the reef. And when we got to Daydream Island before it was the resort place, the skipper pulled up the ship and they had landing barges on it instead of life boats and put the barges in the water and we all went ashore and had a day on Daydream Island,

35:30 before it became fashionable. It was fabulous so then after that episode we continued onto Brisbane and got up into the town, the city of Brisbane. I don't know which wharf it was but right in town and we got off the ship and we all had to line up and march through Queen Street through the city. I don't know whether they put us on trucks or whether we got a train but anyway we got out to Sandgate.

36:00 It was an embarkation depot so we had a few nights at Sandgate and then they split up the army and air force people into different groups and eventually there was a group of air force people. I was put on a train and went down to Sydney and out to Bradfield Park, which is the embarkation depot, well by this time it was a disembarkation depot I suppose and that was it.

36:30 Civil life was a bit daunting in a way, it was going to be something new. It was rather hard to accept that, "Okay, it is over and we go back to being civilians." I would have much rather stayed in the air force in a way when it came. When I was out you thought, "What do I do now?" It really was,

37:00 it was a strange feeling. I think I was lucky that this job at DCA turned up because it had comprised nearly all ex air force people of my vintage and people that were doing the same job, something that I had known for years and it was without being in the air force it was the closest thing to it all over again. All our staff, our regional director, Arthur Doubleday, and Mike Seymour in Queensland, they were all pilots, they were all people from

37:30 the air force so it was like the air force but not in uniform.

Before that job came up Jack what did you do I guess to get put aside or cope with that feeling of having to face civvie street?

It was odd. See being a civilian wasn't much fun in those immediate post war years. It was severe rationing and you couldn't go and buy clothes. You had to have ration coupons to buy a singlet and underpants or a

38:00 pair of pants, shirts or whatever. If you had a car, if you ever dreamt in a life you would have a car you couldn't use it because there was no petrol. You had to have ration tickets and they comprised a miserly allowance of ration tickets to get a car. The whole world as you knew it five years ago wasn't the same any more.

38:30 You had grown up in a different area and just to sort of negotiate to find your way back again as a civilian was different. You were just one of the mob. You could have been a mob of sheep in the paddock and you were one of them. In the air force you had some identify and suddenly you didn't. It was odd, really odd.

39:00 That sort of thing, that feeling I think generally we all felt that, that continued on for probably a few months. Normality gradually set in but it did take awhile. It was strange. Probably as nearly as strange as when you first enlisted. It was a different world, different scene, different sort of life style.

39:30 We had to get used to things that we had completely forgotten. Everything was rationed and it was just quite extraordinary. Sugar was rationed. I remember Mother, it was a different world and cars, there hadn't been a new car in Sydney. I had bought a second hand Vauxhall from a fellow at De Havillands. He had been an engineer out here designing and building Mosquito bombers out in Bankstown or

40:00 wherever they built them. He brought his little car with him, an English car, a pre war Vauxhall Wyver and he was going back to England and had to sell his car, so I bought it. It cost me, I had a fair bit of deferred pay, I think it cost me about £300 and I had that in cash so I bought his car from him I think for about £300. But then you couldn't go very far in it because there was only a few petrol rations coupons available.

40:30 **At least you were prepared?**

Gradually rationing eased off. See even in those days when we had to go to the country to do maintenance the Civil Aviation Department had some old wartime vehicles, the Ford and Dodge and different vehicles. To go down to say Canberra and Yass I would have to go to my District Superintendent, who lived in the control tower, terminal building at Mascot, Major Mann, was the district superintendent. You would tell the

41:01 Major where you were going, for how long and why and what you wanted to do and what you were going to do and you had to calculate how many miles you were going to do and how many miles per gallon the vehicle would do and he would pull out the ration coupons and give you. So if I was in the Ford V8 Ute, I forget how many tickets I had but I know when I got to Moss Vale or Bowral there was a long down hill stretch the engine was switched off and you coasted all the way.

41:30 So he would calculate the precise number of tickets to get you down there to do your job and get back so if you could save a couple of petrol ration coupons, when you got home it meant you could drive your car a little bit further. We all did that, we got very expert at coasting down hills.

Okay Jack, we've actually got a few seconds left so we'll finish there. We're actually about to run out of tape, thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS