Australians at War Film Archive

Richard Winn (Dick) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 4th March 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1508

Tape 1

00:41 **Well thanks Doctor Winn for talking to us today. The first thing I'm going to ask you to do is just give a brief summary of your life from birth till now.**

Well I was born in, on the twenty-second of February 1921

01:00 in England. To explain that, my father was Australian, he was an Australian medical officer in the First World War on Gallipoli and France and he was awarded the Military Cross there. And he lost a leg in the fighting and so while he was recuperating

01:30 in England, he met my mother and they were married in January 1918. And so they came back to Australia where my sister was born and they went back to England again for study and treatment and I happened to be born over there. And my sister says that she was conceived in England and born in Australia, while I was conceived in

02:00 Australia and born in England. So I'm strictly a Pommy [Englishman], but the only dissension occurred at test cricket times when my father would barrack for the Australian test cricket team and my mother would barrack for the English and I wasn't sure who to barrack for.

And just, if you could explain where you grew up and where you went to school and just continue on with your life in a summary?

02:30 Well my first recollections, my father was a general practitioner at Bellevue Hill on the tram line. And what we, I remember a Mr Knee, he was our gardener, we had a gardener at that stage and he was always interesting to me because I used to talk to him a lot. And he was a tram conductor, that meant he was, took tickets on the, had money and had to give change while he was standing on the outside running board

03:00 trying to hang on with the other arm, so if it was raining of course he got wet. There was a tram strike on and he was not reinstated so he took up mowing the lawns and things like that.

If you could just say very briefly, just say, I went to school here, I then, when I left...

Oh right, I'm too detailed.

That's

03:30 **okay, we can go back and do detail later.**

Oh, right.

So if it's just the main points of your life, then we'll go back in detail.

Oh right. Well he was, my father was in Birriga Road, Rose Bay and he decided he'd like to do, give up general practitioner and go into the city as a specialist. And that stage we had the Great Depression struck so that affected everything and

04:00 we moved from there to a rented house in Vaucluse. And there, I might add, back in Birriga Road where we used to live, I used to go down to the beach and on my push bike. I went to Cranbrook School in Bellevue Hill, was a bad dyslexic and had lots of trouble, and then we went to, shifted to Vaucluse and

04:30 I became a choirboy there and sang in the church choir and then I don't think anything... From there, I wasn't very good at school but I got the minor grades and, in study, and couldn't, because of my dyslexia I was very unsatisfactory as a reader

05:00 so I got into a spot of bother about that. And then from there in my final year of school I, while I was at school I used to play games and sports and things like that and football, you know, not soccer, rugby football. And I wasn't any good at cricket, so I used to do swimming, diving and in the cadets and things

like that, and the

05:30 shooting. And from there I wanted to get into the air force but it was nearly impossible to get into the air force in those days so I had to wait and my mother got me to, talked me into doing aeronautical engineering because that would be, my, I'd get, still be associated with aeroplanes. Any rate, lot of effort, I finally got myself in 1939,

06:00 I finally got myself matriculated to Sydney University as an engineering, aeronautical engineering one. That was in 19-, beginning of 1940, and then the, about half way through 1940 with the problems in Europe, I decided I wanted to enlist in the air force. My

06:30 mother didn't want it, my father said it was my decision and then we, I finally was, had an interview and, at Woolloomooloo, and a medical, and lo and behold the interviewing officer was from next, my next door neighbour. Then from there I finally got into the air force on the third of March, 1941 and did a whole lot of training in

07:00 Sydney, Narromine then overseas in Canada. And from there over to UK [United Kingdom]and then from there out through to the middle east, Sierra Leone and Nigeria and then across, we were being transported to the fighting in the Middle East, and up to Khartoum, Cairo, waited around there and finally got into

07:30 a conversion unit, cause I was flying Spitfires in England. And then the conversion unit, we were converted to Kittyhawks, and then from there we, I was posted to 457, ah, 450 Squadron to Kittyhawk Squadron in the desert with Three Squadron. And lo' and behold, who should be the commanding officer of 450 Squadron, was my brother in law's brother, so I knew him already.

08:00 Any rate, from there we went on operations cause the terrific upheaval in the Middle East and Churchill had to come and straighten it out. And Montgomery was appointed and then we got into operations, Battle of Alam…. el Halfa first and then the Battle of Alamein. And then after that we had to, we were advancing with the Eighth Army and we advanced all the way to Tripoli, that's over a thousand miles,

08:30 and so there was a lot of leapfrogging. And then from there on my ninety-second operational trip, sortie or mission as the Americans call it, I was hit by ground fire, but we had been hit before, and had to crash land. And from there I was a prisoner up through Tunis with the Italians and then the Germans took me over somehow or other and I went to Naples.

09:00 And then from there up to Rome and then to Germany and to the Dulag Luft interrogation camp, which was a bit of a problem. And from there to another camp is, Oflag Twenty-one B in Germany, it was in Poland, but it was a German camp. And then just the famous Stalag Luft Three, where the 'Great Escape' occurred and where the fifty people were shot and then there were tunnels to

09:30 be dug, I only assisted at those. And then we, when the Russians got closer they evacuated us, so we had this long march from Luft Three to a place called Stemberg. And then in cattle trucks, packed in like sardines, we went to, between Bremen and Hamburg and saw the, our air force going over the top of us the, into Germany. And from there

10:00 we were moved again, we had to march all the time of course, there was no transportation and it was mostly outside in the weather. And then we were released at, outside Lubec, at that was magnificent and we went, we were taken to Brussels where I'm afraid most of the population of Brussels was celebrating because it was VE Day [Victory in Europe], and so I celebrated

10:30 too, we got into a spot of bother there. And from there we were flown to England on Lancasters, and then of course from there, had leave in England at a wonderful place in Scotland and from there we went, got on the E-boats to come home to Australia. So, and then after that, do you want me to go on to that? After that, I didn't know what I wanted to do, whether I'd continue with the aeronautical engineering,

11:00 or whether I would do something else. Hearing talks by former aeronautical engineers, I didn't think that I would be much good at it and it was, you had to be in a big factory and under the control of other people all the time. So I thought well maybe I'll go have a commercial job, and so I went to Coles at

11:30 Liverpool Street, Sydney and it was, that was nothing under two and six shop and I was in the men's department. I couldn't add up the, how much things were, in those days you didn't have adding machines or anything like that, you had to do it in your head. So from there I didn't think I ought to be a counter jumper so I tried a job at DeHavilland Aircraft and we all, they went on

12:00 strike, so did I, so then I decided I'd take, I had an idea I wanted to do and decided to go into medicine. So that was, I went to, straight through medicine and when I graduated I was made junior resident of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. And I should say that one thing during the course of the medical degree that was

12:30 terribly upsetting was the first time that we had to attend a post-mortem examination, any rate I got through. And terrific relief the, my wife Helen she married me in final year, she had more faith in me than I had myself, she was a beautiful nurse from North Shore Hospital of course. Well after the

13:00 junior resident medical year at Prince Alfred, I wanted to, I thought I'd be, I'd like to be an obstetrician looking after mothers and babies. And I did a term at Crown Street hospital and I felt I wasn't, didn't have the charisma to be an obstetrician. And so I had also thought before of

13:30 being, going to eye, an eye specialist, ophthalmologist. And one day this registrar from, he was from Prince Alfred doing eyes, he spoke to me about that he was leaving, so I applied and got the job under some peculiar circumstances and it was the most trying part of my whole life. I had to get eyes for corneal grafting so I had to go

14:00 through all that with administrative health in Sydney. After that I became a, graduated there and became an ophthalmic surgeon on various hospitals and continued with that.

Well thank you very much. What I'm now gonna do is go back and talk in detail about your childhood in particular. So I want to ask you first of all if you could tell me a little bit about your parents?

14:30 Well my father was, he as a, they, his family were Methodists, very strict Methodists and his father was president of the Temperance Alliance in Sydney, that's no alcohol. And he was known in the press as 'Wowser Winn' so it was a bit of a problem, so my father had to get up in church when he was seven years of age and swear he'd never touch alcohol.

15:00 His mother wanted him to become a missionary, but he decided that he'd be more use as a medical missionary. So he went from school in Sydney Grammar School to Sydney University and studied medicine. Well in the last year of medicine, the superintendent of, sorry, when he

15:30 finished the medical course he went to Prince Alfred hospital and the superintendent didn't want him to go over, as a war, because that's what he decided he wanted to do. So he went over as, joined the Australian Army Medical Corps, and went to Gallipoli where he served in the Fourteenth Battalion. And from there, I remember he used to say, that he was in, on Gallipoli, they were in dug outs and there was lice

16:00 and on your body and there was cold, was snow on the ground in winter and it was hot on the other times. And he used to look across the bay towards the battle ships out in the port and imagining what they were doing. They were having beautiful meals and sherry before and drinks afterwards, and they'd sleep between sheets

16:30 and they had all sorts of benefits. Any rate they evacuated from Gallipoli and my father was sent to France and that's when he was in the 4th Field Ambulance in the Australian Army. And in the area of the Somme and then at the battle of Messines where he lost his right leg, lower part of it.

17:00 And he was awarded a Military Cross, he had to go to Buckingham Palace to get it from the King. And then while recuperating, as I said before, he met my mother. She was born in Norfolk and her father was a carriage builder who had been born in America, so he was an American but his family came

17:30 to UK and he started a carriage business and had a garage. And so my mother, during the war, worked as a supervisor in an armaments factory, and I remember on the wall afterwards at home there were, she had two illuminated addresses from the staff, that I'd never seen before. So she met my father while he was convalescing and

18:00 they got married in January 1918, now I never got any more information out of them than that. And then as I said we went to Australia and I wasn't there, born at that stage, the family went to Australia, that's my father and mother, and that's where the, my sister was born, but she was two years older than I was. And then as I said, we went back to England for the

18:30 further study and treatment. My father, I think, he must have had post traumatic stress disorder because as a medical officer in the First World War, the medical officer would see all the terrible casualties, and so how he coped with that, I don't know. So I think really that's what happened to him and

19:00 when he went back to UK after being in Australia for that short time, he had psychoanalysis with a Doctor Rickard. It was the early days of psychoanalysis and he had two years of psychoanalysis and helped him an awful lot, and he was relatively all right after

19:30 that. So when he came back to Australia, where I happened to be born, he went into general practice and he was also honorary position on Sydney hospital, where honorary in those days meant you weren't paid. And from there I can remember we used to go every

20:00 Saturday over to our, my grandparents' place at Kirribilli where we had every Saturday we had a chicken, roast chicken, which I thought was marvellous because we never had it at home. And we had one at Christmas but never during that time, cause my grandfather he had started a Winn's Limited stores in the Sydney, after they'd been

20:30 started in Newcastle. And so he was a very down market draper as they called them in those days. And but he used to have these sales, damaged goods and Winn's was at the lowest end of the market. And so there's a story once where he'd advertised these damaged sheets, fire damaged sheets

21:00 and there were lots of people came into the store to buy them and there were so many people that they ran out of all the damaged sheets. So the staff came to him and said, “Look we’ve run out of all our damaged sheets,” and he promptly got up and went down to the store and pulled out all these new sheets and jumped on them and trod on them with his shoes and sent them back and sold them too. I can remember him

21:30 saying what he used to do, he could borrow money from the bank at five per cent interest and he could sell at seven per cent profit, so that was the way he did business. He was a pretty gruff old chap, that had a white beard that prickled you when he kissed you but I could get round him all right, so he was really a very interesting old chap. He had been, at one stage, I couldn’t work it out

22:00 when, that was a fair while ago, it wasn’t, that was before my father was born, and they went and did a trip round the world. And we only knew that by seeing photographs, the, they were at Niagara Falls for some reason I don’t know, and they also in Venice and went to China. And course they brought back some great big jars that, bit like Ali

22:30 Baba jars, I always wanted to play in them but I was not allowed to. So...

Do you have a memory of your grandmother?

Yes, my grandmother, she was, her name before marriage was Shade and her name, her mother was Sofia Cameron. They came with their father,

23:00 the whole family from, Donald Cameron was the father, they came out from Ardnamurchan in Scotland on an assisted passage, the whole family. And it was a bit peculiar because to get the special low cost fare, they had to be all under forty years of age, well that meant that Donald Cameron had his first child when he was about three. And they all came to Australia

23:30 and they went to work for the Australian Agricultural Company that sold a huge tract of land north of Newcastle. He, we visited his grave and on it there it says he had over a hundred descendants when he died. He married more than once, as you might appreciate.

And what was my grandmother like to you?

Well I didn’t know, but she was

24:00 usually when we saw her she was very quiet and very... I really didn’t get to know her very much as a small boy, an exuberant, difficult small boy. So she was a nice old lady, but she lived to, in the nineties and so I really didn’t get to know her that

24:30 well.

You mentioned before that your father’s father was in the Temperance Society, what did you know about that as a child?

Well at the time I didn’t know anything about it, I only learned from my father when he was telling me about having to swear he wouldn’t touch, drink alcohol in the church, and he mentioned then that, about my grandfather.

Was your family, well your parents

25:00 **and you and your sister, were you religious?**

My father wasn’t, that might have been a reaction I suppose, but, after the war. But my mother was Church of England and she believed in the Church of England, the British Empire, honesty, hard work, and the normal Protestant ethic. And she was a lively sort of person, she used to play the

25:30 piano, we’d have sing songs, because there was no television in those days and we seldom ever went to the pictures. And...

Do you remember what else you did as a child?

Well, did I mention about being in the choir.

You did, if you could tell me a bit more about that?

Oh, well my mother, this is at Vaucluse, and my mother was interested in the church, she used to go every Sunday. And

26:00 before that my sister thought she’d like to learn the piano, so she started and I thought I’d learn the piano too but I was so hopeless, I gave it up, but I liked the music. And when my mother suggested I might go to the choir which St Michael’s Vaucluse, it was about fifty metres down the road from where we were in Gilliver Avenue, she talked me into becoming a choir boy, in St Michael’s. That’s of course the

26:30 boy sopranos we were, and I really enjoyed it but I never let on. And the, I think the crowning part of the, that, when I became the head choir boy at one stage and I, they wanted me to sing the Mendelsohn’s anthem, Hear My Prayer and Oh For the Wings of a Dove. I did the Hear My Prayer in the

morning

27:00 and Oh For the Wings of a Dove for evening prayer, and I really enjoyed it. I still enjoy the, that music but I also very keen on Tchaikovsky music, Swan Lake of course, as well, and that was later.

You mentioned your father was getting treatment which you believe may have been for post traumatic stress, did he talk to you about the war when you growing up?

27:30 No, that was the peculiar thing, I used to try and quiz him about it and why he got the Military Cross and all he'd say to me about it was that other people deserved it more than him. So I really, that's, he really never spoke about it. We used to occasionally go to Anzac Day march but as he had a wooden leg he couldn't march. So he used to talk to

28:00 all his old buddies and then when they marched off, we'd go home.

Were there any signs for you of how the war had affected him?

Only the wooden leg, I didn't sort of think of anything else, there was just that he had the wooden leg. And it was most peculiar when we went to the beach, he had to take the wooden leg off and then he'd have to hop down the beach and go for a swim. He, because he had

28:30 this wooden leg, it altered his whole life of course, he couldn't do lots of activities, and so he was keen on fishing out of a boat. He used to take us for a row and you know, pulling boat, he called it, we'd hire them, it was a rowing boat and we'd hire them from the boat sheds of Rose Bay and Double Bay and Watsons Bay and he'd row out and to get his exercise he said and

29:00 then he'd come back. And so swimming, boating and fishing were his activities, he couldn't do any of the others. There's a funny story about this, actually, because in 1929 there is this terrific Depression in the States and it affected our family later, it didn't get to Australia until I suppose in the thirties and that was the

29:30 time when we had to move from Birriga Road to Vaucluse. But at this, and we had to let, we had servants there at Birriga Road and we had a nanny who came from England and had no family in Australia so she got her family to come out over the years. But with the Great Depression,

30:00 a lot of the snooty clubs in Sydney, obviously, were having a spot of bother so the Royal Sydney Golf Club wrote to my father to say would he like to join the club, and before that you had to get on a long waiting list. Any rate it was a hell of a joke, because he couldn't play golf anyway.

What did his wooden leg look like, how was it attached?

Well it was,

30:30 they changed, but it was about that long and it, he pulled it, he had a stump here, it was the lower part of his leg that was, he'd lost and this was a stump. And the thing pulled on like that and there was a, it had a thing to tighten up round here, so it went from here down like that. It had a bit of movement in the toe so when he had it on he had a bit of a limp but it wasn't

31:00 that noticeable for when you got, we were all used to it of course.

The movement in the toe, how was...?

It was like, there was a bit of that movement in his wooden leg.

Was that because the way it was built?

The way it was constructed, it was, there was a sort of a hinge-like thing here so it could move a little bit.

And he was a doctor at this time, he was a GP [general practitioner], is that correct, when you were at Birriga?

In the war?

No at, when you were at Birriga Road.

Oh he was a

31:30 GP at Birriga Road. And of course we had all sorts of patients coming in and that intrigued me of course. He practised in the house at that stage and so he had all sorts of calls during the night and we got used to all that, we all got used to it. And the...

What was the house like?

Well it was on the tram line, it was

32:00 a single-storey blue brick house. The, our neighbours were interesting I thought, the neighbour behind us, the Walker family, and they had a tennis court which of course we didn't have one. And we used to,

there were girls and a boy, Bruce and the two girls, and the girls were about, one of them was my sister's age, so she was invited to play tennis some times. I wanted to play tennis,

32:30 but I was never asked. But we had, there was a tragedy there, the, Bruce Walker he joined the air force and was killed in the war and his father committed suicide on, at The Gap. Another neighbour was a bookmaker and I was always intrigued because his house was

33:00 always being broken into. And the other few things that interested me at that time were, there was a chap called Maddox who murdered somebody, and he was hung, and I think that, I was amazed at that.

What do you remember about that, was that something you heard about or...?

Oh yes, it was, they were talking about it. As I was dyslexic, my reading ability was

33:30 very poor and I was, didn't read anything until I was about thirteen years of age, when in desperation, I used to watch, look at the magazines and books, I'd look at the pictures and try to work out what was written underneath the, in the caption. But at about thirteen years of age my mother was so, I had all sorts of coaching to try and get me to learn but

34:00 finally she got so upset about it she bought a book called Tarzan of the Apes, it was by Edgar Rice Burrows. And we were, at that stage, on the radio, there was no television, the radio, we'd listen to these serials on the radio and one of them around that time was about Tarzan, so I was particularly interested

34:30 in this. And so when she gave me this book there were no pictures you see, and I thought well I wanted to find out what's going to happen to Tarzan. So the first couple of pages I could only get the odd word here and there, but by the time I got to the end of the book I could get I suppose fifty per cent of the words, so that was a great help. I still didn't read anything though, that's why I was dreadful in

35:00 history, not very good in English and I remember I got nine out of a hundred for Latin once and they just reckoned I ought to give it up and I agreed, but I wasn't bothered, there was another bloke who, I think he got seven out of a hundred. Although I was pretty dreadful I was never bottom in anything, but I was, of course, never top of anything.

Did you, did your mother know or did you know that you had

35:30 **dyslexia, did you know what the reasons were?**

No, in those days the word didn't exist as far... and it was only later, recent times that they've coined that phrase. They just thought I was lazy or difficult and that's why I had to have these, this coaching. In fact one of the women, woman coach she wanted us,

36:00 said I should learn Latin because it was a good discipline for English, I couldn't agree actually.

For you as a child having difficulty reading, do you remember what that felt like?

Well it was a problem because at school of course, in those days there was physical punishment so I used to get the ruler a fair... in that junior school.

36:30 In the senior school the only reason for getting corporal punishment was if you did something other than that type of thing. And I can remember once, I was rather exuberant as a child and pretty active and I can remember at one stage running on the desks from one corner of the room to the other, and unfortunately the headmaster came in just as I leaped down from the last

37:00 desk, so he was a bit annoyed and I got the cane then, for that.

How many strikes did you get?

Strikes? I think I got two there, the maximum that was dished out was six but I never got more than two.

Where did they hit you?

On the backside. And it was pretty severe, because although the cane hit you on the backside, there was part of it that,

37:30 that would come over like that and hit you on the leg and you'd get bruises from that, I'm sure they wouldn't countenance these days. But I really don't think it did me any harm.

What school did you go to?

Cranbrook School at Bellevue Hill.

Did you go to Cranbrook all the way through your schooling?

No, early when I was, I went to kindergarten at a place called Quambah, which is a,

38:00 was a girls' sort of school, and they had boys in kindergarten. Funny there, while I was there my sister was there as well and there was a girl bully there who used to threaten to put people down a coal hole.

But I also remember another girl and it was interesting because that was the first time I

38:30 got interested in girls, so any rate from there I went to Cranbrook.

And what was...?

Haven't messed this up have I?

No, you're okay. And what was Cranbrook like when you first arrived, can you remember arriving at school there?

Yes it was, it used to be the residence

39:00 of the Government House at one stage, so it was stone buildings and a drive, a bit imposing. And of course I went to the junior school called Harvey House, and that was a bit separate from the other school, was probably a good idea. Another thing I remember about that was at that age I went through, had a bit of aggressive streak in me and I can remember picking

39:30 a fight with a boy called Cox and he punched me on the nose and after that I never picked a fight ever again.

Were you frustrated by your inability to read?

Well not really, because I was so interested in everything else, the, all the other things I was interested in, just not... So history,

40:00 I didn't read any history at all so for that I was getting about twenty per cent for that, and wasn't till later that I got terribly interested in history, actually in prison camp.

So what was it that you were interested in?

At school? Model aeroplanes, fishing, I was mad keen on the air force and planes and I used to get magazines and

40:30 I couldn't read a lot of the part. But, and I also used to get, one of the magazines was The Aeroplane and Flight and there were other magazines that I was interested in, I can't remember, they'd be even more about flying. And I always wanted to be a fighter pilot, it wasn't to shoot anybody but to shoot the planes down, and that stayed with me

41:00 funnily enough.

We're just gonna have to change the tape, so...

Tape 2

00:42 **Okay, we were talking about your love of model aeroplanes and so forth, could you tell me a bit about where that love came from?**

Oh I don't, no idea really. I remember as a very small child

01:00 making a thing, a very small model of an aeroplane with a, nails through and a propeller that I'd made. And you, we used to hold out the, when we're going along on the car, I'd hold it out the window and the propeller'd go round, and, but nowadays you're not allowed to put anything out the window. We went to, used to go to, there were air pageants they had and

01:30 we'd go out and see the planes then and from then on I got very keen on the... They, I also, the model planes in those days were not the plastic pre-made planes that they, you can buy in a hobby shop now that you glue it, you glue the plastic together and it's a very good model of a plane. In our

02:00 day, you had to make your own model planes and what that was, you had to get a piece of balsa wood, you just had to make it out of balsa wood you could buy. And there was this balsa wood and one end you'd have a propeller that you carved and the other end would be the tail plane, and between that and the propeller you had a lot of rubber,

02:30 it was not a rubber band but a lot of rubber... To get the plane to fly, you had to wind back the propeller, backwards like this until you, and you wound up all this rubber. But of course, see, as the rubber was wound up it was pulling more and more, so if you went a bit too far the whole thing'd collapse so you had to be very careful about that. So after you got it wound up you'd hold the model plane in this hand and

03:00 the propeller with this hand and then go like that, and if you got all the calculations right and got the wing in the right place, it'd fly off and come in to land, you'd put some wheels on it on a wire and wheels on the end. But I suppose sixty per cent of the time it'd crash. Sometimes it'd break up and you'd have to repeat, repair it, other times it'd be all right.

03:30 But talking about that, the last plane, model plane I ever made, this was later when I was a bit older, I saved up and bought a newfangled thing with a tiny little petrol motor that you could put in a plane so this took a long while to build this plane with this engine in it. One of the problems there of course was to start this little engine, there was no self start, you had to do the same procedure as you did on the rubber

04:00 driven planes. But you didn't try to get it backwards, you had to try and make the engine go forwards and you had to flick the propeller to do it. And unfortunately you had to be terribly quick in getting your finger away, because once the engine started it would come back and give you a terrific wallop on your finger. Well this day, one day it was the day I was gonna fly it, my father and I and I think my brother we all went out to Box Hill, on the old Windsor Road. There was quite open

04:30 there and no houses or any, it was open land and you could fly aeroplanes there, so I was terribly excited. And I got this thing up and there was no air controls like they have now, no radio controlled planes. And I started the engine and off it went and it was climbing away but it was climbing too steeply and off, that of course was

05:00 impossible in the end, so it stalled, went down and crashed and was all, broke up. I thought I'd make it, repair it but I never did.

You mentioned earlier air shows, where were they held?

Well they were held at Mascot. The only aerodrome around Sydney was at Mascot, this was a grass field there, there was no runways. And

05:30 the various people like Kingsford-Smith when he flew across the Pacific, he came in to, the, that aerodrome, it wasn't terribly big. And I can remember having a flight in his plane because they used to take, to pay for their aeroplanes they, and

06:00 their income, they used to, on a Saturday or a Sunday they'd be available to take people on, they called them joy flights. So if you paid your money you could have a fly and they used to just take off and fly around for a short time and then land and other people'd get on board. And at other times they used, later they'd put on aerobatic displays, the, but the planes weren't terribly good at that stage, the only powerful planes of course were

06:30 the air force planes. And I can remember at Mascot, one of the air shows, they had these twin-engine, they were called Wapitis, and they came diving down and were very impressive to myself.

So when did you first go up in a plane?

Now it must have been a joy flight at Mascot aerodrome. It wasn't only Kingsford Smith that

07:00 did, there were other people doing the same thing. How old I was, I wouldn't know, I think I might have been about eight or something like that.

Do you remember it?

Only partly, vaguely in my memory.

And was that Kingsford Smith's plane that you went up in?

Well I don't know whether that was the first one or not, I can't, couldn't be sure which one I went. Because I was interested in all the planes and considered it true that I,

07:30 I wasn't being impressed by Kingsford Smith, in fact, I was only interested in the plane.

What was it about the planes that you loved?

Well it was a three-engined, Fokker transport, it was high winged, it was pretty lumbering and slow so it wasn't terribly exciting except the fact that you are above the ground.

08:00 At proper Mascot Aerodrome, part of my, when I was training released the, sorry, in 1939 I got a scholarship, I suppose really it was, it was a scholarship but in 1939 there was hardly, Australia had hardly any planes, very few pilots. And a chap that my father knew, this Henry

08:30 Dickson, was his second name, Arnott, he was from Arnott's Biscuits, and he was president of the aero club of New South Wales at that stage and he tried to get firms to give scholarships so people could learn to fly if they couldn't afford it. And he couldn't get anybody from Arnott's Biscuits factories so he offered it to me and I jumped at it, I thought this is magnificent. So I went out to Mascot and learned to fly with a

09:00 chap called, the instructor was called Darcy Wentworth, there's more about him later in the air force.

Just going back to that feeling of flying, can you remember what it felt like for you as a child, to be in the air?

Oh, the only thing I noticed, it was wonderful. Being, floating around and doing what I'd always wanted to do, it wasn't anything particular about it.

09:30 I think, thinking back, I think the most interesting thing was when the engine started up. Because they were, when they're idling they're terribly quiet but when the, to take off, they had to put it on full throttle and so the noise was a bit overbearing. But then the plane would slowly take up, go faster and faster, all that was interesting and then of

10:00 course it took off and the land disappeared below you and all that was impressive. Coming in to land wasn't that impressive, we didn't do any aerobatics or anything like that, but of course when I joined the aero club part of that training was to do aerobatics.

What did you have to wear when you went up in these planes?

Oh well just as a, on a joy flight you just wore your ordinary

10:30 clothing. In those days as kids, you'd be shorts and a shirt and probably a coat over the top of that and long socks and trousers, and shoes. And then you didn't get into long trousers until about half way through the senior school at school.

Was it cold when you were up in the air?

I don't remember it. See we didn't go up that high

11:00 and it was only for a short time so you couldn't get to the cold air.

I'm gonna come back to the flying a little bit later, but I want to take you back to you talking about the Depression and I want to ask you what impact that had on your family?

Well as I said before, it was the Great Depression, of stock crash in

11:30 New York and people, a lot of people don't know what terrific affect it had on the whole world actually. Because once America went into this recession, people were committing suicide and the, it affected the whole world, of course as I was saying, it affected Australia. My father, as I mentioned before, the

12:00 Depression in, when we were in Birriga Road, we had a cook, a house maid and nanny. And my father and my mother thought they would like to leave Birriga Road, the tram line at one stage and have a house in Bellevue Hill, so they bought this house to, not, sorry,

12:30 bought this land in Bellevue Hill and they were gonna build a house on it and they, my father had to get an overdraft to buy land. His father being in the business when my father asked him how he should conduct his affairs, his father told him he should get an overdraft, cause that's what my grandfather had all the time. So he had an overdraft to buy this

13:00 block of land in Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill, it's right opposite the Packer compound at the moment. The architect's plans looked wonderful and I thought oh, that'll be pretty good. So when the Depression hit, the banks wanted all people to eliminate, to pay off their overdraft and course my father couldn't, so

13:30 he had to sell this block of land which, for the much less price of course than what he paid for it. And the family had to let go the cook and the house maid and we only had nanny left, they felt they couldn't let nanny go, because she'd come out with me from England and had no relatives in Australia at all. So she subsequently

14:00 her sisters, her relatives in England came out to Australia and so there were quite a lot of them in the end, they mostly settled in South Australia. One of the interesting things to me was in the, when the Depression was on and we had the cook I think it was, was a Mrs Wilkes, and all very nice, and nanny used to go

14:30 to her when she lived at Bankstown for the day on the weekends. And I always remember nanny used to keep, tell me how her son, his name was Gerald, was very good at his studies and I was always a bit envious about that. And Gerald was, very interesting thing, he was so good he, at the Leaving, it was called the Leaving

15:00 Certificate in those days, not HSC [Higher School Certificate]. And he did very well at, got a scholarship, in those days it was called an Exhibition to Sydney University, and he became the Professor of English at Sydney University, because he was just magnificent.

And you mentioned the family was forced to sell the land at Bellevue Hill, so what happened to the family at Birriga

15:30 **Road?**

Well partly due to that and partly due to the fact that my father wanted to do psychoanalytical practice only, the Birriga Road property was gonna be no good because he had got some rooms in Macquarie Street. So they sold that and they were, we went to Vaucluse in a rented house.

16:00 **And if you could describe the two homes, the Birriga Road home and how it compared to the place you moved to?**

Well Birriga Road, there's no view, it's right on the tram line, the tram lines made a lot of noise when they went past, there were a lot of people all over the place walking up and down the hill. That was, although I had a friend who was in a road near that,

16:30 about a hundred yards away, his name was Barry Chard, and he lives about a quarter of a mile down the road from us here. Any rate the, as I said, the house, house was blue, single storey, I think it had a couple of bedrooms, wasn't very big. And then it, but that compared with the place at Vaucluse was, we had a magnificent view there, it wasn't a very big place, single

17:00 storey on the side of a hill and the garage was cut into the rock. And we had a verandah glassed in that gave the view and then I remember there was a small dining room and a lounge room and one, two, three bedrooms. I shared a bedroom with my brother, my sister was in the bedroom at the back, my parents were in the front bedroom.

Your brother was younger than you?

Yes. He was six years younger than

17:30 I was. One of the problems there was when you get a younger brother, you get jealous and I'm afraid I didn't treat him very well, I did, there was no physical, I never touched him physically but I used to tease him a lot I'm afraid. He got back at me of course by – I had a – in an alcove out the back, I had sort of a workshop and

18:00 I got interested. I used to do a lot of things with my hands, I could, model aeroplanes and I also did, I bought, got an electric metal lathe and I used to, I made cannons out of brass and other things in this shed, and course I had some sharp tools in my that my brother always used to get in there and blunt them for me.

18:30 One of the cannons I made, it's only about that long, I, it was a, the ball was a bebe shot and I remember putting gun powder you got out of the crackers we had in those days and shoved it in, and there was the wick. And I remember lighting it and it went bang, and sent the bebe across the room, across the, it wasn't across the room, outside. Another time I thought I'd make wine and

19:00 so I read about it and I bought I think a few kilos, they were pounds in those days, of grapes, I put it into a big pot from the kitchen, squashed it all up. They weren't, they were muscatel grapes, so not, when they started to ferment it was gonna be red wine. Well it started to bubble away and this funny smell came out of it and so I finally

19:30 bottled the thing and I wasn't quite sure it'd finished, I didn't realise yet you had to wait for it to finish the fermentation process. So I bottled it and I had about six bottles and put the corks on and put them up on a top shelf in this workshop place. And a few days or weeks, I can't remember, later in the middle of the night there was this terrible explosion and one, and later another one.

20:00 And we went out and had a look and bottles were, the, blowing the corks out and the workshop was a mess of this red, I presume wine, all over the place. And I was able to rescue two bottles of the stuff that was all over the place and put the cork back in them and then there, finally the only wine I got were two bottles

20:30 of vinegar, it was colourless vinegar then, I don't know why but.

And how big was, did you have a back yard at Vaucluse?

Yes, it was about, what, I'm trying to work it out in metres, it was about fifty feet, that's about, what's that, not sure in metres,

21:00 square and we had a few trees there, coral trees. I fancied myself as a knife thrower at one stage and my grandfather had some souvenirs, bayonets, that he'd brought back from China from the Boxer Rebellion. And I inveigled him into giving me these things, and there were two of them, so I used to get down in there, in our back yard and then try and throw these

21:30 bayonets at these coral trees. Any people that love trees would know that a coral tree can take any amount of punishment. In fact if you chopped a bit off it and dropped it on the ground it would sprout on its own. I might add, I wasn't ever any good at this occupation.

Now aside from moving

22:00 **to Vaucluse, did the Depression have other impacts on your family, that you remember?**

No, not really. My parents never, they were never, we never, they never went to the races, they didn't gamble. The drinking was only, we never had beer in the house or wine, there was a, we had, I remember

22:30 a glass thing with sherry in it and there was a bottle of, decanter I think that's what you call it, with whisky. Of course I tried them both and thought they were dreadful. I also tried smoking my father's… he was a chain smoker, his only vice was that, he used to light one cigarette from another.

23:00 And course in those days there were no Bic lighters and you'd have to strike a match so he used to go from one to another and we thought it was a bit disgusting, but he did that for his whole life. Funnily enough, he never developed lung cancer.

And did you notice a change in what you ate or what you could wear or what you could do during the Depression?

No, I didn't, never noticed that myself, no, my sister might have noticed it.

23:30 But we weren't, see, as my father, grandfather was, he started the Winn's Limited in Sydney so he was I would suppose at that stage, you'd have to call him relatively wealthy, so when he died my father inherited his shares in Winn's Limited which kept him going. Because

24:00 as a psychoanalyst, contrary to belief, the patients had to come to the psychoanalyst three days a week for a session lasting a whole hour so the number of patients that he could see at any one time was quite limited, it'd be about say ten or more patients. And of course they had, they couldn't pay much and

24:30 it was for a whole session so my father, he never earned hardly anything at all his whole life in his psychoanalytical practice. So he never earned more than ten thousand dollar, pounds, ever.

And do you remember or were you told very much about the kinds of patients he was seeing?

Not the beginning. But later when I, I can

25:00 remember after the war and when I was doing medicine, I was, talked to him about the sort of patients. Psychoanalysis in these, in the beginning, was frowned upon by the whole of the establishment and some organisations throughout the world and it was intriguing, that there were three, two countries and one organisation that

25:30 banned it. They were, as you might imagine, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and the Roman Catholic Church. Which was understandable, because psychoanalysis was turning the whole of the mental processes of the whole world upside down, and so it was frowned

26:00 upon. But my father being the first psycho-medical psychoanalyst in Australia, his life was very difficult. My mother was a bit upset because of all the denigration my father was getting for being a psychoanalyst, which of course has something to do with sex in… It wasn't. It was to do with all sex, from child, babies being born and

26:30 breastfeeding and all that, so that was all frowned upon and not spoken about in those days. So my mother would far prefer, she far preferred my father to be an ordinary doctor rather than one of these outcasts. But my father realised that psychoanalysis helped him and his problem and that might help other people in the same

27:00 predicament. And there was no treatment at all for them, all they used to be told was they had to pull themselves together which didn't help their mental problems.

Did he see other war veterans?

Well he never told us what, about his patients to identify them. But I'll always remember once, this was after the war and I was back at Sydney and

27:30 he, part of psychoanalysis, there are two major stages to it. They are part of, the early part's called positive transference and this is when the patient is being friendly towards the analyst. And the, there's the other part of it called negative transference when the patient's sick, venting their fury on the psychoanalysis,

28:00 psychoanalyst. And I remember at one stage when he rang up my mother to tell him that if he wasn't home by five o'clock to call the police, because this patient was threatening to kill him. So it was, actually did I mention there, we were talking about psychoanalysis, that after the war I had a nervous breakdown

28:30 and severe depression and my father, I asked him because it'd helped him, I suggested it might help me and it did.

We might talk about that a bit later.

Oh later on, sorry.

No that's fine.

Things just pop into my mind.

We'd like to talk about that because that's an important part of the war story, about how people cope afterwards. But what I'll do

29:00 **now is just ask you if you can remember anything being said to you about your father and the kind of work that he did, any comments, any kind of vilification that you can remember?**

Well not personally, not to my face, the, mainly inference. Nobody said anything at school, I wasn't, they didn't say anything about it.

29:30 I think it was mainly in the medical profession because the people who associated, we associated with, and his friends, he didn't discuss psychoanalysis with them. It was only the establishment, the psychiatrists and other people who thought along other lines, and they came round to psychoanalysis in the end, but they were very

30:00 hostile to psychoanalysis at the beginning.

And so I'm gonna move forward a little bit to when you were a teenager at Cranbrook and your final years at school. What did you do towards the end of school and if you could explain what you decided to do after school?

Well I always wanted to be, fly aeroplanes and be a pilot but other than that,

30:30 thinking back on the, at school in those days I was always very small for my age. And so I'd had to, I was never bullied at school and I don't know how I got round that but some of the boys in this age group being bullied which distressed me, but I always seemed to be able to get

31:00 out of it somehow or other. And I was a boarder for the last year of school, I repeated the last, 1938 I did my Leaving Certificate examination, I passed in everything but French and French was required to matriculate to the University of Sydney, so I had to repeat the year. But some of it, while a boarder

31:30 I can remember, and before that, every Saturday morning I would go into the city, the, at the State Theatre had a theatrette under it and they used to have newsreels and I can remember every Saturday I used to go to the newsreels. I think I must have been a bit peculiar, but the, I wasn't interested in emotional type pictures, human relationships, I was more interested

32:00 in things that actually happened. And I can always remember when there was a newsreel on that was stuck in my mind and when Joe Louis was boxing, fighting against Max Schmelling, I think his name was, the German, and of course there was a bit of friction between the German Aryans and the Afro-Americans. And I can always remember

32:30 I've never seen anything like this boxing match. Max Schmelling was, had been running down Joe Louie and I can remember it started and Joe Louie knocked him out in, I think it was a minute, thirty-five seconds. And he hit him so hard I can remember Max Schmelling buckling up like this with the power of Joe Louie's

33:00 hits. Also all sorts of things there and that a lot of other people never saw. The Hindenburg when it came over, across the Atlantic from Germany, this Nazi wonder with the great swastikas on the side of this huge airship and it got to New Jersey airport and burst into flames. And that stuck in my mind because people were jumping out of the thing and trying to get away from this

33:30 huge explosion. And the, it was, the reason for that of course was it had hydrogen in it to keep it, to lift it and this was because the Americans wouldn't give them any helium, they had helium from their oil wells.

What did you learn about Germany from those newsreels?

Well

34:00 it was bit hard to say, they, it was suggesting a life quite different from any that we had, anywhere else, and I really never took any sort of notice about that at all, I was more interested in material things.

34:30 **Did you know much about what was happening in Europe at that time?**

No. Only what was in the newsreels and they were things like that. There were, I don't think there, I can't recall anything about any problems that the Nazis were having in subjugating peoples or anything because at that stage they were trying to put on a front of

35:00 being very helpful to the whole world, and the whole world was supposed to change to what they were doing. And there was nothing about the Soviet Union. There were strikes in Australia and Sydney, that, they didn't seem to worry me much. And but there, I can't recall anything to do with Communism.

So when you were at school at Cranbrook, you'd

35:30 **repeated the year, what happened then after you left school?**

Oh after, after my second go, I did the year in 1939 and I failed in French again. So I had to go and have cramming I suppose you'd call it now, by a chap called Bunny Becton. He, his method of cramming was you learned things by heart, and he selected parts of

36:00 this book that we had to read and I think about three of them and I learned them all by heart. So when I did the Matriculation exam again which I had to do at the university this time in the Great Hall the, thank goodness we got passages that he'd picked up, so I scraped through in French. So then I was

matriculated, so I was gonna do aeronautical engineering and at Sydney University and

36:30 that was with, at the, I was living then in Paul's College at Sydney University. And two other people, a great friend of mine who was also from Cranbrook who was doing engineering one at, at least aeronautical engineering with me and I shared a room with him for first term, I didn't do any work unfortunately, was Jim Rowland who later became the, of course

37:00 the Governor of New South Wales. Another fresher we had at Paul's was a chap by the name of Gough Whitlam, and he went on to other things later of course. It was interesting, I must admit at, I didn't do any work, that was my trouble, at the, in the course and I used to mess around and I was into sport more and

37:30 also the university, we used to put on a revue which was a bit odd. And I can remember we being freshers had to act as a female chorus line and Whitlam was in that too and he looked out of place, cause he was about twice as tall as everybody else. And it wasn't until in May, June, course the

38:00 war started in September '39, there was nothing much was happening and I didn't feel I ought to join up or for anything. And so it wasn't until May, June when Hitler invaded, it was April he invaded Norway but we didn't seem to worry about that, then May he invaded Belgium, Holland

38:30 and France. And Dunkirk occurred after this and lot of worry in Australia and I felt it was, I should do the right thing and join the air force. And as I wanted to do it anyway I felt that, the general feeling was that Australia ought to go to the aid of the mother country in the same way that they'd done in the First

39:00 World War. So I decided I wanted to go and I, my mother didn't want me to go, but my father said it was my decision and I think he was a bit concerned about the high casualty rate in air crew, but he didn't stop me. So I was, what was I, I'm not sure how old I was there, it was, no I'd be nineteen I think, '39, yes.

39:30 No '40 it was, that'd be 1940, so I'd be nineteen. So I applied and I was asked to come to the depot at Woolloomooloo to be interviewed and have a medical examination. And queuing up for our interview a number of the people, a chap came out of the interview

40:00 and told us in the line, "They're gonna ask you why you want to join the air force and the right thing to say is you want to fight for King and Country." So when I went in and he said, "Why do you want to join the air force?" And I said, as I said, "I want to join the air force to fight for King and Country." Funnily enough, the interviewing officer was a Mr Lees, our next door neighbour. And he had to say, "And what are you doing now?" And I had to say, "I'm studying

40:30 aeronautical engineering at Sydney University." And he said, "Well you can't join up, because that's a reserved occupation." I said, "Well I'll go back to the university and resign and then I'll come back again." And he said, "Oh, all right," and so I was accepted. And they gave us a, we went into the air force reserve and we got a badge and we carried on the, I carried on the university course, but at night-time.

41:00 We had to attend lectures and, about Morse code and other things about navigation at the Railway Institute. And this...

We might just stop there I think, we've just run out of tape, so we'll...

Tape 3

00:39 **You mentioned Dr Winn, that you liked sport and you referred to that title fight that you saw on the newsreel. Can you remember the Berlin Olympics?**

No. I can't even remember the, I know Jesse Owens was one of the stars of the

01:00 Olympics. It was only later that I learned about how Hitler tried to ignore him and so, but he, that was later, wasn't earlier.

So what did you mean when you said that Germany seemed to be looking like they were helping the world?

Well I think it was all their propaganda, and they had a propaganda machine running there. And there was a problem with

01:30 the – because of the Great Depression – a lot of people were worried about, well, trying to find out a method of getting out of the Depression, so I think that Hitler's rise to power, because he had this idea of a way of living that could get out, get over the Depression, and he was actually succeeding.

02:00 In the States, Roosevelt had the 'new deal', which was another method of doing it, but there were quite a few people felt that Hitler was, might help the world especially because he was anti-Communistic and Communism was worrying a whole lot of people at that stage

How did you notice that Communism was worrying people, how did that manifest itself?

Well

02:30 only vaguely, before the war, the, all these things that, I wasn't particularly interested in these things, I was more interested in all sorts of things you do physically than conceptions.

So at Sydney University, what sort of sports did you play?

Well I played football, that's rugby football, I wasn't much good at any

03:00 of it I might add. Rugby football, I was in the athletics team in the relay and I was not very good in, because of my size in the rugby football, I wasn't that good. There was only one team there, that was the Firsts, and you had to play, I remember playing the New South Wales Police and they ran all over me because they were about twice my size. I also did swimming, I

03:30 was not bad at swimming I was represented for the breast stroke swimming. In the diving, I did it but I was not very competent at it, I, it took me hours to get up enough courage when I wanted to learn to do a one and a half forward somersault. And you, I couldn't do it on a one metre board, it had to be the three metre board, that's the ten feet. Is that right? Ten feet, that's right.

04:00 And I remember one day at Rose Bay Baths, in those days a lot of, most of the baths were tidal, there's only one non tidal pool and that was the Olympic Pool at North Sydney. So I remember trying to get up courage to do this dive and took about an hour, I was debating with myself, and finally tried it and I hurt myself but it wasn't that bad. So

04:30 I had more goes, so I could actually get over and do the one and a half somersaults but it was never very good. And, although at the school sports at, I did come third in the associated school sports because there were only three of us in it, I think. But the other interesting thing, that was after the war, the,

05:00 what we did do at Paul's of course was, the restrictions of life in a school and at home were removed when you went you go to a college and university and of course you were able to virtually do anything. So we, every afternoon, we'd go up to the local hotel, the White Horse, and have a few beers. And of course at, at six o'clock they, it

05:30 was the beer swill, they used to call it because the pubs had to shut the doors at six o'clock. So you had to get how much beer you wanted into yourself before six o'clock. And always remember going up to this hotel and we'd go into the bar and we'd be in a corner all the freshers from Paul's. And there would be other people, the locals, and they all had their special place in the bar and you couldn't go in their space,

06:00 you had to go in a, in our space. So we'd then go to dinner in the Great Hall and of course we being freshers we were at the bottom of the barrel at that stage. So I didn't get to find out how life was, other than a fresher, until after the war when I went back there.

So did that seem like a happy time, that first year at...?

Oh yes, it was great, whale of a time, that's why I wasn't doing any work.

06:30 We had informal dances and formal dances, at the formals, at those dances we used to have to get into dinner jackets and things and I had to borrow one of course. And I'll always remember the, at the formal one there were more people and it was held at, in the, no it might have been the

07:00 informal was held in the, our main Great Hall. It was modelled funnily enough, that hall, on the Westminster Hall in London so it was quite an imposing hall. There was another one similar, of course the Great Hall at the university was much bigger than our hall. But I can always remember dancing and there'd be senior people about that high, and there were two, there was a couple

07:30 dancing that were about that high above everybody else, head and shoulders above everybody else. Of course that was Gough Whitlam and his wife, her name then was, can't remember.

And what sort of a man did he appear to be?

Well I didn't have anything to do with him, he wasn't in engineering, he was in some other faculty, I think it might have been arts, cause I think he might have been doing arts/law and so they

08:00 sort of all got together, you, that's how the college worked. You got to know people doing the same thing in the same faculty, so we didn't sort of do anything together, I was in this nuts and bolts faculty. I tell you another funny thing about that, it just comes to mind. In engineering one at the university, we had to do

08:30 a thing called workshop practice because ours was gonna be theoretical, and they wanted the engineers to know something about actually making things and the problems of making things. So we all went down to do the Sydney Technical College where we had to do a number of things and to learn how

difficult some things were. And I can always remember we did blacksmithing at one stage and part of your, we were pretty good at just hitting bits of

09:00 metal and flattening it and doing things like that. But we, he gave us the job of making chains, and to do that you, this is a, not an electric welding chains that just about all the chain manufacture now is done, this was blacksmith welding chains. So you got a rod about that long, about that diameter and you had to bend it up, and heat it before, get it red hot and bend it up like that.

09:30 Then you had a, ended up like that, then you had to flatten that and flatten that and put it one on top of the other and then put it in the forge and get it at the right heat, and then you hit it with a hammer like that and it welded. Well the instructor could do this every time. I might add, before he hits, he had to throw a handful of salt into this contraption and hit it like that. Well I never could

10:00 get it. I was throwing salt and heating it up and hitting it but I never ever got the weld. I don't know about the other blokes whether they got it or not, but I never did.

So did you really enjoy that opportunity?

Oh yes, it's great fun, I liked using my hands all the time. In fact, that was, funnily enough it was that, that my parents felt, half way through my school curriculum that I was a hopeless student and I'd better do something else beside trying

10:30 to learn these school subjects. So they suggested I do a workshop practice and we had a special place in the school, a workshop for the people like me who weren't terribly academic. So I learned a lot there and I liked it, and then when I finished that, I did actually metal work at the workshop. But not many of us did it, only those people who were classified as non

11:00 academic.

Did you consider yourself a hopeless non academic?

No, didn't worry me, I thought the academics were a bit stupid, that, I thought it was more important to make things.

So given that when you joined the air force, did you want to be an engineer in the air force or a...?

Oh no. The, because getting into the air force in peace time was nearly impossible, they only took hardly anybody,

11:30 they had to have better qualifications I was gonna have. They, it was being nearly impossible, my parents thought that a way of still being interested in aeronautics, you could do aeronautical engineering and the business of making aeroplanes. So I did that because they suggested it, so I went along with it.

12:00 **Why was it so hard to get into the air force?**

Well our air force then consisted, that's in 1940, no, when I wanted to get in was 1938, there were hardly anybody, I think the entire air force there might not have been more than two thousand people altogether. That's, and I don't think there were more than about fifty pilots. So I was small for my age, I didn't

12:30 fit the sort of profile I think you should have, I think you had subjects that I wasn't very good at, so I never even attempted it. I remember asking about it and I think my parents asked, got on to the air force and asked about it and they said, you know son, not impossible but very unlikely that you'd get in.

Did it have a glamorous

13:00 **profile?**

Air force? Oh yes. I can remember thinking back, I always remember this, at school we had a very handsome student, he was my, in fact my sister thought he was pretty good too. And he was tall, blonde, he did well in his studies, he was also terribly good on stage. He was, I can

13:30 remember we had, at the plays, school plays and I think he was in one of the Shakespearean plays as the lead, he might have been Hamlet or somebody and everybody thought he was wonderful, he was. I thought he was wonderful too. And any rate he got into the air force and the poor chap was killed at the crash before the war even started.

Did that image of glamorous pilots, did that have something to do with movies, do you think?

14:00 No, not really it was more in the magazines I read, I always wanted to be a fighter pilot, nothing else, because there were always things about fighter pilots and they did, had all the fun, aerobatics, all sorts of things.

Did you think you could get girls?

Well I was what's known as an unsophisticated person at that stage. I was very keen, we had dancing

classes at school

14:30 in the last year and I was very keen on a girl, I suppose you could call it, fell in love with her. But it was really, it didn't get past the platonic ever, she was very good looking too, I thought.

Can you tell me about her?

Well not her name. Oh yes I can tell you her name, Christian name, Noreen was her name. And where did she go to school, I'm not sure where she went to school.

15:00 It might have been Kambala or Ashcombe and we had the, that was the way things were done in those days. You had dancing classes, there'd be the boys and the girls, and the boys'd be along one part of the room and the girls along the other part and then the teacher, Miss Kaye I think her name was, she used to show us various steps we had to do. We had to do the,

15:30 I think it was the quickstep first and we had to chasse or something and then when she'd demonstrated everything and we got up and did things on our own and the girls did things on their own, then she'd say, "Now take your partners." And of course there was a bit of a problem then, because who did you dance with? The attractive blokes'd, would dance with the

16:00 attractive girls, and so I was keen on a few girls at that stage but I'm afraid I was really frightened of them. Even having a sister was two years older than I was and she was pretty good looking actually, and I think she thumped me a few times and I was really, I suppose you'd say terrified.

16:30 **Fair enough. So during the time of enlistment, were some of your alumni, were some of the other students at Sydney University were they talking about enlisting too?**

One or two. One in particular was really intriguing, he was, his name was Col Fletcher and he was doing engineering as well. And he'd be, had poliomyelitis as a child and he

17:00 had a club foot and one had to be built up about like that so he could walk and he had, walked of course with a limp. I can remember he wanted to join the navy and they wouldn't have him, they said he wasn't, he was medically unfit. But the story goes that he kept applying and they kept

17:30 knocking him back, I don't know how many times and finally the radar had come in, in England to start with and the, it was used in Australia but nobody in Australia knew how to do it, or anything about it. And Col Fletcher jumped into radar, this is before it became associated with the need for it in the services, he got in

18:00 early and he became a full fledged specialist in radar, and so he applied again and they welcomed him with open arms, cause there was nobody else. So he got what he's worked for and always stuck with me, that if you want to do something and you try hard enough, you're prepared to skirt around it if you get blocked in certain ways, you keep trying and trying and trying, you get there at the end.

18:30 **And did you ever hear about what sort of navy career he had?**

No. No I can't, after the war I don't think we spoke to him after the war, no.

So tell me about when you knew that you were in the air force?

What after March, third of March 1941.

Tell me about the day when, after you'd said to the enlistment person, well I'll go back to university and resign, tell me what happened then?

Well after that, the next thing that happened on the thirty-first of

19:00 July, 1940 I was, no, sorry, thirty-first of July, 1940 was when I saw that, the interviewer, it wasn't until the third of March 1941 that I was called up. And we all went down to, funnily enough, the same depot at Woolloomooloo and we were kitted, well we weren't kitted out, we had to sign things that we'd do this and that and we wouldn't misbehave,

19:30 all the normal things. And we were given our number, that's an air force, your air force number that goes with you all the rest of your life. And my number was 403776 and the bloke after me he obviously had to be 403777 and his name was Jack Young, there's more about him later.

So tell me about the depot down in Woolloomooloo?

Oh well it was, funnily enough the building, it might still be there.

20:00 But it's, it wasn't much just a place to go in and out, cause after we got our numbers and there were buses waiting outside and they took us to where, at Bradfield Park, that's where the university is, at Lindfield. And that was this air force, it was called the Initial, Number Two ITS, Initial Training School and we did

20:30 drill and spare marching and more drill and physical, PT, it was called, physical training. It was, I don't know what they call it these days but it was all exercise we had to do, an hour in the morning, an hour at night, they were really gonna get us fit. And we also did subjects, Morse code and a few other things

21:00 that pertained to the air force. Then of course when we finished that there was an exam, there was always an exam at the end and I just got, I was forty-sixth out of a hundred and twenty, that's not terribly good. But then after that we were then sent to the next training place, that's to fly Tiger Moth aircraft, cause the other people hadn't learned to fly it, so it was Number Five EFTS [Elementary Flying Training School] at Narromine,

21:30 and we went out there. And so we were allotted instructors and funnily enough who should I be allotted to, it was Darcy Wentworth. Well he said to me, he said, "I know you know how to fly this thing, but we've got to go through all the motions," you see, so he went through all the motions. Any rate we, it was great fun flying the Tiger Moth out there because there were wedge-tailed eagles around that part of the world and we used to chase them but they could always get out of the way.

22:00 I was always amazed the way, we'd dive on a wedge-tailed eagle and he always knew where to go. There were a few crashes there of course and then we had our exams after other subjects, studying, and I got fourth there so I was improving. And then when that finished we go to, we're sent to a depot of course, embarkation depot, and that, funnily enough

22:30 was at Bradfield Park area. We waited then of course for a ship to take us somewhere, we thought we were going to Canada, and so one day came and we go down to the Pyrmont and get on this ship which was called the Johann van Olden Barneveldt. It was a Dutch ship with Javanese crew and the meals were dreadful. And any rate we went down the harbour

23:00 and my parents were, had a sheet out from their house waving it and I actually, I saw it waving. Then we went out into the Tasman Sea and the, we were escorted this boat, it was about fifteen thousand tons of passenger liner, we were escorted by an ancient naval, this HMAS Adelaide, a light cruiser, so it was good to

23:30 see. There were an awful lot of us on board, always troop ships they were chock-a-block full and I remember out in the Tasman Sea the biggest storm I've ever seen before or since was, we hit in this. And this boat, fifteen thousand tons was pitching so much it was burying its bow into the, waves came over the bow, which was unusual for a boat of this size. And when that happened the propellers were

24:00 coming out of the water with a thump, thump, thump, thump noise. And when looking over to the poor cruiser Adelaide it looked like a submarine because the waves were going all over the fore deck and the gun and the bridge. Any rate we went from there to Auckland and there was this beautiful ship waiting for us, called the Dominion Monarch twenty thousand ton luxury

24:30 liner, four diesel engines and air conditioning and we were put in the lounge. Sounds good doesn't it? But there were a hundred and twenty of us in the lounge in double-decker bunks, it was chock-a-block of course. And so we had some leave in New Zealand, didn't do much but go to the local pub and off we went again to cross the Pacific.

Had you had much experience on the water?

Well yes, because my father was

25:00 very keen on fishing and he liked game fishing and fishing for sharks and things like that and he used to do a bit on Bondi Beach, but never caught any. And so he got, we always used to go, every holiday, Christmas holidays, we always went down to Narooma to stay at Highlands Hotel, might still be there actually, and he would go fishing. My mother

25:30 and the other children would go on the beach in the estuary and things like that and he used to go out game fishing. He'd hire a boat and we'd go out into the ocean through the breakwater bar at Narooma and head off to Montague Islands where we used to go, and I went with him. And I always found that I was, felt sea sick the first day we went out,

26:00 once or twice I vomited, the next day I felt reasonable and the third day it could have been as rough as whatever, I wasn't ever sick after that. So we did all sorts of fishing, he wasn't very, wasn't a very lucky fisherman, we used to troll, Zane Grey actually was there, I remember, and at one stage my father

26:30 went down to visit Zane Grey. I don't know if you know who he was, he was the, he wrote a great number of westerns, Hollywood westerns and he had a camp at Bermagui where we visited once. My father wanted to talk to him about game fishing, cause he was the champion game fisherman of the world, he'd fished all

27:00 over the place, New Zealand and everywhere and he came to Australia cause I suppose it's the last place to come. And I can remember distinctly we went down to see him and course I'm about that high, just standing around, and the thing that amazed me was the fact that he had a secretary, a very good looking girl, and I thought to myself later, when I grow up I'd like to have a secretary like that. And we didn't get much out

27:30 of Zane Grey, but I can remember one time we were fishing and it was, we'd been around Montague Island and we're coming in and we, in those days you had two rods over the stern and you put on a whole fish bait and you trolled it, sort of trolled it through the water and hoping something'd get on it.

And I can remember this time we were coming home and we're about

28:00 oh, a hundred metres from the rocks, coming along close inshore and the, it was getting dark, it was twilight. And Ben Baddeley, the owner of the boat, he told us, "Okay put your drags on the thing and wind your lines in," you see. And no sooner had I put the drag on and started to wind then I got this incredible strike, this swordfish came, marlin it was, came, went

28:30 straight up, out of the water. It was only about what, twenty feet away, right up into the air and thrashed with his head waving from side to side and he threw the bait like that then crashed back into the water into this darkened, it was all dark. And it so impressed me I decided, "One day I'm gonna catch one of those fish," which I did later.

All right I think we just need... Oh,

29:00 **okay. Right. I just want to go back to the farewell when you left Sydney. What sort of a farewell did you have with your family?**

Well we had no farewell, because no family were allowed to get anywhere near the boat when we, so we didn't, they knew, I think I rang them up and said we're going, because you

29:30 weren't supposed to tell anybody, it was supposed to be all a secret you see. So we were taken down to the boat in buses and from there we just, we boarded and directed to where we were supposed to go. It wasn't until later that when the ship went down the harbour they apparently knew and I saw them, but there was no farewell.

So how did you feel when you saw that...?

Oh I thought that was pretty good that they, that I'd seen them,

30:00 I'd seen what they were doing. But we always, at that stage you, one didn't look back, high, I suppose everybody else did, you were always looking forward to what was gonna happen next and where were you gonna go and what was gonna happen and all that. So we never looked back at all about what had happened.

So what were you looking forward to that day you left Sydney?

Well it was a great adventure, that's really what it was all about, this

30:30 incredible adventure. I had never been overseas before, in those days nobody went, hardly anybody went overseas, now everybody goes, but in those days it was terribly unusual for people to go. So everybody's excited and looking forward and terrific.

What did you pack?

Pack? You packed what you were told.

What was that?

No, you had a kitbag of course, it

31:00 was about that by that and you had to put everything went in there. I think what you had, we had the uniform of course, that was, everything was in the uniform, I can't remember whether the underpants were in the uniform, but the rest of it was. You had trousers, long trousers, blue, very prickly, the material wasn't very high quality and which is natural cause you weren't an officer.

31:30 So you packed the trousers, you had black shoes, regulation, everything was regulation. Socks, shirt, tie, black tie and you had this funny four and a half cap you wore and because we were trainees we had a white flash in it so you, that was to let everybody know we didn't know anything. And so we all, I think what, when we were asked that by any

32:00 body, we want to impress them, we'd say we're air crew trained.

So are you saying that the officers had better material in their uniform?

Oh yes but we, our group, none of us were officers, we were all in the bottom there, aircraftsmen we were called. We didn't even have a badge with a propeller on our sleeve, until we got one later. So you could tell by looking at the officers that their whole,

32:30 their shirts, ties, jackets and everything were superior tailors and better quality cloth.

Were they sailing on the ship with you out of Sydney?

No. I can't remember anybody that went with us, there could've been, but I just can't remember anybody. But of course we had officers telling us what to do in all these training camps.

And how did they seem to you, the officers?

Oh they were all right,

33:00 everybody was, to me everybody was happy and helpful and there was none of this putting down of people that you hear about now and boot camp and people being run down and shouted at, there was none of that. Everybody was, we were all volunteers the start with, we were always thankful we got in, we weren't gonna be difficult. But funnily enough before I went, before

33:30 we got on the ship, and I believe I had, I was given a service diary. And I didn't know what to do with it at first so I thought, "Oh I suppose I gotta write something in it," so I started to write odd things and of course I kept going with that.

Who gave you the service diary?

I can't remember. There were a number of people, I think I, farewell you know, going away gifts, I got four wallets and

34:00 I remember getting a thing that had a, you could put a photograph in of my father and mother, it was a thing like that and you could open it and see them and shut it and put it away. So other than that, I can't remember anything else.

Was it against the rules to keep a diary?

Yes but not then, they didn't make, that wasn't an issue in Australia, I can't, I was, I can't, we were never told not to have a diary. It was only when we got over to

34:30 the war zone that we weren't supposed to have a diary, especially on a squadron we weren't supposed to.

And what were the dangers in keeping a diary?

Oh well the idea was that if you were captured or, and the Germans captured the diary they could learn all sorts of things about the state of the, your unit. So the only people that actually kept a diary

35:00 were mostly the generals who were thinking about writing it up after the war I think, like Eisenhower, Montgomery. And Rommel of course, he wrote to his, I only found this after the war, but Rommel wrote to, he was a great general in the North Africa, the Desert Fox he was called, he was correct in being awarded that. He used to write to, apparently wrote to his wife every night.

35:30 And she would, stored up all his letters, which was a bit of a problem later.

Do you know what the nature of those letters was?

Well after the war I got interested in all these things, I went through all the history of all these things, and I read The Rommel Papers which were collected by a chap by the name of Liddel Hart. His wife had collected them, just,

36:00 I don't know why, I suppose keepsake or something, and it wasn't until the attempt on Hitler's life that Rommel was forced to commit suicide that his wife knew that the Gestapo would be trying to find anything, everything out about him at all, she had to go to the trouble of hiding them which she did. They had to be bricked up in walls and all

36:30 sorts of things and some of them were lost, but after the war she was, they were able to get them again and use them. They're really intriguing his, these, this Rommel Papers.

So after the War when you read, you started doing more reading about him, did that illuminate some of your experiences in there?

Oh yes, it was incredible and I think that's why I got so interested in it because when you're doing, when

37:00 you're in it as a, you don't get to know much at the time. You get information comes to you but only what you're supposed to hear and you really don't know what's going on, and I suppose that's the right way to do it. But I mean the only reason we knew that Japan was in the war was, we were crossing the Atlantic on this funny little boat and we heard that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbour.

37:30 And but afterwards, but we learned that then, other things you didn't know much about.

So did you find after the war that you did a lot of reading?

Oh I did, I, in fact as a POW [prisoner of war] I did an awful lot of reading. As a dyslexic it was a bit of a change, there wasn't much else to do actually so we were, I just started to read and I found I could read with ease after a while so I,

38:00 I read in our camp. They had a good, lot of good books sent from Switzerland cause the people that were there had been shot down in the first couple of days of the war and they'd got all this stuff. They were a bit odd in the head but they... So I started reading and reading and reading and reading and I read terrific numbers of books. I also read the Koran and the Bible from cover to cover. These books were good, because they took so long to

38:30 read them. And I didn't read, in the Bible I didn't read the, there's a section about 'who begat who

begat who begat', and this goes on for page after page and I couldn't stomach that, I left that out, the rest of it I read, every word.

How did your dyslexia impact your exams in training?

Well there wasn't much writing. There were

39:00 no long sentences in these exams, they were short things about armaments and aeroplanes and aircraft recognition and navigation and all these things were, there was hardly any writing in that at all.

Shall we change tape? Do you want to look at the light?

Tape 4

00:39 the, his father was the manager of a cattle station in Queensland, that was owned by a Mrs Cooper. Her husband had died and she and her husband had actually carved out this place, it was called Harvest Home. It's

01:00 actually on the map and it was four hundred square miles this cattle property, it had been much bigger than that but it'd been cut up. And it was on the Rowlston River which ran into the Cape River which ran into the Burdekin, everybody's heard of the Burdekin River. Any rate, Teddy Bundock lived in Bellevue Hill where Mrs Cooper lived and she had a companion who

01:30 was the sister of Teddy Bundock's father's wife. So any rate he went to Cranbrook school and the, each year, for the Christmas holidays he used to go up to the property and he asked me to go as... Any rate so

02:00 I can remember we had to go to the train of course and the train was steam trains then, we went on the steam train, we went to Brisbane and we had to change trains at Brisbane because of the gauge difference. The, I remember staying the night in the Gresham Hotel and the, we had to sleep under mosquito nets, and it was hot anyway, we went to get under mosquito nets, it's really dreadful. Anyway I can remember that and then the train trip from there, narrow gauge

02:30 all the way through Rockhampton down the main street of Rockhampton and I thought was a bit odd. And then to Townsville and then from there we had to get the train that's going to go to Charters Towers. So that has to climb the mountains, the range there. And I can remember on this train, it was going so slowly it had one engine at the front, they're all steam trains of course, one engine at the front, at the rear was another engine pushing and it was

03:00 going so slowly you could get out and walk. So any rate we got to Charters Towers and then we got on the, Mr Bundock's car, it was a Willys Overland, all open. The, and to keep the rain off, it'd have a hood, the whole length of the car and then if it was dry you'd put it down and if it was raining you had to get out and put it up and you'd get wet before you could put it up.

03:30 And then it had side curtains, things that, but they, off he went driving to Harvest Home and it was about eighty miles south of Charters Towers. And we finally got there, it was interest, to me it was interesting, the house was two storeys. It was, the lower floor was on the earth as concrete, and then the dining room and was

04:00 on there and a bit of a lounge room and then outside was a, it was a fernery I suppose. This was summer and this was North Queensland, it was pretty hot. So the fernery, they used to have those canvas bags with water in them and I can remember that we used to drink, and to make it better we used to have lime cordial. So, and at night-time sometimes the, we'd all

04:30 go up to the top floor to bed and the snakes had the run of the place down below. There were, it was interesting, he had, they had bullock paddock, it was called that was, and wasn't fenced of course, you couldn't fence anything, it was so big. And there was a horse paddock and there were paddocks round the house and a small, one of the paddocks had goats in, we had goats. And then

05:00 they'd do mustering and what, that was for branding and castrating the male, turning the bulls into bullocks. And I can remember once we went out, oh better start a bit earlier than that. The, Teddy Bundock, he of course had been brought up on the land and

05:30 he apparently, he told me he learned to ride in the dry river bed with the sand and so if he fell off it didn't worry him much. And he was a very competent horseman and he, his horse was this most beautiful stallion, chestnut stallion, just a beautiful horse. The only trouble was it was, always used to get terribly excited when the mares were around and it would rear up like... any rate, I

06:00 was terribly impressed by the whole thing. I had a, I was given an old nag, it probably the quietest thing on the place but I wasn't much good, I didn't have any riding practise up to that time. So I can remember we went out to, the first thing was to get the horses in from the horse paddock because they, every stockman, there'd be two European stockmen and about four Aboriginal

06:30 stockman, and they were wonderful. I got on better with the Aboriginal stockmen than the other characters. And any rate we, they all had to get more than one horse, they used to have the one they're riding and two others usually and then some pack horses for each stockman. And after that, when these horses were brought in, they hadn't been used for a long while so they were all

07:00 they hadn't, they had to be broken in again, so this was terrific watching all this going on. And then after that out we went, out to this stockade, a long way away. And then my job turned, I was a bit disappointed with this, because I was on an old nag it wasn't much good, my job was for this mob of cattle that they collected, hundreds of them, had to be brought into the yard for branding, and into this area before they went to the yard.

07:30 And I can remember, I had to walk my horse, with me on it of course, slowly. There was a gate between this fence, and I had to walk slowly with my horse through this gate so that the cattle behind would follow me which they did, I didn't believe they would but they did. And so every time that happened, this had to be done and the first stockman of course had to

08:00 do this job. Also we'd get under the things and one of the other things was I thought was, it really called, I was getting better at riding and we, at one stage there was a lot of scrub and we had a lot of fun chasing bullocks and things through the scrub, and they called it scrub dashing and I thought it was terrific. I, thinking back on it, I think it was terribly dangerous,

08:30 see you could have easily gotten, run into something, but nobody ever worried about that, see the branches of trees were all over the place.

Doctor Winn, can I just, I just want to go back to your training camp, I just want to ask you about what was the level of experience that people had flying planes?

Well ninety-nine per cent had no experience at all, I was one of the few.

And where had you gotten your experience from?

That was at the Royal Aero Club,

09:00 when I had that scholarship for, in 1939.

And what sort of craft did you fly in at the aero club?

Tiger Moths, exactly the same as we were gonna fly at Narromine.

So that obviously gave you an advantage?

Oh yeah, I already could fly it. I wasn't to let on though, I couldn't, cause I was, wasn't, cause we had to go through the ropes

09:30 Darcy Wentworth and I, we just had to go – he had said, "You have to do it again just the same as everybody."

Okay so talking about, if we talk about the journey leaving Sydney, did you know where you were going?

No. There were rumours. In the services everything works on rumours, and they're always interested where you're gonna go, and you might be going here, you might be going there and so you

10:00 just had to put up with that, you hoped for the best.

Can you remember what the rumours were?

No. The, you see at that stage I think the Sixth Division of the Australian Army was going to the Middle East and so we had, in the harbour we had these huge ships.

10:30 I can't remember, there was the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth and the Ile de France and the Mauritania, the biggest liners in the world. And there were all sorts of rumours where they're going and it was just the same. Everybody accepted it, but I can't remember what the rumours were.

You said you hoped for the best, what did that mean?

Well I thought it, I'd like to go to Canada and I wanted to go to

11:00 England and so the way, normal way to do that in those days was to go to Canada for training. Cause The Empire Air Training Scheme was started, there were people being trained all round, all over the world in New Zealand, Rhodesia, Australia and Canada, but Canada was the main place for training.

And why did you want to go to Canada?

Cause it was part of the way to England. I'd never been there of course, to Canada,

11:30 and I didn't know anything about it, except it was pretty cold.

Had your father told you much about England?

No. No there, no, my mother used to talk about it. In fact she was annoyed about, not annoyed I suppose, she was, didn't like, in Australia she didn't like the heat or the flies and the grass wasn't green. And she used to say that, if we ever said, "Oh the grass is green over there,"

12:00 she always used to say, "It's greener in England."

So how did you occupy your time on the ship, on the way to Auckland?

Well I can't remember, I think we, it wasn't many days on that trip and we were sort of wondering what to do and all sorts of things so there wasn't really much. But from Auckland to, on the Dominion Monarch

12:30 these poker games started up and this was interesting cause it made a big difference to my life this. We were playing, small amount of money, I can't remember what it was, betting, you see in poker, you have to do that apparently. And there were a group of us and we, and I wasn't doing very well and we were a number of days this was going on. And then I remember one day I was playing and with this group and, funnily enough, I don't know how, I was

13:00 winning, you see, and not a great deal of money, but it was a reasonable amount of money. And it was time to stop and what they all said is, "Right we'll have two more hands," you see. This was the idea, we'll double up or quadruple, you can bet what you like. And the idea of this was that those people who were losing had a chance of getting all the money back, you see. And funnily enough I won both of

13:30 those, so I had a fair amount of money but I, which was quite reasonable to me but I'd lost, everybody was annoyed with me. So I decided it wasn't worth winning and so I never gambled ever again, funnily enough.

And what sort of relationships were you forming with other men on the ship?

Well it was always with the people who you being training with. And

14:00 you were with them all the time, so there was certain people you get to know well and others, it's like I suppose at school in a class, you know some of them and friendly with them and not others.

Who were your friends?

Well I had Jack Young, 403777. And there were others there, Thiele and 'Whack' Turner, he killed himself, I mean, crashed a plane. And

14:30 who else? Jack Cummins.

Was 'Whack' his real name?

Mmm?

Was 'Whack' his real name?

No. He was a very handsome bloke, that's why I remember. And he met a girl before, while in Sydney and we were very impressed, cause she's a very good-looking girl. And he was a very nice chap but he

15:00 wasn't killed on operations funnily enough. He, flying over the water, he just flew straight in, because it's very difficult to judge, flying over water it's very difficult to judge the, how far above the water you are, it depends on the size of the waves, and if there aren't any waves, you can's tell. So that's why a lot of accidents occur with flying over the water.

Did 'Whack' have a lot of experience with

15:30 **girls?**

Oh I never asked him. Although that's funny though because obviously there are blokes that like to tell you how good they are and you, I always took that with a grain of salt.

I ask that because I read in your book that you mentioned something about 'Whack' saying that girls in New York kiss with their tongues out.

Oh yes, I remember that.

What did he say about that?

Well that's all, he was, I, I think he was amazed that that's what happened. I'd never heard of that before.

16:00 But I don't think I'd kissed a girl myself so I, it was everything was a bit unusual.

Did New York girls seem different?

Oh yeah. They, the, well the sort of, see we came into New York on a special group on leave in our uniform. We were being entertained by the organisation in New York,

16:30 I think it was the American, British American Ambulance or some thing. And course, did I tell you there about we marched down Broadway and, did I tell you that?

Can you tell me about that?

Oh. Well, when we, we had to get Canadian passports to get into the States, it was all organised, there was nothing to, personal, and the whole squad of us went down there. And we arrived in New York on early morning on the eleventh of November

17:00 that was 1941 and of course the eleventh of November is Armistice Day for the First World War. And apparently they, every year, a bit like Anzac Day in New York they had a march with all their, and they were people in uniform, I mean they didn't have people, civilians marching, as far as I can remember, but they were all proper soldiers. And any rate,

17:30 so they say, "You're going in it," so we were put in it so we marched down Broadway, most peculiar. There was streamers in all directions, I'm sure nobody knew who the hell we were, but it was interesting to, an interesting experience. And of course there, we had a whale of a time down there, the sight seeing, we never got to bed before three o'clock in the morning, and nightclubs and goodness knows what all over the

18:00 place. And we went to shows like Hills are Poppin', I remember we went to that show and it was of course the best thing on Broadway. Everything was turned on for us, you know we, I think we went to about four shows, they were long running, things were very difficult to get into and they just swept us into everything, I don't know why. We went to the Rockefeller Centre and went to the top of that and went to see the Rockettes down below in this

18:30 great music hall, it was terrific, I'd never seen anything like it of course.

So it was everything that you'd wanted the air force to offer you?

We were amazed, we didn't think this'd ever happen, it's not the sort of thing that happens in the air force, to turn a thing on like that. I don't know whether anybody, any other group of air force people ever did it, but it was, maybe it was, I have no idea.

Can you tell me about the nightclubs you went to in New York?

Well we were, as I was telling you

19:00 I was an unsophisticated person and well, some of them were very low dives and there was strip tease and all that sort of stuff going on. And we, course we were having, we weren't teetotallers and so we were having a few beers and all that sort of stuff. I can remember one we, we went to a dance at the Hotel Pierre, have you heard of that in New York? Oh that's one of the top hotels, you know,

19:30 only special people go to the Hotel Pierre. I didn't know any of this at the time it's only afterwards. So I met a cigarette girl there and I was gonna meet her but she had to go, she was, couldn't get off till three o'clock clock or something, that's what she said anyway.

What did a cigarette girl do?

Oh she sold cigarettes. Yeah, she'd be dressed up in skimpy clothing and have, in front of her would be a tray that round her,

20:00 support around her neck and there'd be cigarettes for sale so she went round selling cigarettes. But most people smoked in those days, in fact about, I suppose ninety-five per cent of all air force people would be smokers. Not me, I didn't like it, funnily, I tried it at home when I was a kid and I thought it was dreadful, so I just didn't smoke, and that was unusual.

And what did these New York women think of Australians?

20:30 Haven't a clue, they never said. No, I have no idea what they thought, I suppose they thought we were a whole lot of hicks who weren't that knowledgeable. But this sort of thing happened, I can remember there's a chap running it, he was sort of a PR [public relations] man or something and he told us once that he could get us girls to go with, you see.

21:00 He'd, well that's what he said, and he said, I can remember this cause it was most unusual. He said to us, "If you're stumped at eleven o'clock at night, just give me a ring," and he will get us a Roxette, ah, a Rockette. And they were these ballet dancers, not, high hitting, high kicking people in this music hall, there were thirty of them in a line,

21:30 you see. So that's what he said, but I never rang him up.

So you never got stumped.

So any rate, it was really incredible.

So what would you be doing until three o'clock in the morning?

Oh just being at a nightclub or a, what else did we do, yeah, mainly at nightclubs.

Can you describe to me what these nightclubs looked like, did they have dim lights or what?

I'm just trying to think, I didn't,

22:00 well they had pretty loud music and they were mainly, you'd get up and dance as well as they'd put on this performance. There'd be singers and these people dancing and yeah, there'd be subdued lights, there'd be people moving around talking to people. We'd be talking to people and ourselves and drinking beer, I think that's all we drank in those days, yeah beer.

And if some men were kissing girls, were they kissing

22:30 **them in the nightclubs?**

No. I didn't see any. It was, in those days, well I don't know about other people, in those days you didn't do that sort of thing. You take them home you see and hope to give 'em a kiss before they said goodbye, that was it, that's the way it used to go in those days, for the non sophisticated, what the other blokes did, I don't know. But we had one bloke who was already married, another bloke had a steady girlfriend in

23:00 Sydney, I think they were more active than we were.

Even though they had people back at home?

Well yes, they still came to New York and went to the nightclubs.

So that time in New York was not long before America officially entered the war?

That's right. That was November the eleventh, 1941, and America came into the

23:30 War at Pearl Harbour on the sixth or seventh of December, '41, so which was very soon after that.

So what was the atmosphere in America like at that time?

In New York? Oh nobody seemed to worry about anything, everybody was having fun and there was no talk of war, that we heard.

Okay, I just want to take you back to your trip to Canada and ask you about

24:00 **what happened once you left Auckland?**

Well as I was saying, we were in the lounge, a hundred and twenty of us in double-decker bunks and we were playing poker and doing odd things like exercises. They had, they don't let you do nothing on a boat, you had to do things ahead of the military. So we'd be doing, I think we did marching and lectures and that type of thing and then when we had

24:30 time off we'd do, we'd be up to these other things. There was no grog on the boat.

And what were the sleeping arrangements?

On that boat they were double-decker bunks, in a normal cabin for two people I suppose there'd be four. Cause I remember in another ship, I remember there was, took two thousand, at least took two hundred passengers and it, when we were on it there

25:00 were two thousand, so.

And what was the scenery like?

Well we were going across the Pacific, we saw nothing because you don't, troop transports don't go into harbours unless they have to refuel or something. So across the Pacific it was nice weather and hardly any rocking and once or twice I saw some things, they were skewer

25:30 seagulls and that meant we were close to land. But one other time the, it was decided apparently by the ship people that they would have gun, gunnery practise, because we had a gun, a six inch gun on our stern for protection and so they, we could have a practise shoot. It was nothing to do with us, we just watched and they put us,

26:00 oh, this smoke float out in the bay and on the water sorry, and they fired at it and they were pretty good, they hit it too.

So to any other passing ship, did you just look like a cruiser?

We didn't see any other passing ships.

But if a ship for some reason did see you, they would think that the boat was what?

Well I don't know but being a troop transport, see we were being escorted as well by a Canadian light cruiser so,

26:30 and we saw no, never saw any other ships. They kept us away from the, see the, I think when we left, there were rumours going round that Lord Haw Haw, the German propagandist, said there were people leaving, you know they knew everything you see, this group of air force people leaving New Zealand and they wouldn't make it to Panama. So I think we went south you see and to fool them, but I doubt whether they,

27:00 I don't think they had any war ships in the Pacific at that stage.

But you didn't know where you were going, is that correct?

Well when you get, start from Auckland, when we go to Auckland we know we're going to that direction so the rumour is we're going to Canada, but how we gonna get there, nobody knows. You would've thought we'd go to Vancouver or some place but we didn't, we went through the Panama Canal and there into the Caribbean and we

27:30 went to a place called Curacao, I say, but everybody calls it Kira-cacao, but on Curacao that's how they pronounced it. And that was a Shell Refinery place and depot so our ship re-fuelled and then off we go north. Cause, and you know then the, when you're going north from your Caribbean in on the eastern side you got only two places, America and Canada, and American wasn't

28:00 in the war and we were going to Canada. And this is when a peculiar thing happened, this is where luck plays a huge part in warfare. Before we get in to Halifax, a few days before, they give out forms to us to fill in, you always do this in the air force, there's a form to fill in. And what it says, is they're asking your preferences, what did you want

28:30 to do? We're going to Service Flying Training School, what sort of school do you want to... Single-engined planes, flying single-engine planes which would lead on to fighter planes or twin-engine and multi-engine planes cause there was SFTS [Service Flying Training School] for multi-engine planes and which would lead on to bombers of course. And of course I only wanted to be a fighter pilot, so I wrote, 'Fighter, first preference fighter, second preference bomber,'

29:00 this multi-engine. Well about well two days before we're into Halifax they post on the notice board a list of who's going to what. And there my name is on this multi-engine bomber group and I was absolutely devastated, "Oh crikey, this is the end of the world." And so I think it was the next day the ship comes into Halifax Harbour, this huge harbour that's in Nova Scotia on the

29:30 eastern side of Canada. And there we fall in and I'm with this group going to this twin-engine group, and the commanding officer taking this parade says the magic words, "There has been a mistake, there are two too many in the multi-engine group, Winn and Young fall out and go to the single-engine."

30:00 I thought crikey, how wonderful. It, they, how would that happen? It's absolutely pure luck. People say you can make your luck but you can't take luck in the – often times in the services.

What were your reasons for...?

Sorry?

What were your reasons for wanting to be a single-engine and not a bomber?

Fighter pilot, oh that's the only reason I wanted to be in the air force, I wanted to go screaming across the sky shooting other planes down, being an ace fighter pilot and nothing else was of interest.

30:30 **And all those years that you wanted to be a fighter pilot, did you think about crashing?**

No. I never figured I'd crash, I never figured I'd be, other people could crash but I wouldn't. This is this I think this peculiar state of mind you get into that you're invincible, I think that's the peculiar thing you, you get brought down to earth later of course.

So is that an important part of being in the air force, feeling invincible, did other men

31:00 **feel...?**

Oh no I don't, I never asked anybody. You did, you never, well I never talked to and I never heard anybody else talking about those things so they were never spoken about, you didn't say those things, you might think it but. Now I don't know whether, what the other people thought but I felt I was, could handle it.

So how did you become aware of the LMF [lack of moral fibre] issue then if other people did?

The?

31:30 **LMF?**

Oh, I didn't mention that.

Well then...?

LMF, that means lack of moral fibre. And well I can't, I, I don't think they're, well if they had that they'd be removed and you wouldn't know, you, all you knew they weren't there. I didn't even know that

designation till after the war, I'd never heard it. Because if, we're all

32:00 volunteers, see, and it's very unlikely that that would show up in training. I could understand it showing up in operations but I can't remember, and I don't think they every said anything about somebody that that happened to, it was sort of never mentioned.

I just want to ask you about your stop in Curacao, what were your impressions when you first sailed...?

Well I'd never seen a place like this, it was

32:30 in the Caribbean, beautiful blue water like Montague Island. And it was a Dutch place and so they had these funny Dutch houses all over the place. And while we were there, we were allowed leave there, we weren't supposed to go into town but we did, we had Canadian dollars so that's why we knew we were going to Canada. And so we got a ride on, we had to get a, go in to, it was Sunday so nothing was happening.

33:00 So we got a taxi, and a most peculiar thing happened that stuck in my mind, the taxi driver had a split thumb on both sides and it was a congenital defect but I'd never seen that before. I was always interested in just about anything, the, I wanted to know what was going on all the time. But, so we went to there, we bought some bananas I remember in the, in Curacao itself but

33:30 and I think we had to pay too much money for them, but nothing much else happened.

And what about the language differences, how did you communicate?

Well I don't know what they, I think they must have been speaking in, we couldn't speak to them, I remember that. We had to sort of sign language and, you know, point to the township and take out money and he'd say, you know, he'd do the, it was all sort of sign language, we don't know what the hell he was saying. But he got his, he didn't want Canadian dollars

34:00 actually, he wanted American dollars but we didn't have any American dollars so I think we sort of talked him into it was Canadian dollars or nothing so he decided he'd take it as he was taking so many.

And from Curacao, then what happened?

Oh well we went up the, through the Caribbean and I noticed there, that I hadn't seen very often, flying fish. I saw them once years and years ago, but there were a lot of flying

34:30 fish there. I used to like to get up to the bow and look over the bow and watch where we were going and see the porpoises and with, round the ship and the flying fish. But it was pretty warm there of course, as we went north it's, we never saw land there and it started to get a bit cooler because it was, what was it, any rate it was getting ready to go into winter.

So can you tell me about arriving

35:00 **in Canada?**

Well that was in Halifax Harbour, we went into this harbour and it was a huge harbour, it's one of the best harbours around with a terrific number of ships. It was, I think it's even much bigger than Sydney and it's sort of open bay like place. But you didn't sort of, you weren't, I was interested in things like what sort of train we went into and what the engine was like

35:30 and all that sort of stuff that young people, young men were interested in.

Can you explain it in detail then what happened when you were told to get off the ship?

Oh well we got off the ship into the train, we're taken to this SFTS, Service Flying Training School. It was Number One Service Flying Training School, a permanent school in the Canadian Air Force in

36:00 out from Toronto, that's in Ontario, in the middle of Canada that is. So we start the SFTS course, which will lead onto promotion and wings, the whole bit, once you go through there you supposed to be, know everything. And so we started to fly Harvard aeroplanes, they were North American Harvards, they were the Wirraway fighter plane that we had in Australia we

36:30 got was a modification of the Harvard and with guns on it and so it's performance wasn't that good. You had six hundred horsepower engine, radial engine on this plane and we did all, we had to learn to fly that which is quite different from the Tiger Moth, a heavier plane with faster and more powerful and retractable under carriage, the whole thing. So we went through with the, what do you call it, the instructors and they're showing us what to

37:00 do and then we have to do it and go solo, and we do cross countries, we do aerobatics and we do formation flying and all this and... And we do the ground subjects like armaments and aircraft recognition and navigation and all that goes with it. And this goes on and then we, did I tell you about the food, that's the thing that struck me in

37:30 SFTS Canada, I can, I can visualise it today. It was the buffet type, I remember breakfast more than

anything, it was breakfast and I can remember the cereal, there was every, we'd, I'd never seen all the cereals that they had available for us. And of course there was huge jugs of milk to have and then we had, I remember orange juice I'd never seen before for breakfast and I

38:00 think there might have been tomato juice as well. But and the other thing was the second course which was bacon and eggs and this huge plate, two eggs, a pile of bacon and flapjacks I'd never seen before, they're sort of pancake things and the whole thing smothered in maple syrup. I thought, incredible.

How did it taste to you?

Magnificent. We were all, being Australian, nobody had ever seen anything like this. I'm

38:30 sure that's why there's so many fat people in North American continent the, you know, the food was incredible. So any rate we got through all that and whatever sticks in my mind. We had our exams again of course and because I was so keen on the air force and everything about the air force, a lot of them hadn't sort of been, knew anything about the air force when they started.

39:00 So in the exams I came top of the course and have a guess, Jack Young was second, you see, Roy Thiele was third, which was all right. But they only, we got our wings but of the course they, twenty per cent of the course were gonna be, become officers and of course I had, they had to make me an officer. So from there we went off into Canada, into the States and New York.

39:30 But it was a lot of fun the whole, we, unfortunately in training in the air force there were a whole lot of accidents.

Before we talk about that I think we'll change tapes, Doctor Winn.

Tape 5

00:39 **Okay I wanted to ask you about the training that was involved in Canada. Could you talk to me about what you actually had to do on a daily basis?**

Well there were two parts to it, there was the written and the things on the ground like navigation

01:00 lectures, and later of course we had to use that in navigation with the plane. And then there'd be armaments, learn about the machine guns and the guns that were there, that was a hands on thing. And then there would be aircraft recognition was a thing a lot of people had trouble with but as I was so mad keen on all the aeroplanes of the air forces of the world I knew actually more about aircraft recognition than the

01:30 teacher, because they probably weren't interested anyway. So and then you'd put into practice, in the flying part was you had to progress through the various stages of flying, like your take off and landings and then you'd learn, have to learn about steep turns and you gradually built up until you're doing aerobatics. Cause if you're gonna be a fighter pilot, you gotta be able to throw the plane

02:00 around the sky, you can't do anything gently and that's one of the reasons why airlines hate fighter pilots. And yeah, that'd be about all, so.

What planes were you flying in?

It was called a North American Harvard. It was a single-engine, of course, low winged mono plane, with a retractable under carriage, a radial engine, six hundred horsepower, can't remember the name, I think

02:30 it might have been a Wright engine, and there were no armament on it, it was just for training purposes.

You mentioned that there were many accidents, could you tell me about them?

Well the peculiar thing in the air force is that when an accident occurs, a crash somewhere, they do something stupid and they, you're not there. So you hear about the accident, you don't see the person again

03:00 but you don't see what's happened. This is, I think, the whole peculiar thing about the air force that it's everything at a distance. The fighting's done at a distance, so you don't really see the people you're fighting against. You, on one occasion I got nearly to that but, usually it's just doing things and performing something and you're looking at planes and so... Funnily enough it didn't seem

03:30 to worry us that much, I didn't think I was gonna have an accident so I suppose that helped. And you thought that if somebody had an accident it was their fault when of course it could, quite possibly not been their fault at all. So there was sort of a, I suppose a bit of callous, that's the only way you could call it, cause we didn't get emotionally upset, we just thought, “Oh that's crook.” That's about all you'd say.

So did you hear what kind of accidents people had during training?

04:00 Well we didn't see it but we learned about it, they might be doing aerobatics and get uncoordinated and fly in. They could, night-time was a problem, they, night flying, some of them I suppose they just didn't know where the ground was, cause it's very difficult at night to fly cause you're supposed to fly by the instruments, and there's always a conflict. If you're gonna fly on instruments you mustn't look outside,

04:30 you just gotta concentrate on the instruments. If there are stars around or something like that then there's a tendency to try and fly as though it was day time, and of course this conflict can confuse you.

And what happens when that confusion...?

Well I'm trying to work out why people crash, so I didn't, so I really don't know, a lot of the time you, there was no

05:00 reason, nobody... And they didn't, we never seemed to have, in training they never sort of did post mortems on the, whether how or the accident had occurred, it was, you just didn't worry about it, you just went on to what you were doing and it was just sort of bad luck.

Who, what other countries were involved in the Empire Air Training Scheme?

Oh that was, the major one was Canada and then

05:30 the, Australia, New Zealand and Rhodesia.

So in Canada, in the training, did you have people of all different nationalities?

There were mainly Australians, but I suppose twenty per cent were Canadian, cause they were mixing people, well I don't think they were trying to mix people up but it's terribly, must have been terribly difficult organising the training. It had to be a certain period with a certain number of people, with people moving all around the world

06:00 and I don't know how the hell they ever did it actually. But...

How many people did you lose...?

Lose?

Or how many people were killed during training?

I can't remember but we didn't dwell on it, that was in the past. I think about three or four in Canada on the course, it was, it got worse later. But I was struck, after the war reading

06:30 the history I was struck with the huge number of people were killed on training in the air force. It was, I think it was seven thousand people killed, RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] people killed while training, air crew that is.

How long were you in Canada for?

I thought you might ask me this. I really can't tell, I mean...

Roughly.

Well a few weeks, or might have been a month or more. It, well, no,

07:00 might have been, I'm not sure, it might have been two months. I was, I can remember when we got there it was the Fall was on because all the trees, the beautiful trees were in autumn tinge; in Canada that's magnificent. And then when we left Halifax to cross the Atlantic there was snow, so what does that make it, a few months.

And when did you visit New York, when was

07:30 **that?**

That was, we arrived there on the eleventh of November, that's Armistice Day, 1941.

So that was on leave from Canada?

Yes, on leave.

So when you left Canada, where did you go from there?

Well we went up through Montreal, we had a, I think we might have had a leave there, we might have changed trains or something. The thing I remember, this is peculiar but

08:00 I noticed the different smells in different places and Montreal had a smell all of its own. And this is odd, but when we used to go to the, the few times we did go to the pictures in Australia, you'd get a program, and the program always had a smell, I subsequently learned later that it's something to do with the size or whatever, but that had

08:30 a smell. And Montreal I remember stuck in my mind, had that same smell, which is a bit peculiar. Any rate from there we went off to Halifax again, that's where we came in, preparatory to going across the

Atlantic to England.

How did you get to England?

Well that's, it was, what happened was that we were to, we were at this depot at Halifax, when they wanted to do things

09:00 they'd take you out. And this group, my group was, have a guess, was myself, Jack Young and ten sergeants, two officers and ten sergeants. So we're taken down to the harbour and we get on a lighter with our gear and there were lots and lots of boats in our harbour, waiting to form up convoys. And we go out in this lighter and we pass this boat looks terrific, and we'd pass that

09:30 and another boat I liked the look of, we went past that. And we did this a few times and then we came to a place where there was no boats, and in the distance there's this tiny little boat and I thought, "Crikey, I don't want to go to England in, across the Atlantic in that." Any rate we had to, we got on board and there were only twelve of us and this, normal troop ships going across would have thousands. And so I was designated of course the

10:00 OC ship, officer commanding the ship, and sounds good, if you were the officer commanding the Queen Mary the personnel on it. So we, the ship was about four thousand tonnes, it was a motor ship but it was called the Moss Fruit. Now this is unusual because it was a Norwegian ship and in peace time it used to take

10:30 bananas from Honduras in middle America to Europe so it had a fair turn of speed. This thing could go quite fast, it was not a greyhound but it could go about seventeen knots, cruising. And so any rate we take off, the boat goes out of the harbour and I'm looking for a convoy... no convoy. If we keep on I suppose we'll get the convoy tomorrow, look around, no convoy. We went right across the Atlantic, U-Boats [Unterseeboot – German submarine]

11:00 in all directions, but we zigzagged as we went was the normal procedure to, if a U-Boats fires a torpedo, you have trouble directing it if you're zigzagging. The captain always looked worried, I couldn't work this out cause we weren't worried, it was a beautiful trip, lovely weather and hardly any seas, hardly, well it wasn't rough at all. And then we get into Liver – come up, came into Liverpool

11:30 via the northern islands in there, and I find out what we're carrying, we were an ammunition ship, and that accounts for the worry on the captain's face. Cause that's why I think, one of the reasons that we didn't go in convoy because if we'd been hit by a torpedo and it blew up, it might have damaged surrounding boats. Cause there had been an ammunition ship blew up

12:00 in Halifax, I think it might have been the First World War and it wrecked the town. So I was very happy to get off that.

Did you have an idea where the ammunition was heading for?

No. Just going to England, and, well they needed a terrific amount of ammunition. The people, Liverpool was all smashed up from the air raids this, but the people didn't seem to be worried, they were quite, seemed to be, I mean they weren't hang dog like that, they were going about their

12:30 business, they didn't seem to be worried at all.

What evidence was there of the air raids?

Well there were smashed buildings all over the place. And they weren't, there was no fires running at that stage, the air raids on Liverpool at that stage had been, what, a few months before. So there were just buildings all demolished and bits out of them and they were a bit depressing to see that, but

13:00 so you realised that was what was happening.

How long did you stay in Liverpool for?

About four hours. So we got on a train then and went via London to this depot, another depot at Bright, ah, Bournemouth on the Channel where we were, you wait around, you go to a place, you wait to go further. And in this place it was,

13:30 you got another form was given to you with, for your preferences, and this time it said, cause we were heading, this was gonna be an operational training unit, the planes you're gonna fight with. And it had 'fighter, bomber, reconnaissance,' I remember. And I thought I'm not gonna fall for this again so I wrote fighter, fighter, fighter. And with luck would have it, I was sent to an OTU [Operational Training Unit] and we,

14:00 it was 58 OTU in Grangemouth, Scotland near the Firth of Forth and Jack Young was with me of course and lo and behold it was a Spitfire OTU. Which is what I'd been looking forward to all my life I suppose, you know, they're the most beautiful planes and they're incredible performance, and so I thought, it's just marvellous.

14:30 **So what did you do there, what kind of training?**

Well the Spitfire's a single-engined, ah, single-seater, and so you couldn't learn to fly it with an

instructor, you had to go solo one go. How they did it, you had to get familiarisation with the cockpit and what was in it because there were all sorts of things you'd never seen before. So there was a cut down Spitfire in a hangar and you

15:00 get in it and you know where all the levers and all these things are in it, a whole lot of them, the gun button of course and the thing to bring the under carriage up, and the thing to work the constant speed air screw and all the other gauges that are on the there you have to be careful of. And so when you got that clear, you fly the Spitfires so they did that to me, and I can always remember, I'll never forget it, walking out onto this tarmac and

15:30 there's my plane out there and they, it was incredible to watch, look at. Any rate I remember getting into this tight fitting cockpit, hardly any room and then you started up and there in front of you, you got over a thousand horsepower with this famous Rolls Royce Merlin engine. And so you taxi round to

16:00 where you're gonna take off and if I remember correctly we had the, because you couldn't see with a great engine in front of you, you couldn't see straight ahead when it was taxiing, so you had a bloke would be sitting, one of the ground staff sitting on the wingtip to tell you where you were if you were gonna run into something. So and then he got off and of course to take off you put the engine into, propeller into fine pitch and then it's full throttle, cause you always do that

16:30 to take off. And of course this engine burst into roar and so we hurtled down the runway and the acceleration was so great you'd be forced back into the seat as it went down and then the thing just leapt into the air, and it was incredible. So you flew round a bit, get familiarisation and come in to land, and I just

17:00 I, you know, I was ecstatic I suppose. But after that you go through the rigmarole of doing all the things you gotta do, but you're always on your own, you never have an instructor in there, because you can't. And the whole thing got much more interesting, cause we had to do all sorts of things there, getting ready to go to the squadron. And you had to do low flying and when I say low flying I mean it. You, fifty feet was the

17:30 height you were supposed to be, or lower. So you fly, I remember flying over the Lake District of northern England and over the Scottish Highlands and I remember seeing Glen Eagles Golf Course from a low altitude. And you did aerobatics and dogfighting and also not much, there was hardly any theory there. It was mainly about the Spitfire and what you could do and not do.

18:00 So you do all that, you do air to air firing and see if you can shoot. And there were, one thing there struck me was, there was a chap there, an American, who joined the RAF [Royal Air Force], he was, quite a few of them did that and he was – in civilian life, he was a crop duster so he had to fly planes very low and you gotta be pretty good as a pilot to be a crop

18:30 duster to stay alive. And any rate so he was a crop duster and he had over a thousand hours flying and he used to give aerobatic displays in aerodromes in the States. So he was pretty, I was, I felt flattered when he asked me whether I would do dogfighting practise with him, but he always shot me down in theory.

What was his name?

Jack Currie.

Could you tell me about the

19:00 **dogfighting?**

Well two planes, the idea is, in this training system was you'd be apart like that and much the same altitude and it'd be on. And then the, you'd have to get into a manoeuvre, you'd either try to get him and he'd try to get away and so he'd be doing steep turns to get away and I'd be doing things. And it's all trying to, you'd be upside down and some of the time, it's terribly hard to know what's going on because you just

19:30 got this plane, you're trying to follow it around. And so he was much better at it than me, but I hoped I'd improve.

How could you tell in theory who had won?

Oh well you couldn't. I, well I could, that sticks in my mind, I remember once I was doing a steep turn to get away from him and I was above him and I can remember he did this manoeuvre and he came up like that in a stall and he was able to get

20:00 deflection. See, shooting in aerial combat, a lot of the time you could do four and a half straight at the first, that's only if the plane's right in front of you going the same direction as you are. Or if the plane's coming right at you and you go there, there's, you aim right at the plane. But if the plane's turning you have to do deflection shooting, and that is, I don't know whether you've ever done any duck shooting, but if somebody in duck shooting

20:30 when the duck's flying you have to aim in front of the duck, if you aim. And this clay pigeon shooting, Diamond [Michael Diamond, Olympic shooter] will have, that chap Diamond will have to be, he does

deflection shooting. He works out how far, he's gotta work out how far you think the duck will go by the time the shot gets to him and the duck hits the shot. So I could tell, I only learned this later this manoeuvre he was doing, I learned about this

21:00 later, that he would come up to get inside me, he'd come up like that, and on the stall he could fire at me, when I realised that, that he'd won. So well I mean just, we could talk to each other, or could we, I don't think we had radio then, we might've, I'm not sure whether we had radio or we could talk to each other. We just wag your wings when you wanted to stop and just go back to the airfield.

What uniform were you wearing

21:30 **at this stage?**

Well I was an officer then so, luckily enough, so I had a tailored uniform, it was done by one of the London tailors and I thought it looked pretty good actually, but as my badge of rank was right at the bottom on the officer's scale, it had a thin thing of braid round there and... But I always remember

22:00 the, and I had a peak cap then and nobody else had them, you had to be an officer to have one of those. And a great coat cause it was pretty warm – ah, pretty cold and it was a most magnificent thing, it must have cost a huge amount of money, cause this was a London tailor, I mean you just did it, that's what you had to do, you'd front up, the others didn't have tailored uniforms, they got their stripes on their sleeves. But they really, I was a bit against it, I thought it was very

22:30 unsatisfactory or unhappy for all of us, all going, doing the same course, the same everything but a division had been made in the, in us. We were all air crew and I couldn't see why you'd want to have different ranks in the air crew, I could understand that a flight commander having a superior rank to somebody else or the squadron leader but I couldn't see why the air crew had to be different.

How much were you paid?

23:00 Paid? I haven't a clue. It was all right, you, yeah it must have been all right because I mean you weren't overpaid but you could do things. Go on leave, when you went on leave you, we'd stay at a hotel in London and you could pay for that, and see shows. I saw lots of, I don't know why I was interested in West End shows, where the theatres were, they were all going. And I

23:30 remember saw one with Vivian Leigh in it, she was the star of The Doctor's Dilemma by Bernard Shaw, and there were Tales of Hoffman and one of the ones that really got me was that Margot Fonteyn in Swan Lake, she was absolutely incredible.

So you had leave in London, what was London like, this was after the blitz?

Well, black outs to start with, the major damage to London had already occurred so there

24:00 was only the occasional air raid, so which made it much better but the, it was really smashed up, there were whole areas of London burned out. And St Paul's was still there, no bomb, I don't know whether a bomb hit it, Buckingham Palace got one bomb but it was standing. I can always remember the Battersea Power Station, it was a huge power station on the banks of the Thames and they'd tried to,

24:30 the Germans apparently had tried to bomb this thing but it was still standing, it's the luck of where the bombs go.

What was the mood like in London?

Well most of the time you were with service men and all that was to do with what was going on and what you had to do and as it was always, I was always with pilots, fighter pilots, we were all, it's the same sort of

25:00 talk you got up to. The only people, civilians you'd see would be, weren't, the girls you met, they were the only civilians, but most of them were in the services like the WAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Air Force] or the army or the navy, and so the talk was mainly about service things. Although I did have relatives in Norfolk and this was a farmer,

25:30 a relative of my mother and they talked about farming of course and what was happen. The rationing was on and that was, that's when we first ran into it. It was pretty, on the stations, the air force stations, the food was quite good, you'd get an egg sometimes for breakfast usually on a – and other things. If you weren't on a station, you're in London, you'd

26:00 take your ration book and stamps and you'd go to a hotel and the only thing that wasn't on the ration was sausages. And they were a special sausage with I think was ten per cent meat and about thirty per cent sawdust, I'm sure it was sawdust, I think it was sawdust. But you could have as much as you like of that which is... and there were vegetables. But I can't remember

26:30 eating anything other than that at the hotel. If you handed them your ration book you could get things but it was, milk was scarce cause that was all going to the children and there was... But people were quite, nobody seemed to be dejected, they were all, it was all, I think Churchill summed it up. Everybody thought, you know, we're gonna win,

27:00 we weren't of course at that stage, things were pretty dreadful. But I can't, I don't think, when over the times I was there, I can't recall an air raid where I had to go down into the air raid shelters, so that was a nice period I think between raids, they after, later than that they, the raids got up again but I was gone by then.

So

27:30 **how long were you based in Scotland for?**

Oh a month or two I think. See the thing happened there of course, did I tell you about, we got the preferences again after we finished in the OTU, another sheet with preferences on. This said, 'Where did you want to go to?' There were various areas in England that are groups where... there was Ten Group was down in Cornwall,

28:00 there was Eleven Group opposite France and there was Twelve Group in Norfolk area and Thirteen Group up Newcastle way. And so the only action was going on was on Eleven Group, so I put Eleven Group. And I, when they told me where I was going they didn't get what I requested, I was sent to the Isle of Man. There were no, nothing was happening round the Isle of Man, but there was a squadron, there was an air force squadron getting

28:30 itself ready I suppose and it was 457 Squadron RAAF so that's why I was sent there because it was Australian air force squadron, I presume. And when I arrived of course you go to a station you have to report to the adjutant, so I arrived and said, "Pilot Officer Winn reporting, sir," and the first thing he said to me, I remember, was, "The policy of this squadron is

29:00 last to come, first to go, so you and Clinch," the other bloke I was with, "you're going to the Middle East." So I said, "Oh crikey, can I do some flying?" He said, "Yes, you can do some flying." And I did a few flights round the Isle of Mann, nothing was happening there. And so went off on leave and what happened was I had to be recalled because 457 Squadron was being shifted from the Island of Mann to Red

29:30 Hill in, down below south of London in the Eleven Group where all the action was going on. And they were replacing 452 Squadron RAAF, which is rather a famous squadron with Paddy Finnigan was an ace in the, squadron commander. And there were people like Bluey Truscott who, I met him in, he'd got all the gongs in the world and he was, met him in London in Fleet Street in the pub, but

30:00 it was nice to meet the famous people. And so they swapped over, but 457 Squadron weren't very competent and what had happened, the Germans had introduced into their air force this wonderful plane, the Focke-Wulf 190, it was brand new and it could run rings round the Spitfire. And course the first operation that 457

30:30 went on, they lost four out of twelve and numerous others thereafter and a bit dejected and, but I wasn't amongst it, I thought, "God, I've saved my life." Cause there was, I'd be sprawled without any experience at all and up against a superior aircraft like that, I'm sure I would've been shot down.

So you were told you were being sent to the Middle East, but what actually happened?

No, they didn't say that. Oh, from the

31:00 squadron they told me, "You're going to the Middle East," but you didn't hear anything else, you just had to report to the, another depot, embarkation depot in, report there, you had to wait again for, to get a ship or whatever's happening to you. And we knew where we were going because we got yellow fever injections, so you could say, oh well, we're definitely going there. Then we had to get, they got a big convoy this time, it was a decent

31:30 convoy, there were eighteen ships, they were all pretty big. We were on the, it was called the Highland Chieftain, and it was well protected this one, we had two cruisers in the middle and a screen of destroyers around us. And we headed off south down in the Atlantic amongst all the U-boats and what should happen, our ship breaks down and stops in mid Atlantic. And of

32:00 course the convoys never wait for anything, they keep going and we didn't have any, I thought we ought to have a destroyer from this group looking after us, and no. And the ship was designed for, in peace time, two hundred passengers and there were two thousand of us on board, so it was a bit worrying to tell you the truth. But they got it going again, we caught up by evening, we caught up with main convoy.

32:30 **So who else was on the boat, the two thousand?**

Well it was chock-a-block with troops, we were, there were air force people we got to know, there were army people, we didn't mix with, well not snooty, we just didn't know – it wasn't on your wave length. And we had some American people on board, I don't know why because

33:00 they... What happened, when we got on the ship, or before, we were all issued by, or we were anyway, revolvers you see, I presume, don't know why, but no ammunition of course, you got this revolver, Smith and Wesson revolver I remember. And I can remember on this boat these Americans were misbehaving, were waving their revolvers around when they shouldn't and so everybody had to hand in their revolvers, but

33:30 most peculiar.

Now how long was this journey?

Oh I can't remember exactly how long, a week, how long does it take to get from England to Sierra Leone? That's on the west, south, west part of Africa, so that's in the tropics of course and can't remember how long. We got there and of course we went to another depot again. And then from

34:00 there we got another ship and went from there to Lagos, that's the capital of Nigeria, we're going east, we're in that part of Congo was there. And then we wait again and another depot and then we're off to, we're flown across Africa by Pan American airways were doing a job in Africa, it was part of the war effort I suppose. They were troop transport planes, they weren't comfortable, they were aluminium dents in seats

34:30 and along, one each side. So from there we, when our time came they flew us across Africa, I saw Lake Chad and all those funny, it's all desolate, and we had to land a couple of places to get on fuel. But it was sort of desert like country with a few odd trees, I don't know how the hell they ever survived in it, they're all goats they had, presumably

35:00 goats didn't eat anything. And then we went to Khartoum on the, that's in the Sudan, on the junction of the Blue and White Niles, which I was interested in. Cause the Blue Nile comes in from Abyssinia and it's clear blue water and the White Nile's coming in from south of, southern parts of, around Lake Victoria and it's all muddy, so there's this peculiar sight of a river with two pieces, once, before it mixes up.

35:30 So we see, we went on leave and I saw the place where General Gordon had been murdered and the, when the Mardi erupted, Churchill had been in the cavalry in that thing, that rebellion in the Sudan. And then I, we went, as we were walking around I remember the, a lot of people in that part of the world want to sell you souvenirs, just about everything you can think of. And there were lots of people trying to sell

36:00 souvenirs and they're all sort of made up, they weren't genuine articles I didn't think, so I said I want a genuine thing as a souvenir. So the only thing I could see was this, one of the sellers, he's a youth I suppose, and he had a white thing around his head, turban like covering they all used in that part of the world. So I pointed at that and said, "How much?" and I don't think he, you had to show money and,

36:30 I think you could say, if I said, "How much?" I knew what he meant, he knew what I meant and he'd say something and I knew what he meant, because it was just an amount of money. And he shook his head like that and in his hand, put these other things, and I shook my head and pointed to his turban. I had to do this a few times and he turned to his buddies, there were a few of them there and had a powwow with them, I don't know what he said. But any rate he agreed and my money had got a bit, increased by that time,

37:00 so I gave him the money he took this thing off his head so I had something genuine, but obviously it was a bit dirty.

When you first arrived in Sierra Leone, what was your first impression of the…?

Of where?

Sierra Leone, when you first…?

Saudi?

Sierra Leone, when you first…?

Oh there, before Khartoum.

Before Khartoum, when you first arrived?

Oh in Sierra Leone. Well we got off the boat at Freetown and then we went up to another depot. And

37:30 that was, I'd never been to the tropics like that before it was, you know, the full tropics and there were the, naturally, the natives from there and the, we went to this place, we just had to wait. And I can remember the, what you had to do, you had to get a, they said they were boys, he was about twelve, fifteen or something and he was gonna do your washing. And I always remember you had to,

38:00 his pay was ten shillings a week, and I thought that was excessive but cause we didn't earn very much, but that was the fixed rate. Actually ten shillings was, the basic wage in Sydney just before the war was about, was four pounds ten. Now there, ten shillings, there were twenty shillings in the pound so that's,

38:30 this is the basic wage for, would be, gotta work it out, there were two ten shillings, so four pounds would be eight ten shilling notes and one, that's nine ten shilling notes a person in Australia working on the basic wage would be paid that a week. So we were paying ten shillings, and any rate so we didn't worry, we just paid it up, so what do you do with the money any way.

39:00 So nothing much happened there, it was just terribly hot and we just wait, I don't think we went on leave at all, there was nowhere to go.

Where were you sleeping?

We were in huts. I think, the ones at Freetown were manufactured wooden huts with roofs on them. When we got to Nigeria we were in native huts, round things with

39:30 native, you know, sort of, wood bits, brush I suppose you'd call it, on top.

So by the time you arrived in Khartoum, did you know what you were going to do from then on in?

No, you're never told. You're just sent, you work out theories where you might be going but you have no idea. They don't even tell you on the plane that you're going to Cairo, it's only when we got on the plane at Cairo, at

40:00 Khartoum and they said they're going to Cairo. So we thought that that was a possibility but you can never tell because you might be sent anywhere. So we fly up the Nile, not up the Nile, down the Nile north to Cairo and you'd never guess, you're put in another depot again.

What were these depots like?

Well this was called the, what was it called, Heliopolis was on

40:30 the outskirts of Cairo, it was, there was the Heliopolis Sporting Club where, Egyptian Club, you know, that had a swimming pool funnily enough in it. And when we went on leave that's where we used to go to there and have a swim and we could have lemon squash to drink cause being a Moslem country, there's no alcohol. And the, we were in tents, two man tents, they,

41:00 but they were dug into the ground so the fly was like that, and I think this was because of the heat and the sides of the tent were sort of sunk into the ground. And there's nothing much to do except go on leave unless you get told what you have to do. And one, on a number of occasions, because I was an officer I had to do, there were people misbehaving in Cairo and being brought in by the military police for, what are mainly

41:30 for drunk and disorderly which seemed to be the standard thing that people were doing wrong. And I had to be, act like a magistrate, decide what I was gonna, take a summary of evidence and make a decision about whether they go to court martial or further up or what. And you'd have the military police would bring them in, they were all a bit tough blokes and all stern and everything. And most of the people were, you know, they were just ordinary sort of people.

Tape 6

00:39 **Doctor Winn, can you, I'd like to ask you now about your arrival in Cairo, can you tell me when that was and what was happening at the time?**

Well, just trying to work it out, it'd be, I suppose September [actually July] would be the time I got there, I

01:00 went on to this transit camp, or this depot. But there were amazing things going on in the Middle East at that stage. The British, who had pushed the Italians back in North Africa, the Germans had come over to assist them and with them came this General Erwin Rommel who was known as the Desert Fox cause he was so good. And

01:30 they were, he was with his Afrika Korps and they was fighting backwards and forwards across North Africa between the Eighth Army on one side, our side, and his Afrika Korps on the other side. At this stage he'd got the better of the British and he'd gone all the way from Benghazi area all the way towards Cairo, and in the process he captured

02:00 Tobruk in forty-eight hours when it'd held out previously for five months when it was occupied by the Australians. So it was a terrible shock and Rommel kept advancing and it got, he got all the way, drove the Eighth Army back all the way to Alamein which is an area to the west of Alexandria and Cairo there, I suppose fifty miles from

02:30 Alexandria. Oh, and he was halted in this position, mainly due to the Australian Ninth Division and New Zealand Division and he started to build up his forces to do to the rest of the trip and finish it off by attacking in that position and going through to Cairo then Suez Canal and he could put everybody off to

03:00 be able to outflank the Red Army and the Caucasus and probably even link up with Japan and India. And of course the oil fields would have fallen too, so it would have been a terrible disaster. There was a terrific flap on at that stage, a lot of the people thought they, Rommel, cause he was so good, he'd win without any trouble. And so there were runs on the bank and the burning of papers

03:30 in the embassy which came to be known as Ash Wednesday, I suppose that's always the term. And even

Mussolini, I've learned that later, had had his White Horse carried over to Africa so he could ride in triumph through the streets of Cairo. So, and our General Auchinleck wasn't doing very well, the Eighth Army was really a beaten army. So Churchill got a bit concerned and

04:00 he decided to do something about it, so he flew to Cairo and sorted things out by sacking Auchinleck. And he was gonna appoint a new commander, well the one he was gonna appoint Gott, he was a, well known in the Middle East as very good, he was killed in an aircraft accident. So Montgomery had to appoint his second choice, Montgomery who was in England and that was the,

04:30 he was told, Montgomery, that on the eighth of August, I learned all this later in these times, because when we're doing it, you don't hear about all this. But Montgomery heard about it, his being ordered out on the eighth of August, he left on the tenth of August, flew to Gibraltar and on the eleventh of August, funnily that was the day I arrived on the squadron. But the other thing I was, interested me was,

05:00 that was the day, eleventh of August, that the most heavily defended convoy left Gibraltar heading for Malta in the middle of the Mediterranean, surrounded by hostile forces, to supply them, because they were on the verge of starvation. So Churchill ordered this, navy people didn't want to do it and I don't blame them. So what happened, this convoy consisted of fourteen merchant ships and for escort

05:30 they had the two most powerful, powerfully armed battle ships, the Nelson and the Rodney, as escort, and three aircraft carriers, and cruisers and twenty-four destroyers. Well there was attack a lot of the way to Malta and nine of the fourteen were sunk and one of the aircrafts was sunk and cruisers but they got the supplies through to Malta. Montgomery

06:00 left Malta on the, left sorry, Gibraltar on the eleventh, and arrived in Cairo on the twelfth of August. What happened then was he went to see Auchinleck as the original commander, who told him he couldn't take over the Eighth Army until the fifteenth of August. Now all this time the Germans have been reinforcing, they're getting ready to attack. So Montgomery

06:30 goes out to see what's happening in the desert and he starts off at the northern part beside the sea where the Ninth Australian Division is and he's inspecting and talking to all the people he can. And he mentions that the Australian hat's pretty good for the desert so they offer him one, so he puts it on. Now he didn't put a proper dent in it, and it was up at the side which isn't usually done out in the sun, it looked a bit odd. But after that he went down,

07:00 saw as many units as he could and they started to give him badges which put all over this hat and it looked quite comical, and a lot of the Generals have felt that he was, over did it. Because what he was doing was being a showman, which he had to be, because he had to turn round a defeated Eighth Army at Alamein and turn it into a victorious one and he only had eighteen days. And to me that's incredible,

07:30 it's really a miracle. So then, what happened then was, a battle started to develop but we were on the squadron before that but I'll mention the battle, I probably might be better first. On the thirty-first of August, Rommel attacked, and with our help, he broke through the lines and came up on Alam el Halfa Ridge it's called. And he was knocked back and he had to go back

08:00 and get behind his lines and his mine fields that he'd built up, over a million mines he had in there and they were five miles deep this mine field. So our squadron and other squadrons and the night bombers and one of them an Australian squadron plastered him day and night, so that's why he went round behind his mine fields and then of course it was needed to build up to the Battle of Alamein. And

08:30 that took a while and in that time we were operating of course and our job was to get air superiority over Germans. So I got the squadron on the eleventh of August, I did my first operational trip on the twenty-first of August. It's peculiar, I don't know if people might be interested that, what we did, we were

09:00 239 Wing there were four squadrons, that's 450 ourselves, 3 Squadron, a permanent RAAF squadron, then 112 Squadron RAF and 260 Squadron RAF, I think it was. What, the job we had to do was be close support to the Eighth Army so we had to be like a long range artillery, we would drop bombs and other things but when you start,

09:30 you've gotta learn your ropes when you join the squadron, and I think I didn't mention that. But when we were finished the conversion course before we joined the squadron, the squadron leaders would come up to the conversion course place and look us over, the new replacement pilots, cause we were losing a few. And lo and behold

10:00 when I'm there, I see this character I know, he's Alan Ferguson, he's my brother-in-law's brother. So he said, "G'day Dick, how are you?" and I said the same thing. I didn't know he was Squadron Leader then, he said, "Would you like to join my Squadron?" I said, "Yes please." So it was wonderful to have him as the CO [commanding officer].

Because you'd arrived in Egypt as part of the 457 Squadron, is that...?

No we got 457 Squadron, after I've been in the depot,

10:30 we were then trained to change to the new Kittyhawk fighter bombers that were there, and then from,

when we got that training, we went to the squadron.

So what was the difference between what you'd been fighting in and, or what you'd been trained in and the Kittyhawk?

Well the Kittyhawk, the Spitfire was a beautiful machine and much superior to our Kittyhawks, a Curtis fighter, an American fighter, the only reason it was there was in plentiful supply. It was inferior, I'm

11:00 afraid, to the Spitfire in performance and also inferior to the BFME 109 [Messerschmitt BF-109] that the Germans were flying, so we had to alter our whole tactics because of that. And we had to fly in formation, a defensive formation, because the Germans were superior, they could climb up nearly twice as fast as we were, so if they wanted to get out of the way, they just climb straight up. The only

11:30 advantage is our armament was probably slightly better than theirs, but you had to be able to shoot it before it was any use.

How long did you have to make those adjustments to flying the Kittyhawk, can you describe…?

Oh about a couple of weeks. But when you can fly you can really fly everything, well that's, it's similar single-seater fighter plane. It was very heavy the Kittyhawk,

12:00 strong in itself and it could take incredible punishment but its performance was... If you go, it couldn't climb but it could go down, straight down very fast so if you wanted to get away from them you'd put your nose down and let her go.

So can you please explain to me then exactly what you would do in the Kittyhawk from when you took off?

Right. Well the squadron, I'd better say how

12:30 it was worked, the squadron went on operations. There would be twelve aeroplanes. Now there'd be, they'd be, when they'd be flying, we'd take off and we'd get into formation, there'd be a bottom cover as it were with six planes and a top cover with another six planes making up the twelve. This bottom cover the same as the top one would have a plane here, number one it was called,

13:00 and behind him, an experienced pilot, and behind that plane here would be his number two, which would be another plane with an inexperienced pilot. And now they were arranged, there'd be what they called 'em pairs, one pair, and then there'd be another pair and another pair. The pair in the middle number one would be the leader, now that's the bottom cover. The top cover is exactly the same but the leader of the top cover, or he would be Blue

13:30 One on the gaggle board, so that's what the designation he had, the squadron leader of the lower one would be Red One. When we, you took off, you form, go into this formation and fly over the German lines and we always, your problem is being shot at by – attacked by the Germans so you had to do a defensive system. Because if the sun was up here in the sky then we

14:00 would fly, the bottom cover'd be there and the top cover here. Now the reason for that is, that the saying that we're always told, "Watch out for the Hun [German] in the sun." Because see, if you're flying along and the sun's up there, the person wanting to attack you would get in the sun, well you can't see him if you look up, but if you go like that you can, so we'd fly over the lines like that. The first sort of thing we'd do is armed reconnaissance, it was called, where

14:30 you go over the lines to have a look and hope the Germans'll come up, you can have a crack at them. The other thing was armed reconnaissance with a bomb, that you'd carry a, start off two fifty pound bomb, that's about a hundred kilos and then later we got the five hundred pounds bombs. And you took that over the lines and that used to annoy the Germans so they'd be sure to come up when we did that, and you could tell when you went over the lines,

15:00 where you were. See it's very hard in the desert because of the... Mediterranean's to the north, the desert's to the south and the coast line goes like that, so navigation was pretty easy. If you're over water you headed south, if you're over land you headed north, got to the coast road and went home but most people, you know, we were terrible at navigation I'm afraid. The, so, where was I?

Can I ask, you're flying over the German lines and you look down, what do you see?

Well you couldn't see anything on the

15:30 ground, just looking at the ground, there's no trenches or anything. You knew when you're over their lines because they'd be shooting at you, with their famous eighty-eight millimetre heavy anti-aircraft gun. Or if you're down too low you'd cop it from their twenty millimetre anti-aircraft guns. So you'd fly over the lines and wonder what happened, the first time I ever went on operations you don't know anything of course at that stage.

16:00 And I remember Alan said to me, "Now look, we're going over to do an armed reconnaissance and you won't see anything, I just want you to stay glued to my tail," you see, "don't drop off anywhere, you've got to stay there, if you do drop off you'll probably be curtains." So we went off over the lines there, we were apparently, apparently we were attacked by the German fighters, and there was a bit of a

16:30 mix up and I stayed glued to Alan Ferguson. We came back and landed and I said, “Well what happened?” I hadn’t a clue. So you progress from that, he always get, the first sprog pilots always get, go to the CO first and then you get further on than that, you find you’re more on your own. And then later you come number one and you’ve got to have somebody behind you,

17:00 you slowly go through, of course we’re losing people all the time so you gotta keep replacing them. So the next thing you do was this armed reconnaissance, and when we went over the lines as I was saying, but our manoeuvre, because we were inferior to the Messerschmitt 109 our formation was defensive formation and we, so we had to be able to

17:30 react to their actions. Now when we’re flying over the lines, the German fighters came up to attack us, their formation was always line astern, a leader like that, all the other planes like that and he’d go traipsing around the sky like that. So when we would get over the lines, their lines, we had to look out for the German planes, we called ’em bandits, so all the pilots would be looking all over the place and somebody’d pick up the Germans, they’re up in the

18:00 sky somewhere. And we’d call up the CO and say, “Bandits three o’clock up,” or whatever and they, he’d say, “Got ’em,” and then we knew he knew where they were, and they always flew round behind us. So we’re going along like this, they come around about two thousand feet above us, come right round like that behind us and they’re getting ready to act like a falcon, you know, diving on us. So what they’d do, they would break their line astern and come out

18:30 in a finger fourth formation, in other words they were all ready to go down like that. And our CO in charge at that stage would be watching them and when they put their nose down, preparatory to starting to dive, we’d do a thing called a turn about which is a bit hard to explain, but there’s a pair, there’s a pair, and another one and we’d go like that. So we’d turn round and face the enemy coming, that’s about a hundred and eighty degrees usually.

19:00 The Germans’d come down firing their guns at us and we’d be coming round that way and we’d put up our nose and fire at them, and then they’d scream up high again and they may do that a couple of times. Well when they went up we’re going the wrong way, so we’d do another turn about and go on the course we were already on, so we’d keep going like that and there’d be a few oh, peculiar things like that. And if we were being attacked by more than one

19:30 group of Germans, two, we couldn’t do the turn about, so then it was all a mix up and the squadron commander used to say, I remember hearing him when he said, “Okay it’s a mix up, it’s a dogfight,” you see, so we were all on our own then. And you take your number two with you, you hope he can keep up with you and you’re manoeuvring and diving and screaming all over the place to try and get a shot at the Germans. And they’re doing exactly the same but when they think they’re,

20:00 things are too tough they put their nose up, go straight away up again. So, any rate ...

Were you number one in the formation?

Oh not at the beginning, you start off as number two and half way through you, later you become a number one, it’s automatic because people are being lost so you, more new twos are coming on so you stay number one, and then after that you become one

20:30 of the cover leaders, I got to that at one stage for a few operations. I made some peculiar mistakes when I was there too but nobody knows, I could tell you later.

Can you tell me about some of the mistakes you made?

Oh well there were mistakes going all the time in this business, this aerial fighting, combat. And any rate then we did that, then we did bomber escort, that is the light bombers, they’re always eighteen and they were called the football team by,

21:00 in Rommel’s Papers. Any rate they would go over about nine thousand feet and we’d escort them and then there’d be low cover for the bomber formation. There’d be, say Three Squadron might be doing the bottom cover and there’d be six planes on, in line astern on either side of the, this bomber formation. And above them there’d be another squadron would be the medium cover and we’d be like that Hun in the sun system and

21:30 there’d be two more squadrons above us, this is to protect the bombers. So we’d do that and the bombers’d bomb and the Battle of Alam el Halfa they were doing a lot of this, the light bombers and we were escorting them, and that played a big part in the victory, the, in Rommel’s Papers he complains a lot about this football team. So after that, the next thing we would do, type of operation was ground strafing.

22:00 Now this was always a problem because the sort of things we had to usually ground strafe before the Battle of Alamein was the German airfields, and they’re most heavily defended places from the anti-aircraft point of view. And so we had to gain air superiority over them and that meant attacking their airfields. And one method of attacking the airfields was light bombers to go

22:30 and the fighters, we, our squadron would be behind them and one operation, called the Daba Strafe, the light bombers were in front and we are about a mile behind them. They do their bombing and then we

come dive down in line, in our formation, dive down, so that's what, eight thousand feet and then we spread out into line abreast, there'd be twelve aeroplanes

23:00 like that. And we fly right over the aero, the German aerodrome and you only could shoot at what was in front of you, you couldn't turn cause you'd collide with one of your friends. So you'd fly across the aerodrome and right down low and going very fast and you'd fire at whatever was in front of you, it might be a German plane or a truck or a tank or something or other and then over and out to sea. And I remember the

23:30 first, this one, the first one I was on, the CO was leading and I thought, oh, this is a piece of cake, there's nothing going on, we're just having a lovely time screaming along you see. And I looked round behind and crikey, I nearly jumped out of my seat, it was, the air was full of exploding shells and tracer bullets going in all directions and I was glad when we went over the escarpment onto the water. But of course you always lose, I think on every strafing run we lost people, on that one

24:00 we lost two out of twelve. Then you'd go back and then the battle, the Eighth Army was getting ready for the big battle and we were attempting to get air superiority as I said. And there were two occasions I thought were interesting, the, if you were in a dogfight and you were all in a mess, you decided to come home, everybody would go home, you see.

24:30 And what you'd do, you would fly as low as possible that you could so that by doing that, it was very difficult for anybody to shoot at you because you're so low they don't know you're coming and you're gone before they can get their rife, their machine guns at you. So the other system was, if you're coming home alone, if there was cloud cover, a continuous sheet of cloud say about, might be usually about eight,

25:00 ten thousand feet or something like that, you would climb up and get just under the clouds and come home that way. And by doing that, if there was a German flying around and wanted to attack you, you just jump up into the cloud and he couldn't see you. And so I remember one occasion I was coming home alone and I was right under the cloud cover and I saw a plane in the distance coming towards me and it wasn't quite at me it was a bit out to the side.

25:30 And I thought I wonder who that is and so, and then when he got closer I could see it was a 109. And he couldn't shoot me I knew that, and I couldn't shoot him and he knew that, so I waved at him like that and he waved back. Most peculiar isn't it. Cause the war in the desert, according to Rommel, was a war without hate, now of course that's a bit of an exaggeration, there was quite a bit

26:00 of hate, but it wasn't one of these terrible wars in a populated area, see this was desert. So the odd Arabs with their goats that used to roam around and go through the lines and all sorts of things, and otherwise there was nothing there. And the Arabs for some peculiar reason, the Bedouin, always seemed to know when there was going to be a battle on cause they all disappeared, when the battles were over they'd come back. So any rate

26:30 then the Battle of Alamein went on and the Australian division was the Ninth Division on the coast on the right of the line, in the ancients, the position of honour, and this battle was, went on for about twelve days, a terrific slogging match. And the Australian Ninth Division was represented, there were ten divisions in the Eighth Army

27:00 in the attack, there were the Australian Ninth Division in the most vital place was right on the sea comprised ten per cent of the force and it got twenty per cent of the casualties, although it was only ten per cent of the force. So they weren't gonna be in the advance, they went back to Australia to help fight against the Japanese. But

27:30 they, another time, this was with the breakout occurred with the tanks, in the south of the Alamein position. I was coming home alone, again, and right down on the deck this time and I went over a rise and right underneath me was this battery, eighty-eight millimetre gun battery with

28:00 it's associated high velocity, small anti-aircraft guns, twenty millimetres, and they were getting their thing ready. So I've gone over before I could, no way I could attack it, I didn't know it was there, so I went over and then I thought, "Crikey, they'll be at me soon and I'll…" So I had to weave and go all over the place to try and upset their aim. So I was climbing as I was doing this and I was heading east towards our line,

28:30 and I saw this huge dust cloud in the distance and as I got closer I could see it was the whole of the Seventh Armoured Division. Now you don't often see this, in fact probably never see this anywhere else except in the desert. It was incredible, this, all the tanks moving along like this, I don't know how many they had but it was a huge mass of armour all coming along.

29:00 So then after that when the advance of the Eighth Army took place, our job was the, close to port of the Eighth Army, and we started to advance with them. And I can remember one occasion when the squadron went they, sometimes you'd have to go by truck in advance or swap over and do a flight sometimes and otherwise in the truck. And we went right through the battle area this time on this truck and we saw a knocked out

29:30 Sherman tank, they were the best the Americans had, you know, they were supposed to be super-duper.

But the eighty-eight millimetre, their anti tank gun shot a hole in one side and out the other, that's how powerful their eighty-eight's were. In fact it's incredible the, in the war our material was always inferior to the Germans. Now nobody will admit that but this is absolutely true. We could get up equal to them every now and again

30:00 in the quality of their equipment, we had more you see, they had better things, everything was better. Their Messerschmitts were better than we were and probably equal to Spitfires that came late in the day. The anti-aircraft gun, that's the famous German high velocity eighty-eight, that was actually an anti-aircraft gun and it could throw a shell about there by that

30:30 up to thirty thousand feet, and that shows the power of this thing. And, so when it was used, that's thirty thousand feet is what, ten thousand yards which is something about the same in metres. And so they modified it so it could also fire straight ahead so it was a dual purpose gun, incredible. The British could've done it but they never did, and

31:00 so this ruled all the battle fields this gun, because it could stand off out of range of enemy tanks and it could shoot em all up and they'd get nowhere near the guns.

So given their superior equipment, what do you think the reasons were for victories like Alamein?

Oh the reason for winning, oh we had more of them, more of 'em, and that's really what it was about, it's we had

31:30 more than they did. And but the only thing we had, even their, the Germans had a thing called a jerry can, now you can probably, you can buy them down here at the hardware, they were invented by the Germans and that was to carry water and petrol and stuff. And what did we have on our side, we had those

32:00 flimsy kerosene tins, a thing square like that and if it was put on the back of a truck to take somewhere over the bumpy desert road, a lot of them split open. So, and in fact before the Battle of Alamein, we wanted to, because we knew how good these jerry cans were, we'd be travelling backwards and forwards over North Africa, and every time you saw a jerry can you'd pick, get it and take it back with you, so we had a lot of them. And before the

32:30 battle they ordered all the jerry cans everywhere to be handed in to the army, so that's what it was about. So any rate, the only thing was superior was the twenty-five pounder, our field gun, so they had it all over us all the time. So more people were killed on our side than their side, because of the superiority and because our tanks were inferior. In fact it was interesting I thought that

33:00 with the British started off with an anti tank, a gun in the tank which was, fired a shot like that, the weight of it was one tub of margarine, so it was all right against the Italian tanks, but when the Germans came with their seventy-five millimetre guns they were out gunned completely. Well the Eighth Army got some old

33:30 fashioned tanks from Americans, also had a seventy-five millimetre gun but it wasn't very good, and that's why Churchill asked Roosevelt could he have some of these special, new American Sherman tanks to help him at Alamein. And Roosevelt sent over two hundred odd which is, against the US Army's wishes, and actually I suppose they really helped to win that battle. Because they had a medium length seventy-five millimetre gun the same as the

34:00 German's seventy-five millimetre gun so they were on a par, but of course as soon as the Shermans came the Germans got a better gun, a long gun, seventy, that could out-range the other ones, so we were always behind.

In given that you were on the advance, what was the role of the ground crew in the operation?

Oh, well wherever we went, the planes had to be serviced, they needed petrol of course to make them go, they needed ammunition to go into the,

34:30 for this machine guns, and if we were dropping bombs they needed them, so all these things had to be taken up all the time so, to the new landing grounds. We'd get one and we'd be leapfrogging like this and, cause we were at the front, there were no aerodromes or aircraft in front of us, everything was behind us, so we were as close as you could get to the actual army all the time. And so they had to, it was peculiar, it was divided into

35:00 two flights and there'd be part of them would have to go by, the, by trucks on the ground and others would fly. You see they had to be serviced before they took off, so that this group had to be over there and this ground crew group had to be forward before the planes took off to advance. So they had to be serviced before they took off, so here's the ground crew

35:30 here, the planes go to the next one and these ground crew catch up. One of the problems there is being the desert there were, water was always a great problem. We had to have water tankers of course as well as petrol tankers because there wasn't any in the desert. There were wells at odd places for the Bedouin but they'd all been, we reckoned they'd poisoned the wells and the Germans reckoned we'd poisoned the wells

36:00 but they were pretty awful, you couldn't, it was typical, oh you wouldn't want to drink out of the water in the wells.

Why, what was wrong with it?

Oh they, I think they'd put oil in it and all sorts of things to... I don't know what the, nobody said what the actual so called poison was, it might have been salt or something. You don't hear all sorts of things, you just get people talking and you can't nail any thing down on that thing, so...

36:30 **Did you have water rations?**

Oh yeah, we used to be sometimes on one bottle of water a day, a thing like that. Some, one time we got to half a bottle a day. Well you're supposed to shave yourself and all sorts of things but I had an usual, I found a thing called a Rolls Razor. It was a dry shaver, like the present dry shavers, but it wasn't connected to

37:00 the electricity, you had to go like that, get it to, the fly wheel inside to go, so I didn't have, I could drink all my water.

And what were you sleeping in?

Well tents, the other thing was that the tents, there's nowhere to hide in the desert. See, you're in the jungle you can get yourself under a palm tree or something, but in the desert, there being no cover at all, the only

37:30 defence was a thing called dispersion, so they're all on dispersal. We have a, the aerodrome itself or airfield itself was usually a place that the camel thorns had been knocked off, a bush about this high, and they put a grader over that. And then the airfield would be about one mile square, like that, and the squadron planes were all over the place spread out. So

38:00 if the Germans came and bombed they could drop their bombs in between the tents or the trucks or everything else. But course the only trouble with that was if you sleep here in this tent and you had the mess was over there, it's a pretty long walk or, if you couldn't get a lift in a truck. So...

Can you tell me about the bombing at, actually maybe we'll change tapes, yeah, yep.

Tape 7

00:38 **I might keep talking to you about the conditions that you were... Okay, are you recording? I might keep talking to you about the conditions in the desert. You were talking about the water restrictions. So what kind of rations did you have?**

Well they weren't the greatest

01:00 cause there was great trouble in supplying the advancing army and we used to, the, we had black tea, no milk. We had bully beef, it's actually luncheon beef, you can buy it on the shelves now, it's made of beef in a tin, a peculiar shape tin and you, that's taken off and there, that's what you had for... I can't remember, I think

01:30 we had prunes which were the sweets, and we'd have a thing called herrings in tomato sauce and we called goldfish. And so the main thing was the gold fish or the bully beef and so the cook had to be very inventive and try to make all sorts of dishes out of the same things. They, we also had those biscuits,

02:00 ship's biscuits, a thing about that big, terribly hard, and they'd smash them up and I think we could use those as, like porridge at one stage. And when we did have beer it was always warm, but that was a bit of a problem.

Where did the supplies come from?

They all had to come from Alexandria, miles away, until... But as we advanced we were able to, Tobruk was,

02:30 release was taken and they could use Tobruk Harbour then to supply it as we went forward these various, there weren't many harbours, on the way to the supply. Cause a funny thing happened there actually in that advance, talking about that. The, in that area where Tobruk was, there was, this was called Cyrenaica, which was, it wasn't actually desert, it was nearly desert.

03:00 And when our forces got there it meant that we could now fly escort to a convoy to Malta, which was in terrible straits at that time. So the convoy left Alexandria to Malta and we had to give it air cover from there out in the water. Now we hadn't flown over the water at all so they gave us a,

03:30 a Mae West to put on and we... you know what that is? Well it's a flotation jacket, they call it after Mae West, because a bit of this you see. And we didn't have dinghies, a lot of people in the Pacific of course

they would need a dinghy but they didn't think we would, needed it so we, I don't think they had any to tell you the truth. So if we came down we'd have to get out of the, and be in our Mae Wests.

04:00 But from there we were doing escort in the convoy and this is, at one stage, it was interesting with a convoy, the escort, the Navy boats would shoot at anything, when anything got close. They couldn't distinguish between friend and foe so they'd have a go at everybody, so we would have to keep away from them enough for outside their

04:30 anti-aircraft guns. And on one occasion there, we ran into a JU-88 , that's the twin-engined German light bomber. And Frank Shaffe was leading and I was his number two at that stage and we attacked this thing and shot it down, so that was the first plane I'd got any interest in, so it made my score was a half.

So was this convoy work, was this quite early on in your work in Egypt?

Yeah, yeah. Oh

05:00 yes because I was number two, that meant I was early in my... And from there we, oh, you ask me...

No, that's okay. So I'll just get the chronology working a little bit. You met Alan Ferguson and you joined his squadron, was that then when you did the convoy work?

Yes, after that, I was with 450 Squadron all the time after, I didn't go anywhere else, so when I joined the

05:30 squadron with Alan Ferguson I just stayed with him.

And the conditions during that time when you were doing the convoy work, what kind of supplies did you have then?

Well it was the standard supplies for an advancing army, we didn't, they didn't change it. Cause we still had the Kittyhawks for a convoy patrol, we'd have a belly tank

06:00 we called it, it was an extra tank of petrol that let you go further and if you were attacked or when you, you'd drop it. So you'd go, allowed you to stay over things longer like a convoy cause you sort of had to hang around all the time.

That process of advancing, what could you see from the air, what was the landscape like?

Well that was pretty similar most of the

06:30 time, that's flat desert-y thing, country, with the occasional wadi, that's a water course that has no water in it but you can see a change. And there's things would be changing all the time but it's not very much. It's nothing like Europe or any of those places, it was always semi desert except in that Cyrenaica place where there was a bit of green grass in odd places. And cause the Italians had been there and

07:00 they'd had farms there in sort of a way.

What kind of farms did they have?

Well I never saw one, I only knew they were there. They had white farm houses and I don't know what they were doing, cause, we didn't really have, hardly any time off to do anything, sight seeing. Only once, we went for a swim once I remember in the Mediterranean. And we, another time we

07:30 were going on leave to Derna, that was a place in North Africa and what happened there we, you're driving in our truck along the road and a terrible thump in front of us and the truck in front of us had gone over a tele-mine, that's an anti tank mine, and it was just blown to bits, so we didn't think we'd go any further. And I'm afraid it was really a bit of a mess with, you know, body parts all over the place.

08:00 But we were attacked then by another JU-88 I don't know why, it just came from nowhere. And he attacked us, didn't, dropped some bombs but didn't hit anything and off he went. I don't know, most peculiar. But we didn't get to Derna. I wanted to go to these places cause I'd read about them, there's a whole lot of interesting places along that coast, Serti and oh goodness knows what and old Roman ruins. But

08:30 I didn't see any of them, it was just aerodromes and airfields and that sort of stuff, but I suppose we had to do our job.

How were the airfields and the aerodromes marked for you, from the air?

They weren't. They, you could tell where it was because the dispersal of the trucks and tankers and tents. You could see that around this squarish sort of area

09:00 which was the airfield. The airfields were a bit of a problem in one way that the air strips in them, did I mention this before, the air strips in Pacific? Oh, might not have done it. In the Pacific Islands and a lot of places, when planes wanted to go, they went to a thing called an air strip, that's cause it was sort of a runway thing. And you'd land on that and take off that and maybe two planes could take off together, and then they'd be dispersed

09:30 in amongst the coconut palms. Well in the desert, cause there was such a huge area, what we used to do when we took off, there was no strip, it was just this great flat piece of ground. And when we took off, we'd take off the whole squadron and go in one go, that was twelve aeroplanes lined up, and we'd all go together. We'd all do our business before we got in to the plane

10:00 and then we'd, the CO is, indicates, 'start your engines', and when we warm up everybody'd go like this and then we would take, he'd take off, and we had to keep, of course, beside him if we could. The trouble was, that when the planes were ready to take off they would stay that far apart, which was too close and when we'd go along like that the CO would go straight, he'd be all right and his number two would

10:30 be, he'd have to go a little bit out that way. And then this number one would go a little bit that way with his number two going that way, so what was happening, was going like a fan. And I remember one occasion, I was right on the end and this time and I had to take off in amongst all the tents and trucks, but I'm glad there wasn't one in the way.

Now you talked earlier about food and cooking and so forth,

11:00 **who travelled with you to provide support, how did that work?**

Oh well the squadron, there're about two to three hundred people on the squadron. We had a doctor, we had orderlies and ground defence people and mechanics and air, people to look after the radios, the people to look after the guns, people, each plane there was these people. As I say radio,

11:30 and the air frame and the engine and all this, had all this service, like a, you know, a thousand kilometre service in a car, had to be done out in the open. And it was incredible the, how dedicated the ground crew were because they weren't getting any of the fun of flying and they had to do this in terrible conditions and do this work.

12:00 It was dusty and we used to get dust storms and here they were out in the open, no, nothing over them, shifting, moving engines and putting bombs on and terribly difficult. And when at one stage we got a lot of rain and they had to do all this in the mud, but they didn't get any recognition really, and I hope, this makes people recognise the incredible work that they

12:30 did, and of course we couldn't have done anything without them.

The relationship you had with the ground staff, did you form a close bond with them?

No. Now this was, Alan Ferguson, the CO, originally, well we changed COs, he left and we got some others. He was very good, he's a permanent air force officer and he'd been well trained and how to look after everything

13:00 and be responsible for everybody including the ground staff, but we didn't have much to do with the ground staff. They, when we'd come back from an operation or a mission, whatever, you would report at the, ground crew come out and you'd have all the people looking at your aeroplane and they'd have to replace the ammunition in the, for the wing guns and they'd be swarming all over it, and then you could say, "G'day." And I had,

13:30 looking after my plane, Athol and Ray, and they were really good and I liked them, we got on all right but we didn't socialise with them. Now don't know why but see in the desert the, there were two messes, oh, there might be others, there's a ground crew mess, the sergeants have their own messing, that's food system, separate. Then I think there were the other ones, the corporals and others, that have their own system, and then there was the

14:00 air crew mess. So the officers, ground crew officers were in the air crew mess, the, and everybody else that flew the plane, so the officers were there, the pilot officers that would be there too and the sergeant pilots, altogether. And in some other places, I don't know whether UK or what, I think the sergeant pilots and non commissioned air crew were in a separate thing altogether, I think it's terrible

14:30 mistake. So we were all together, so you got to know everybody.

How did the squadron travel, apart from the pilots obviously who would fly in advance, how did the rest of the support...?

Well we go in trucks. We were completely, nobody walked anywhere, or marched, we were the most, well any rate we had a lot of complete transport. And because of the, there was usually more pilots

15:00 than the number of planes available, so there'd always be pilots over, so when we advanced from one landing ground to the other, some, certain number of pilots would take the planes and there'd be other pilots that had to go by truck. And I can remember one occasion I was driving this truck and Keith Marrows was beside me and the, I was very keen on photography and I got a

15:30 thirty-five millimetre camera in Canada and was taking photos all over the place. You weren't supposed to, of course, but I was doing this. He was taking photographs flying, of the anti-aircraft bursts. But on this occasion I was trying to explain to Keith how to work a thirty-five millimetre... I'm driving this car, he's over here and I'm telling him how to do it like it like this and course I drive off the road. And

there’s this water course, dry of course, and

16:00 the truck jumps the thing and in the air and hits the other side and I’m thrown out and I land and the truck comes, wheel, back wheel comes right into my back here and I got a few cuts on myself. And the CO’s trunks, see we’d be taking the luggage as well, and our own little trunks, and here’s the CO’s trunk was thrown out and

16:30 dented, dreadful, so, and other problems. Any rate we caught up in the end and oh they, things were pretty crook. They, the transport officer in charge of all the trucks, he had a look at the truck and it was damaged up the front right wheel that’d been twisted there somehow, which is reasonable with what it had suffered. So I was

17:00 debarred from driving the transport from then on, he debarred me you see. I thought, “That’s a bit odd, a truck costing in those days about two hundred or whatever it was, or something like that. And here I’m allowed to fly a plane and cost about ten thousand dollars in those days, maybe twenty thousand dollars.” So that was a bit peculiar, but I didn’t mind.

What about showering and toilets and so forth,

17:30 **what, how did you cope?**

Well no showers. We had, when there’s water available, we had these sort of a canvas thing like that, was a sort of a bath, you sat in it and you could put this muddy water over you. And if it was cold, sometimes it was cold in the desert, you’d heat it up with a blow torch, the water. And the, so you,

18:00 the other thing, the toilet system was a thing called desert lily, were dotted around, that was a urinal type place. It was important in the desert, the Italians and the Germans there, their hygiene wasn’t very good and they used to leave their faeces all over the place, it bred flies, so the place was, millions of flies would get in your food and in your nose and up your, in your ears. And so the British system was

18:30 to make sure there wasn’t any of that laying around, so you’d have a hole dug in the ground and a thing over the top and sort of a canvas thing around you and, or you, if you couldn’t wait or get to that in time, well you had to bury what you did.

I want to talk to you about what it was like flying when a battle was going on, when you were facing enemy planes?

Well

19:00 yes, another occasion after we’d been to this Marble Arch aerodrome, this was a, we had dogfights before that and not much had happened either side, but after we went through this Marble Arch aerodrome where it was on the border between Tripolitania and Libya, or Cyrenaica I should say.

19:30 After that we went through other ’dromes and the Germans were getting a bit more active and on one occasion there we got into a dogfight and you have to manoeuvre as hard as you can to get behind. And at one stage there I was 109 and I attacked him and he did what they always do, he went up in the air. And I followed him up and I thought I was gonna, he was gonna fall on me bit I got a good burst into

20:00 him and white smoke came out. Now that meant that he’d been hit in the glycol, that’s the, they were liquid cooled engines and the coolant, rather than water, was called glycol, and if you hit the tank, the glycol tank, it all drained out, so then his engine’d over heat and seize up and he couldn’t get home. So

20:30 that was one I had a go at. Other occasions, the, another one, we got into a mix up and I, this was Italians, we were escorting a three-engine Savoy transport planes and a mob of Machi 202s , they were very like the 109 there, they didn’t have as good an armament but they,

21:00 cause their performance was just as good. So on that do, we attacked and I got one climbing and then another one and I had to drop my belly tank to catch up with him and I was able to give him a squirt, we used to call it that, it was a bit like that, and the whole of his rear end just disintegrated,

21:30 his tail section, and see I never saw it go in. As soon as you do that I was being attacked by another Machi 202 so I had to swing away and I couldn’t see what happened. So Bobby Gibbs, the Three Squadron commander, he also attacked one and so he claimed one and I claimed one, and there was, what happened, there was, we were listening to their

22:00 talk over the radio and they were listening to ours of course. But I didn’t realise this because I just put the claim in and a few days later I was told that it was destroyed you see, and how in the hell did they know? And I found out subsequently that they listened in to the Italians, see what they were saying, and there were three shot down, only two people claimed it, just Bobby Gibbs and me.

You’ve talked about the claims of planes, how did that work

22:30 **in a squadron sense of...?**

The claims?

Yes?

Well that's one of the really problem things in aerial fighting, because you really, if you're one on one and you shoot the plane down and it crashes and you see it crash, then you go home and say, "This is what happened." But when you're in a dogfight or in aerial combat you really can't see, after you, whatever you've done, you can't see the results of it,

23:00 unless something dramatic happens. See I think they gave me that one where the whole aft section disintegrated because there's no way it's gonna fly from there, but they have to believe you, you see. And in a group of people, must always be people who push the envelope as they call it and so there's a tendency to be over-claims in the...

23:30 I shouldn't really say so, but I think some people claimed things a bit more than others, and so you can't really be sure. We felt the Americans always used to, they were a bit annoying, we were quite annoyed with the Americans, we had a, there was a squadron of Americans in the back area that used to come up sometimes. And they just couldn't, we had to work with radio silence so that when the CO or somebody found something happening, he would radio us immediately to react.

24:00 But the Americans couldn't stop talking, on the radio, they're all talking to each other, about girlfriends and all this garbage. And it upset us too because they're interfering with our silence. I suppose they thought there's silence over there, they'll have a go.

Did you ever get to talk to some of the Americans?

No. I think you felt like saying, "For Christ's sake, shut up." Ah well, and, what else? Oh we go back to

24:30 Marble Arch, cause this was interesting, I thought. Marble Arch was the place where there were, the ground was a bit marshy in some places so they couldn't do an aerodrome for us, we had to use an aerodrome the Germans had used. So when they had retreated they'd mined this aerodrome at Marble Arch. And we came in, I'm glad we came in second because the Three Squadron came in and one of their,

25:00 I think one of their planes was blown up by a tele mine and some of their ground crew were killed. And they had, we had the engineers come in, army engineers come to clear the airfield and they of course had to look for these mines. Now that didn't worry us cause you could walk over them and they wouldn't go off but you put a truck over it'd go off and blow the thing to bits. There was an anti personnel mines,

25:30 a little thing about the size of your, of that and on the top of it were three prongs, like that, tiny little prongs so you could hardly, couldn't see them, without great difficulty. And they were the things that killed a couple of our blokes and the Three Squadron blokes. And of course the problem with that is if you trod on one it wouldn't go off, nothing happened, but when you took your foot off it, it'd jump up in the air and explode. So if you knew you'd

26:00 put your foot on one, I don't know what the hell you'd do, you'd stay there for weeks standing there. So any rate the Germans knew we're there so they attacked at night, night bombing of our aerodrome. And we had the, at that stage, just about all the anti-aircraft guns and the forward troops around us cause they usually wanted to protect us. And we had corners of this airfield, we

26:30 had a battery of our three point seven inch heavy anti-aircraft guns so that's, they're four in a battery, so there'd be sixteen and we also had forty Beaufort guns, so it was really heavily defended. And when this plane came over, this German plane, you don't worry about it, you just hear them coming, but when you hear the bombs coming you take cover. So I remember when these bombs came, I dived into this slit trench and there was some bloke in there

27:00 ahead of me, underneath me. But this, our barrage opened up and it was incredible to see all this going off, it's better than the fireworks displays. I think the German must have got the shock of his life, cause he headed off home very quickly.

That sense of being exposed in the desert, how difficult was that to cope with?

Well if there was any, you'd just lay flat on the ground,

27:30 that's what you always did, if there was a depression, you'd get in that. It was too difficult to dig slit trenches in our advance so we didn't worry about that but around Cairo and those places, everybody had a slit trench. The Americans call it dog hole, or was it a foxhole, I don't know why because it really is a slit trench. You'd dig a trench about that wide and about that long, six feet long, long enough for a body to be in it and you get in

28:00 there. Now if a bomb or something came straight down on top of you, of course you were a gonner, but if it burst say, twenty feet away, you'd be all right. So once you were in there, the only trouble with a slit trench, there was nothing above you, so if the debris and bits and pieces of the anti-aircraft guns were falling, they hit you, so we put on our steel helmets.

I want to talk to you a bit about coming back alone, when that happened.

28:30 **I want to talk to you about how often that happened to you and what happened when you**

came back, in, what the feeling was for you?

Oh, relief, from getting home all right. We didn't, that didn't happen that often, it varied a whole lot. We did other things you see, we were doing strafing and there were occasional clouds around when we'd be getting close to

29:00 Tripoli, and that's Tripoli in Libya not Tripoli in Syria. You'd, more frequently you'd be with somebody and only occasionally would you come back alone. So we did another trip there we had to strafe this area, and Andy Taylor he was leading and he's at number

29:30 two and I was number one at that stage as well and we went over this strong point. It was a sort of a bit of a village actually this place and we were too close to the Germans and we didn't know they were under us to tell you the truth, and there were clouds like that and we were there. And so Andy Taylor, he was hit, and his plane and he had to force land at a, half a mile away. And

30:00 when you're hit, the plane's hit by a machine gun bullet, you can hear it and it goes, 'ping', like that. If you're hit with a twenty millimetre cannon shell, it goes, 'bong,' like, do you remember the (Gowmont...UNCLEAR) British films had this great gong and a bloke used to hit it, just like that, that's the sound it was. So I got, I hear this great bong so I know I've been hit so,

30:30 it still flew, so Andy Taylor had to crash land over away and I was able to get home. But when I got home it was, didn't look the best.

How difficult was it to know, while you were in the air, how bad the damage?

You can't tell. Unless you flame up or something like that, you know then. But you can't tell, you just know you've been hit, and you hope it's not in the vital spot.

31:00 So...

Would you do anything differently once you knew you'd been hit, how did you fly the plane?

No, you just carry on the way you were and that was, the first time I was hit was most peculiar. It was a, we were in formation coming home with the sun, you know this formation six and I'm in the bottom cover and there's a top cover here and I'm number two to that. And I think oh there's no need to look around, see it's

31:30 vital to know where you are, you don't like this, you're doing this all the time and you're moving your aircraft. And that's the reason why fighter pilot's wear a scarf, not for, the only reason you do it is because you're gonna get a sore neck cause of doing this. And if you didn't do that, the people that didn't do that were shot down. And I don't know where I was now.

That's okay. What was the sound like when you're in the air, in

32:00 **battle?**

Oh, in the air? Well, oh there was this noise coming on all the time but you had this helmet on and things like that over you. The only, one of the problems was when the anti-aircraft guns were firing at you, the heavies, the eighty-eights, you'd see them bursting like this and you didn't worry about that but, cause you couldn't hear them. But when they, you could hear them you were too, they were too close, so when you hear them you had to get out of the, shift.

32:30 **What were the colours like, of these bursts?**

Oh they were black. It was a sort of, they all had the same formation, it sort of unfolded out at the top like that somehow and black smoke came like that somehow and the black at the bottom.

So when you're in the air, if you could just describe the colours and the sensation of being in a battle like that, in the air?

Oh well,

33:00 all the dogfights only lasted thirty seconds or something like that, cause everything's going so quickly in the air so, and that's finished, it's all over. And maybe get up to a minute or sometimes or maybe two and that's all, and so you don't think about anything, it's excitement really. I always felt the closest thing you could get to oh, aerial combat

33:30 was when you are playing rugby union football match, before you go on to the field you're apprehensive. While you're playing you can ignore what's going on and then after it's over it's one of relief. That's the closest I can think of what it's like. But I suppose it's all automatic, you just do what you have to do.

34:00 So you're worried, I'd say you're concerned, I don't think, if you're really fearful all the time I don't think you'd do it, you're concerned and then the excitement takes over.

The pilots who didn't come back, how many pilots did you lose out of the squadron?

Oh, I've no idea, see we didn't, in the, from February '42 to '45 we lost, what was it,

34:30 fifty-nine pilots and three ground crew, from our squadron. There were only twelve in the squadron so that's five times our quota were lost. And but you don't seem to worry about it much, I thought you know, why am I... oh, another funny thing, I must tell this. Whenever anybody was shot down, what happened, the rest of the pilots or some of them,

35:00 what they'd do is riffle the belongings of the person shot down. So if the person shot down walked back, which quite a few were able to do, the first thing they'd do, this person'd do, would walk into the mess and say, "Okay all you bastards, put everything back," you see. And there was none of this peculiar thing they get on with in Europe, I don't know, we didn't seem to worry about all that stuff, I suppose we were really too callous, I don't know, I suppose that's what it

35:30 was. You never worried about that, you just say, "Oh, bad luck." Normally we say, not so much, bad luck, "I think he should've pulled his finger out," they used to say. So.

Did you ever walk, did you ever return late and discover your things were gone?

No, because I didn't return, I was only shot down once and I, that was when I got

36:00 prisoner, POW, so I was attempting to walk back and I'll tell you about that later. But a lot of them walked back, some people walked back more than once. But you had to be lucky, you had to come down, crash land, or out in the parachute away from where the Germans were, out in the wide open spaces, if you were near a city or a town you, were too many people around. So ...

What were some of the stories, well because we're near the end of the tape

36:30 **I'll save the story of your coming down, but for other pilots, what were some of the stories of people who returned?**

Well they were very interesting, I think the most interesting one was this last do we were doing, we had to bomb, knock out the Germans near this air force near Tripoli. And to do that they decided they'd do this, bomb these two aerodromes and strafe them and we had to

37:00 strafe the one near the sea first before we could do the one further inland. And so our navigation being so dreadful we flew over and missed it and went over and camped or something. And Georgie O'Neil, one of our pilots, we were very low down and during this and he was so low his propeller touched the ground and of course that bent the propeller blades back and he wasn't, wouldn't fly properly. Anyway he had to crash land

37:30 further away and then he wanted to walk back, so a long, a terrific story about what he did, how he ran into an Italian wandering around in the desert and the Italian wanted a cigarette and George gave him one I think. And he finally got up to the front lines and was able to get through the front lines, he got a sack and put it on his head, make him look like an Arab. And getting through the lines

38:00 was the most incredible job. He, cause the German were challenging him from the rear, he got through part of it and they were yelling at him and to stop him, they fired a burst of machine gun fire. So what he did, he fell over, specially, and just lay still, and they looked the other way or something and he was able to crawl off and get away. So that was terrific, that was the best story.

38:30 Others had had to exist on, one of them had to exist on beetles and things like that, he was in a pretty bad way but he survived. He had to crawl, cause his feet had been injured, so that was an incredible thing he did.

Thank you, I think we'll leave it there for this tape and we'll change the tape.

Tape 8

00:39 **Before we talk about getting shot down, I just wanted you to explain the legend of your squadron because it's quite a famous squadron, and can you tell us what its name was?**

Oh well 450 Squadron, we only had a number, it was called actually the Desert Harassers. Apparently

01:00 Lord Haw Haw in Germany, in the propaganda was running the, running down the allies, air force, and he said that the 450 Squadron was, you know, harassing something or other. And so 450 Squadron decided they'd call themselves the Desert Harassers after that, so we sort of were caught with that.

And while you were in the desert before you're about to work, fight with the

01:30 **Eighth Army, you got some bad news from home?**

Oh yeah, well Alan Ferguson was writing to his brother and who's married to my sister, and so when my mother died in '42 he told in a letter to Alan Ferguson, so he told me. She died of, she had high blood pressure which couldn't be really treated very well in those days, so she got a high blood pressure stroke.

02:00 **Did you have much time to reflect on it?**

No. I was terribly upset of course and I walked out in the desert when I heard it and round and round, all, long way and finally came back. So it's, anybody would be upset when their mother gets killed, or dies I should say.

Okay, well if we can talk about the day you were shot down and

02:30 **I'd like for you to describe to me in detail what happened on that day from when you woke up?**

Oh in the morning.

In the morning, yeah.

We were advancing at that stage and we were very near, getting close to Tripoli, that's the town we were, city we were aiming for. And the advance, Tripoli fell to the Eighth Army on the twenty-third of

03:00 October, 1942, January sorry, twenty-third of January 1942 and we advanced from our former aerodrome, airfield, we were gonna go into their airfield called Castel Benito Airfield, just close to Tripoli. So we advance, land there, I think we did an operation before we landed and then we landed at this Castel Benito, that's Mussolini of course. And

03:30 from, after landing, George, what's his name, Norton, he was one of the pilots, an officer, and he was ordered to go into Tripoli to see if he could get some beer for our mess you see. So there was a vacancy and they said to me, "Okay Dick, you can go, you go in that plane," for a place, him, you see. So off we go and we've got to

04:00 attack Ben Gardan Airport near the Tunisian border, which we do and then we have to do this strafing of the road of where, chock-a-block with German and Italian trucks and all sorts of vehicles and it was just nose to tail and very heavily blocked. Any rate our job was to strafe this and the road, the other thing was, I didn't, I don't know about other people, but we never

04:30 tried to kill people. All we were trying to do was either shoot planes down or destroy trucks or tanks, we never tried to seek out people to kill. Even in the air, if somebody baled out, a German baled out in their parachute, nobody'd shoot him, in the desert this is, and they didn't shoot us. So there was this peculiar arrangement that went on. Any rate

05:00 we're strafing the road and I hear the ping, noise, you see, and I'm hit. So, so what, I thought, "It's all happened before plenty of times." So, I do a couple more strafing runs and I climb up to join the rest of the people who are a bit higher up, and as I do that a, one of these German JU-88's light bombers went right across in front of me. So I turned into him and gave him a burst and

05:30 then my guns were out of ammunition, I could only give him one burst. And then I notice that the heat gauge on the coolant was off the map and the, and then the oil started to heat up, the oil gauge started to heat up and the engine seized on me. I was a bit annoyed because when I was hit and streaming glycol, like that 109 I told you about, if somebody had told

06:00 me that I was streaming glycol, I would have gone, head straight for home. But in all the mix up, the, they might have thought I was a German plane in fact, cause it was very difficult to work out what was going on. So because of that...

Let me just ask you, what communication did you have, with the other pilots in the air?

We had radio, telephones. But of course the Germans could listen in to what we said and they,

06:30 we could listen in to what they said. Not directly, but via a ground station.

So how frantic did that communication become, or was it calm?

Me? I didn't say anything.

Generally?

Well Americans talked a lot but we hardly ever said anything, and that's what happened on our time, on my time. So all that happened was I climbed up as hard as I could, when it seized of course I couldn't go up at all I had to glide down, I

07:00 was too low to jump out from the parachute. So I came gliding down, and this is where luck comes into it, they were firing at me all round there but I was doing all this and I wasn't hit. And as I came down for a belly landing with the wheels up which is what you had to do, cause if you had your wheels down, you'd hit the ground and tip over. So luckily enough I was in the middle of sand dunes which is dreadful places to, cause they're up and down, to force land

07:30 in. And lo and behold, just in front of me, was this tiny area of flat ground. Now that's luck. And so I was able to do a belly landing.

Did you know where you were?

Oh I only knew I was behind the enemy lines. And it was a place called Zuwarah, if that’s the right pronunciation of this, that was the nearest place. See this is, all this region

08:00 was, they had a fair amount of, number of people, it wasn’t sort of desert there, it was farms and Arabs going around and all sorts of things like that. So I got out, I was a bit shaken up I can tell you, and I thought I’d head south east to cross our lines if I could, do a walk back, but everywhere you walk in sand dunes are your foot prints, so that was a bit crook.

08:30 I kept going anyway and I went over this rise and there in front of me was a camel caravan of about four or five camels with the Arabs and they were walking across and as they were hostile in that area so I thought I’ve gotta stop and wait for them to cross. So there were camel thorn bushes dotted all over the place so the only thing I could do was hide round behind one of these, so I got round it and sort of embraced

09:00 the camel thorn bush, they’re about that high and about that big and like they were dotted evenly like that all over the place. So while I’m down like that waiting, over the hill behind me comes these three characters, they were Italians, led by a, he was a sergeant, a non commissioned officer I think, and he had a pistol. The other bloke

09:30 was a, had a rifle, other one, the other soldier had a sub machine gun. So I didn’t have anything, we never, I didn’t carry a, as I was telling you before, a pistol, we always carried a water bottle. So I put my hands up and he came over, the first thing they did was pinch my watch, which is standard. So, and then he said a funny thing, he said, “Companion, companion.” And I thought, “Crikey, what’s that? Oh he wants to make, give himself up and be a prisoner of war.”

10:00 Cause occasionally, but after the Battle of Alamein a lot of the Italians gave themselves up, walked into the British lines and gave themselves up. So I had this peculiar idea that I could take them prisoner you see, which was far fetched of course. So off he, we start walking in the direction I wanted to go and after about a hundred yards we’d stop and he’d, or he’d stop and I’d have to too and then he’d say, “Companion, companion,” again. And I’d

10:30 do this, and after a couple of goes like this he got annoyed naturally. And I didn’t know what he was on about, he tried to talk to me, he had Italian and a bit of French, I had English and my French was obviously terribly poor from matriculation problems. So we really didn’t get anywhere and so he got annoyed and we turned round and we marched, he marched me back to where my plane had crash landed and they were in the process of setting alight, so that was all right,

11:00 I didn’t mind that. And so then I was taken from various places by the guards and one of the most peculiar I think was, the guards seemed to, what are they, police or what, I don’t know, but I was taken into the marrow, the Mareth Line was a fortification, it’s just like the Maginot Line, huge fortifications that the French had erected between Tunisia and Italian Tripolitania.

11:30 And so they took me, these, I think there were about four guards I had, I wasn’t, couldn’t run away, in fact I didn’t think of it. We go to this fortification and there’s a parade ground there, huge parade ground and, I think as soon as the news has got round that there’s a captured flyer they all started to pour out of these, these soldiers came out of these

12:00 fortifications. And here I am in the middle of this parade ground with about three-odd guards and they got these hundreds of people pouring out to have a look at me. I don’t blame them wanting to have a look but they were all round me and I was getting a bit apprehensive, I thought, this is a bit crook. And while I’m there I’m standing, I’ve got my hands down like this, so we weren’t in manacles or anything like that, and I felt something put into my hand and

12:30 so I brought it up like that and there, somebody had put into my hand a handful of paper wrapped boiled sweets.

Why on earth do...?

It was absolutely incredible, I, you know, cause we’d been shooting at these people you know, not a few hours ago. And here, this bloke, I never saw who it was, but obviously it must have been an Italian soldier,

13:00 and I’m sure he, his buddies weren’t very happy about that. So any rate I was marched off then to see somebody in a caravan and they took me there, I don’t know why, apparently, they looked like generals in the caravan, and they wanted to see what I looked like I suppose, but I couldn’t understand what they were talking about. And any rate from there you go through a series of, he handed from one lot of people to another. And so I was then handed

13:30 over to the Italian police, army police that is, and they used to chain me up at night onto the steering wheel so I wouldn’t run away but I wasn’t gonna run away anyway. And the cook, I got to know him fairly well and he was a funny chap. We had to eat spaghetti which I hate and ersatz coffee, I didn’t like that either, but hunger overcomes everything. And he would point, this is the part that really got

14:00 me, he had his cap but he had a monogram on it, a badge, and he’d point to it, but we couldn’t communicate very well but he’d point to it like that, then he’d say, “Victor Emmanuel nichs Mussolini.”

This was incredible. Victor Emmanuel was the King of Italy at that stage, he was telling me that he was a King's man, not this Mussolini bloke. And then later I remember a German staff car went

14:30 past and we were on a bit of a rise and the, when the Italian cook saw it he went like this. So there was not much love lost, there was not much love between the two.

How did you feel about the treatment you got from the Italians in that camp?

It was all right, yeah there was no, you know, I was never bashed up, although we had one of our pilots was shot down and he got bashed up and he, funnily enough, he was rescued by a German in a staff car, so,

15:00 bit peculiar. But I was never, there was no physical abuse at all, there was, I was mentally worried as you might imagine. Any rate we went on further and then, another peculiar thing, we were, I was put in a cage, that's a lot of wire, barbed wire round an area and turned out there were British people in it. And they were this long range,

15:30 Colonel Sterling's famous long range desert group, and they'd been captured in that area because of the natives were, in that area anti the British, so the natives told the soldiers to capture them so they did. And but they thought in this cage, these, they thought I was a plant you see to try and get any, so it was hopeless there. Any rate we stayed the night and the Italians seemed to be scared stiff of every

16:00 body, they were firing their automatic machine guns all night long. But then I went to, was taken to Tunis and the Germans took me over, I don't know why, I was a prisoners of the Italians originally, all that time, and then out of the blue I'm taken away by the Germans, so I could never work that one out. But after there, I think it was there a

16:30 short time and I was put on a plane to come to Naples and it was a three-engined JU-52 [Junkers aircraft] and I was a prisoner of two German, they would be like sergeants, they all had the big Lugers on their, pistols on their belt. And so we got on this plane and off it went and I couldn't see an officer flying it so it looks like a corporal flying it. But any rate they got, we crossed the Mediterranean,

17:00 the Bay of Naples and I could see... I was always interested in everything around me. In fact I wanted to see Carthage, the ruins of Carthage but I only got a slight glimpse of that, I should have got the Germans to take me on a tour of it, But any rate we went over to the, so I saw the Island of Capri and Vesuvius, we landed. Then I was handed over to a German paratrooper, who also had a great big Luger on his belt,

17:30 we were driven through the streets of Naples and I remember an Italian chap, over on the road saw me, and he did that. I thought oh well, I glad I'm with this paratrooper. Any rate so we got on a train, the train was chock-a-block full, they were corridor train with compartments, one corridor on the

18:00 side then compartments, it was chock-a-block full. And my German paratrooper, he walked up and shouted at these Italians, really shout, cause Germans love shouting, and, to get out of the way and they got out, he forced his way down this corridor with me right behind him. And came to about the middle compartment which was full, all the compartments were full, about eight people in each compartment, maybe more. He opened the door of one and ordered

18:30 them all out, so all these Italians had to get out and they were fuming, but he didn't care, and when they were all out he shut the door. This is an eight person compartment and only two people in it, me and him, so we got window seats and he's enjoying the whole thing. And because paratroopers were part of the German Air Force, see our paratroopers were part of the army but their the paratroopers are part of the air force,

19:00 he felt, he knew, he could see I was a flyer from my wings, I presume, and he tried to start a friendly conversation in all sorts of sign language, you know, pointing to the Italians, going, you know... Any rate it was quite a good trip then we went up to Rome, not Rome, Roma, didn't know it was Roma, so then taken off to the army headquarters, Terminus Hotel in Roma.

19:30 And I, they tried to get something out of me with a plant who was supposed to be an American, and then we're put on a train to go up into Germany. And that's the first time I, with other kriegies, kriegies is the name of a prisoner of war in Germany. And we were in carrier, in these compartments on the train going to Germany with the guards and you weren't supposed to look out the window at that stage but I sneaked a look. And I went past a place called, it was F-I-R-E-N, something like that [Firenze], and I thought, "What the hell's that?

20:00 I've never heard of that." It was Florence, but nothing like Florence written down on. So we went into, over the Brenner Pass into Germany and we stop at Munich and we're, what happens there, that was in February, I think it must have been February some time, must have been February, there the Germans were all looking dreadful, they were terribly unhappy looking. And apparently, this was the

20:30 time when the Field Marshal Pauliss' Sixth Army that were attacking Stalingrad had been defeated and all these hundred thousand Germans were taken prisoner, course everybody was, all the Germans were very unhappy, we were very happy. So they put us in a, locked us in a room at night and nothing in it, concrete floor and I realised then that concrete is worse than

21:00 bare earth to sleep on. And then from there we went up to, I was taken to the interrogation place called Dulag Luft, it was near Frankfurt, yeah Frankfurt on Main. And I was put into this, this is the difficult part. Put in a cell, solitary confinement

21:30 of course, it's about eight feet by four feet with an iron bed and had a bucket in it, and that was it. It was white inside, wasn't dark but there was one window high up on the wall, I couldn't reach it, it was frosted and bars outside of course so you just completely isolated. And they took everything from you, or they did from me, I presume they did everybody else, this was standard. All

22:00 the, didn't have a watch of course cause I'd lost that, I had a fountain pen, I had a handkerchief, I remember, and a comb, and my identity disks which is made of stainless steel, on air crew, stainless steel with stainless steel chain so it won't burn away. The, and I was left there and then in came

22:30 one of the guards, handed me a thing to fill in, it was a form with Red Cross, purported to be from the Red Cross, asking you what was your name and all this and a whole lot of things. We'd been told we must only say, the Geneva Convention said you only had to put your name, rank and serial number, which I did. And of course underneath it was what squadron were you at and all sorts of things, so I ignored that as we were supposed to

23:00 and he took it away and nothing happened. Couple of days later in walks this interrogation officer he, I was interested in him, and in fact he had scars on his face and head, lots of them. And I knew that Heidelberg University in Germany that's what they did, they had these peculiar duels, so I knew a bit about him straight away. Now this is the funny thing at all,

23:30 he was a handsome bloke with perfect uniform but, and his English was perfect, but what he did, the first thing he did when he came in, he took out of his pocket a packet of cigarettes and offered one to me. Now I didn't smoke you see, and I said to him, "Oh thanks but I don't smoke." He, you know this floored him, he didn't know where to go from that. And I think it's because if somebody had been captured they wouldn't have had a cigarette maybe, and they're all heavy smokers or just

24:00 about everybody, they wouldn't have had a smoke for a couple of weeks or even more, and when somebody offered them a smoke they'd think, oh isn't that wonder, isn't he a nice guy bloke, so he got really upset and out he went. And then a couple of days after that they told me I was going to a permanent camp, so I was taken out, I was given back all my gear. And I got on the train where they all are and course the Red Cross parcels

24:30 were available in the Dulag Luft, they gave me a small block of chocolate which I ate immediately. And then onto the train gets this guard and calls out my name so I have to say, "Yes, I'm it," and I'm taken back and put in another cell. Now this is what's peculiar, I was twenty-two years of age and it was my birthday on the twenty-second of February and I was

25:00 in cell twenty-two, isn't that intriguing. So I slept in this cell and I got friendly with the guard who brought the food cause we only had a bit of soup, like stuff with a bit of potato in it. So when he came round I used to point at this thing and say, "Potato, potato?" I mean he didn't know what the hell I was talking about, he knew what I was pointing at. And after a while he'd, when I'd say, "Potato," he'd say the German, which I can't remember if this is right

25:30 or not, it sounded like, "Kartoffel," you see. So then every time he came round I'd say, "Kartoffel," you see, and he taught me that and he thought it was great, so he gave me an extra potato, I thought that was pretty good. Any rate the other problem was, in solitary confinement, the other bloke said, other bloke threatened you, of course he did, he threatened me and said, "Well," you know, "you could be treated, we could treat you as a spy and have you shot or either, maybe keep you in solitary

26:00 confinement for the whole war." Well that worries you a bit and you go, I was going through periods of, panic periods and other times not and I felt I have to do something about this, I can't give in to all this. So I decided I'd have to do physical exercises. You couldn't run around, you could run on the spot so I was running on the spot, morning and afternoon and night and

26:30 all sorts of times. And then I was, I did physical exercise, push ups and all sorts of exercises to do that, and I also thought well I've got to keep my mind off this thing. And I came to the conclusion the only way I could do that was to attempt to write poetry, well not write it, I couldn't, there was no way of writing, I, my fountain pen didn't have any ink in it, so I couldn't write, there was no

27:00 paper. So I thought, "I must. I'll do poetry." I didn't know anything about poetry, only one I knew was 'Hiawatha' so I'll do it on that format, you see. So I tried it, took me ages to, nearly a day to, sometimes, to get one verse cause my English wasn't very good, so I remember the first verse I got was this...

\n[Verse follows]\n This is the fourth of February\n

27:30 And I am in a cell\n

The reason for me being here\n This day I here will tell.\n

That's the first verse. Any rate I got through twenty-two versus before I finished, I had to remember it all cause I couldn't write it down. So then the other thing was that they tried a thing called the heat treatment. There was a radiator on...

Can I just ask you what preparation did you have in your training

28:00 **for being captured and becoming a POW?**

Well we had a lecture once I think, just saying the, what you should do and what you shouldn't, but they didn't make a big deal of it because I don't think, they didn't really want many people to be prisoners. But they told us about that name, rank and serial number and nothing else, and that was all they told you.

When you were in the interrogation centre

28:30 **and you said that you were panicking, can you describe some of those feelings for us?**

Well I don't know how you can describe it, you just sort of, I suppose exaggeration of what might happen to you, and you had to get that out of your mind.

What were you thinking might happen?

Well stuck there for the rest of the war or shot, those are the two things that they were making an issue of. But the other thing of course

29:00 was to annoy me, and that was where, in this cell, second cell I was in, the, there was this heater on the wall. And what they used to do, it was snow outside cause it was pretty cold then, and they'd heat up the, with this radiator thing, they had the controls outside, they'd heat it up so your cell got too hot, so the only way you could keep

29:30 relatively reasonable was to lay on the floor, that was always cooler there than high up. Then after they'd cooked you for a while they'd then turn it off and then you get the cold come in from all the snow outside. So they were doing this for a few times and I got annoyed with the whole thing so with my identity disk and I, was metal, I could see at back of the

30:00 part of the heater was a plate where the wires went in. So with my identity disk I was able to open the screws and remove the plate and see what was going inside. So I worked out how, with my pen that I'd been, had been returned, the barrel of it, I was able to put it over the wire so I could control, I could

30:30 turn off the heat when it got too bad, but I couldn't make it warm, so half of it was satisfactory. I later found in a while after that back in, other prisoners were coming through, and they were asked about the heater and they were told that it was riveted, so the Germans riveted it after I'd been there. So then we were,

31:00 I was taken into this bloke's office, this interrogator and see, I was a pilot on a plane but I was in the wrong uniform. All the air force people normally wear blue uniforms or blue battle dress but in the desert we wore Army battle dress, brown, khaki, so he knew I'd come from the desert. And he threatened me and all this went on and I didn't give way and he finally

31:30 got annoyed and I was sent out and, there was nothing physical, at all. The Germans, the army, navy and air force the Luftwaffe [German Air Force] worked to the Geneva Convention as close as they could. I mean they did all these hot, cold treatments, all part of it, but not a great deal of difference. So from there I went out into a train to Oflag Twenty-one B, that an officer's camp in Poland. And

32:00 we were marched from the train to the camp and there, all the kriegies inside always look out to see who's coming and there looking right at me was Ray Clarke who was with me in Four, Twelve Course. So I went in and I went into his room and in our room had a few interesting people, wasn't a room, a sort of alcove in this sort of building. And some of the famous people that was Eric Williams and Michael Condor, you, I don't know whether you've read

32:30 Wooden Horse, book about the escape of the wooden horse, oh well he wrote this book. And then, what happened there...

Can you explain to me, was this the, what was the name of this camp you were in?

Oflag Twenty-one B, that was...

And what did it look like?

Well it was an old house like, I suppose a manor type house, a big one, and they put a wire, wiring tank went all the way round it. And

33:00 it was on the sort of side of a hill, it wasn't terribly well organised. And there were a lot of tunnels were being dug. In fact when they welcomed us in one room, I was standing near a pillar and one of the old kriegies came up to me and he said, "Don't stand there, there's a tunnel going out from there." And so it was all, the activity was, tunnelling was part of them getting out and annoying the Germans you see. So one tunnel, I think this is

33:30 intriguing, in the toilet block, it was a block, with a toilet. In Germany what they do under it, there are no flush toilets, under this, there was a bench like thing, quite long and there were holes cut in it like that, and under that was this pit where all the faeces went and that just stayed there, you see. So what

happened was that they decided they'd dig a tunnel inside this thing, see. So the Germans were

34:00 thinking that, knowing that tunnels probably were going on, would roam the compound searching for these possible tunnels you see. So in this tunnel, because of that, we had a bloke who had to warn the tunnellers, so if they saw something that wasn't, the Germans were coming. So one bloke had to do that, so he had to sit on this toilet seat thing, opening, and make out he was constipated, cause he had to

34:30 stay there a long while. Any rate that tunnel broke, everybody was, people got out, about twenty or thirty and the Germans got annoyed and we had the Gestapo come in. And I think they really didn't know what they were looking for, the, I think they worked on the assumption that everybody was dead scared of them and we weren't. And so actually one of the kriegies stole one of the Gestapo's torches, they didn't seem to know what they were doing, but they went away and nothing happened.

35:00 They said we were going to an air force camp, cause there was a mixed, Oflag Twenty-one B were Officers, we had naval officers, army officers and air force officers. So we went down to Stalag Luft Three. That's down near Sargan. It's no longer called Sargan cause it's in the Polish part of Europe at the moment. And we were admitted to that place, it was a special air force camp, very

35:30 big, divided into compounds. We were in the East Compound and we had a lot of old, very old kriegies who were shot down in the first few months of the war and they were a bit peculiar we thought. And I was, mentioned earlier about, they had books, they'd been sent over for them by the Red Cross, so we had a good library. That was very interesting that camp, you learn a lot about yourself in those situations. And

36:00 one thing I noticed, struck me was in our, we had, we were in rooms and there eight in a room, double-decker bunks of course and we had beg bugs. And if you got a top bunk you, bed bugs like warm air so they'd be on the top and the lower bunk didn't have hardly any, so I got a lower bunk, though it was cold down there, if you're gonna be warm, you'd have the bugs. The meals were spartan, they were the same ration that the concentration camps were getting,

36:30 that was one slice of black bread about three millimetres, by that, in the morning with a bit of margarine about that on it, spread it flat. At lunch time we had a soup, it was, this was supplied by the Germans brought into the camp, distributed in the camp, and consisted of a, sort of a greyey looking soup, not a thick soup, it was a watery soup

37:00 with the odd potato in it about that size. And we also had mangles and cold rabbit and sort of those things, Swedish, swedes and things that they feed to cattle. But you could fill yourself up on that, the swedes I didn't like it much at the beginning but you had to get used to them, we didn't have a great deal of it. The problem there was on that, those rations we couldn't survive. We, as

37:30 in the concentration camps were getting the same and so people were dying of starvation because some of the food was being pinched by the POW, the kapos in the concentration camps, so they lived and the other people died from starvation, this is in a concentration camp. But in our camp we were getting the same diet, so it was being distributed evenly and we weren't gonna allow it, any group to get a power structure. So it was a starvation

38:00 diet for us and we lost weight at terrific rate when we were on that alone, but we had Red Cross parcels which helped, in fact they saved our lives. And they came from American and Canada via Switzerland, the Swiss Red Cross distributed them. We were supposed to get one a week and we did when things were good but the supply broke down every now and again then we'd onto a half and sometimes none. But without doubt, they were terrific.

38:30 We had in that, did you see the Great Escape picture, well that's Stalag Luft Three.

How close is it?

Mmm?

How close is it to the move?

Oh the movie's quite distorted in a way. The first thing it's got, it's got Americans in the British compound, that was the North Compound and of course the star of the show had to be an American, and the Americans had their own compound, so that's a bit odd.

39:00 The other thing is they all looked too clean and all the uniforms were spick and span, it was ridiculous, we never had that. Things were dirty, we couldn't clean ourselves up or anything hardly, so all that was wrong. But the dealing with the German guards was the way it was done, we weren't allowed to talk to the German guards, the special people at the camp were designated, German speaker to talk to the guards,

39:30 and wheedle things out of them in exactly the same way as that happened. And if you escaped, at one stage, you were put in solitary confinement but I'm sure you weren't put in, Steve McQueen had his baseball, never saw that, there was none of that going on. And the other thing I've gotta say before I go any further is that...

We might just stop there and change the tape and then to, just hold that thought and...

Tape 9

00:39 **Well I might actually go back a little if we can to the journey to the camps.**

To?

To Oflag Twenty-one B.

Oh, the journey to Oflag Twenty-one B.

So I want to talk to you about the interrogations that you received by the Germans when you arrived there?

Oh,

01:00 you mean in the interrogation camp. It's called Dulag Luft

Dulag Luft.

D-U-L-A-G L-U-F-T.

So in Dulag Luft, what kinds of questions were the Germans asking you?

Well they were all to do with military matters, to do with where squadrons were and who was in command and all about them. A lot of the, most of the

01:30 prisoners were from England on Bomber Command, they were going through Dulag Luft. And they were able, the Germans were able, by talking to these prisoners to find out all sorts of things about what squadrons were where England, who was the, what was the name of their squadron leader, even the squadron leader's girlfriend. Now they got all this by talking to these people, a little bit of information, this is

02:00 how it's done, you get a little bit of information and a person who's being interrogated thinks that's all right, it's, he's not spilling the beans. But they add all this stuff together and apparently what used to happened, the German interrogator'd go in the room when this bloke was there and the German interrogator would say, "Oh I know all about," you know, "your squadron." You know, "Bill Jones, he's a squadron leader, do you like him?" You know, this sort of talk. And so they, this is how you wheedle

02:30 information out of people.

Do you remember any questions in detail, about what they asked?

No, I couldn't tell you, it's all gone from my memory. I really didn't want to remember it, to tell you the truth. In fact I sort of put it out of my mind for a number of years, it wasn't until I started to write my memoirs that all this came back, so that's why I haven't got absolute details.

Do you remember

03:00 **your sense of apprehension at the time?**

I know it was but I couldn't describe it, you know, what it was like. It was very worrying I know that, that's why I got this, panicky at times, but once I got hold of myself and did all these exercises, I got over that, that worked to...

When you were flying in the Middle East,

03:30 **did you hear stories about prisoners of war, did you know what was going on?**

No. We, the idea was not to have any, not to talk about those things I think, yeah we just never did, if somebody's a prisoner of war, you know, that was it.

So when you arrived at Oflag Twenty-one B, the first camp that you went to, what kind of

04:00 **scene greeted you when you stepped in there first of all?**

Well it was Ray Clarke, former, he was in Twelve Course with me at Camp Borden in Canada. And so he waved to me, I thought, I'm glad I know somebody in here. And so I went in and he sort of showed me the ropes and where to go and what to do and that sort of thing. I had a

04:30 terrible bout of diarrhoea in there and I think it was due to the black bread and then I remember, this is by the by... But I remember Eric Williams had a bald patch on the back of his head here and he was worried about that, so he decided if he had all his hair shaved off and massaged it, it might bring the hair back, so that's what he did. And while I was there, I thought oh I might as well have my hair cut off too, I didn't have it shaved, I had it clippered right down short and

05:00 I was, thought I'd grow a moustache as well, so I had a terrible moustache. And just at that time the Germans decided they were going to, they'd photograph us for some reason and give us an identity disc, which mine turned out, 206 I think it was, and it must have been from somebody who'd died because the number was too low. And they took photos and we saw them, what they were like, and

05:30 I looked dreadful, my hair cut off and moustache. And they were getting annoyed with the air crew bombers and they called 'em terror bombers, the British were terror bombers on Germany, which I suppose they were. And I thought crikey, I look like a terror bomber and I thought they were gonna, might use my photograph in their newspaper as a typical terror bomber. But no, nothing happened about that.

What was there, how long were you in Oflag Twenty-one B for?

I've got no

06:00 idea, about, maybe a month or, not sure. Time sort of disappeared, we didn't, I didn't have a watch so I didn't know what time it was or the date. We didn't seem to worry about, you know, Sunday, Monday, it was no, it was just one day after another.

What was the routine in that particular camp?

Where, in Oflag Twenty-one B? Well you went to bed at night, in the morning you wake up and you went through, go through this breakfast business and

06:30 you had that black bread and then you ate things from the Red Cross parcels. And then after that we have arpel, that's counted, that'd everybody counted, we had to go on parade and the Germans'd count us, and if the count came up all right well then they'd, we'd be dismissed and we could do, walk round the circuit or read books or... We weren't allowed, being officers, we weren't allowed to work, which is good and bad in one way. Cause if you were other rank,

07:00 you had to work in Germany, you might be in a coal mine, that'd be dreadful, but on the other hand you might be on a farm, and that'd be wonderful, cause you get beautiful food and you also got female company and it was heaven. But not everybody got the farm of course, and you didn't know whether it was a good farm or a bad farm. So we weren't allowed to work at all, so we had to find other things to do, which we did, and mainly tunnelling was one of them.

07:30 **What implements did people use for the tunnelling?**

Well that was the hard part, there was no spades and shovels around of course. And in the Red Cross parcels there were tins of milk powder, a round tin, about that round and about that high, and after you got the milk out of it you could use that for, as an implement to scrape the ground. And

08:00 Stalag Luft Three we were in a pine forest and the ground was reddish coloured loam and it was terribly easy to dig, very hard to hide though.

Did you do tunnelling at Oflag as well?

No.

No.

We were new boys there and we didn't do any. And I, when you dug a tunnel you, part of the deal was that you were gonna attempt to escape.

08:30 I had no German, no French, I couldn't even act as a French prisoner of war, there were a few of those in Germany who could masquerade as one of those, I didn't have any French. So I decided I wasn't gonna try to escape, I'd just try to help people who wanted to escape in the digging of tunnels and things like that.

So talking about those escape attempts at Stalag Luft Three, what kind of communication did you have amongst your-

09:00 **selves about who wanted to escape?**

Well there was a special committee within, see there was a POW, a command structure inside the camp. There was a senior British officer, he was the most senior person, he'd have his lieutenants I suppose and then there were societies, there was escaping society. And anybody wanted to escape would have to devise a plan and get people who wanted to do it with him, then they would take

09:30 the plan to this escaping committee and they would consider it and decide whether they'd approve it or not. Cause sometimes people wanted to do tunnels that would crash, you know cut, one'd go into the other one, there had to be plans so that procedure had to be followed. One funny, I must admit, this is a scream. One of the tunnels from our East Camp, there was a problem in getting rid of the earth

10:00 from the tunnel cause it was this rare, reddy, yellowish loam, so if that appeared anywhere Charlie, the ferret, he was the one that was looking round the camp for tunnels, he'd see it immediately and then there'd be a flap on to stop the tunnelling. So it was decided that to stop this problem of Charlie finding

10:30 it, if the sandy loam from the tunnel was put in the ceiling, he wouldn't find it probably. So they decided they'd do a high speed tunnel and go from inside this accommodation block, but they miscalculated, as they usually did, and the level of this sandy loam in the ceiling got thicker and thicker and heavier and heavier. And the ceiling started to sag and all the sand

11:00 was dripping into, all the time, and you know, in people, the kriegies' faces and what they were eating, and they never tried that again actually.

Could we talk about the accommodation for a little bit?

Well there were eight in a room, small room, I couldn't tell you... and in it were, was a, I suppose a briquette type stove for heating, which was nice. But

11:30 we never had many briquettes, that's what you did to heat up, but it was a help when it was really cold, so that was good. And did I say eight in double-decker bunks around the room, and in our room we had, there was Ray Clarke, Ambrose Hayley and myself, Australians. And then there was Willie Williamson and Pete Finlay, they were two Canadians. Pete Finlay

12:00 was interesting, he was an upper gunner on a Sterling bomber on a night raid over Europe and he was shot, that plane was down and crash landed and the entire crew were killed except him. And he was terribly, you know, dent, ah injured, had trouble with his back, I think that'd been broken and arms, legs and goodness knows what, and he'd been in a German hospital for about

12:30 three months or more. Apparently they treated him well, so this was interesting. That was the German army, navy or air force, not the SS Gestapo [Schutzstaffel – secret police] or the Nazi Party, there was a complete division in Germany, which was interesting. And then Willie Williamson had been shot down by, a canon shell piece had gone right across his ear here, across there like that and he, that cut this facial nerve and he, so he had a droopy face, all this

13:00 was just like that. Ambrose Hayley, he was shot down in North Africa and he had a cannon shell piece in his knee and I didn't have anything.

The others, were they pilots or...?

Yeah, they were all, no, Ambrose Hayley, Willie Williamson, oh there's another English man who was a bit, thought we were all colonials, and then there was, we had a New Zealander so

13:30 they were mostly pilots, Pete Finlay was an upper gunner but the rest were, yeah, they're all pilots.

So that accommodation that you had, the bunk beds, did you have mattresses or...?

No, we had palliasses, that was a sort of a bag with straw you put in it and bed boards across the bunk, your palliasse went on top of that. And of course how do you build a tunnel, you have to use bed boards.

14:00 So you start off with the whole bottom made up of bed boards and as they collect bed boards from all the kriegies there, there was a number of bed boards supporting us got less and less cause the Germans didn't bring any extras in of course.

So the ceilings that were sagging from the sand, what were the actual structure made of, the building itself?

Well just like, just sort of like this, a room with a ceiling and a...

So, plaster ceiling?

Oh,

14:30 can't remember, I really, might have been, might have been just boards, I'm not sure, I can't remember that, funnily enough.

So what was the routine in the Stalag Luft Three, you mentioned what you did in Oflag, was it the same in Stalag?

Yeah, we had arpels morning and afternoon, exactly the same thing. For exercise though in the Stalag we used to walk round the circuit, the barbed wire was like that with towers

15:00 with guards with machine guns in them. And then in from that, about forty feet inside was a trip wire, it was called, it was a wire like that on which, put on posts, and it went right round the whole camp, and inside, just inside that we'd walk and that was called a circuit. We all had to walk one way of course because there was too many people on it so we all wove, I remember we all went anti clockwise. The, if we were playing

15:30 games we'd be, sometimes did, like you know, soccer sometimes and other games, had to be careful. If you, the ball went over the trip wire, you had to go to it and look up at the guard and do that, and then when he nods, if he nodded his head you'd go over the trip wire and get it. But if you went over the trip wire when he hadn't done that, you were shot. And we had a few kriegies that,

16:00 they must have gone off their heads, they just ran at the wire and clambered up and of course they were

shot, which, wasn't the greatest. Did I tell you about the Great Escape and the, oh that was interesting, do you want me to share you about that? Well the North Camp had their Great Escape when all these people went out exactly in the film, and of the eighty odd fifty were taken of the

16:30 eighty, I think it was three of them got back to England I think. And so there fifty were, Hitler got so annoyed he ordered the Gestapo and SS to murder fifty as an example you see. So he did, and we had our, one of our squadron leaders Willie Williamson and one of the bloke, our bloke pilots, Rusty Kierath, were among those murdered. But that changed the whole sort of attitude inside

17:00 the camp, they reckon it wasn't worth annoying the Germans any more because it was getting difficult. And if the Gestapo or the SS with Himmler took over Germany which was, they were getting more and more power that everything'd be different because they were quite different from the rest of the community.

Did you yourself have any involvement with that particular escape?

No. That was in the North Compound, we were separate, in the East Compound.

17:30 We had the, I think I mentioned that, the wooden horse, that was one I worked on. That's three of them got out that time, they, only three, and they all got to Sweden so that was very good for the whole lot. But, so we made this jumping horse and course it had sides were covered in so they did a tunnel out through that, through the, out from the main arpel ground, and they

18:00 all got out. So that was great. I was glad to work on a tunnel, my job was, one of them was to jump over the horse cause we had to do this all the time, and also to get the sand out of inside the tunnel, inside the horse and we had to take that round the circuit. See we used to put bags made of trouser legs inside our trousers, and this full of sand, and as you walk the sand would dribble out onto the

18:30 ground. So as it was a grey-ey sort or muddy sort of track, as you walked round you trod this orange yellow clay-ey material, wood sandy material would be trodden in and so you wouldn't know it was, the tunnel was being dug. The only other thing was of course originally the camp topography I suppose you'd say, was like this. And then

19:00 as the years went by the circuit was going higher and higher and higher, they didn't cotton to that but...

How large was that circuit, how big an area was it?

Oh I'm just trying to think, about the, oh I suppose it was the size of a rugby union, no, football field I suppose, our camp would be, our section would be about that.

And where was the accommodation in relation to the circuit?

19:30 Oh inside the circuit, the circuit was quite as far, as close to the trip wire as you could go.

And the compounds, were they in a grid or...?

Yeah, they were, oh the Germans always do everything very, they're very careful and very sensible. And I must admit I, thing has come to mind is that show called Hogan's Heroes it was, that made out that the Germans

20:00 were absolute idiots and that was far from the truth, there were hardly any German idiots. You just want to see the way they're doing things now, they were always extremely careful about everything and their motor cars, when they build their motor cars there're no idiots in that. And I was really annoyed with that because it distorted the entire attitude towards the Germans and their, you know, what they were

20:30 doing.

What was your relationship like with the Germans who were guarding you?

Well we weren't allowed to have any relationship with them because it would interfere with the, our special people who were getting things out of them, so we weren't allowed. I started to learn German but there was no opportunity. And any rate when they, the German guards said anything about it, we just said, "Oh German's a dead language." They didn't like that.

So you didn't

21:00 **communicate with the guards?**

Oh, no, not on a regular basis, only occasionally you'd see one and we weren't supposed to talk to them, but you could call out, "It's a dead language."

So how did you get your information about what was required of you?

Oh we had a radio in the camp, like the, in our section like the one in the Great Escape, it was similar to that.

21:30 They got the parts by blackmailing the guards, the only one they needed was the valve, they were able to make up all the rest of it from bits and pieces and, you know, these Klim [dried milk powder] tins. And they, it's just, how you, security for the radio was because if the Germans came it was dispersal

again, the bits of the radio were handed out to all sorts of people

22:00 and a little bit of a nut in your pocket and somebody else'd have something else. The only difficult part was to hide the valve, all valves, cause they couldn't be... but it was never found. But every day we got the news came over the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation], that's when we knew that D-Day had occurred, and that was terrific. So the, what happened would be, there'd be special people designated to go and take the,

22:30 the news round the camp, they'd get the news and couldn't write it down of course, they had to remember it and go into the various rooms and say what was happening and wait for the next one.

Could you tell me in detail about the wooden horse episode, I'm not familiar with that?

Well these three people, Eric Williams and Michael Condor, you know, he

23:00 was actually an army person, this is peculiar, and he was in air force camp. The reason he was in an air force camp because he was on the anti-aircraft guns and in Germany all the anti-aircraft guns were under the Luftwaffe, the air force, you see so that's whey they put him in there. And so they decided they'd do this tunnel, the wooden horse is copying the, in ancient Greece when they put the wooden horse into Troy you see, that was behind it. So, any rate, they made this

23:30 horse, it was a jumping horse about that high and that wide and you leapt over it, the Olympic Games you seeing people. But the sides weren't open, were closed in, it wasn't, the other ones are all open, they made sort of a box like thing and somebody could get inside. So the first time, what we did we took this, put beams across to lift it, so we

24:00 took it out of the kitchen area into this place in the open part, put it, rested it down like that, we did that a few times and then they started the tunnel. And how they did that, they made a trap, that's a thing like a man hole with a lid on it and so what happened, somebody would be inside this jumping horse and we'd take him out, put him down you see, he's inside and nobody'd see. So then he had to deal with the sand

24:30 and he scrapes that away like that and puts this, like a square thing in the ceiling, man hole, down into this place about that far under the ground level. And then he'd cover that all over with sand and he'd be, go back you see. And the next day he'd do it again and he'd start taking sand from inside where this trap was, he always had to leave enough sand to cover the

25:00 closed trap so nobody would notice anything was wrong. And so all the time we're slowly removing the, he's slowly removing the sand and digging down and along so it's, there's no electric light, so I'm glad I wasn't down in the tunnel. But it took a long while, this was the thing, as you can imagine, it was terrific time taken, I mean months and I don't know about years. But slowly

25:30 goes further and further under the wire, barbed wire and out and then up like that and then there's a pine forest all the way round. The idea was to try and get into the pine forest before you got up but they never seemed to know where they were gonna get up, they seemed to always miscalculate. But this one cause only three people were going out, we could cover the fact that they'd gone, you see, you could fool the Germans into, we could make out we, there

26:00 was a full quota of prisoners there even though some had gone. And but they found the exit to the tunnel eventually, but they were well gone. In fact they, how they did it, they, this, I didn't know this at the time, nobody knew, we just knew they weren't there and we weren't even told they'd got to Sweden and England. They went to the railway station and bought tickets and off they went to

26:30 Baltic Sea, Stetten I think they went from, and what do you call it, got on a boat illegally, I cant remember what the name of that is and were taken over to Sweden, the three of them. So it was a terribly successful tunnel, that one.

When you're involved in sort of carting the sand away and walking around, what kind of fear did you have about being found?

Well you never considered it.

27:00 The, well you always, see there's a lot of guards around you, normally there weren't that many people, guards in the camp walking around. They'd only come if there was something wrong, if there was a tunnel they'd found, they'd all pour in with their steel helmets on and their rifles and all the whole paraphernalia, and they'd do what they had to do then they'd go out. So we were sort of on our own except for Charlie who used to walk round all the time,

27:30 looking for tunnels, most, so we were sort of left on our own.

Charlie, was that a nick name?

He was a German chap in blue overalls and he was, he always looked, he was designated to look for tunnels you see, until Hitler got annoyed and we didn't do any more. There was one other tunnel though, Margaret Tunnel, this was what it was called and this one started in the middle of the parade ground, the same way as the

28:00 wooden horse one, with a trap had to be sunk in the sand with a lid on it. How it started was they, we started, they started, I wasn't involved, started it in winter time when we all had our great coats on, so everybody had to stand close together from now on. So the squads were a lot of people in them, you see, so if all, enough kriegies were in a squad, all with their over coats on, right in the middle, people could do

28:30 things, so they started it right from the middle there. And so this was a bit difficult because they had to get the sand out, distribute it within the... the Germans were really counting, so they had to do it quickly before the Germans did the counting of us. And so the floor you're able to dig down at the tunnel end, far, and of course you wouldn't know it's right in the parade ground. Of course when you fell in to be counted

29:00 you had to be in the exact spot or you didn't, you couldn't get into it, so it was very difficult in the beginning because it was hardly any room. And the air supply, what had to happen the, that one of the tunnellers would have to go down into the tunnel in the morning arpel and come out at the evening arpel, so he had to stay in all day and there was not much air down there, so it was very difficult at the beginning.

29:30 But they finally got bigger and bigger and bigger and they got to a place where it could get out but they decided they wouldn't use it after this trouble with the fifty. They decided that if the Germans decided to massacre us, we'd, somebody could get down this tunnel and be able to inform the British authorities what happened and who did it

30:00 for later, so they kept it.

You mentioned before that it was possible to fool the Germans about how many people were there, how did you do that?

Well I'm not quite sure. Sometimes, I really, the mechanics of it I can't remember it now, I wasn't involved in that so that's one of the reasons. Thommo Thompson, a great friend of mine in the room, he was one of the English

30:30 people, he was working in the map department they did all sorts of things, making maps and for the people that were gonna escape and clothing to look like civilian clothing and all sorts of things. I wasn't involved in that but so...

The Red Cross parcels that arrived, how often did they arrive?

Well we're supposed to get one a week and if we got that

31:00 a week that was pretty terrific, cause they had, did I say that, a block of chocolate in them. And cigarettes, block of chocolate, Klim, dried jam, coffee, what else, salmon, tinned salmon and so many sardines, that type of thing, so it was terrific. But you had to do activities and to pass the time I used to, you could do gardening so I, you put a,

31:30 did a plot outside the, our room and tried to grow things. The sandy loam was, in a pine forest, was dreadful so we had to use compost, tried to use compost, we used the peelings from the potatoes when we were on good rations, we didn't have to eat them, and put it in there. And I was only, I couldn't grow anything else but tomatoes, cucumbers wouldn't grow, lettuce wouldn't have a heart

32:00 and onions wouldn't grow either, it was just the tomatoes we could get. Had to be careful when they got ripe though. Some of the other rooms didn't, they were lazy, I'm amazed that, you know, some of the people didn't do anything.

Why did you feel the need to keep busy?

Well I suppose I'm an energetic person, I didn't consciously say, "If I do this, time'll pass

32:30 quicker," I just did it, I suppose, I don't know. Did I tell you the story about Thommo, this English? This English, unsophisticated English person, he was on a Wimpy Bomber when the thousand bomber raid was, went from England to

33:00 help the morale of the British people, it was pretty low, they thought that if they did this, it'd sound good and they'd be happy. There weren't a thousand bombers on active service so they had to get bombers that people were training in them who were on OTU, Bomber OTU, to make up the numbers. And poor old Thommo was the bomb aimer on this Wimpy, that's a fixed Wellington bomber, two, engine and so they were gonna bomb

33:30 Cologne you see. So off they go and they've never been on operation before and they go towards Cologne. And in a bomber plane you had a photo, a camera that photographed the, where the bombs, your bombs fell. Now to help that to know where the hell it was, because you had in it, in the plane you had a chute in which you put a thing called a photo flash, this was just like a flash in a camera, but a huge

34:00 flash to illuminate the whole target. So what happens, they're getting over the target the photo flash jammed in the chute somehow so it exploded in the aircraft and Thommo, the bomb aimer right at the

front. He was the only survivor, he was blown straight out. So any rate he parachuted down and he got in the underground, he got to the Spanish border but he was picked up there. But he was a bird watcher, and not a...

34:30 the feathered kind of course. And this was good to hear because he kept a diary about what was happening every day and what was the weather and all these things and what birds he'd seen, there weren't that great many in a pine forest. But they, another bird watcher there too but Thommo was very keen, he was always out watching them you see, filled in his time of course. And one day Thommo comes into the room and says, "The migra," is it migration,

35:00 when birds are flying? "...migration of the finches or the black tit or something is..." and he's terribly excited. Ray Clarke who was, he said, "Oh shut up, Thommo." Ray Clarke's still alive actually, down in Melbourne, I've never told him this, any rate I haven't showed him my memoirs either. He said that and the others pooh-poohed poor old Thommy, Thomas, Thommo.

35:30 Thommo Thompson his name was, Barney his Christian name. So I thought, I was interested, I was interested in all sorts of funny things and so I said to him, "Well show me." So we went out beside, near the trip wire and looking out over there, there was a clearing so I said, "Where, I can't see any migration going on?" And he said, "Oh hang on a moment," you see so we're waiting.

36:00 He said, "There goes one." And I said, "I didn't see anything." And he said, "Oh there's one, there's another one." And I could see a little bird about that big, flew across this clearing like that. And I thought, I've been had, you know, this is not, what sort of migration is this? And he said, "Just wait a minute." And we waited there and about every three seconds one of these birds'd fly across, always in the same direction, they were heading south.

36:30 What Thommo said, I said, "Well, so what?" He said, "When you think of what's happening in that little area," cause these how many birds are flying across every three seconds, "if you take that for the whole of Europe, there are millions of them flying." And that's what, apparently was happening, they're all flying to North Africa. So I realised then there was a terrific lot in life you miss that's going on.

How important were

37:00 **those kinds of friendships for you in the camp to keep you going?**

Oh well they were a great help. I sort of, we sort of got into groups, cause when we were marched out through the snow we had to have, we were in groups and Ambrose Hayley was, and Thommo and myself we sort of went together as a group. And see we all had a blanket each and so in

37:30 the snow you needed a bit of warmth and so we could use three blankets if we were altogether, so that was better than one.

And what were the relationships like between the different nationalities, the Australians and the Brits and...?

Ah well there was a bit of sort of rivalry I suppose, they're not at you for hostility, but in our room the English

38:00 man, not Thommo, the other one, not telling his name, I think I've forgotten it actually. He was a bit difficult and he think, thought he was superior to the colonials, which I suppose that's quite normal. The, there wasn't any, in our room, other than that he, the New Zealand bloke he, I'm not telling you his name either, he was a bit, he kept to himself a bit. And

38:30 the, oh there wasn't any problem but if you saw a mess, a hut with somebody else they might be all Pommies like myself, but always lived in England so there was sort of tension. What, another thing that happened was, I was, after the war I thought about was, there was no homosexuality in the

39:00 camp. Cause when you got a whole, thousands of people, men, it's, you think there'd be a few homosexuals amongst the group. So we had plays put on, people acting and they're always a couple of women and they had to be, the women, the blokes that were portraying women in the plays, there was speculation, but that was all, there was no,

39:30 I never heard or noticed or anything to do with homosexuality. And wondering about that because normally in there, whether they are more controlled or what, I don't know, in the air force, might be that. I don't think they selected non, air force selected so there won't be homosexuals in it, but that's all we said. We had quite a few plays were put on and lectures, and I learned from one of those

40:00 not to be an aeronautical engineer. He was one, this bloke was an aeronautical engineer in the RAF and he'd been shot down, I don't know why he wasn't a reserved occupation, so they, people who tell us about their occupation. So he said about, "If you're an aeronautical engineer, you gotta do mathematics all the time cause you gotta work out the stresses and strains on every part of the aeroplane, so you gotta do mathematics. And you'd be in a huge factory and there'd

40:30 be forty engineers probably, and the end of your life you'd probably be able to design the tail plane." And I thought, I don't like that idea, I don't like the mathematics either so I thought I might be changing from doing aeronautical engineering. And we had another bloke who was a, we had a bloke who was a

professional burglar, he told us all about being a burglar, and another bloke who was in the Special Branch of Scotland Yard and he told us how he had to trail people. And

41:00 another bloke who was a customs officer in Johnny Walker Whisky Distillery in Scotland and he told us the goings on up there. How every year there was a celebration and this, the brewery workers, everything was locked down because there was so much excise, they didn't want anything stolen. So he, every, this, maybe it was Hogmanay or something, the workers all got drunk and they

41:30 never discovered how the hell they got the whisky.

We're finished the tape.

Tape 10

00:36 **Doctor Winn at what point, how did you become aware in the camp that the war was coming to a close in Europe?**

Well we had our clandestine radio and so we had the BBC every day. So we heard, the Germans had their propaganda radio going and telling us all about the

01:00 Oberkommando der Wehrmacht [High Command Armed Forces] Becant [?], this is how they started and they'd do it in English for us. But it was mainly propaganda so we were, new exactly what was happening and when the Russians started to get close. Of course the, we got to the stage where you could hear the Russian guns, they were, and there was a lot of worry in the camp what was gonna happen to us, were we gonna be left to be over run by the Russians or

01:30 evacuated or whatever. And the, we were a bit worried about this because the Germans had found in Poland, in a place called the Katyn Wood, the bodies of four thousand Polish officers who'd been murdered by the Russians. Now the Germans announced it and course the Russians said it was the Germans,

02:00 and so we were in two minds who the hell did it, somebody did it. So when the Russians were getting close, we couldn't, we thought, "Crikey, we don't want to be liberated by them, we might be liberated into Katyn Wood situation." So there was quite a lot of worry about that and we weren't sure about what else might happen, they might decide to shoot the lot of us as they had been doing without any worry on the Russian Front. And

02:30 so finally they decided they'd, we had to be evacuated. Now it was cold, January and very cold, it was very cold that year. Thommo and his diary said it was minus twenty degrees, I don't, he was very accurate usually, how he said, got that I've no idea. I must admit it was really cold but it was still, there was no wind when we started, the wind got up later but when we

03:00 started it was very cold. The, when they told us we were going to be evacuated and it was, there was in the winter I decided I was gonna make a sledge, so I used bed boards and nails out of the walls and hammer made out of a lump of iron that somebody got and, but you had to borrow all these things. So I made this sledge and I got a whole lot of derision, most of the people around said, "Oh what do you want to do that for,

03:30 we're not gonna go," or, "They won't allow you to do it," or, all this talk, or, "And you don't need it." And any rate the day came and we all go out into the snow, the, we were the last section of Stalag Luft Three to go, and at that stage there were over ten thousand officer prisoners, air force officer prisoners, so it took a long while cause they had to go down a road and so we were out, waiting for quite a while until

04:00 we finally went. And course there was excess, we couldn't carry all the Red Cross parcels so we, we got two each and we ate as much as we could out of the others and when we got nearly ready we threw all the stuff we couldn't eat over the, into the Russian compound. That was Russian prisoners of war and they were being badly treated and dreadful food so we just threw it over the fence at them and they thought that was pretty good.

04:30 So then we started and we just had to march, it was, my sledge went well, and after a while actually, the three of us, they were getting very tired so they put their Red Cross parcels on my sledge and we pulled it in turns. So we went, we were heading away from the Russians of course, the back of our minds was another thing, why did they do

05:00 that? Were they thinking of our well being when they marched us out as far as the Russians were concerned, and we didn't think that was the case, so why were they moving us? So that was the back of our mind because you always worry about everything at that stage. Any rate, we marched and some nights we could get some accommodation, I remember one night we were in a church and another night under the tiles in some other place.

05:30 And then the snow went away and we, it was getting bad with the sledge on the cobble stones going through towns. One of the interesting things was the way the German civilians treated us, they weren't hostile at all, they – ninety per cent of them were women because all their men were in the services.

And our guards, some of them a bit young and they were very obstreperous. And

06:00 some of these women would bring out boiling water so that we could make a brew, tea or something and the guards used to get annoyed with them of course and shout at them and the women would shout back and wouldn't buckle under, we were amazed at this. And the implication was that some of them had their sons in prisoner of war camps in Canada or somewhere else, and the implication was that they were just doing the sort of thing that

06:30 they hoped these other people in other, in America or Canada would do. So we finally got about a hundred kilometres it was and we got to this place and that's when we were put in these cattle trucks to go somewhere, we didn't know where we were going. And so this train was in this siding so forty-five of us each, into each, each cattle truck,

07:00 they had a roof on it, a cattle truck where they put horses and things like that, and they were quite small actually. Did I tell you about this, how we had to sleep? Oh well the, forty-five people in a cattle truck, we could only stand up and they, the door, gate was of course bolted and locked and there's one window and a bucket in the middle. And we took a fair

07:30 while to get to where we were going apparently because we had to go the night a couple of times. And on, to try and get some sort of sleep, it was decided that the only way to do it was everybody to lay down with their heads on the out, pointed towards the outside and their feet in the middle. And when we did that of course the foot, feet of one person opposite you would come to about here and your feet'd come to about

08:00 there on him. Now we're still too cramped, we couldn't lay flat on our backs so we all had to go like that so when that, we did that, it was all right. There was a bit of a problem if you were opposite a very tall person, you'd have his feet in your face then. So we were all on our side and about every ten minutes during the night the leader of our, the truck load, would say, "Over you go," and we'd all have to go and we'd go on that side all

08:30 together you see, just like sardines. It was a humorous bit, but then we kept going and we had no idea where we were going but we finally ended up in a place called Darmstadt, half way between Brahman and Hamburg. And we were there, we were put into this naval POW camp, and from there, we stayed there quite a while and of course the, D-Day had occurred

09:00 and the British were coming up, oh, in that area, Holland, round there, they were getting closer to us. And it was a wonderful place to be because every morning, we were halfway as I said between Brahman and Hamburg, and that was the path where bombers came, a lot of the bombers came in to bomb Germany. So each morning you could hear this low rumble and then it would get bigger and bigger and bigger and then you looked up

09:30 in the sky, you'd see the vapour trails, and the front of every one this tiny little dot and they were the American Air Force, and there were hundreds of them flying into bomb Germany. And also there'd be fighters about, you couldn't really see them, they're so tiny but you could see them when one of their planes was hit and it'd come spiralling down like that and crash, and people got out in their parachutes. Then every night the

10:00 RAF bomber command would take over, they'd do exactly the same, come over the top, you couldn't see them cause there're no lights. And you, they'd go over and then you'd frequently see tracer bullets going through the sky and it'd be a night fighter taking the bombers and then they'd be hit and then they'd burst into flames and start coming down. We liked the idea of the bombers going over, we weren't very happy about the ones being shot

10:30 down. And ...

What was the mood of the guards?

Sorry?

What, did you still have guards with you at this stage?

Oh yes.

So what was their behaviour like, given...?

Well when they put us into a camp, they sort of stayed outside, cause we were enclosed in barbed wire with machine gun posts, they didn't want to mix with us I presume, well we didn't, they weren't there. And then when they were bombing Brahman and Hamburg, these

11:00 two cities, there was a terrific fireworks display with the anti-aircraft, flash of the anti-aircraft guns firing at our planes and the photo flashes going off. We could tell how many planes there were from how many photo flashes went off and then where the bombs hit the ground, and a terrific display, but I'm glad we weren't in it.

Was it a liberating feeling?

Oh yes, we were over the world cause everything was wonderful. The only

11:30 trouble was it was this, that they're moving us all the time away from liberation, so while we were there they, the British got a bit closer so they moved us again. And this time I made a trolley cause there's no snow and so off we went on another trip. Now this was May, beautiful weather, spring time, and it was lovely marching except when it rained and we got wet of course. And

12:00 we had to be in, no accommodation of course, we're out in the fields and so we'd make a sort of a hole in the ground the three of us'd get in like that and put three blankets over the top and hope there wasn't too much rain, and we kept going. And one time, interesting, we went into, the guards took us to this place and the guards wanted to put us in this field. And it was a farm and the eldest male person in the farm

12:30 was about, was a boy of about fourteen or fifteen I suppose, something like that, and he was in charge of the farm apparently, amazing. And he got, he was arguing with these guards, I mean it's a kid like this and shouting at them and all sorts of things, he had to give way in the end and we did go into the thing, but he put up a terrific fight for a fourteen, fifteen year old. Then we kept going and we came to the Elbe River, that runs through Hamburg to the sea and

13:00 there I bartered a packet, a couple of packets of cigarettes, which had become the currency in Germany, that's how the, all the transactions were done, their money was useless of course. So I bartered a couple of packets of cigarettes, which course I got them because I didn't, we all got a couple and I kept mine rather than smoke it. So I remember I bartered those for a pen knife

13:30 which I wanted and then we were taken across the Elbe River, downstream of Hamburg. Now this was a real problem, we were upset about that because that meant that the British Twenty-first Army Group under Montgomery, again, he was, they were advancing but they, the, that put a river between us and liberation, so we were a bit upset about that. And they marched us all the way north to

14:00 outskirts of Lubec and the guards wanted us to go in but the Mayor of Lubec said, "No," and the guards couldn't force, couldn't, we had to go south again to a place where there were a number of barns, beautiful, wonderful place this was. There were cows on the lower part of the barn, I suppose they were barns or whatever they call them, and above them was a loft like place where they put all the hay. So we had hay to sleep on and

14:30 it was beautiful and we were there a couple of days and then up the road comes a British scout car with two comet tanks behind and we were liberated. So they smashed down some of the wire as a gesture and radioed base and off they went chasing the German rear guards. So here we are, liberated. So,

15:00 what happens, our senior British officer in charge of all the kriegies, makes an announcement. "On no account must any prisoner of war leave the camp, if you do you're liable to be shot by the Germans or interfere with the British, their advance, so this is an order," he repeated three times, "nobody's to leave the camp, we just wait here until we're liberated and moved away." Within five minutes there was nobody in the camp.

15:30 That was about oh, a few thousand of us. Everybody went walk about, that, so of course I did too with all the rest of the group. And so we're walking down this road we didn't know where to, and we see a van beside the road and nobody in it, so somebody got in it and started it and it went, the engine went but when he put it in gear it wouldn't, clutch wouldn't work. So one of the caps, the chaps said he knows how, "I know how to

16:00 fix that," so he got in, opened the cover of where the clutch is, and he got a handful of sand and gravel and threw it in. I was amazed but the thing worked, it would go then. So off we went into the closest village, which was Bandamaine, the Germans are milling around handing in their weapons and our soldiers are milling around. And they were terribly annoyed though, our British Army people

16:30 because they'd just liberated Belsen extermination camp and they were, phew. All the SS had done all that of course, they ran the camps. There was rumour, I remember when we were there somebody said, "Oh there's a, they've found an SS person," and they'd gone somewhere and what happened, we don't know. They, there was no

17:00 rifle shots so I suppose they beat him up a bit, dunno.

You mention in your memoirs that you did pass a cattle truck on your, on that march?

Oh that's right. Well on that, when we were in the cattle trucks going to, across, we went over a bridge when another train went over the top of us, it was this sort of thing, there were a lot of cattle trucks and there were people inside, civilians and they looked terribly dejected. And

17:30 we knew something terrible was happening to the Jews, that was the rumours that was going around, we had no idea that they were doing active extermination. The treatment of people varied, we had one prisoner of war who was shot down in Italy and he was tortured by the Italian Police, he had his testicles were squashed in a vice. And when he came into our

18:00 camp he had to be, wear special support. And other people had been in the concentration camps, had never got to ours and so quite a bit of brutality around, but I think the German Armed Forces, army, navy and air force, they never did anything wrong.

Okay, if we go back to

18:30 **the when you'd been liberated by the British Army, and can you describe what that town was like?**

Oh well, these barns were part of an estate, an agricultural estate so that was separate from the town, when we left there we went into the local village, it wasn't, there was a place where the Mayor had a thingo, smaller than Mona Vale.

Did you know then

19:00 **immediate…?**

We didn't know what was, oh we didn't know what the town was.

Did you know immediately what your future was then?

No. We knew it was pretty good, everything was wonderful. So then after all that we… keep, another thing comes to mind, Don Lushe, a Canadian who's a bit of a lark. He, when he went walk about he found a German staff car and he commandeered it, we got in it and he was driving

19:30 all over the place and he needed petrol so he drove up to a German filling station and the German didn't want to fill him up. So Don Lushe roared at him that he was Oberst Lushe, Oberst is the German name for Colonel and they're really pretty high up in the German forces and this bloke buckled up immediately, filled him up, Don Lushe apparently had to sign a chit, so

20:00 that was a peculiarity. Any rate we went back in trucks over the Elbe and then the Rhine River and into Brussels. And then when we got there they put DDT [pesticide] cause, I don't think I had any lice on me, but they put DDT in a gun, powder gun, here, here, here, down there, down there and all over your hair to deal with the lice,

20:30 and then we could have a shower later. And then they gave us, our clothes were dreadful so they gave us a, we got knew battle dress but this was army battle dress we were given, no badges of rank at all and looking pretty scruffy, and they gave us some money and we went on leave into Brussels and that was VE Day.

Do you remember what you ate first?

What, in Brussels?

21:00 Haven't a clue. What happened there was the whole place was in, you might imagine, in pandemonium, everybody's laughing and smiling and patting people on the back and running around in all directions and it's incredible you know, with all this relief that was sort of poured out of everybody, so we had it too, all this. Any rate we saw, I think it was Ambrose Hayley and myself, we saw this senior British

21:30 officer's club and that's for oh, I think it was brigadiers and above cause, or maybe colonels, brigadiers, generals and all that lot you see. So being kriegies we didn't mind, we just went straight in the door to the bar and the barman looked a bit startled at the beginning, I think he's wondering whether we ought to be thrown out, but the rest of the people in there,

22:00 the generals and so forth, they soon cottoned that we were kriegies and they'd never get us out of there, that'd be a fight. So we drank, obviously there, and everybody's laughing and joking and carrying on and then after that I think we went out. And I can't remember much of this, what happened, I had too much, and we were going round the town and people were in all directions, all sorts, everybody seemed to

22:30 be in the streets. I think we must have gone into a couple of other taverns or something or other and had a few more because I'm afraid I got drunk. And I came to a thing, I subsequently found out what it was, it was a fountain in Brussels in this main square and it was, the fountain was a boy piddling into this water and it was called the Mannequin Fountain. And I think I helped him and did the same

23:00 thing myself, I'm not quite sure about that, but I can remember vomiting into the gutter, which I'd never done before. And after that we went back, I can't remember what happened then, and the next day we were flown over to England, for another dusting out with the DDT.

All this time that you're a prisoner of war, did you think about what your family might have thought your fortunes were?

No,

23:30 never entered my head. But we were very concerned, that was a problem there, there was a constant worry about what would happen to you. The first one was if Germany won the war, this was before the D-Day, if Germany won the war, what would happen to us. That was the first thing. The second thing happened was the Red Cross parcels, they

24:00 were being cut off every now and again and what would happen if they were cut off completely, we knew we'd starve to death. And then the other thing was, why were they moving us away all the time

because, away from being liberated. Because the rumour was about that the German Nazi Party, SS and Group were going to go to a redoubt in the mountains for the last stand and they were gonna use us officers

24:30 as bargaining chips. So that worried us a bit, course, a lot actually and so we were a bit concerned with that. And when we were on the march I remember one time the German guards wanted us, for the evening, to go into a clay pit and our senior British officer refused point blank. He said, "If they want to massacre us, they gotta massacres us up here in the open,"

25:00 so we'd be able to run away, some'd be able to run away. We weren't gonna go down into that thing, cause they could easily have done us over there. So these were, constantly this sort of thing was, especially also after the Great Escape when the fifty were murdered, that was in the back of your mind, and course you couldn't trust the Nazi Party, them at all.

Was there a particular turning, while you were a prisoner of war, was there a particular turning point

25:30 **in the war that you can remember where you thought, Germany's gone?**

There were two. At Stalingrad when the German Army and [Field Marshall] Paulis was defeated and they went, that made us feel better because that's the first time the German Army had had a defeat except for Alamein. The really turning point was D-Day, cause, see there was a lot of worry about whether the Germans, was very difficult what they did at D-Day, the allies, to

26:00 you know, amphibious attack on a hostile shore. And Rommel was in command of the anti, this is peculiar, Rommel this, he was in command there under von Buchert or some other character, of the defence of Normandy. Which is rather peculiar because here's Rommel on that side and we got Montgomery back on the British side, so they seemed to

26:30 be running up against each other all the time.

So can we talk, Doctor Winn, about how you got home then from England to Australia?

Well from there we went to another depot of course and we had a lot of leave and we went all over the place in England, I was lucky to go up to Scotland and did this salmon fishing with the aristocracy and learned a bit about the aristocracy and their privileges. And then we left and got a ship home, another depot again

27:00 and a ship via the Panama Canal again and home.

And how long was that journey?

Oh, I've no idea. The idea of time didn't sort of...

Did it seem to you like a long time, were you desperate to get home?

Well we wanted to, but no, what did, we went, I wasn't desperate and a lot of other people weren't, they wanted to have a look round England, see they hadn't had a look and the war was over and they wanted to do a bit of sight seeing. Well I wanted to do a

27:30 bit of that too, but they just said, "You gotta go," so had to go.

So what did you do on the ship on the way home?

Oh I can't remember, nothing much, there was nothing to do but it was just... that's funny, I can't remember anything about that ship, there was nothing to do. It was the Orion, P&O liner, it was much better than the others, it was still acting as a troop ship, so it was very crowded.

So were you part, but you weren't part of a squadron then, what sort of men were on

28:00 **that ship?**

No. Well I think, I don't know how many thousand were on board but they were air force and I think they were other people, army and all sorts of people were all being... This is a big problem, see, England was nearly sunk by all the people that came there, two million Americans came over there for the, for fighting in that area and so they used to reckon their barrage balloons over England around the cities, and they used to reckon the only reason that England hadn't sunk was the fact that

28:30 barrage balloons were keeping it up so, there was so many people.

So what was the first Australian port you arrived back in?

To Sydney, Woolloomooloo, the finger wharf at Woolloomooloo and there on the dock down there I saw my brother and my father. My mother had died of course, and my father had married again a couple of years afterwards. And then we, joyous I suppose

29:00 reunion and then we had to go to, all go in buses to, back to Bradfield Park where we were de-something or other, I can't remember what it was, you know they had to deal with all the pay books and all that sort of thing. Then we were sent on leave and then later we were de-mobilised October '45,

must be, yeah.

Did your

29:30 **family tell you when they became aware that you were alive and well and on your way back home?**

No. I don't know, that's interesting, I didn't tell them anything, it didn't enter my head, so, peculiar isn't it. I suppose there was so much activity going on in, it just never entered my head. And I was a bit disappointed I couldn't do it, see around England, but. I did go to Ireland and had a look, stayed at the Shelbourne Hotel. I must tell you

30:00 this thing, this is a funny thing ever. In camp, people would say all sorts of things, what they would do when they were released. So this bloke who said, when he's released, he's tell us, "Well when I'm released..." everybody's saying what they're gonna do themselves. He said, "When I'm released I'm going to go to the nearest pub and I'm going to order a hundred beers." So any rate when we were at Brighton, was after we came to

30:30 England we went to Brighton, this place, and we go on leave and this bloke goes on leave. And we, he walks into this hotel into the lounge and the waiter comes and says, you know, "What would you like sir?" And he says, "A hundred beers." The waiter, of course nearly fell over himself, but the bloke said, "A hundred beers!" I mean, when you're a kriegie you don't take anything you see, from anybody, you're all steamed up. So any rate the poor waiter and all his staff were there

31:00 pouring these beers, but of course it takes a while to drink a hundred beers so he had to get, so all of us had to help him drink it.

Did your body find it hard to adjust to the amount of beer you were drinking?

Oh I'd had a bit of practise in Brussels. No, the British beer is fairly light thank goodness and you could consume quite a bit, without it affecting you. But

31:30 it really peculiar what happened, what a lot of the kriegies did when they got to England, they did all sorts of things, some people tried to get into films and everything you can think of, on release. I just wanted to do that fishing trip up in Scotland. But any rate so you come back and then I couldn't, didn't know whether I was gonna be a doctor or whatever and that's when I had to make a decision. So I

32:00 thought about being a counter jumper, did I mention this before, I don't know whether I did. So I went to Coles had a store, in those days it was called Coles & Son or something, and nothing under two, nothing over two and six, which is the equivalent to about oh, a dollar now, or may, yeah it's a dollar now, and all sort of low, down market.

32:30 And I got a job as an assistant to, in the men's department, and it was all handkerchiefs, socks, underpants and all that. And I found I was pretty hopeless, people'd come in and we'd, they'd buy this, nothing was packaged, it was all loose and so you'd, they'd give you, you'd put these socks and all together. And it was all sorts of peculiar

33:00 amounts, that we didn't have the metric system of course and so it was, we're all under pounds, shillings and pence so it'd be like, seven pence halfpenny and that was half a penny and all sorts of peculiar prices. Well my mental arithmetic was dreadful, I couldn't work it out, so there was a girl there who was pretty bright and thank God, and I'd ask her, you know, "What does this come to?" and she could spit it out straight away, so then I could

33:30 get the money from them and of course if they had change, well you give 'em the change. But when it was very crowded, it was very difficult cause I couldn't work out the, what it all, they all added up to, so I had to make a guess, and I think I was overcharged some people and undercharged others of course. But I'd work a figure and I'd tell the customer whatever I thought it was, and nobody ever questioned me about

34:00 the adding up for the, how much. Ever. But they all checked their change. Absolutely. And I mean this was just interesting. I think, see the adding up with those, pounds, shillings and pence was really dreadful.

Can I just ask you about when you arrived back in Australia, what sort of de-briefing did you have post war?

Oh, nothing really, they didn't want to know anything. They, we had all that

34:30 in England, you know, find out where we were and what happened to us and all that stuff in, down in Brighton after we were released, that went on. They asked you questions, 'How did you lose your aeroplane,' and all that stuff. Back in Sydney was mainly all to do with your pay, course I had a lot of money then because we were being paid while we were prisoners, pretty good isn't it. And I, they

35:00 we got promoted, that was the other funny thing. When I was shot down I was a pilot officer and then after a year or something, everybody was a pilot officer for a year before somebody became a flying officer, we're going up in rank. And then after another certain time everybody becomes a flight lieutenant which is the equivalent to a captain in the army, so our pay was pretty good, and you couldn't

spend it could you, so when we got back we were rolling in money really. And

35:30 that's why when we went to Ireland we stayed at the best hotel, Gresham Ho, no... no it wasn't the Gresham, can't think of the name, Shelbourne Hotel, and they worried... Oh, another funny thing I did back in, when we got back to London, I had plenty of money. I decided I'd stay at the best hotel I could find and, cause I could pay for it, so I went to Claridges, I don't know whether you know about Claridges the hotel, it's for

36:00 royalty and presidents and field marshals, and all that, nothing under that lot. So being a kriegie didn't worry me, I went straight in to the desk and said, "I'd like a room." And the, whatever he was, desk johnny said to me the exact words, these were his exact words, "I'm sorry, sir, but I think you would be more comfortable at another hotel." I thought what a wonderful way of giving you a knock back.

36:30 **To which you replied?**

I just said, "Thank you," just left. Didn't worry me much, but it was, cause it was, I knew it was nearly impossible to get in there, and any rate I thought it was worth a go.

All right we might, do you wanna do one more, yep?

Tape 11

00:38 **Okay Doctor Winn, I just wanted to go back a little bit if I could, back to the camp. And you mentioned earlier that when there was an escape attempt, the Gestapo would often come into the camp to check. Could you tell me a bit about what they were like?**

Well to me, this was only once when they did it in

01:00 Oflag Twenty-one B, but we didn't think they were anything at all, they were just sort of ordinary dopey people, that's the feeling we had. They didn't seem to be that bright, whether they're all like that, I don't know, I shouldn't think so but these were ordinary people so. You couldn't, we couldn't speak German, or I couldn't speak German to them and they couldn't speak English, they just wanted to push us around really. And I was intrigued

01:30 that nobody was very concerned about it at that stage. I think after the Great Escape, if we'd had the Gestapo in then, we would be far more concerned about the whole thing.

So there was no Gestapo that came in after the Great Escape?

No, not into our camp. No, I didn't hear of any in the other camps, there might have been but... See, the air force

02:00 Luftwaffe, they had their own camps, we were in an air force camp, so Goering was the head of the Luftwaffe and he was very worried about his own position and his privileges and he was, guarded his prisoners and his air force people fairly strongly.

You talked about the concern that you had about the Red Cross comfort parcels not arriving, what food did the Germans provide you?

02:30 Well we had that slice of black bread that thick with, that size, and that much margarine in the morning and, that was their food. And then we had that soup in the middle of the day, hot, it was hot soup, with, runny soup not a thick soup, with a few potatoes in it and some mangles, swedes in it, and that was lunch. And then at

03:00 tea we'd have that same slice of black bread. We also had, occasionally they'd bring in blood sausage and I couldn't, honestly I couldn't get myself to eat it, so, maybe I wasn't hungry enough at that stage, but I just couldn't even try it.

Were there times when you were hungry?

Oh yeah, when the Red Cross

03:30 parcels were being interfered with or we weren't getting them it was, that was very bad.

Did you have health problems while you were in the camp?

Yes, a peculiar thing happened, at one stage I thought I was getting tuberculosis, for some peculiar reason, I was feeling terribly weak and I don't know why and any rate I was sure I had tuberculosis. So I fronted up, we had a doctor in a

04:00 part of the camp, so, par for everybody, all the groups, and I went to see him and I told him, "I feel awfully weak and I think I've got tuberculosis." And he said, "Oh well I'll listen to your chest," so he got out his stethoscope and he listened to my chest and he said, "Oh that sounds pretty good but just to make sure I'll do a blood test." So he got this great big syringe, a really big syringe, very impressive

syringe,

04:30 so he took out this, I suppose about hundred millilitres, well fifty millilitres of blood and he said, “Oh well I’ll contact you later,” you see. And so off I went and I recovered after that, it disappeared the, your weak feeling and I never asked him about the, what was the result. But he couldn’t do anything, there was no way, that was good psychological medicine you see, he did that and so I thought it was

05:00 good, so.

So he was a prisoner doctor, was that right?

I think yes, he must have been. They were captured in places like Crete and places, a number of doctors when their troops were in trouble, they would stay with their troops and not attempt to escape.

So when you first left, or arrived in Brussels, what changes in your own physical appearance did you notice?

I’ve no

05:30 idea, cause I, we never looked in the mirror, so I really, I suppose I was beaming all over with joy. So I don’t think there’d be, when we had a supply of Red Cross parcels our weight didn’t drop down, we had a reasonable weight. And being small was an advantage because great big people

06:00 needed more food than tiny people, and we all got the same rations, so I was getting more per stone or whatever I was, than big blokes, so lucky thing, that worked for my favour.

You mentioned when you arrived in London, you went and stayed with the aristocracy you termed it, could you tell me what that trip was about?

Well Lady

06:30 Frances Ryder Organisation organised for troops to go and stay in English homes, like they did in Australia a while ago, and so I wanted to go fishing and the only place they had on their books was this place in Scotland. And they told me that two Australians had been there before and they’d misbehaved, that was indicating I had to behave myself, you see. So any rate I went in the train and we went through Perth, it was in the Scottish Highlands and we came to

07:00 this place, their village was called Glendevine, and the railway station called Merthley, it was in the highland hills of Scotland and on the River Tay, this was one of the big rivers of Scotland. And the chauffeur picked me up in the Daimler and took me round to this manor, oh, it was a estate. It was a beautiful

07:30 two storey red brick building with stone surroundings of the, oh I remember this, of the doors and the windows, a bit like Hampton Court Palace the way that’s constructed, course nobody knew the size of that. But we had to go through a deer park to, drive through this beautiful deer park to get up to the house and then I remember I knocked on the door, I think I did, and the butler came and he was terribly snooty, you know, like this. And

08:00 I said, “Pilot Officer Winn sir,” Flight Lieutenant I was then. “Ah, yes sir, I’ll take you to madam,” or whatever, Lady, her name was Lady Lyall, and it was Sir Archibald Lyall’s Estate. I don’t know what they did, I felt there might be some connection with Lyall & Tate Sugar, what it, they never let on because the aristocracy keep everything very close to their chest. So I knew that the butler didn’t like me

08:30 but the, Lady Lyall and Dorothy, the daughter, they were there, everybody else was away, and they were very charming. And I must admit, thinking about it, all the time I was there, I never really knew whether they liked me or not, because they, this, their manners were always perfect. So, the sort of thing we did, I’d dress for dinner in my uniform and then we’d have a sherry in a side room and then we’d go into dinner and I’ve have to take

09:00 Lady Lyall in on my arm, you know, all this sort of stuff. And they had an armour room and Sir Archibald was very pleased with his armour and he had this wonderful steel, well not steel, the Eleventh Century armour head and he told, this was his pride and joy and he showed it to me specially, and I was a bit sceptical. Any rate, years later there was this,

09:30 on a little Australian under news magazine, there was this photograph of all the other photos right in the middle of the page and the caption under it said, ‘This very good example of this head that’s been given by Sir Archibald Lyall to the Tower of London Museum.’ So there, he really was telling me the truth. But

10:00 they were, they had two sons killed at the Battle of Alamein, and one seriously wounded, and a daughter, that’s what happened to their family. It was, you know, the war affected people in, you know, very difficult ways. Any rate we did all sorts of wonderful things, they took us on, they took me up in, for a picnic up to their hunting lodge in the hills, I’d never been in a hunting lodge before. This is, very big place,

10:30 two storeys, and we went in there, had a look around and they had a great big hall, I suppose it’d seat about fifty people I suppose. I suppose they had parties and all, and all in this great hall, fire places

either end, and they had stag heads around the walls. And we had to pass through a place called, this is the Burnham Woods, if you've done Macbeth in Shakespeare he talks about that, so all these things made it all

11:00 interesting.

How incongruous was it for you, having just come from a German POW camp to be in that environment?

Well I thought it was terrific. The other funny thing about that, there were things in the... I had developed a, I was a left winger at that stage, I think everybody was at that age and the Beveridge Plan was a socialistic plan for England, was mooted, and I was all for it. And I remember we

11:30 got into some talks with Lady Lyall and I was all for everybody should have an equal start in life and equal education and equal everything and no privileges and of course here I was in the privileged aristocracy. But they didn't get annoyed with me, and I thought now here's a perfect example of the manners business. When I caught some big salmon and the butler changed

12:00 completely, from being, looking down his nose at you to oh, quite friendly, but the others didn't change at all and they were perfect manners all the time, I didn't know what they thought of me. What you had to do of course was write a letter after you left to thank the hostess for having you, and so I wrote a letter. And we'd been to the Buckingham Palace garden party at this stage, so I told Lady Lyall

12:30 about the garden party and thanked her for me staying there, but she wrote back to me, which is unusual, to thank me for coming. So I must, my behaviour must have been all right, that's all I could think.

Now you talked about your views, that you had left wing views, did you change your views over the period of time that you were a prisoner of war, did it have an impact on you?

Well I didn't have any views before when I was at school, politics just didn't come

13:00 into it, I was not of a voting age I suppose and I wasn't interested in politics at all. So when I came, then in prison camp, cause all sorts of people were talking all sorts of things, I went along with the Beveridge Plan, I thought that was the way to go. I still think it's the right way to go, cause... sorry.

That's okay. When you came back to Australia and you saw your family again, did

13:30 **you talk to them about your experience as, in the war?**

No. I, there was never any, I wanted to talk about it, get it off my chest, and but in those days you were supposed to not say anything, you were supposed to keep a stiff upper lip and say nothing about anything. So this was all bottling up inside me, I must admit it worried me a bit. That was, that was

14:00 what was the done thing so this is the first time I've said anything about the war, in all those years. I've written about it in things but I've never spoken to anybody about it, that's why I've got verbal diarrhoea today.

You mentioned quite early in this interview that you suffered from depression and had a breakdown, could you tell me about when that was?

Well after I started the university I think I was in

14:30 first year or second year, I, I don't know, it was just, this thing developed, I had a, bit hard to explain, it was very distressing what was going on. And but, so it got to the stage actually I thought of suicide, I didn't carry it out or try but it went through my mind, I thought I couldn't carry on. And so that's when I spoke to my father about it

15:00 but it wasn't, I can't, you know, what you feel, I really can't explain it.

Did you have any idea of what was causing that depression and that...?

No. I didn't connect it to anything, I just thought I was getting it. But whether it's due, I presume it might have been due to the war service, I suppose it was. But

15:30 I'm glad I got over it.

And what were you studying at university at that time?

This was medicine, I'd started, already started medicine by then, it was first or second year medicine I was doing. But I was so petrified of failing cause I was old for, you know, we were called old servicemen at the college and we, I was so petrified of failing

16:00 cause I mean the life was half gone nearly and I hadn't achieved anything. So I studied very, very hard and so, even though I'm a bit slow I was able to get through medicine without failing any years and went straight through and without a post or anything. So there were seven hundred and something students in first year medicine after the war, first year after the war, three hundred and fifty passed at

the end and I

16:30 was one of them, thank goodness.

You did some work, you did some jobs before you went back to university, is that correct?

Yes.

What were those jobs again?

Well one was the Coles store in Liverpool Street and then I thought I would see how it was to be an aeronautical engineer so I got a job at DeHavilland aircraft, at Bankstown Aerodrome. And got a job there they, they said the only thing they could make me do, get me to do would be a final assembler, that was what

17:00 my designation was. And but my job was to dismantle Mosquito aeroplanes, had Rolls Royce engines, and they were on Lend Lease and they had to be dumped at sea, so all I was doing was dismantling the engines from the aeroplanes. And then the management decided they were going to abolish the morning tea break and so the union decided to

17:30 go on strike and I wasn't allowed to vote because I was quite keen on strike, so I left there and that's when I finally decided to do medicine.

What made you want to do medicine?

Well my father was a doctor of course and I knew about his life and that thing and I thought it was a worthwhile thing to do. You could help people see, and so I thought

18:00 that'd be what I'd like to do.

You said you, when you had the anxiety and the depression that you spoke to your father about it, what kind of conversation did you have with him?

Well I think I told him I feel dreadful and I, no, I don't know whether I said I couldn't carry on, I can't remember the exact words cause that's the effect. And I told him, I asked him, you know, what about psychoanalysis and he said, "Yes, it'd help me."

18:30 So then he, there was another psychoanalyst in Sydney at the time, a chap by the name of Fink, he was a Hungarian Jew refugee whose medical registration wasn't recognised. So anyway, so I did there, I used to go three or four times a week for an hour each time and one and a half years. So, it's wonderful.

19:00 **The symptoms that you had when you were feeling the depression , could you explain what it was that you were feeling, were you having nightmares or...?**

Oh I didn't have any nightmares, it was just depression, the feeling that you're worthless, oh, all that, everything negative in life that you can think of, you're thinking. But hasn't come back to me now, I couldn't, I don't know the exact

19:30 feelings, it was... even though I was doing medicine, that was the funny part about it, I sort of... I had trouble at one stage in medicine, when we got to fourth year, we had to do pathology in the, we had to go to post mortem examinations and autopsy and examinations of people that've died. And

20:00 we were in this theatre place and there was a slab with a dead body on it and the technicians had to, they have to examine each of the body's cavities, the abdomen, and of course they've got to do this and open it and then the chest cavity, and I could stand that. But when they had to examine the cranial cavity and that upset me no end because they had to saw around here and then knock the top off, you see, and

20:30 that really got me and I had to go out and, to recover. And when I was out there I thought, "Crikey I've got to, I can't let this beat me, I've got to get over all this," so I went back inside again. But some of the people were, a number went and some of them didn't come back, so maybe they failed medicine.

The psychoanalysis that you did, did you talk to him about the war?

Who, to my father?

No, to

21:00 **the other...?**

Fink, I really don't know, you talk about everything in psychoanalysis. The idea is that you're allowed to, you're supposed to say whatever comes into your head at the moment and not consider what effect what you're saying will have on anybody else, that's the only way anybody can find out what's troubling you. Cause if you're be troubled by something and you want to tell somebody, you think, "Oh well, I won't tell them that, it'll upset them or they won't believe me," or

21:30 something or other, or they get annoyed. In psychoanalysis the opposite, the psychoanalyst doesn't react at all to the, it's vital that the psychoanalyst does not react to what the patient's saying, because if

he, if the psychoanalyst does it'll inhibit the patient saying what's really on their minds. So that's why it's terribly hard being a psychoanalyst because of the abuse that

22:00 is heaped on psychoanalysts by their patients amongst other things. And so I honestly couldn't tell you what I said, any rate, it would be definitely very private.

The, you mentioned earlier that you had anxiety about doing medicine because you were older because of the war, was that feeling of having that period of your life in

22:30 **a prisoner of war camp at a very young age, did you feel you'd missed out on certain things?**

The only thing was that I was sort of behind, well everybody in the services had this problem that they had been in for years and younger people'd be coming up and you might miss out, although they passed a law that ex-servicemen should have preference. But you still felt you're

23:00 sort of behind the normal profession in your life.

The experience that you had as a POW and the experience you had as a fighter pilot, when you weigh those two things up, what did you, what did you learn the most from both those experiences?

Well I wonder whether I learned anything.

23:30 Well you see we were young and it was adventure and so I don't think you ever weighed up anything, you just keep doing whatever's come, you didn't think that far ahead, it was all today or tomorrow or, and everything was taken out of your hands. You didn't decide anything, you don't decide anything for yourself in the armed forces, you're told what to do, you do what you're told. And when

24:00 they, you do whatever they say and you can't argue, so you sort of abandon yourself to the service or the unit you're in.

Did it take you some time to catch up on what'd been happening in the world, and at home, when you came home?

Oh, well I suppose, not really, the,

24:30 things were happening, but everybody, the war had ended and it was a complete upheaval, everybody's terribly happy and doing all sorts of new things and terrific lot of energy going on, and you just sort of get on with what you're doing and not be introspective, I think that's what was happening. You just had to do it so you put your head down and did what you had to do.

Did you find coming home that Australia had

25:00 **changed, that people had changed?**

I didn't notice, at all. They, I had a new step mother of course, she was wonderful, I would say she's the best step mother anybody could have. She was, had been a music teacher at Saint Catherine's School at Randwick area and she could play the piano. She was a concert pianist actually and she could play all these wonderful, she was really keen on

25:30 Chopin and she frequently played it and it was wonderful. She was so helpful and through her whole family, and so we thought the world of her and it was wonderful to get a step, frequently I suppose step mothers are a bit difficult, but she never was, and was always terribly helpful.

What are your

26:00 **thoughts on the Second World War now about the way it happened and the way it ended?**

Well I think, my belief is that the two evils were Nazism and the Communism but it was a terrible pity to have to go to all that effort and loss of life to get rid of

26:30 Hitler to start with and then the problem with the Soviet Union. And so the casualties, a lot of people don't under, realise the terrible casualties that occurred in the war. The, I think England lost six hundred thousand or something like that, dead, and France about five hundred thousand, Italy was similar. And

27:00 the, I think it was that Poland lost fifteen per cent of their whole population were killed and the Soviet Union lost twenty million people. And of course in China nobody knows the huge death toll there with the Japanese and their rice offensives to starve the Chinese. And Germany lost, I think it was, I'm not absolutely sure of these figures, I'm sure some

27:30 body could correct me, but there was something like five million Germans only lost, in their, all, in their killed. Cause there were civilians as well as army and armed forces. The, as I said the Soviet Union lost all these people, they suffered the most of the Second World War. In fact their, they really you'd have to say was most of the

28:00 fighting was done there, they, and they were responsible for the victory in a huge degree. America was,

they lost, I think it was a hundred and fifty thousand, or something like that, no civilians, and it was equal between Europe and the Far East. Now I might have made a mistake there so, but I know they got out of the war very lightly compared with

28:30 the other people. And Yugoslavia and some of these places, that was dreadful. The Croats in Yugoslavia they were, and the Yugoslavia people they were pro-Nazi and a lot of people don't know this, and they were against the Serbians who were anti-Nazi. And poor old Serbia is, end up being

29:00 thumped, goodness knows what, with this ethnic cleansing was fair enough, but they shouldn't have done that. But a lot of people don't realise how they suffered in incredible way from Nazi Germany with Croatia and Slovenia helping the Germans.

Having been in a POW camp, how did you feel when the full atrocities of the holocaust was unveiled?

Well I was horrified of

29:30 course because nobody believed that, you know that, we believed the Germans were, the Jews were being treated badly but we never suspected that there was absolute extermination like a factory, which was what was happening. We didn't, it's interesting you should mention that because after the war when I passed in medicine I got a job as a locum, that's in

30:00 this group, two man practice, one of them went on leave so I came in to replace him. And the other doctor in the practice, he was a Jew and when he knew I'd been in prison camp he told me his story. He was in the camp but he was in Buchenwald concentration camp and he was, we talked about that, I did talk about war with him, and he told me about

30:30 the struggle to survive in a concentration camp. He said the only way he, reason he survived in, he got in, he was young, young lad, strong, he got in with the camp kapo, that's what they were called. It'd be a, one strong arm sort of bloke who organised a, helpers, a gang it really was. And this, these

31:00 people got plenty to eat because the food coming in, which was going to slowly starve everybody, came in, and the kapo and his mates were, could do the distribution of the food. So what it meant was that you, they made sure they got enough food and the other people they just died of starvation. And so he apparently, told

31:30 me he got in with the kapos and that's why he survived. But I think one of the greatest tragedies of the concentration camps was the fact that all these people were put in them, they were other than Jews, the gypsies and all these other people were exterminated. But they were put in this camp and there was all this problem with food and people trying to get food. And there was a tendency for some people, the ones that tended to survive were the ones who got the food

32:00 and the others didn't, so they survived at the expense of their fellows. And I'm sure, I've never asked anybody, but I've got the feeling they're carrying a terrible load of guilt, some of them. And probably worries them more than the, or as much as the trauma they suffered in the camps.

Did you ever feel, coming home, that you were treated differently having been a POW than, say, aside

32:30 **other service men, was there a difference?**

No, there didn't seem to be any difference. The prisoners of the Japanese of course were badly, very badly treated, of course it's dreadful how, the way they were treated. And there was a lot of sympathy for them naturally, they deserved it, and German POWs they sort of, they ignored us really, which was fair enough. But

33:00 that was a peculiar thing with the Japanese prisoners, in our medical course there was a prisoner of the Japanese, Michael Flynn was his name and he was doing the med [medicine] course the same as us. And he, it was interesting, he told me one day, he was in, I think he was in Changi at one stage, he was never on the Burma Railway or the Sandakan march, but he was in Changi and then he went to Japan to work in the, he was an officer,

33:30 to work in the coal mines. And at one stage he told me that he was a – they were above ground and he was talking to a Japanese officer and he was an officer of course and Michael said, "Oh that was interesting this morning, there were fourteen Flying Fortresses went over." And the Japanese officer turned to his sergeant and said,

34:00 "You told me there were eighteen," which was different from what Flynn had said, and then he proceeded to bash up this Japanese sergeant. Now I don't, this bashing up, with whap, whack with the, whatever they, their Samurai swords I suppose, not the sword itself, I don't know what they used but... which was intriguing that the Japanese officer was taking the word of an officer

34:30 prisoner over his own sergeant. This idea of bashing people up seemed to be standard practice.

Did you ever have a reunion with any of the POWs in the camp that you...?

No, we were all over the world. We've been to see a couple of them, Thommo Thompson, Barney he was

in Northampton, we tried to get him to come to Australia funnily enough. He was a town planner but he said, he

35:00 had no qualifications so he’d have to start again. And any rate, he married his pilot’s widow, his pilot, they were all killed except him and the pilot had a wife with two daughters, so he married them, and so we used to visit him a number of times and did more bird watching. The others, Pete Finlay, we saw him in Canada and

35:30 he became an optometrist and he died recently but, who else. We communicate with the others, Ray Clarke is down in Melbourne and we ring each other up and when he’s up here we see him. Ambrose Hayley’s dead, he, that’s the trouble when you get on, they’re all starting, we’re all starting to drop off. But the others, Ambrose Hayley, yes, he died recently and

36:00 he was a very keen trout fisherman and I was too and so I used to go down and fish down in Tasmania in the lakes down there. And he was a keen, I thought I was a keen fisherman but Ambrose Hayley was twice as keen as I was. I can remember we were fishing in this lagoon and it was snowing in November it was unusual, it was snowing and in the water’s up to here, cold, and I’m getting cold and I wanted to stop. But Ambrose kept going and he had this wound in his knee and it was all swelling up and

36:30 he suffered quite a lot from that, from this bit of canon shell in his knee.

And did you ever have a reunion with your squadron?

Yes, we, that was early on after the war we had a reunion and I went to that and Alan Ferguson was there and we had a, but there were hardly any pilots. See the ground staff started in April 1941 leaving

37:00 Australia and they stayed together for the entire war until 1945 in Italy. So they all got terribly friendly and everybody knew everybody else deeply, if you’d been with the same people through all sorts of travails for all those years they had a, sort of a bond. And I’d been there only five months on the squadron to do my ninety-two sorties and then I left. So there were some of the pilots I’d never

37:30 seen before, they’d never seen me, they, and there were, this was the problem in the pilots. So other times I’ve been to reunions when there were no pilots at all, and so I was out on a sort of a limb. And so but I always go to the Anzac Day march, and but there’s still no pilots there that I know, cause a few of them are dead of course. But there was nobody marches, George O’Neil, I used to some

38:00 times go with him but he lives up in Queensland somewhere so I don’t see him.

Did you go up in a plane again when you got back from the war, did you go up in a plane?

Yes, I thought I’d like to get my commercial pilot’s license so I went back to the aero club again and I did that but I got that license but I didn’t go into the commercial flying at all, I was

38:30 doing medicine. And the other thing was you had to fly these planes, they were low powered, I can’t remember the name of it now, I think I might’ve flown it, they were flying Tiger Moths at one stage, but another De Havilland aeroplane, low winged thing. And I flew that and it’s like pushing a scooter around, compared with driving a Ferrari so, and you’re terribly restricted in what you did,

39:00 you had to call up and say where you’re going and what height and they’d tell you what you can do. So after you’ve been throwing a high powered machine round the sky you don’t want to do that any more. So I gave it away.

Doctor Winn, thank you so much, thank you.

Oh well, sorry I spoke so much.