

Australians at War Film Archive

Stanley Watt (Stan) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1588>

Tape 1

00:30 **So whereabouts did you grow up Stan?**

233 Cambridge Street, Wembley, Perth.

What was Wembley like in those days when you were there?

Oh it was the end of the tramline, later on it went out to Floreat Park and then they had a switch back road to City Beach and being a mad swimmer and surfer

01:00 I used to go on the switch back. When I was sixteen I got my drivers licence, I used to scare the living daylights out of Mum and Dad, I was allowed to take the car. Dad was a World War I man, so Mum was a very nervous person. She used to get very upset that I would

01:30 take the switch back and bounce from one hill to the other.

Was that a car the switch back?

A car, yeah. And I also had a motorbike just before I went away and that was led to pleasure of jumping the motorbike on the switch back.

You just mentioned your father, what did he actually do in the First World War?

He was in the Light Horse, which was in the desert, in fact in a lot of the places

02:00 where they are now, fighting the Turks. He went right through to Baghdad, after the horses they took from overseas from Australia were found to be no good in the desert, so they went onto the camel and then they became the Camel Corps.

How much did your father tell you about World War I?

I wish I had taken more notice.

02:30 He brought back some souvenirs, flintlock pistol. I don't know if you know them and a German Mauser pistol. I did much the same when I got back, I brought back a Luger, nine mill [9 mm calibre].

Did he talk to you much about what he experienced out there?

He was at Gaza and he told me how, on the camels he had a mate

03:00 who was wounded and he went back to pick him up. Took the risk of going back even though his mate had been shot, and picked him up and brought him back.

Did you think that they had a really strong element of mateship back then?

Yes as we did. This Col Moreton, I was with him for the whole of the war.

03:30 Before I was in the air force, I was with him right through the war.

So whereabouts did you actually go to school in Wembley?

West Leederville State School.

And what was that like?

If you read my book it was a lot of bullying

04:00 and we had a guy who is not around, so I can talk about him. A guy called Frank Smallpage who used to bully me. And I was taught boxing so when my uncle took my up to the gymnasium and taught me boxing and he was tripping me up as I came out of class and so I turned around and whopped him. At this stage I was only six, so I learnt to fight at six. But you will hear later on I did a lot more boxing.

- 04:30 **Well he sounds like a tough little fellow at six years old if he was bullying kids?**
- Oh I was being given a hard time.
- Why?**
- He was just the school bully, he was tripping me up as I was coming out of class. Unfortunately the teacher saw me, Miss Smallpage [Miss Crossley], and she took me into the headmaster and I got six cuts [a caning]. You used to get the
- 05:00 cuts in those days. Come in and get the cuts. Whew, whew, whew. Yeah that happened.
- Sounds like you were in a tough school with high discipline?**
- West Leederville State School we used to play high cockylorum, have you heard of that?
- No.**
- Well you got down and you put your head between the guy's legs and hung onto his legs
- 05:30 and you had to do a running jump and see how high you could go up with about six guys all linked together like that. And if you had to break their, when you got up you had your turn, "High cockylorum jig, jig jig. Ever see a monkey riding on a pig?" And by this stage you were trying to break the opposition. It was
- 06:00 pretty rough at school. We used to do a lot of biffing [punching].
- Is that why you got involved in boxing because it was a rough school with a bit of biff [fighting]?**
- Yes this Frank Smallpage, I decided that he was bigger and heavier than I. And I had an uncle who was very keen on boxing, Uncle Hec, and he built a
- 06:30 studio and he put some gloves in and he used to teach me how to box. How to get in close and everything was done in pairs. Hit twice, so I was part of the boxing team and I used to go from station to station and you will read in the book how on the exhibition boxing you are not supposed to hit hard, because
- 07:00 you have got a target area, there, there, there and there, and you have got to hit that target and touch it. It is like, they do that somewhat in other sports too, you touch there. And in England one of the professionals hit me and hit me hard and I finished up, because I taught boxing, I finally
- 07:30 knocked him out .and you will read in that book how the next morning the CO [commanding officer] called me in and said, "I watch you put up a good fight last night. Seeing that you got mad about it, you can go on fighters because you're a fighter." Everybody is getting posted onto bomber command when I first got to England and he said, "You can go on fighters," because I badly wanted to be on fighters, flying single engine. And that's how
- 08:00 I managed to get it. We didn't get onto Spitfires over there, we trained on other planes the Spitfires there weren't available. So went out to the Middle East and went out on Kittyhawks.
- We will get to that later on, I still want to know a bit about what it was like growing up in Perth?**
- Well we didn't have transport, we had skates, roller skates, from the West Leederville State School we used to
- 08:30 skate or bike to school. We couldn't afford, parents in those days they didn't have nay money. Skates were cheap and later on when there was more money we got a bike for Christmas.
- Did you have any jobs around the house?**
- Oh that was part of the job. You had to mow the lawn, clip the hedge, they all had hedges we had to clip.
- 09:00 Looking after your own pets, I used to have a great big thing of pigeons and I used to keep bees and I used to go out and collect bees at the Wembley Golf Club right now, with a smoker and smoke the bees to get the, to, and then put them in and carry them home. The number of times I got badly stung.
- 09:30 These were my hobby interests.
- So did you make honey?**
- Oh yes. Well I had six hives in the back and I think it is in the book how on one occasion I was smoking the bees out and they chased me and I got badly stung by all of the bees. Yes I was doing it for honey.
- 10:00 **Would it be a profitable sort of thing to do?**
- No, only hobby, interest. And as I say when I was growing up we had the depression so we were trying

to earn some money. We also used to, when we would go to the beach, we were mad on City Beach, we used to and collect drink bottle and sell them back to the people that sold the original full bottles.

10:30 We would collect all of the empties and put them in a bag and take them back. And I think we got threepence a bottle.

You mentioned the Depression, how did the Depression affect your family?

Well my Dad, he is actually quite famous in Legacy and Highgate sub branch, which I am a member of. He was,

11:00 brought the printing business from his brother. But in those days if you went bankrupt you went to gaol.

Really?

Oh yes. You shouldn't have bought the business if you didn't know how to manage it properly and he finished up teaching costing so that people wouldn't go, so in the master printers association would teach the people all of

11:30 the other printers how to, he was very conscious of that issue. He was very strong in the RSL [Returned and Services League], he would only employ returned soldiers from World War I. So Imperial Printing Company was known as the returned soldiers' printers. And having got close to it, going bankrupt, he bought from his brother who would have gone, Jim Watt, he also lost

12:00 two brothers in World War I. He was very money conscious and he turned it around. I followed him and taught costing when I got into Imperial Printing Company.

What was the printing industry like in the old days?

Well you have seen the old hand fed platens?

Not really.

Well you push and put your hand in

12:30 and if you weren't careful you got your fingers nipped. And a lot of people got nipped. So you were working that and getting your hand in putting the paper in.

It sounds like a pretty physical and exhausting job?

And later on they had an automatic feed, the Heidelberg. Heidelberg platens and so then you, you got your hand in them and if you didn't get your timing

13:00 right you got your fingers snipped.

Did you grow up around that?

Yes.

Did you have any little chores that you did as part of your father's business?

Chores? Well yes, there were the days when you were melting the metal for the linotype machines, I had to melt the metal every morning. And melt it to go back in for recycling.

13:30 **Why do you need metal?**

Because that's all they had, they had foundry metal and linotype metal. The foundry metal was too expensive, but it was put into cases and you had little boxes that you picked out one at a time and I was fortunate that I had a foreman who was very good at it. We also had a lady who was very good at it.

14:00 Picking up a letter at a time and putting them into what was called a stick. That was a stick that you arranged them in and that was before they got to the linotype machines.

So is the metal melted in order to make the letters that you would?

Yes. But it would be a whole line of type, that's why they called in a linotype machine. Whereas with a foundry type you picked up a letter at a time and you had to assemble them.

Sounds extremely fiddly?

14:30 It was.

Was there a bit of a shortage of metal in those days then?

No the foundry type lasted longer, because when you were using the linotype it just got recycled, got remelted, where the foundry type lasted for ages.

So you could reuse the foundry type but the other type you would have to melt down and re - ?

15:00 Melt down and that was my first job melting the metal down for recycling the next day.

And how would you melt it down?

Oh they had a big pot where you through yesterdays metal into, it was an electric heated pot and you had to get that out and pour it back into an old about that big,

15:30 and that went into the machine and became a line of type.

Did you find that type of work exciting?

Well my Dad always said you can never lead until you had learnt to serve, if you want to lead you have got to learn to serve first so he brought me from the ground up, I was sweeping the floors, doing the linotype melting. I learnt to

16:00 foundry type, any printer will know what I am talking about.

So you didn't get any special treatment just because you were the boss's son?

Quite the opposite I was paid less than everybody else. And even when I became foreman of the print works he always believed that you didn't get any special treatment, in fact he went the other way. At that stage I think a foreman was getting

16:30 twenty shillings and I was getting ten shillings. And I was a foreman. But he always said learn to serve and then you will be able to lead.

Just going back to your school days, was there any sort of sport you learnt to play?

Yes I used to caddy golf sticks for my, we will talk later on about Ping Ingle,

17:00 Ping Ingle was the son of Harold Ingle, my Dad's mate. The dads were very close together and they used to play golf together and they were playing out at Wembley, which I play out there now. I got my shoulder injured during the war, so I was playing golf and good golf

17:30 out at Mount Hawthorne. Out at Mount Hawthorn. And I used to play good golf out there, but now when I got my shoulder injury I can't hit a ball any distance anymore. But Harold Ingle and my Dad were great buddies and Ian Ingle,

18:00 Ping was his nickname, and I were great buddies. And I will tell you later on how we joined up together and he got killed.

So were you actually doing a bit of caddy work on the side?

Oh yes. I was shoulder and walking around, all good exercise.

Did you have any sporting interests apart from golf?

18:30 Well I won a scholarship to Wesley College and I used to participate in everything but I later on, I took to squash but I was playing football. It was compulsory at Wesley College in those days and cricket was compulsory, you had to learn to play these while you were growing up.

19:00 **Well it is not such a bad thing is it?**

No, do you watch the AFL [Australian Football League]?

Yes.

Later on I got into rugby and I had a bet on rugby, do you watch the international rugby?

Not big on rugby myself.

Okay, I bet on the Kiwis because I used to play with the Kiwis in Italy.

The All Blacks?

The New Zealanders.

19:30 They got beaten in the last by the English, the British. In this recent game the Australians beat the British but the Australians got eliminated in the early rounds.

There is always a bit of rivalry going on between those folk. So I understand you joined the Cameron Highlanders?

Yes.

20:00 I have got a certificate there of the 16th Battalion Cameron Highlanders. My Dad was director of recruiting and chairmen of Commonwealth Loans, which was raising funds for Spitfires Britain. He was very anxious to support Britain because he had fought in World War I and he,

20:30 well the anxiety of my Mum, because later on when a number of the kids got killed in World War II she finished up in an asylum. She was nervously concerned when I joined the war but Dad had talked me into it. But I will give you background to that later.

How many siblings did you have?

Siblings? I have a son names Ian after Ian Ingle

21:00 and I have two daughters. Jane she is, Jane and Kerry.

In your family, was it a brother and sister?

Brother and sister.

And where are you placed in the family?

Well my sister who is now in a nursing home sixteen months older than I,

21:30 as I say we were all born at home in those days. And my brother, seven years younger than I. So.

You're the middle child?

Yes I am the middle child. But of course I grew up with my sister, I was very fond of her and I still am. I go and visit her twice a week in the home.

That's lovely.

22:00 **So why did you decide to join up with the Cameron Highlanders?**

Well we had a foreman who was in the Cameron Highlanders. And he was only recently died, lived to an old age. Andy Patterson. Andy was a permanent Cameron Highlander and I got talking to him

22:30 and I finished up I went with him. He was adjutant of the 16th Battalion Cameron Highlanders so I joined the Cameron Highlanders because I was very close to him and very fond of him. And this was when you went three months in and three months out. So I stayed in

23:00 fourteen months, the last one I finished up joining the air force, that's why it was a two-month.

Before we get into joining the air force can you tell me about the training you received with the Cameron Highlanders?

Well yes, with infantry we had to as I say I was sixteen when I joined up, 16th Battalion. We

23:30 went on many route marches, we had to carry sixty pounds on our back of rifle and ammunition and, one particular we marched from Fremantle to Swanbourne and fired at Swanbourne range which is still there now and then we went right north, we used to march about twenty miles with all of this kit on your back.

24:00 In winter time we would carry the, put the, had to dig a trench and put your waterproof thing over the top of it and on one occasion we just put all of the soil out of the trench on it and climbed into it and on one occasion it poured rain and it all came down in the middle of the night.

24:30 I also did one from Capel. That was a sixteen-mile route march, I think from Busselton to Capel.

That sounds about right.

Again you had what you called a trenching tool, like a little shovel, and you got that out and you had to dig a trench.

25:00 **Sounds like pretty hard work?**

For a sixteen year old, yes. One of the reasons I decided to join the air force. I actually applied for the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. Brigadier Lloyd, who knew my Dad, rang up and said you had to be twenty-one to join the AIF and go and fight anyone overseas. "How old is Stan?" "Well he is sixteen." "Well tell him when he is twenty-one to come back and he can do it."

25:30 So then you could join the air force at eighteen so the day I was eighteen.

Were there any sort of marches that you would have to do in the full Cameron Highlander uniform? You know parades?

I had this Scottish kilt and because at sixteen you're interested in girls and I went to take a girl out one night, kids at fourteen are taking girls now.

26:00 And she said, "I am not going out with any bloke that is wearing a skirt." And she refused to go out with me, that was one of my first disappointments.

I thought it would be a bit of a novelty with that whole Scottish thing, I thought it would be exotic?

She thought men that wore a skirt weren't all men, half men. So she refused to come out with me that night.

Well what sort of social things

26:30 **would you get up to in those days?**

Oh well we used to go to the Embassy ballroom and learn formal dancing. And on Friday nights I also went to YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] gymnasium. And Ping and I we used to go to Friday night gymnasium and

27:00 then we would always save our money up and get a milkshake, we called them milkshakes in those days.

This was a non-alcoholic drink?

Oh no.

It was alcoholic?

Oh no, it was not alcoholic. My Mum had a her father, she claimed that he was a drunkard because he used to work in town and Friday night he would go and have a couple of drinks and then he would come home

27:30 and he would always bring home something that was attractive to eat. And she said that he was a drunk and she made me promise, and I didn't do it but I nearly did, made me promise that I wouldn't drink until I was twenty-one. I drank when I was twenty, I was in England at that stage.

I think you did well to hold out to that stage.

Well Ingle didn't.

This is your best mate?

28:00 He went to [Perth] Modern School and I went to Wesley, he won a scholarship and I won a scholarship to Wesley and we were separated for a while, that was when I was in the 16th Battalion. But I used to go to the YMCA camps at Rottnest [Island].

I didn't know the YMCA had camps at Rottnest?

They did. We were allowed to take our

28:30 canoes over on the zephyr and paddled around and we used to go on hikes. We had a kit inspection. You had to make up your bedroll and wash your dishes down in the salt water. I was very keen on the YMCA, I was in the YMCA for a long time.

Was that sort of the average thing you would do being a part of the YMCA or

29:00 **would there be also....?**

We used to go on long hikes, we used to swim. Do you know the basin at Rottnest?

I do actually.

Well we had to swim the length of the basin and back, that was part of the ritual after we finished our dishes we walked down the basin and we would swim and consequently, I will tell you later on, I am quite a swimmer now.

So where did you actually learn to swim?

29:30 Crawley Baths. Down here they had baths and I had my grandfather Leslie was the father of Hec, who taught me to box, he was a sportsman and he won all sorts of trophies and he used to bring all of the grandkids down and teach us to swim and dive at Crawley Baths.

30:00 **Sounds like you had a close family?**

We did, we all lived close together. My mother's sister and her husband, my Mum and her Mum and Dad all lived in Wembley. One in Harbourne Street, one in Gregory Street and we lived in Cambridge Street and Ping Ingle lived in Cambridge Street.

30:30 **With the boxing at what point did you actually started getting into competitions, was this when you were in the Cameron Highlanders?**

Well in the Cameron Highlanders I was always keen on physical exercise and I got my lance corporal at Ascot here where the racecourse is. They had a training ground there and

31:00 I was second top in that class and then I went to Frankston in Victoria, I was sent over there and then I got my corporals stripe. And I topped the class over there.

You were doing well.

Physical recreation training they called it.

Were you sixteen at the time?

Yes.

So that must have been a pretty exciting thing to do for a sixteen year old to go to another state and do that sort of thing?

31:30 Oh yes because we were all in trains and they had cattle trucks and we had to sleep in the cattle trucks. And being small I was able to fit in the hat rack. I would sleep in the hat rack, the other guys would sleep on the ground with all of the poo from the cattle, which they had tried to sweep out but it still stunk. And then when I went across to the air force

32:00 that's another story.

Before we get to that I just want to know when you did go to Frankston was that before the outbreak of war?

No. We were actually, I excelled in bayonet work. And what was the guy that taught bayonet, very famous he had

32:30 a gymnasium in Perth. He taught me and I was his assistant with the bayonet and you know they had these shaped bodies stuffed with straw and you had to do a running charge and hit a vital spot with the bayonet. I was always very keen on physical recreation training.

Do you think your background in boxing made you good at the bayonet?

33:00 No they were different activities. I became a good boxer even at Cunderdin I was doing some boxing, when we got on board ship there was only boxing but I was organising the boxing and I used to put myself in the ring with somebody that I didn't like.

33:30 And then of course when we were going overseas, I used to give them a hiding. There was one fellow, he is not around any more, a fellow by the name of Johnny Woods and he was a bit of a drunk and he came into Geraldton when we were training at Geraldton and he was swearing in front of a girl I was rather keen on, in fact she is in my book, Gwen Williams. And I said,

34:00 "Look you do not swear in front of women." And he said, "You step outside and say that." And I went to step outside, he stepped outside first, he was in the dark I was in the light and he biffed me so I finished up, fought him all of the way up the main street of Geraldton and I cut his lip and he had to go to hospital. And he was still wearing his scar right until he died. I was concentrating on his nose so he couldn't see.

34:30 You know how if you get hit in the nose you eyes water? But I was actually, was hitting him around here and cut his lip right up there, subsequently every time on the troop ship when I was doing the boxing I used to bash him against me, but I was just exhibition box, not try to hurt him.

You already hurt him enough?

Well he was scarred until he died.

35:00 **So what made you decide to get out of the Cameron Highlanders?**

Well you could join the air force at eighteen, you couldn't get into the AIF until you were twenty-one, and I had applied for the AIF and as I say, Brigadier Lloyd knew my Dad and asked how old I was and I was sixteen. So I waited until I was eighteen and Ping Ingle and I went into ANA House and we both

35:30 joined together.

What was your family reaction towards your joining up?

Well my Dad was proud, my Mum was frightened. Ping later on got killed. Bob Blair in fact you have probably read about him in the paper, he and I were in England together, a week after I saw him in London House he got shot down

36:00 over Holland. And you know it is all damp there, they found his body still in the plane a week after the war, they found this plane with his body in it. That was Bob Blair. The Blairs and the Watts and the Pascoes they were all very close families. They used to play bridge

36:30 and anyhow we finished up losing some of ours which Mum, I finally got shot down which you will probably read in the book. Anyway my Mum was scared that I wasn't going to make it, because my Dad lost two brothers in World War I.

So what happened to you immediately after you joined up in the air force?

37:00 What happened to me? Well I went through Pearce, Cunderdin, Geraldton.

So if you can just go through the process slowly, so you were then taken to Pearce?

Yes. Well my Dad had a car and Harold Ingle, my Dad's buddy, he had a car and

37:30 and my Dad would drive me, finished up, Harold Ingle who had HJ Ingle engineers in Perth, have you ever heard of the gas, they put wood and paper in the car , light the wood because he had coke. It would drive it because it was the

38:00 heat that drove the engine, and we drove all of the way down from Geraldton down to Perth. At that stage we were eighteen, nearly able to drive.

So what were your first impressions of Pearce?

Well I realised for the first time that we were getting close to the war because there was another guy, Charlie Owens was in Broome when the Japs came over and

38:30 you probably heard that they bombed Broome, and they sunk a lot of the planes, did you? Okay, yes the Japs had come into the war and they were bombing Broome and Darwin and what have you. And I heard a

39:00 lot of the relations from this guy Charlie Owens who I was in the YMCA with and he joined the air force before, eh was older than I. And he told us that he was running around these big forty-four gallons drums of fuel and didn't realise they were fuel when they were machine gunning them up at Broome.

Lucky man.

Yeah he was lucky. Well subsequently he wasn't lucky.

Did it surprise you that the Japanese were bombing Australia?

39:30 Well of course yes we were surprised. Very surprised.

What sort of reaction did everybody have to that news?

Fear. My Mum, being an ex-soldier my father was exhilarated that he had a chance and he joined what they called the veterans

40:00 VDA, veteran defence army and he was lieutenant and they used to play soldiers all around here, around Moore Park as a matter of fact. He was soldier through and through.

So he was actually really excited about the fact that there was another war?

40:30 Well I wouldn't say excited but he certainly. They didn't know at that stage that the Japs were so brutal.

Can you describe what Pearce was like as far as what it looked like?

Well the first of the WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] there because we didn't have refrigeration in those days and the food was terrible.

41:00 **Why was it terrible?**

And we all got tummy troubles and the WAAAFs got tummy troubles and it was strange to see us on parade and the men would make a run for it and the girls would make a run for it, maybe they would make it maybe they wouldn't. Because even when we got to Cunderdin there was no refrigeration at all.

How did they go about training you at Pearce?

41:30 Well once the Japs came in they moved us down here for our initial training because we had to do a lot of learning, navigation and other things, so we got moved once the Japs were making their way down here. What was the question?

I just wanted to know with Pearce what was the

42:00 **initial training like at Pearce?**

Oh marching, we did a lot of marching .

Tape 2

00:30 **Can you tell me about the elementary flying training at Cunderdin?**

Well it was Tiger Moths, which are still being flown. I had a guy named Charlie Flint and I was his first pupil and he was very enthusiastic and I went solo in seven hours and

01:00 I must admit I was a little bit nervous originally, as one always is when you start something for the first time. And he taught me aerobatics, and I have a rating in my log book, exceptional above average for aerobatics. I loved them I studied them. Every night after the day he would invite me into his room at Cunderdin and say now when you go

01:30 to do this this time do it a bit slower, he actually gave me private tuition so that I got a very high rating for aerobatics and I love them, which I subsequently had to put to good effect.

How much training did you have to do before you went solo?

Oh seven hours. I went solo in seven hours.

Is that a standard amount of hours?

02:00 Well it varied. I suppose seven hours, sometimes twelve hours.

How were those seven hours spent before you were ready to go solo Stan?

02:30 You fly dual because you had the instructor in the back seat, the pupil in the front seat. So you had to learn how to side slip, in other words slip down and straighten up because you had to get your two wheels touching the ground at the same time otherwise your under cart would go.

Any other kinds of particulars that you had to learn before you did a solo flight?

Well no because we had to do aerobatics how to loop and how to do a

03:00 stall of the top and a slow roll with an open cockpit you just had to have your harness on and make sure that when you're there you're tightly done up so that you didn't fall out of the plane.

What sort of other training did you have apart from the flying training, the sort of theoretical....?

03:30 Well at Cunderdin and Geraldton, I will tell you about Geraldton after, but at Cunderdin it was only flying. We had a bit of entertainment and I had to box a wrestler on stage. It was interesting because

04:00 hey had advertised it well at Cunderdin, Stan Watt who was quite a boxer and Rocky Marciano was the Canadian wrestler and he was quite famous. I was just an amateur at this stage. And before we started he said, "Well before we fight, let's shake." And he put his hand out and next thing, they had a mat out on the stage there,

04:30 and have you heard of the crab hold? He jumps on the back and pulls your legs up there and he said, "Well make out you're hurt." And I said, "I am bloody well hurting." And of course the mob roared with laughter because it was supposed to be a serious boxer versus a wrestler, and we put on a bit of

05:00 match on that night.

So did you land a few punches on him after you escaped the crab hold?

I can't recall. I can remember him putting the crab hold on me, and then I can't remember that's sixty odd years ago.

Can you describe the aerodrome at Cunderdin when you arrived?

05:30 Yes we had huts that in fact we had all been back to Cunderdin, those that went through Cunderdin and they had a revisit and of course it is like Pearce now, it has all been upgraded. You wouldn't recognise Pearce now to what it was. But no it was very primitive. We just had a field, it had all been levelled

06:00 and grassed. It was all on grass we didn't have any runways so that you could come in and land, and didn't have to line up on a runway.

Did that make any difference to the way you approached your elementary flying training?

Well you had a wind sock, you always fly up the wind sock.

06:30 Whichever direction the wind was coming from, you would always have to do a square, I don't know if you have done any flying, but you do a downwind leg, you do a cross wind, and then into wind so that you have got that windsock which you see out of, all of the droves have a wind sock and they make sure you're lined up with the wind sock for your approach otherwise you will wipe your under cart off.

07:00 **Did you see many accidents or other incidents during your training?**

Yeah I saw one at Geraldton.

We will get to that.

An Anson landed on top of another Anson.

Sounds like a fairly severe accident?

Yeah nobody got hurt but the Ansons were badly damaged.

That would have been during your intermediate flying training? Was that intermediate flying training you did at Geraldton?

Tiger Moths were elementary, yes the Ansons were Intermediate.

07:30 **Well just before we move onto that can you describe the daily routine while you were at Cunderdin?**

It's a long time ago. Well no I really can't remember.

Just a general indication of what the routine may have been like?

08:00 Well I wake up early, even now I wake up at five o'clock every morning and I would have been doing exercises in the hut. When we passed out there was a moving, we had out parade and the crowd before us grabbed our beds and tipped us all out of the bed at night. So when

08:30 they tried to get a sleep in, they had been out on the booze the night before they, we came and tipped them out of their beds. And somebody yelled out, "Who led that?" and I was pretty mad and I said, "I did." Anyway some guy took a running jump and landed on my back

09:00 so I couldn't face him and punch him, and Ingle he came, oh another thing was they were throwing boots around, and, "Who threw that?" and I said, "I did." And this is where Ping Ingle came to my rescue and jumped on this guy's back and

09:30 held him down while I punched him. He was a big bloke.

Sounds like you were always looking for a stoush were you Stan?

I wasn't looking for it it just came my way, I suppose it is like anybody, if you are good at something people pick on you.

They have to test themselves against you. What other kinds of flying training did you do at Cunderdin once you achieved your solo flight?

I think we did about twenty hours.

10:00 I haven't got my log book here it is up at the beach house so I could answer that accurately, you keep your log book.

What other flying training exercises did you do once you had flown solo?

Oh well, we went to Geraldton.

Well before you went to Geraldton did you do any cross country flying or any of that kind of thing?

Yes. And we did do cross countries. As I said there was no

10:30 refrigeration in those days and you got the runs and we all did on the cross country. Every one of them just landed in a paddock and the flying instructor came out and flew us home. They're twin seaters. Everybody that had to do the cross country that I was on with all got the tummy bug and all had to be flown home.

11:00 **So you're literally stranded on your cross country flight with an upset stomach?**

Yeah and I can remember I didn't even throw the switches, I was too ill. I just flopped out and I was vomiting and shitting and you have got no idea what it is like when you have got a tummy wog and you're trying to sit in a tight strap. Anyway they sent the instructors out and flew us all back to Cunderdin.

11:30 **I can try and imagine what that must have been like. What about leave in Cunderdin, did you get into town much to mix with the locals or?**

Yes we used to go to dances, oh no that was at Geraldton. No I can't remember.

What happened when you left Cunderdin did you say you had a parade?

12:00 I can't remember.

Was there a ceremony when you received your solo wings?

Well we didn't get wings until we got to Geraldton. No Cunderdin was only the EFT[S], Elementary Flying Training School. And then there was the service flying training school

12:30 where we did a lot more flying training later on.

This is in Geraldton?

Yeah, service flying was in Geraldton.

Did you have leave between training in Cunderdin before you went to Geraldton or did you just go straight to Geraldton?

I think we got about a weeks leave to come down to Perth.

Do you remember how you spent that time?

13:00 No I wasn't drinking until I got to England. Ping was.

It would have been an opportunity to catch up with family and friends I suppose?

Well your Dad always came and picked you up because Cunderdin is not that far out of Perth and I can remember,

13:30 yes from Cunderdin they had a bus, they brought us back and dropped us off in Perth to go and see your parents.

And I suppose you had a week leave in Perth before you went to Geraldton?

Yes.

What were your expectations of Geraldton?

Geraldton I didn't like it, because those that were going on fighters, I was mad keen on fighters, they got posted to the

14:00 eastern states where there was fighter training. And Anson's were for those going on bombers and because I didn't want to go on bombers I deliberately made sure that I didn't fly the Anson well. I will give you another story later on, on Mosquitoes.

Why were you selected for the bombers?

Well it was where there was a vacancy.

14:30 If it was nearer to home and from those that lived in the eastern states, even now you stay as close as home to possible for your training.

Were there any pilots that did the elementary flying training with you that were selected for fighters?

15:00 Well this Col Moreton who is still alive, we lost so many people through the war I just cant recall who else. But no I was mad keen to be on fighters, I never wanted to be responsible for anybody else's life. I wanted to be responsible for my own life that's all.

Why was that so prominent in your mind?

15:30 I had a fixation. I had seen in a bomber command film where a guy made a mistake and all of the other people lost their lives as well as himself. The other thing was that I had a personal friend, who is quite well known now. I don't know if you have heard of Professor Kerr, Alec Kerr?

Yes we have actually met.

You have interviewed him?

We have interviewed him.

16:00 Well Alec Kerr was one of my buddies before the war and he got shot down on his second trip, well he has probably told you,

No that's okay I don't want to interrupt your story.

Well Alec we were very mindful, we got the wrong story we heard that he had got shot down by a fighter and when he got out he was parachuting down and they shot him on the parachute.

16:30 And I always figured that I would rather land a single plane then be with somebody like Alec Kerr. Actually you have heard from Alec, he didn't get shot swinging from the parachute. I will tell you that.

What about the excitement of being able to fly a fighter?

17:00 Well if you want to be something you become good at it, well that's my philosophy and I became good at dive bombing. I wasn't so good at spinning and we were training, we did some acclimatisation on Tiger Moths over in England when we first arrived, and then we went on to a

17:30 plane which was the training plane for the Spitfires called a Master, there is the Master 2 and 3 and I went onto the Master and trained in England. Figured that I would be good at it and I was, and I will tell you later on how I came to be selected to do that Venice raid.

Well perhaps I should interrupt you there and we should just continue with the training that you were doing in

18:00 **Geraldton, you were disappointed that you hadn't been selected to be a fighter pilot and it**

sounded like you were trying to sabotage your future as a bomber pilot in Geraldton?

Well it was a twin engine and one thing, this Doug Burton the trainer, he is still around as a matter of fact he and I are great buddies. You have to synchronise the two engines

18:30 and I used to de-synchronise so that I didn't get selected and he said, "Can't you hear those bloody engines the two engines?" They're murmuring, you know, when you haven't got them synchronised they, and I had terrible trouble with my ears, so I never could synchronise them properly and that goes on your report.

19:00 **What other kinds of assessments were you given during your training?**

That was it. I could fly the plane all right, but I couldn't synchronise.

Just for interest sake what was it like transferring from a Tiger Moth to something the size of an Avro Anson?

Well if you were keen to fly, I was keen to keep flying but I want a good pilot on the Anson, I got that exceptional above average on the Tiger Moths, which I subsequently flew,

19:30 the Tiger Moths in England but that was because of the aerobatics, because that's all they could judge you on, you know flying straight and level is nothing, anyone can fly. In fact I flew an Italian plane after the war.

So how long were you in Geraldton for Stanley?

About six months.

So what took place during that six months, how were you introduced to the Avro Anson?

20:00 We were, because the Jap's had come into the war we didn't fly from the Geraldton aerodrome we were put out onto what they called satellites, they built satellites. And there is Codgerina and Georgina and in the book if you get a chance to read that. Geraldton, the flies were so terrible, by the time they brought this food out in the dixies [mess tin] for us because

20:30 we lived there in tents to get the food out of the dixies onto your plate, you had all of your food covered in flies and half of the time you were eating flies. Geraldton wasn't kind to me. I hated it up there. One because of the flies and because it was leading me onto twin engine bombers.

21:00 But the flies were terrible.

You mentioned there was an accident before, can you go into a little bit more detail about why those planes collided?

Well I think it was just carelessness, two planes coming in, and of course if you don't see if you're behind, and that's what happened, two planes landed, in fact it has got a memorial up there

21:30 another, Geraldton was used during the war for Liberators, and there was a Liberator up there and they have got a memorial. Where you have only got one strip, one landing strip you will see most dromes have got different landing strips, there is the risk of landing on top of each other and that's what happened.

22:00 **And there was nobody injured?**

Not on that. But it is a well known story. You know these things got in the papers how a guy came in to land, and he was directly behind and didn't see the plane had landed and landed on top of him. On the Liberator one they got killed and they have got a memorial up at Geraldton.

This is an American Liberator I suspect?

22:30 Yeah.

Did you spend much time in Geraldton the township?

Well this is where I, at Geraldton I was keen on a lass called Gwen Williams and she was a WAAAF and this Johnny Woods was swearing, those days you don't swear in front of women.

23:00 And he said, "Well step outside and we'll sort this out." And I finished up cutting his lip and putting him into hospital and later on on the troops ship I used to organise the boxing because there was no sport or anything else. And I always got in the ring on the top hatch with Johnny Woods.

Just to remind him who was boss.

23:30 **What kind of effort did you see on the civilian front in Geraldton with regards to defences against a Japanese invasion?**

Well the Japanese never did get down to Geraldton, only Broome. Broome, Darwin.

Did the face of Geraldton change during those uncertain times?

Well they just didn't have us flying out of

24:00 the drome they put us out to these two satellites. We did all of our flying from the satellites.

Did they have blackouts in the evenings or bunkers or....?

No but we were issued with rifles once the Jap's came into the war, even the air force we were issued with rifles for defending ourselves and families.

24:30 **How likely did you think it was that the Japanese would make an invasion?**

Well it looked as though the Japanese were going to land in Australia, you have probably heard of the Battle of the Coral Sea?

Yeah.

My Dad who was very keen he was warden of the state war memorial, the memorial we have got up here at Kings Park. It was strange

25:00 but he was leading, the Admiral who was leading the fleet down onto the memorial of that and he had a stroke and he just dropped dead. And I went to visit him in the hospital, he just fell over bang, and hit his head and all he had was a little bit of blood there but he died. And it was strange that he was leading the admiral and they

25:30 finally gave me an American flag which I have still got, to put over the coffin, the admiral he read a eulogy to my Dad.

So was there a lot of concern that there was a real threat of Japan landing in Australia and invading the west coast?

Well we didn't know if they

26:00 would or wouldn't. They sent the submarines in, which is another story I will tell you, how later on we went from Claremont by rail to Brisbane and then we went to a staging camp and then we went to Sydney and then we left from Brisbane. Because of the Japanese submarines.

You couldn't leave from the west coast?

No they were all

26:30 in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, they weren't operating out of there.

So were there any other important events for you during your time in flying training at Geraldton?

No I can't think of anything other than the two Anson's landing on top of each other, I wasn't in it, thank goodness. Well I couldn't fly

27:00 an Anson anyway. I didn't want to.

So what happened, well you must have got your wings?

At Geraldton? Yes. And you see what happens, I have just come down from Pearce now when they got their wings, they have head of the services present the wings. They just said, "Here are your wings, find someone who will sew them on your uniform will you?" And that was it.

27:30 No ceremony, no nothing. There is a lot of ceremony now for those getting their wings. As I say the other week I was up at Pearce and they have a big hoo haa [a big fuss].

Would you like to spend a bit of time now explaining that ceremony that you were a part of in Pearce recently?

28:00 Oh at Pearce, yes well they have the army, navy, air force principal officers and they do the presentation. There is a band, they have people come in to, they form then their army, navy and air force principals, Peter Cosgrove and the army

28:30 the previous one was, the admiral was the last one and Cosgrove and then they had Houston previously. And they march up and salute and stick, they had a lycra suit, the wings and they just stick them on the chest, salute and that's it. And then they have the

29:00 principal officer, have their staff car and they drive them away and the band leads them as they drive out. And when Houston do you know of Houston?

No.

Angus Houston, he is in the press quite a lot. The band leads his staff car away and they were playing and I said to him,

29:30 "Did you know what the music was?" and he knew it straight away.

\n[Verse follows]\n " Ain't it a pity, she's only one titty to feed the baby on.\n Poor little bugger he'll never play rugger he's not sufficiently strong.\n When he gets older and bigger and bolder he'll take himself in hand,\n The reason why, reason why he'll never understand.\n So they tried him in the infantry, they trained him out on land and sea.\n They tried him out without success, tried him out he made mess after mess, so they

30:00 made him an airborne." \n

Of course this is a principal of the air force. You know they always have a bit of a thing there the band plays depending on the guys.

A bit of a roasting.

Oh he thought it was a great joke.

What was your role on that occasion, Stanley?

Well as a fighter pilot

30:30 we get invited up there for every graduation. And that's three times a year they graduate. And we live in the, provide food, accommodation. As part of the ceremony they actually give us a chance to fly the simulator. You know the Hawk up there?

I don't know of it but I imagine that's interesting?

Oh they have got a simulator up there in a room and all of the instruments

31:00 and they give us a chance to do navigation they have a navigation for all of these students and we can sit in on all of their lectures.

It must be fascinating?

Well once you're a commissioned officer you never can retire you know. So you're always available if the government calls upon you to fight an enemy.

So that means you'll be ready to get up there in one of these modern jet planes?

31:30 Well I have flown a number of different planes since, some of them legal some of them illegal.

Well perhaps we will explore some of those jaunts a bit later. What happened, you mentioned that you returned to Perth from Geraldton and you made your way east to staging camps, was that by train?

We got at Claremont on this train. And of course there was

32:00 Shirley, we'll go out when you're ready to have a break for a morning tea.

Perhaps we will finish this tape, how much time do we have left? Seven minutes. Shirley is pretty well on time for us.

What was the question?

32:30 **You were at Claremont and you were going to catch the train?**

Well of course the New Zealanders had gone through Perth prior to that and of course Rowe Street was the brothel street and of course there was queues and queues and when we came through all of the girls came out waving their panties at us as we were heading off. They were saying, "Goodbye, goodbye." Never been near a brothel, well not quite true.

33:00 I never have been into a brothel in my life.

So the girls on Rowe Street were?

There were giving us this waving send off. And then we were about four days going across to Melbourne on the train.

What was that trip like Stanley?

33:30 Well it was very similar to my first army crossing. The trains were all dirty and they had dixies full of food. We had to climb into the water towers to have a bath, you know the trains in those days were steam engines? We would get into the thing and have a shower and clean up. Later on of course when we went from Melbourne to Sydney,

34:00 train stations they had food but here we had to carry the food with us. No refrigeration. But once we got from Melbourne to Sydney we were ebbing fed from the stations.

How did you occupy yourself going across the Nullarbor?

Oh a long time ago.

Did you stop for meals?

34:30 Oh yes we stopped for meals and for bathing.

Can you explain the bathing I didn't understand that?

Well we would dive into the tanks, you know the big tanks for the steam engines? We would dive into the tanks and we would have soap, dive in soap yourself off, dive in, and we all bathed in each others,

These would be at stations along the line would they?

Yeah.

35:00 **What other kinds of comforts did you have on board the train?**

Well no beds, we just slept on the floor. Or if you were lucky they had seat you could sit in a seat but I think from memory that was officers only. We were in cattle trucks.

So how would you occupy yourself in a sparse cattle truck full of - ?

35:30 Just bored to death.

That says a lot I guess. So what happened when you got to Melbourne?

Well we did a course in Melbourne at Point Cook, which is still a drove Australian [?UNCLEAR]. We did a, when we got to Melbourne, the

36:00 Japanese were sending subs down and they were known out there so they sent us on to Sydney but we did this flying course what they call under the hood flying. They put a hood over you so that you learnt how to fly blind and that was, we had a weeks course in Melbourne and then we went to the

36:30 showground in Sydney and then we got on a boat in Brisbane.

Can you maybe describe the course that you were doing where you were flying under the hood?

Well, they were twin seaters and this was subsequent training we did where one person is keeping a lookout for other aircraft and the other person has got a hood and you have got the instruments only in front of you and you flew by instruments only,

37:00 and the other person kept a watch to see that you didn't fly into other aircraft.

Sounds like a fairly unsettling experience?

Unsettling? Well you knew it was part of your training and everyone had to do that sooner or later and we were lucky we did that here. We subsequently did that in England where the weather was much more hazardous, flying in cloud.

So what happened in Sydney before you departed, did you have [pre] embarkation leave?

37:30 No we went to the showground and it was only long enough to hook up to another train. We were getting fed, when we went up to Brisbane. Of course they had showers at the stations, so we were living like lords once we got off the West Australia route. The two

38:00 trips I did, one in the army and one in the air force were very primitive.

What were the differences?

Well the station they had ablutions and they had food.

38:29 End of tape

Tape 3

00:00 Yes, we went to the Sydney Showgrounds, that was what was called a staging ground, and it was only long enough there because Japanese submarines, midget submarines were off Sydney. So it was off Melbourne and Sydney. Melbourne, another reason we didn't go aboard a ship there was because the waterside workers were striking.

How did that go down amongst the men?

01:00 They weren't at all happy about that, we didn't do much about it but another story about that when we get to America?

Okay well what was Sydney like?

Well we were only there a short time, it is a staging camp. And then we got word that the Japanese submarines were off Sydney and we were then onto a train and off to Brisbane.

Did you get to see any of the night life of Sydney before you left?

No.

So you were pretty much confined?

01:30 We did a bit in New York.

Okay well I will ask you about that when we get to New York. So from Sydney you went to?

Brisbane. Straight aboard ship. The Mormacsea, it was a New Zealand ship and we went across to San Francisco.

Well what were the conditions like on board?

Hammock. Primitive.

02:00 They have one big galley, no seating you had to take a dixie, you had your dixie on the side, and a great big servery and slop, slop, slop.

Was the food any good?

Well by comparison yes, there was refrigeration.

Makes all of the difference.

Yes it does.

So what would you do to pass the time?

Boxed.

02:30 Because I used to organise the boxing, I wasn't only organising the boxing myself, anyone else who wanted to get into the ring, we set up a ring on the hatch and anybody could challenge anybody else. Because we were hitting with nine pound gloves so that you weren't hurting anybody on the ship. Because the ship is not still, it is rolling around and your punch could be harder than you expected.

03:00 Johnny Woods and I got in the ring there a few times because I matched him, we subsequently became good friends, in fact I brought him home after the war.

So how many boxing matches would there be over a week say?

I don't know, I can't remember now.

Would it be one a day, say?

Oh probably a couple a day.

So quite a few?

Yes quite a few.

03:30 **Was there much gambling going on?**

No not on board, there was later on on the squadron.

I was just wondering if people were putting bets on the boxing match?

Not that I know of. Because it was what you call exhibition boxing, you touch a person's area and you pull your punches. So you weren't boxing. When I was in England I was touch boxing.

So what you're

04:00 **saying is there are no real winners or losers it is technique?**

No it became later on in England, which I will tell you about later.

Okay and what other things would you do to pass the time on board?

Sixty years ago?

Were you all in the air force?

Yes we had accumulated a lot of other guys from the other states, when we got to Melbourne, the Melbournites come on.

04:30 I will tell you another story about that later.

Now well tell me now while we're on it.

Okay well when we were travelling out from England to Suez there was one guy who was

05:00 with us on the ship had a hang-up bomb, and he, because we weren't allowed like the Americans to jump if you couldn't land, do a parachute jump like if the Americans had a hang-up bomb. And he, we weren't allowed to have hang up bomb, and he dropped, when he touched the bomb came off and blew him up.

What is a hang-up bomb can you describe that for me?

05:30 A bomb is hung underneath. We had three five hundred pounders, one under each wing and one under the middle part of the aircraft. And two of them released when you dropped but he came back with one hung up and it dropped off when he landed and blew up. And I was with the

06:00 padre strangely enough, Bob Davies I don't know if you have heard of him, he was the Bishop of Tasmania after the war. Anyway this guy blew up and the engine went so far, but the biggest part of him was about your fist, he was just shattered. Anyway Bob Davies and I went and collected the bits and pieces that were there and put him

06:30 in a sack and buried him. Yeah that was just one of the guys that was with us, who didn't make it.

So you were all pretty much making friends on board the ship?

Oh yes hearing each other stories, chatting, killing time.

07:00 And the exciting part of course was when we tried to cross the Atlantic. Oh what happened was we went to San Francisco and we went on the Pullman Coaches, that's the train that went straight through to the east coast of America.

So you disembarked in San Francisco?

In San Francisco and when we got to Pittsburgh

07:30 somebody on the radio said, Australians we were the first crowd to go across America. Because they were all going through Canada, because America had just come into war and we were friends. So they had black people on the train who were used to being tipped and of course we didn't have any money like the Americans had,

08:00 so when they went to, oh I was telling you about when we got to Pittsburgh somebody on the radio said, the first batch of Australians were coming through America. "They are arriving by train," so much for security, "They're arriving by train." And of course all of the girls came down and gave us a big hug and a kiss, they had never met us before and

08:30 they thought we were all black people, Australians were black that was their ignorance. So they all came down, droves of them came down. How can you kiss and cuddle all of these hundreds of girls that turned up?

I am sure you did your best?

We gave it a go.

Gave it a good go then? So were you seen as a bit of a novelty as Australians in America in that time?

It was, yes.

09:00 And then we went to another staging camp called Camp Miles Standish just outside of Boston.

Were you in contact with Americans?

No it was only that they had the money and we didn't and they wanted to be tipped and we had never tipped and we had never tipped.

Well how was that received when you didn't tip?

Well they tried to obstruct us from getting off the train. "Tip. Tip. Tip."

09:30 Anyhow we didn't have any fights but it was clear that we were quite prepared to stand up against them. They were black people disadvantaged.

So that's a bit of a cultural difference that you would have discovered?

Yes big cultural difference.

And did you see any racism at that point?

Oh there was, you probably realise that around

- 10:00 the war time, the Second World War they had a lot of cultural difference between black and white. And I found that, I have been back through America seven times I found that it is weaning off now. But industrially, I will tell you later on. Yes there is a lot of cultural difference.
- 10:30 **Just while we're on the subject of America, how did you find out about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?**
- I can't remember.
- That's alright, do you remember what your reaction to that was?**
- No I can't remember what my reaction was, but obviously we were pro-American and very anti-Japanese because they had been bombing our country.
- 11:00 **So it is in Boston that you have got a staging camp at this point?**
- Just out of Boston, it was called Camp Miles Standish and that was a staging camp and that was a staging camp and new were there for two days and then there was a request, all of those that want to go to England on the Rangitata and
- 11:30 foolishly I put my hand up and the other guys didn't, they got a lot of entertainment in New York. We were taken by bus from Camp Myles Standish from the camp down to the wharf and aboard the ship. But those that didn't put their hand up, because we had had so much training, we had spent about eighteen months trying to get to the war and some of us were a bit too keen and got there a
- 12:00 week before the others.
- So you were overly keen at this stage?**
- Yes.
- And you didn't get to spend any time in New York then?**
- No not at that stage, later on commercially I went through New York another time.
- So you went from Boston on a ship to England?**
- No, from New York.
- So you went from Boston to New York and then you were on your way to England?**
- But
- 12:30 because we had had some gunnery training we were manning, because this is when the pack subs were across the Atlantic. They were German submarines were actually hunting in packs. So we had to man the forty millimetre Oerlikon guns on the ships.
- 13:00 Also they did a lot of zig zagging and when they found a, on the echo sounder when they found a submarine they would fire off these depth charges. So pretty well all of the way across every night we hardly got any sleep. The depth of charge of course lifts the boat out, but it doesn't lift it out evenly,
- 13:30 it lifts it out on one side so we were being depth charged all of the way across. But we went right through from New York up to Greenland, down to the Azores and then finished up in Liverpool.
- It sounds like it was a stressful sort of a journey.**
- 14:00 When we got to Liverpool, Lord Haw Haw who was the British [enemy broadcaster in English from Germany, aimed at demoralising the Allies], said that the Australians have now on this ship, we didn't get any ship, we got six submarines, we blew up six submarines with these depth charges. "We
- 14:30 are going to get them now," and they sent Messerschmitts over to dive bomb our ships. But the British got Spitfires off and they drove them up. But we saw the dogfight in the air, you know all of the white cloud, so they were dog fighting above us as soon as we pulled in there.
- Into Liverpool?**
- Liverpool.
- So you could actually see the dog fight as you pulled in?**
- 15:00 You know with the rarefied atmosphere at high altitude you get a white cloud form behind the? So that was quite exciting. But when we, we were on our way to Bournemouth and the day before we got to Bournemouth the Germans with the Focke-Wulf 190
- 15:30 skipped bombed the Australians at Bournemouth and killed nine Australians. So Lord Haw Haw came on and said, "Well we killed nine Australians in Bournemouth and now they're heading for Brighton." And

- 16:00 actually we went down by train to Brighton and we did a march through Brighton, the Australian troops all marched through Brighton. Liverpool at the, two hotels there we manned the cannons on top of the hotels because Haw Haw had said that, "We now know they are in Brighton and we're going to get them,"
- 16:30 So we were manning, so we didn't get a lot of fun in Brighton, although we did get to see the, what was the show that was on? All of the girls were in the nude, dancing in the nude? Still a quite famous show in?
- Paris?**
- No, I have been to that too.
- 17:00 What was the name of the show?
- This is in England?**
- In England, Brighton. I have forgotten the name of the show now, but they came down and they had a theatre there and they put on a show. And that was the only bit of lightness we had in Brighton.
- Well that would have gone down pretty well nude girls?**
- Well the girls we saw later on in Italy.
- I thought you said you had some nude girls?**
- 17:30 Yeah they had a show in Brighton, I have forgotten the name of it now. They were on stage way back, not like here, have you ever seen here?
- I have yes.**
- Here there is a fair bit of nudity.
- So what you're saying is that you couldn't see very much?**
- You couldn't see very much at all.
- I am sure that would have gone down well though?**
- "Hooray!" "Hooray!"
- 18:00 Yeah.
- So how long is it taking you to get to Liverpool Bournemouth and Brighton because that's a big journey?**
- Two days, we drove down in a train and then we got in a bus and we went to the Grand Hotel, that's right we stayed in the Grand Hotel manning the cannons there against the Focke-Wulfs coming in and skip bombing there.
- 18:30 **And what did that look like from where you were sitting?**
- The Grand Hotel?
- Well did you actually see some of this skip bombing?**
- No they never did come in. see we were all ready for them, but Bournemouth they weren't and they actually landed skip bombs on the hotel in Bournemouth but they never did get to us there.
- Is this where you**
- 19:00 **is this your destination Brighton?**
- Well Brighton was subsequently our destination after Bournemouth. And then we did an acclimatisation course at Fair Oaks. And this was flying Tiger Moths again.
- Why did you need to do an acclimatisation?**
- 19:30 The name suggests it, the weather is entirely different to Australian weather and when you get to read the book you will find that I got lost continually, because England from the air there is a lot of tiny villages you couldn't, in Australia as I said I flew across, after the war from Melbourne to Perth and you just follow the railway line. But in England there is little villages everywhere. If you read the book you will find out that
- 20:00 we ran out of fuel and we had to put down on a drove and they had these spike to stop German gliders coming in, and we managed to get through. They had the balloons over London and we just kept getting lost. Another occasion I landed in a paddock out of fuel and went
- 20:30 over the hill and started running down the hill and had to get out of the aircraft and grab the wing and turn it around and around so I didn't lose the plane. Yeah we had some excitement.

Well what would be an average day doing that sort of acclimatisation?

Well we were there for about a week and we would fly every day

- 21:00 doing this acclimatisation. They would tell us, "Go and find Leeds." "Go and find Mount Herchel," whatever the Mount is and we had to navigate our way to these places. So all in different directions and invariably we got lost.

Would you be by yourself in the Tiger Moth?

Yeah.

So how would you actually find these places?

- 21:30 Used what you call time and distance. Work out on the map two seven three so you start heading west and then you come down through the cloud, if it is fifteen hundred feet you stay at two thousand feet, you come down and get under the cloud and have a look, you reckon it should take you
- 22:00 twenty-seven minutes to get there so at twenty-six minutes you come down. That was the method of doing time and distance.

And this would be a not particularly effective method?

Well we had to do this in Italy too, the weather in Italy is just as bad as it was. So we would work out what direction we had to fly and for how long

- 22:30 and don't come under the cloud until your time was up and then you got down and you found out where you were and then you dive bombed. We lost a lot of guys who didn't get it right.

Before we get onto Italy, just dealing with the weather conditions in England, if you get a whole lot of wind or a whole lot of rain does that then push you off course so then your time and distance is out?

No

- 23:00 rain doesn't affect you very much when you're flying. You're flying just so much faster than the rain and we weren't flying for that long, see the Tiger Moths don't have, when we were flying the Masters, the training Spitfires that was much faster and heavier. No, rain doesn't affect you, you just got wet
- 23:30 because it is an open cockpit.

Well yeah with the Tiger Moth you're in an open cockpit so that's got to be uncomfortable?

Yeah.

What sort of a uniform are you wearing for England?

We had flying suits, gloves, helmets, eye protection and we had boots. Which subsequently the flying boots we weren't allowed to

- 24:00 wear in operation because if you bailed out you lost your boots and couldn't walk home. But part of our training there was, in England, was to take you out in a closed bus and you would have to find your way back to the drome, you didn't know where you were, and they had the voluntary defence services
- 24:30 there and you had to get under the barbed wire and get into your barracks. And a lot of the guys that drank they just went to the nearest pub, but myself and another guy we stuck together, and we were the first. This was called escape training so we did a lot of escape training.

Well what sort of things would you learn about with escape training?

Watch,

- 25:00 how long were you travelling, could you hear a train or a? Soft ground, hard ground was it? So you tune your ears so you pushed out of this three tonne truck and have to figure out where you were and then head for home. So it was all done on time and distance.

How successful were you?

Well we were the first to get back, under the barbed wire and

- 25:30 I always believe in being first.

Were you ever given any maps to help you?

No because with escape training you didn't know where you were, you could have got hit as I got hit later on in Italy, I will tell you about that. And you could be lucky that come across somebody who spoke English and find out where you

- 26:00 were or you didn't.

So it was a little bit about using your own brain?

And ears, listen and if you heard something went past or it sounded like you went through a village, you carried a pencil and paper with you, okay two quick villages okay they are that far apart and so on.

That's interesting.

Yeah escape training was judgement, personal judgement.

26:30 **During this time are you based at Fairoaks?**

No we did that from Burton on Trent. We did escape training from there.

So just so I can get it clear in my mind you go from Brighton to Fairoaks to?

Burton on Trent that's up to the

27:00 Midlands and that's where we flew the Masters.

So how long were you at Fairoaks for?

I think it was only a week.

So you're moving through pretty fast?

Yes.

At what point do you move off the Tiger Moths?

I think that might have been

27:30 about two weeks because I can remember we got some acclimatisation course and we got lost, repeatedly lost in England and it was about two weeks there.

Would you get in trouble for getting lost?

No that's all part of the training. You got into trouble if you went to the nearest pub, but I didn't drink in those days.

So it was fairly casual training?

Yeah. .

28:00 **What were the conditions like while you were doing that sort of training?**

Well on the receiving end of the, Germany they were bombing England of course, quite a lot there. And if we went out, which we did go to the pictures, the pictures didn't start until about eleven o'clock at night and you had no transport

28:30 so you would walk home. And if you had a girlfriend you had to make sure that she was living close by because you didn't have any transport. And I can remember sitting there, and this was a Swiss girl and the anti-aircraft guns were shooting at these German planes coming over and we

29:00 stayed with them and drank their coffee and tea while they were shooting at these German planes. Because no where near, when we got leave in London the number of times we were on the receiving end of bombs in London.

How dangerous was it to be walking around the streets of London in those times?

Oh everybody was sympathetic to everybody else.

29:30 You weren't feeling threatened. Of course it was daylight until about eleven o'clock at night. The further north you go the less dark there is, so you weren't threatened by being in the dark. If we went to the pictures invariably it would be about eleven o'clock at night before the picture finished and you would walk home in daylight.

30:00 **How did the English respond to Australians?**

Very favourable, yes. You will find in my book on one occasion we had been to a dance and were coming home and we got a lift because they were on petrol rationing too, and they had a limited amount but they would share

30:30 their vehicles and take you, and on one occasion we even had a husband and wife vacate their bed. And five of us slept in this double bed. I was on the outside, and you know you would pull the blanket and they would pull. You got very little sleep during the night because you're trying to get warm, England can get pretty cold.

So it sounds like the girls were pretty friendly over there too?

31:00 Australians from the First World War were very popular because there were many Australians in the

First World War, because they got leave from France back to Britain. My Dad lost two brothers in France, they were killed. The Australians, when they got leave they came back to Britain

31:30 and therefore they were very favoured.

At what point did you actually transfer onto a different aircraft?

Well from the Tiger Moth we then went to the training plane for Spitfires was called the Masters, Master 1 and Master 2.

32:00 **And where were you based during that time? Was that Burton on Trent or?**

Yes Burton on Trent was one, I should get my log book out.

I am just trying to keep it a bit with the chronology otherwise I will get confused.

West of Burton on Trent was another drove, it was only about ten miles away from there.

32:30 And we were at two different drones flying the Masters.

What was it like flying those aircraft?

Well, they were a Spitfire training plane. They had a Master 1, which was an in-line, the 2 and 3 were radial engines and they didn't have inverted carburettors.

33:00 And the 1 was the in-line and if you didn't have an inverted carburettor and you were upside down in your aerobatics all of the fuel would come out and set fire to the engine. And we had one guy got badly burnt flying, they took the Master 1 away after a while and only used the 2 and 3 but

33:30 one of the guys, when the plane caught fire through having no inverted carburettor he just got badly burnt.

Well why were they sending you up in those conditions?

Well this was early when the Master 1 was brought in, see planes were scarce, we had to learn to fly the Masters because there weren't enough Spitfires around. What happened was the

34:00 escapee's from Czechoslovakia, Poland, all of those who had escaped out, they were all given favoured treatment for flying, for having these aircraft. And this particular guy that got burnt, he was a Czechoslovak.

34:30 **What did you think of blokes like the Czechoslovakian being given that sort of priority over blokes like yourself?**

Well we figured that Britain owed us something.

You were on the Masters?

35:00 We were on the Masters, we were doing night flying. The Germans used to send over single aircraft to join the circuit while we were doing night flying and shoot down people in England who had been doing their night flying because you can't tell at night time what sort of plane, German or English? The only recollection I have about that was they had these electric

35:30 things on the runway, as soon as the lights went out on the runway, they just lit the side of the runway for you to land, that was the signal that there was a German in the circuit. So every now and again somebody would touch and knock out those lights, because they were electric, which would give the wrong signal. I did that once. I touched

36:00 the circuit, touched the night vision., which meant everybody had to stay circling in the dark until they came on again, the lights came on again. So I had to, I was guilty on one occasion.

How do you cut the circuit on the lights?

The lights were all electric and if you hit a light and it went out you gave a signal

36:30 that there was a German in the circuit.

Right.

And I did that once.

How often would that happen that there was a German in the circuit?

I can only remember that once because you remember yourself. But that was the signal, they would turn the lights out so that the Germans didn't know where the drome was, and if you knocked it out then you gave the indication that there was a German in the circuit.

37:00 **I can see the problem. Well how would you find the German to get rid of the German?**

Well a plane would be shot down.

So visually you would have to identify it as a German plane in the dark?

Well you didn't have to visually if you saw a plane generally when it hits the ground goes on fire, so if you saw a plane that had been shot down you knew straight away that there was an enemy.

37:30 **Sure but how would you identify that they were the enemy when it is pitch dark?**

Only if you saw a plane on fire on the ground.

But before it is on fire, to actually target?

Well you couldn't tell, that's why they would switch the lights out, and by the sound, you can tell by the sound, a Messerschmitt is against a Spitfire it is a different

38:00 sound. You listen to them from Pearce when they're flying past here, the Tiger Moths from the aero club, you have got a different sound.

It just sounds to me that your chances of finding this German plane in the circuit were quite slim?

Well you weren't looking for them you were wanting to hide from them.

So who would be in charge of shooting them down?

Well you want them to get as lost as we were

38:30 just flying in the dark around and around. Because you would have different, I think, every plane would fly at a different, three thousand feet, three and a half thousand feet, two thousand feet and so and so, you would all go on different heights. So if he wasn't circling and a pre-arranged height he would also be a German, he might be flying at five thousand feet in which case you would know straight away. See they had VHF,

39:00 very high frequency radios so you would be talking with each other.

Would you be flying in any kind of formation?

No. You're just circling, night flying, just circling not far from the drome so you can see by the lights where your runway was.

What sort of things would you talk on the wireless?

39:30 Oh only if there, in an emergency. You didn't occupy the air any more than you had to, only an emergency or something important. You wanted to change the circuiting height so it might be, "Red one change height two and a half thousand feet to three and a half thousand feet."

40:00 **How often would you do these night circuits?**

Oh that was only a small part of the training, I can't recall how often but it was only a small part of the training, night flying. I only actually flew at night once in fighters.

Oh really?

In Italy.

Is it harder at night than in daylight?

More frightening because

40:30 You can see all of the anti-aircraft fire.

I can't imagine what that must be like it must be nerve racking?

Well have you heard of tracers? Okay tracers they have got different coloured bullets and when we get onto Italy I will give you some more experiences there.

Sure well what sort of other things were you doing as part of your training?

Well we did the escape training. We did flying training. We practiced navigation.

41:00 Everything that could happen to you when you got into operations.

Were you making some good mates by this time?

Yes. I had a New Zealander who was a good mate who later on married the girl that I was taking out and I will tell you about that later on.

41:30 I was posted out to the Middle East and he was flying Spitfires back in England. And he subsequently, have you heard of the Doodlebug?

No I haven't?

The Doodlebug was a pilotless plane that used to come over on a gyro and as soon as the gyro stopped it came straight down and his job was to put his wing under there

42:00 and break the gyro.

Tape 4

00:30 **Haven't gone to Italy yet.**

Most of the action is in Italy.

I think we had to stop right in the middle of the Doodlebug story?

Yes well this guy from Christchurch, a New Zealander he flew into the side of a mountain and was killed. And when his son came to visit me he said,

01:00 "My Dad when they found his body, he had this ring," that we manufactured. I had an identical ring. It was aluminium ring with a toothbrush let in, toothbrushes of course all different colours. And he had one of these rings and there was no question he was the son of Jimmy who had died tipping the Doodlebug so it wouldn't fly,

01:30 run out of fuel and go straight down. And that's what they were doing, trying to find out where the villages were and the job was the fly along side it and as long as it wasn't over a village tip the wing and the Doodlebug would go down because it was gyro activated.

Can you describe what that means?

Well yes I can because most of our instruments were gyro. Gyro means when they start up

02:00 it is whizzing at a great rate and as soon as you disturb that rate it will cease and then fail. The plane itself, the German Doodlebug plane was a gyro that, if the wing got underneath and tipped it, it would go straight down and it wouldn't hit a village or it wouldn't hit people. And he got killed doing his job, flying a Spitfire alongside that

02:30 Doodlebug and it would go down. But he was watching that and concentrating on it and he wasn't watching where he was going and he ran into a hill and he died.

So he was pursuing the Doodlebug was he?

He was destroying the Doodlebug. That was his job, later on they sent rockets, but they went up and went down. The Doodlebug was one that was a gyro flying bomb.

03:00 **They sound like they were fairly menacing?**

Well you weren't around at the time but the press was full of them, the pilot less attempts by the Germans to knock the British cities around, because you know they came over and bombed with bombs and planes and what have you, but they were losing too many

03:30 German fliers so they used to rockets and the Doodlebugs to hit the cities.

We were going to move onto your experiences in Italy before, what led to those experiences, why were you moved into that area of the conflict?

Right well I was doing a exhibition boxing match and I was actually

04:00 being sent around to different dromes and putting on this exhibition. And at our drome I was putting an exhibition match on with a professional boxer. And he was supposed to touch me, not hit hard. So he touched me and knocked me down. So I got up and it became

04:30 a dinkum fight. It was all flat out and the extraordinary thing was that I knocked him out and the next day the CO called me in and he said, I thought I was on the mat getting into a real fight, and he said, "No you did a great job there, you're obviously a fighter so you don't have to

05:00 fly bombers you can fly fighters but we don't have anything for you in England so you're going out to the Middle East." Where Australian squadron, 459 Squadron was operating, that's how I happened to get onto it.

So your boxing played a role in....?

My career. Prior to that they tried to get me to fly another plane, a Mosquito and I don't like night flying and I

05:30 went down to London to do some night flying and they had hexagonal windows on this and you had to say what they were because you're night vision was very important. So if I saw a house I would call it a horse, and if I saw an elephant it was a donkey and I failed so badly they made me do the test twice, and I found out what was a

06:00 reasonable failure rate and I didn't get onto mosquito night fighters. Anyhow I get sent out to Italy

So you were fairly calculating in your plans to fly?

I knew exactly what wanted and I made sure that the system didn't run me. I was able to do my own thing. And so we went out to Port Said and we trained

06:30 across to Cairo. The Gypos [Egyptians/Arabs - a colonial term] were great thieves and they used to ride on the rooftops and one would reach down and grab your kit bag, throw it out and somebody would run alongside the train and grab it and off it goes in the desert. And one of the guys said, "Well the next

07:00 Gyppo that comes through that door," which was a distraction, what he would do is throw the thing out the window and his mate would grab it. Said, "Well the next Gypo that puts his head through that door he is going to get a fright." And he pulled out his Smith and Wesson thirty-eight and as the guy came in, "Oh Aussie, Aussie, Aussie," you know they all, he put a bullet just above his head.

07:30 The guy came in full of charm and got out quickly and we had no more come in to our carriage. We went right through to Heliopolis, which is apart. Then we were posted to Kitty Hawke flying training,

Whereabouts?

At Abu Sueir, that was a very famous training ground for pilot to come out of. Every pilot who has been in the Middle East knows Abu Sueir.

08:00 **Can you describe the setting at Abu Sueir?**

Right alongside the Sweet Water Canal have you heard of that? Well the Egyptians couldn't afford to bury their dead, and they would just put them in and they would just float out into the Great Bitter Lakes and Abu Sueir drome was right beside that. The hygiene was terrible. As a consequence

08:30 I got tonsillitis at Abu Sueir, it was a drome, Sweet Water Canal, a lot of them were murdered, a lot of them just died of natural causes but that's where they buried their dead sent them down the canal onto the Great Bitter Lakes and then they sort of got chewed up or eaten or floated out to sea. Having got tonsillitis I was held

09:00 back, as the other guys all went forward, I was in hospital, to finish my flying. I had a fever and I couldn't so I actually couldn't see to land I had so much fever and the thing was that they said, "Go and fly that aircraft and you stay up

09:30 there for a half and hour and then you come back." And I was trying to see where the drome was and I couldn't see properly I was so fevered. And over the RT, the radio telephone we had in the plane it said, "If you don't put it down on the next circuit we are going to shoot you down!" Because it was a bit of a joke to help me make the decision, and I finally dropped this plane in from about twenty thousand feet and then I was in hospital and all of the other guys

10:00 went by boat up to Naples. I was in hospital and lost all of my mates, they had all gone on. So I finished up getting a lift on a DC3 with no seats or nothing, you had to just lie on the floor of the DC3 and I went through to Algiers.

10:30 And I was I went AWL [absent without leave] for four days, I wanted to have a look around Algiers, it was on my way to Naples. And I had never been near a brothel and one of the guys that I met there was a Yank, the Americans had just come in from that side. And he said, "Oh you have never seen a brothel?" "No I have never seen a brothel." "Come and I will show you one."

11:00 He knew where it was. The stench, you can imagine the sweat and the heat and whatever, it was terrible. I said, "You're on your own mate." So I never get in to see a brothel. Because the brothels over there they have music and all sorts of entertainment and the girls dancing and what have you. But the stench was just so terrible I never did.

So the personal

11:30 **hygiene wasn't so....?**

Oh it was terrible, as I say everywhere in Egypt I went back to Egypt later, and they don't have toilets and men and women just alongside the buses, charabancs, just body functions in front of you, they don't worry about it. They just don't have the money for anything. So the hygiene is shocking in Egypt, well it was then it is not now.

12:00 **During those few days AWL did you get up to any other exploits?**

No I was on my own and you had to find somebody to, so you tried to find out who had a plane flying up to Naples or Sinella or wherever and I found asking I bummed a ride up to Naples. And Naples at that

time

12:30 some of the Italians were pro-British and some were pro-German. And you had to be careful going out at night because to get back to the base where we were there was this tunnel and we had to get back through this tunnel and of course they concentrated on that and I was a pretty good runner and I used to run pretty fast through there. I didn't get hit

13:00 there but they were the pro-German Italians. I will tell you more about that later on. So I was only there for a short period and then I was sent over to do the operational training at a place called Sinella.

Whereabouts is that?

That's on the east coast of Italy.

So this is prior to joining up with the other boys in Naples or?

13:30 No we all got sent over to OTU, operational training unit.

Right if I can just go back a minute, can you tell me about the experience you had in the hospital with the fever?

Oh I had a terrible fever, I was there for about two weeks. And I was getting medical treatment for about two weeks and I have had tonsillitis many times since then to a point where they took my tonsils out when I got back here.

14:00 **What hospital were you in?**

I was in a British hospital there later on I finished up in a New Zealand hospital but that's another story.

Sure was there anything else you can tell me about the time you had tonsillitis in this hospital?

No only that I had the fever and then it was a question of how could you get a plane back to Italy if the only plane was

14:30 this DC3 which was an eleven hour flight right across from Alexandria, right across there they had been fighting, Benghazi, Derna and all of the places, and you could see all of the vehicles that had been knocked out and the tanks and so forth. That was the interesting thing, you know we were flying over at about three thousand feet

15:00 and the Germans had capitulated and it wasn't until we got further over at Benghazi where we saw where they had been fighting with some of the vehicles still on fire and so on. So I went through to four weeks leave, AWL.

Just before we continue can you tell me a bit more

15:30 **about the routine that you did the training under at Abu Sueir?**

The training that we did? Well I went back to the next course and I was flying Kitty Hawkes. They had just changed from the Tomahawk, which was in the Australian 450 Squadron, had been fighting with, these were fighters, not fighter bombers as I finished up on,

16:00 and they had the Tomahawks fighting the French, you know the French?

The Vichy French [German-installed French Government]?

Yeah. And anyhow I had to finish my training there and then I flew across to Algiers.

Can you tell me a bit about that training, and the planes for instance say the Tomahawk or the.....?

It is a single seater, like all single seater plane. You sat in them, you had a

16:30 book and you studied, what instruments were there and you sat and studied them and then you had an hour to refresh your memory about what you had read and sit there and hour and then you just had to give it the gun, line it up and away you went. So that was the only training you had,

17:00 to refresh your memory of everything and away you went. As I say when it was coming down I couldn't see the drome properly because I had that fever, and then I finally dropped it in from about twenty feet.

What had your health been like prior to your take off, were you concerned about your condition?

I was excited at the chance that I was getting into action at long last. You know at this stage I had been about two years,

17:30 waiting for this action. I had over a year in Australia and a year in England and I was on my way.

So prior to take off you weren't concerned that you might not be in good health to complete

the flight?

I was in good health again, no I completed my training at Abu Sueir and then I caught up with the guys in Naples and then over to Sinella. They

18:00 had already gone to Sinella but then I got to Naples, no operational training at Sinella.

If I can just interrupt you again Stanley, the day that you had the fever before you went into hospital the day you had your fever, did you have any doubts about your health before you took off?

No I was too crook and I was not wanting to admit that I was crook and I kept flying and I was feeling ill,

18:30 and when nobody was around I would vomit. But I didn't have any doubts I was just too busy being crook.

Would other pilots do the same thing, put themselves under that sort of pressure?

I was the only one that got tonsillitis.

But is the impulse to continue flying with your mates enough to take those kind of risks when it comes to your health perhaps?

No I didn't have any doubts about my capability.

19:00 I figured I was a better pilot and I will show you why I got selected to do that Venice raid later on.

Well should we move on then to the operational training?

Well we did some operational training there at Sinella, because dive bombing over

19:30 land or over sea. The biggest danger over sea, if it was a calm sea you couldn't tell how high you were away from the sea. Normally you tried to can or stereotype your dive from eight thousand feet, you dived down to fifteen hundred feet and you bottomed out and five hundred feet. And we were practicing over and over again

20:00 at Sinella, dive bombing over sea, we lost one guy who didn't get the altitude. Because your altimeter didn't, you had to visually work out, your giro on a dive is no good to you, so you had to visually look and work out, eight thousand, seven, six, five, four, three,

20:30 two and then you would start to bottom out. But all of this required a lot of training, so that we were a couple of weeks before we got into action. And I was back with all of the other guys then and we all had the same problem. The first time I got into action the, oh we

21:00 Doug Millar comes on the scene, this was a guy who was a buddy of mine in England and Doug Millar had done a gunnery course and he had shot down two Germans in the desert so he had got a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] before he joined us and he was, as an air gunner he also got a good record.

21:30 We became good buddies. And we flew together, we camped together. The first time we flew together the CO, I won't mention any names because he is not around but his family may be around. This first CO

22:00 at the end of his second tour we figured he must have been pretty what we called clapped out. He had enough and he couldn't take much more. And he was drinking the bar with other guys and didn't welcome us when we came into the squadron. Another guy came up, I could mention his name but I won't because it might

22:30 single down to the CO, he was a flight commander and said, "You're very welcome." But this CO took us out on our first trip and he got a little bit lost and by the time Doug Millar and I got out there it was getting pretty dark and we could see all of tracers coming up,

23:00 the anti-aircraft fire with tracers and different coloured bullets coming up. And we were the last to go in. my first flight, that's right I was so nervous, they had two toggles, there was a toggle which armed the bomb and another toggle which released the bomb and I grabbed the wrong toggle and released the bomb without them being armed and this CO

23:30 it went through the roof of a factory and he actually saw a hole go through the factory and he said, "Who did that?" and of course I wasn't going to admit it. Because he flew alongside and he saw I didn't have any bombs and that night he said to me, "Oh, don't worry I know you were a bit nervous, that's all right just make sure it doesn't happen again."

24:00 And he subsequently became a good friend and he lived in Western Australia and invited me out to dinner later on. We became good friends.

How long did you spend doing the dive bombing training before your first operation?

Including all of the elementary training?

Oh no just while you were in operational training?

Okay it was about a week and then we went on

24:30 operations at Sinella. After Sinella we went to a place called Cervia and then we were on operations.

Is there any more detail you can share with me about that training, operational training?

No other than because your giro doesn't work your training is to assume that you have got anti-aircraft

25:00 fire coming at you. So you go in at eight thousand feet, never fly straight always weave, so coming up to the target and then when your timing is to go down, you go down on a dive a sixty degree dive which is pretty fast, and then you bottom out. At eight thousand feet they had what they call the eighty-eight shell,

25:30 big shell about that big and when you got to four thousand feet, there were layers, that's a black smoke, the layers of a grey smoke at four thousand they had forty millimetre cannons. And a twenty millimetre cannon was at two thousand feet, so you had to go through those three layers before

26:00 you pulled out. So one the way down, to keep the heads down of the Germans, we were diving on doing that sort of thing and why I survived and many didn't was that I would kick on top rudder and go up sideways, so I worked out flying a Harvard which was another training plane we had beforehand,

26:30 that by kicking on top rudder and pulling the stick back you could skid going up. The only trouble was later on I got sinus going up too fast it is like scuba diving which I have done a lot of, you can go down all right, but when you come up you have got to come up very calculating. So I would skid up sideways, and

27:00 later on I will tell you that I got pulled out of the line to go and live in the mountains to clear the sinuses.

Why did that skidding help improve your efforts to get through the - ?

Having dropped the bombs, see you have got six point five shells, and six guns, three in each wing and going

27:30 down you spread your bullets everywhere to make sure they kept down. The eighty-eights they clustered them in fours, I will tell you later on they clustered them in fours, boom, boom, boom, boom, and they had a better chance of getting you. I got hit with anti-aircraft fire every time and holed in the last ten fights. So the

28:00 Germans got very good.

So you have gone into some of your operational experience in Italy against the Germans so far, what was the main strategy behind your operation while you were there?

Well we started on the west coast of Italy and the Poles who had been fighting since Warsaw, these were the Free Poles and they just

28:30 said, "We're not going to fight anymore." So they pushed the Brits and the New Zealanders, they Brits were by then on the east coast, and we had to shift around Pisa on the east coast, around to the west coast. Sorry from the west coast to the east coast,

29:00 so we went right up the east coast and pretty well all of our fighting was done on the east coast of Italy. Your limit, if you survived was a hundred and fifty hours. And I developed a record for accuracy

29:30 of bombing that I was called upon to do that Venice raid. We did a lot of low level machine gunning of trains and houses. We could set a house on fire with six point fives and tracers. And we worked our way up the east coast to a place called Fano.

30:00 We stayed in Fano for quite a while, it is on the east coast, if you look at a map, I don't have my book here I could show you. And we actually flew from Fano quite a bit.

What was at Fano?

Fano was an Italian drome, quite a good drome.

30:30 It was used by the Italians before we were there and it was used by us and after the war it was used by the Italians still, they occupied it. I went back to Italy after the war and managed to fly an Italian plane under their training plane. But it was just

31:00 most of our dive bombing was on trains there weren't many planes. The German planes had all been sent off. I only came across one Messerschmitt. I will explain that. We were doing a lot of dive bombing out of a place called Rimini and Rimini was the focal point of the

31:30 Germans, when they withdrew, they withdrew up the east coast and also through the mountains, but mainly on the coast and Rimini is on the coast. And we were dive bombing a place called Faenza and

this is where we were knocking out the bridges, there were three bridges, a train bridge, a road bridge and a

32:00 canal bridge. And this is where I actually got shot down. They hit me, knocked my engine out and I managed to land without any motor, wheels down, in a farming paddock, wheels down and alongside an American company and they provided a car for me to get back to,

32:30 normally if you didn't get back. If you had say an hours flying and you didn't get back in say an hour you were posted missing. So actually I was posted missing and as far as all of my mates in England were concerned last they heard I was posted missing so by the time I got on the troop ship to come home they were quite overjoyed to know that I was still around because many of us weren't.

33:00 So in that book Dunkely, we had a lot of guys shot down at Faenza and another guy I went to see in England, he got shot down because at that stage the Germans were grouping all of their eighty-eight shells. Where they got knocked out of tanks they took the guns away and they built concrete blocks and they were anti-aircraft,

33:30 they were artillery and grouped in fours so that if they overshot, I actually later on when I was in the New Zealand army they tried to knock me out with an eighty-eight air burst, an air burst is where it is timed to explode. I was also in, I was sniping in the army with the

34:00 New Zealanders later on at the Po River and they put an air burst over me. I was in a house watching for any movement on the Po River and I fired two off and they found out where I was and I am down crawling along getting away

34:30 from this because I knew full well. And I have got a piece of the shrapnel actually up in my beach house from an air burst that set itself on the ground. Of course what I didn't realise is that when shrapnel first lands it is hot, and I burnt my hand picking it up thinking that's a good souvenir, and I went to pick it up and I burnt my hand. And I put that piece as a souvenir at my beach house and I have still got it up there.

35:00 **Just coming back to the operations in Italy, Stanley, how many strips would you have used prior to reaching Fano?**

Well I finished the war at Fano because that's where I got shot down. And Venice was my very last trip. You talk hours of flying because

35:30 our limit was a hundred and fifty hours and you got expired, this other guy I was telling you about Moreton, he got too expired and he went onto training. I got a hundred and ninety-eight hours, ten minutes. I know that clearly, I have forgotten the bombs but it is in my book there if you have a look, it says how many bombs I dropped. But I developed a technique for accuracy dive bombing

36:00 and we used to drop, for trains, we used to drop a cluster of three bombs at the beginning, all of the trains would head for a tunnel where they can't be seen. So at the beginning of the tunnel and at the end of the tunnel we would try and drop our three bombs so that the train would be blocked inside the tunnel. Also if it got away we would come down and machine gun it. I can remember one clearly,

36:30 train got out of that tunnel and was trying to get away and I shot it up.

I will just ask you firstly did you successful trap any trains in tunnels during your operations?

Well you never find out, you see it go in and of course you don't hang around, you watch for it to come out and if it does come out you move in with your machine guns. No I only ever saw one

37:00 and I shot that train up with my six point fives and, it was bringing armaments back for the Germans. Later on they were bringing them down by ship, which I will explain to you later when,

Can you describe your attack on that train in as much detail as you can vividly remember?

Oh we came in at about twenty feet and we just dived down, we got about twenty feet off the ground and the train itself was

37:30 of course like any train it was right on the deck and we just shot the train and blew it up and destroyed it.

Were there any anti-aircraft guns on the train?

No they were transporting tanks and other armaments on this train down to the front line.

So it was a fairly valuable target?

38:00 Oh yes it was. Because what we I can't remember what we got but I do know that we got the engine and we got a lot of people that were on the train.

What kind of passengers would you suspect they were?

They were Germans.

Troops or?

- 38:30 Most of the cream of the Germans were them what were they called? Oh the cream like we have the SAS [Special Air Service, elite troops] here, the Panzer, Panzer Division, which did most of the fighting for the equivalent of our SAS here.
- 39:00 **What kind of radio communication did you have during that?**
VHF, very high frequency.
What kind of communication would be common between you and the other pilots attacking?
Same VHF because you could talk plane to plane, plane to ground, ground to plane.
How did you talk between yourselves during an assault like that?
Filthy language. When you're excited you forget, that's another story I
- 39:30 will tell you later on when we got into Austria. Well I will tell you now, after the war, because the Germans left a lot of their loot in Austria and we were staying in a house up there and one of the lasses listening in they had our VHF, the Germans had it and she was with the Austrians fighting for the Germans. And
- 40:00 she said, "What squadron were you with?" she spoke very good English. And I said, "450 Squadron," "Oh you have got filthy mouths." She knew all of our filthy, as I say when you're overexcited you say, "Look at that," you know.
Was there any kind of jargon or slang terms that you used in the squadron without revealing obvious obscenities?
- 40:30 What, swearing?
Was there any common saying that you had, lingo you used? Jargon? Apart from the swearing that you can remember?
No I can only remember the swearing because when you're excited which we were, you use all sorts of language you wouldn't want to repeat.
So it is a feeling of high excitement was it during one of those assaults?
Yeah.
- 41:00 She knew the language. Anyhow her mother came up to myself later on and said, "Do you mind leaving my home my daughter knows you and 450 Squadron because," because we had two Australian squadrons 3 and 450, 450 Squadron, "They had the filthiest mouths."

Tape 5

- 00:30 **About you coming to the end of your operations in Italy?**
At Sinella. Well At Sinella we went up and started operations, that was our operational training unit at Sinella. And we then went to Cervia, which was then very cold on the east coast,
- 01:00 we had to try and get warm at night so you could sleep and we had what we call a, we set a drum of petrol outside the cottage we used to take over where we could, to save sleeping in tents, buildings that had been knocked
- 01:30 over by the Germans. And there was one house there with a room there, and we put what we called the choofer, a forty-four gallon drum with an S pipe running down and you ran the petrol high to run down and through a
- 02:00 piece of paper end lit and on the S with holes in it, it would let out a reasonable amount of fuel until it got to the top of the S and that vaporised and gave us the warmth. Choof because choof, choof that's what happened to it.
- 02:30 And what happened there?
So you were actually living in blown out buildings rather than....?
Yeah a lot of the buildings we knocked over ourselves, but a lot of them the Germans, the idea was that from the buildings they used to use snipers. I was sniping later on when I was, also when I went back to the army with the 2nd New Zealand
- 03:00 Division, but that was after I finished my tour of operations. We went up the east coast.

Was it a problem for you with the snipers in the buildings you were staying in? Were they parked on the top of the buildings?

Well I was sniping from a building and this is why they tended to knock the buildings over,

03:30 but I will get to that later on when I was with the 2nd New Zealand Division.

I was just wondering in the places you were staying, you were staying on the east coast?

On the east coast.

So you were staying in these broken down sorts of buildings?

Buildings.

Was it dangerous?

Wasn't it dangerous? Well they had already the building had been knocked over there would just be a room or two

04:00 and they no longer constituted, well when I was sniping they were because I was sniping from the top of a roof at the Po River and I was sniping at people. I am jumping the gun.

Yeah I am just trying to find out what the living conditions were like in the east of Italy?

Well

04:30 I am trying to think. Living conditions, it was bitterly cold and I was sleeping on the ground with an army blanket around me and I had just my nose outside and I had a ground sheet around me so that the water didn't penetrate. Mostly we were sleeping on the ground.

05:00 Although occasionally we were sleeping in a house where I said we had the choofer. We had one recreation place that the local padre, we had three padres, Roman, Church of England, and Presbyterian and I think I had got to mentioning the one had become the

05:30 bishop of Tasmania, Bob Davies. Well Bob Davies set up a recreation place in one of these buildings in, I have forgotten the name of the town now. But, Padova and he set up there a bar for us and a

06:00 recreation where we used to pinch as much as the Germans used to pinch, stuff from homes, we had a billiard table there and we used to come in to Padova, Padau as the Italians call it, because V and V. They had a recreation place

06:30 but we got to Rome more for recreation.

It sounds like the conditions that you were living under during that time were incredibly primitive?

Well the further north we went the more primitive. The Italians in the south were very warm very friendly, invited you

07:00 into their home, cooked spaghetti for you. They had very little, but if you were driving your jeep along and you could find a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK running across the road you would run over that and take it to the locals and they would cook it for you. The further north you went it is more industrial and more commercially minded, the south

07:30 they were more farming people. And the Italians from the south of Italy were very warm and friendly, although it was the northern people politically that hated the industrial parts which were right up the north and as you may have heard, Mussolini was actually strung up and killed in Milan. However we

08:00 did have some recreation. We had some recreation when we went past Rome we came back to Rome and,

What did you think of Rome?

I am not a Catholic, but they gave us a chance to visit the Pope and he spoke

08:30 in semi-English, but he blessed us all.

How many of you were there when he did the blessing?

Oh three or four of us. We just got a jeep full of people and we just went in and had a look around. Same when we got to Florence.

So you just kind of rolled up and the Pope blessed you?

Yes.

You can't do that these days, because that's a pretty - ?

Well one of the guys lifted our jeep up

09:00 and put it on the steps of the -

Vatican?

Vatican. And we yeah we lived to visit places that were worth visiting. It was the same when we got to Venice, just south of Venice, well that's later on, we had a wild party with the Kiwis. Because all of our Australian troops had come home so the Kiwis were,

09:30 when they came out of the line they would bring us souvenirs and one particular episode was just north of Rome. The Kiwis would fight for two weeks and then would come out for two weeks and we were very close to them and they would come to our mess and we would visit their mess. Because you know

10:00 wine was very cheap, when we think about. I will give you an episode later on where we had a party just south of Florence and the Kiwis just sent a truck along and picked up all of the wine that they could get, and all of the musical instruments they could steal, or borrow,

10:30 and got in touch with us and said, "Come over." And we had a ten ton truckload. And you only, it didn't look as though the weather was going to be suitable for flying and so we went to this party and got well and truly done with alcohol, we drunk far too much over there,

11:00 it took a while to break it of as a matter of fact, as Shirley will tell you.

Do you think the alcohol thing was stress release?

Yes it certainly was. Later on in the war when I was with the New Zealand 2nd Division and under shellfire and rockets, I could not hold a cup of tea in the hand without spilling it. I was

11:30 as nervous as that. Anyhow this particular party it didn't. Look as though we were going to be, so somebody went out for a pee and saw the weather was clearing, we had better get back, it looked like the weather was going to be all right. So we all got back in this truck, threw all of the demijohns of wine out, flew back and got in at first light just as we got a briefing

12:00 to take off and we flew over a place called Rimini, this appears in the story much later on. Rimini was a focal point for R-I-M-I-N-I. And we took off and we dived bombed, we were all pretty full. It was the only time I ever

12:30 flew when I was full of alcohol. Two of the guys got killed dive bombing, after having drunk all of that alcohol.

Because this is madness to be going on a dive bombing mission when....?

Well we didn't think we were going to be on a mission because the weather was so foul. We got called and we had to do it and it was just west of Rimini and instead of climbing

13:00 back up to seven or eight thousand feet after I decided to stay on the deck. And I was on my own. Everybody else went up and I was on my own and I was going across the roof tops of Rimini and they had machine guns on every roof top and then they had further eighty-eight shells and I went out to sea and I just kept going out to sea because I was under fire all of the time. And I went about twenty-five miles

13:30 out to sea and Germans were landing their shells on the water to try and get you to fly into it and I was weaving like this and I managed to, after about twenty-five miles out on the east coast of the Adriatic I climbed up and I was on my way home on my own and there was a cloud break and on the

14:00 way back one of these Germans had been flying around when we were dive bombing and he was a soul, on his own and I was on my own. So I wasn't in any condition to have a fight so I pulled up into the cloud, he had just been shooting down our planes

14:30 and he wasn't wanting to mix it so he pulled into the cloud and I pulled into the cloud and we lost sight of each other and I got back. But I was in quite a nervous condition when I got back, not as bad as I was when I was in the army.

Is that how you would avoid things by going into the clouds?

Oh yes well you see cloud over Italy and most of Europe is pretty low.

15:00 We had to fly above the cloud to eight thousand feet most of the time. So it is what you call time and distance, you take your time, you set your course, because there is the Apennines, the mountains running all the way down north south Italy, you had to make sure if you were getting into the Apennines

15:30 that you came down through the cloud at the right time otherwise you hit the mountain like I told you in England this Jimmy guy, he went into a mountain. Well we would say okay it is now ten past we should be over the target at twenty past so we will then come down from eight thousand feet, making sure that we were not

16:00 in the Apennines, and go down and do your dive bombing .so often you were dive bombing through cloud and this is where I finally got shot down which I will tell you about later on.

So that's got to be difficult, dive bombing through that layer of cloud?

Cloud is not always thick, quite often you can see through the cloud at your target.

16:30 If you're targeting for say a train or tank, if you're crossing a river which we did, in fact one occasion we didn't climb up to eight thousand feet we decided we would shoot everything that moved and we shot a lot of Germans, they were marching along the river and as soon as we came, we spread out,

17:00 this Doug Millar I was telling you about, he was a flight commander at that time, or a flight lieutenant and he put us two hundred yards apart from each other. And we just went across the line at that height, shot all of the Germans we could find and then climbed up and came back, back to the drome .So we had, it is written in the book.

17:30 We had a bit of a rebellion because Millar wanted us to go down low and we were crossing the line and we had been under a lot of shell fire, and he said, "We will get more Germans." Because we had this philosophy that the only good German is a dead German. We strafed them and there was a canal there and I remember seeing them, as we came along and we were spread apart so they didn't hear us until we were

18:00 right on them and so we got quite a few and the others that we could see in between the couple of hundred metres apart they were jumping into this canal, freezing cold. That was good. We also, we used to go across to Yugoslavia and across all of Northern Italy and the Adriatic, but that's another story later on.

It sounds like you had a bit of autonomy when you were actually out on a mission?

18:30 Oh all we were given was a target.

So as long as you hit the target you could do pretty well whatever you liked?

Oh when we were train busting you didn't know what you were going to find until you got there. And

Would you give the train any warning that you were going to bust them?

Well they would hear you coming over and if they could they would go for a tunnel. There were a lot of tunnels,

19:00 because north of Italy is a lot of mountains and a lot of tunnels. So with the trains you would follow a train line until you got to a train and then you would try and get to it before they got to a tunnel. And if they got into a tunnel then you tried to drop your bombs at each end of them to block them off so that they would have no air to breathe.

19:30 **It is just sounds quite funny from the point of view that you have got video games like that nowadays where as you were doing it actually for real with targets on your way to various targets?**

Yeah this was for real. My job, when I finished my tour was to go onto mobile operations room unit, MORU.

20:00 That was to, I am still flying maybe I should come back to where I am flying.

Yeah stay where you are flying.

We were doing a lot in the North of Italy because this is where they were manufacturing and the Germans were bringing down a lot of their equipment. Coming down through Austria and through the mountains with the trains,

20:30 bring all of their equipment and guns and tanks. Often we would have to fly across the sea, and coming back we would fly, because you didn't know who were Germans and who weren't, the seamen. So we would often put a lot of bullets alongside them and if they were soldiers

21:00 they would preserve themselves and if they weren't, they would hide down and they didn't try to fire back on you. And one occasion I came back with a fish in my cooler, cooked, we were that low just flying along the sea about five feet above the ocean, it was flat calm. And I came back and this fish had

21:30 hear me coming along the air and jumped, you know flying fish? Jumped and got into my air cooler on the plane. We were flying really low coming across the Adriatic.

That is low if you can, managed to pick up a couple of flying fish on the way?

They weren't flying fish, I think they were just fish who had nervously heard the roar of the engine coming along.

22:00 We were, you know, you had to try and sort out if they were German or genuine fisherman. There was no food in Italy, the Germans took most of their food away. I can tell you at Naples we, when we first got

there we had a, we weren't allowed to take food out of the mess. There were these little kiddies, I had one little girl she was

22:30 six years of age and she had a jam tin. And the kids would line up, because they had no food, queue up and they would take the food back home and they would get the slops out of what we ate and the food. And they would take it home to the family, Mum and Dad and brothers and sisters. These little ones because every one has a heart beat for a little child,

23:00 and I had a little six year old girl and I used to shove some bread down my shirt, but they had porridge and slops and stuff that they would put in their tin and take back. That's how hard food was. And of course the Germans took everything that they could get a hold of. They also dosed all of the girls with VD [venereal disease].

23:30 Nobody would be game if they were that way inclined to have sex with the females there because they were, mostly were, Germans had given them VD. Anyhow that was Naples when we first arrived there, these little kiddies would queue up with these jam tins for slops to take home for food. In fact I have even got a photograph

24:00 somewhere of that, she was a sweet kid this one, we all felt for the kids, it was against the rules to take anything but we all got some bread and jam or something or other., shoved it down our shirts and gave it to the kids so that they didn't have to eat all of the slops that were thrown into a big bucket.

Do you think that the authorities knew about that and just tolerated it?

They knew. Because they were as

24:30 human as we were. They were friends at that stage because the Italians had stopped fighting, in fact they were fighting Mussolini, what they call the partisans, but that's another story later on when some of our guys got shot down.

Yeah I want to get to that but you did mention VD there, what were you blokes told about VD?

25:00 We were given the lectures, films on VD always exaggerated and never the truth. I know when we first joined the air force they said, "When you're away don't." and they had this film of this good looking young guy goes out and he goes to a brothel and comes back and he is playing billiards and he takes his cigarette

25:30 out and puts in on the billiard table while he is playing billiards and he had had sex and somebody picked it up and smoked his cigarette. Now you can't get a VD from smoking a cigarette, but this is how ridiculous it was. They told you be careful if you are going to go into another country, you don't know each other, anything can happen to you. So ridiculous.

26:00 I always remember that one this guy coming in who had just been into a brothel he grabbed a cigarette and put it onto the billiard table and it said, "Well, now this person had got venereal disease." Not true.

Must have scared the hell out of you?

Well that's what I say, nobody was game to get to close quarters with any females.

So the propaganda extreme actually worked?

Oh yes.

26:30 Actually the Germans did deliberately give the girls VD, they had sex and they would mix the girls around with, it was often true so nobody was game to touch an Italian girl.

That is quite a tragic situation really isn't it?

Yeah.

What would happen to you if you did get a case of VD?

27:00 Well you got sent home for treatment.

You got sent home?

Well a lot of people didn't mind getting sent home, yeah. But I got another story later on when I got into Trieste but I will tell you about that,

When we get there. What kind of reputation did your squadron have by the time you were doing those operations around Italy?

Well I don't know whether you know but there was seventeen

27:30 Australian squadrons in Europe. 450 which I was, 451 which was Spitfires, 452 which was Spitfires, 453 and 3 Squadron. 3 Squadron got the Mustangs ahead of us. I converted onto Mustangs but never actually flew them in operations.

28:00 They went through, they were flying the Mustangs, they put what they called overload tanks on them, flying from Udine at the top right through to Berlin and they were escorting the bombers. And so they became as the Eighty-eights, the twin engine German plane, they were escorting the bombers that came over England. So

28:30 but we kept dive bombing, well when we get to Venice, you will find that they put cannons on the Mustangs.

Were all of these squadrons dive bombing or was 450?

Well, the

29:00 Empire Air Training Scheme had eighteen all told, eighteen Australian squadrons for Europe and most of them were bomber. There were a few medium bombers and heavy bombers and so on. What would happen was from England they would fly the heavy bombers out and bomb Italy and all of the other, Germany on the way out

29:30 and land at a place called Foggia, I don't know if you know of that? Foggia is down in the south of Italy they had a big base there and this was a military base, and I can remember we used to send our Kitty Hawkes down there for grog. We used to fly down, took the armour plating off it and

30:00 and the fuel tank and filled it up with grog and brought it back. Everybody had to do their turn get the grog and come back. We were drinking far too much believe me, when we were in northern Italy. But they were actually flying from England to Italy, to Foggia, refuel and rearm and fly back and bomb on the way back.

30:30 So it was a big base. The Germans had their base at Rimini and that's why we bombed that Venice, but I will come to that.

You mentioned before that your squadron was of assistance to the partisans in Yugoslavia? How did that work?

31:00 Well the we used to fly from the north east of Italy out to the, but the message was if you carry the best weapon you can so if you got shot down there was the Croats, the Yugoslavs, they were communists and I will tell you later when I was in the army what happened there.

31:30 The women were ruthless. The Ustashi was their army, they were not, because they were communist they hated the Brits and we were a Brit as far as they were concerned and if they caught you they would castrate you so nobody wanted to be

32:00 shot down. So we used to come back across the Adriatic, instead of taking the shortest distance, this is where I was flying low and getting back across the Adriatic. Yes the women Ustashi, they were hated, absolutely hated the Brits.

Would you hear

32:30 **about this sort of stuff in briefings?**

Yes because we got briefed for every raid we did so if we went through to Northern Yugoslavia that would be thoroughly briefed.

How long would a briefing take?

Well it depended, we were given photographs of the target, in fact in one of my books there I have got photographs of some of the targets

33:00 that I have been given. You're told where to go, what co-ordinates to go to. What direction and what height and so on because some of these were in the mountains up the north. We actually did one raid at twelve thousand feet down. Normally we go from eight thousand feet and diving at that height you get up so much speed I hit about point seven mach, do you know what mach is?

33:30 **Ah something....**

Speed of sound. And you judder, your plane judders.

Do you have any problems with passing out under that sort of speed?

When you're coming up because in the valley you have got to come down and then up, which I always did anyhow. But yes I was taken off for a while because I was getting my sinus, my

34:00 sinuses were coming up too fast but yes I had a week at, I forget what it was called, living up in the mountains to

Recuperate?

Equalise.

So what actually happens to your sinuses?

Well you know the sinus between the eyes the nose and the ears and even after the wear I was commercial flying quite a lot to and from

- 34:30 and on the planes they always had those little red pills, which if you ask for it, I need a sinus pill to, and I would ask the people on the commercial flights here and for a long time I still had the sinus trouble.

So you are going too fast and it does something to your sinuses?

Yes you come up too fast

- 35:00 I will tell you later I was scuba diving and it is the same thing, you can go down as fast as you like but if you don't come up at a controlled rate you get the bends. It is the same sinuses, it doesn't matter how fast you go down but if you come up too fast you don't equalise.

Well this would be a problem even still today I am assuming?

- 35:30 They have, what do you call them now? G belts, they can push a button and put pressure on their body to stop their body from, have you ever seen a person when they're pulling out of a dive? All of the skin and everything just goes back over the bones.

- 36:00 It is the same now, they have a G belt, which equalises the pressure on the body and gradually releases it. It is like when you're scuba diving, you go down fast and you come up slowly from sixty feet to the surface, when you're scuba diving, I have been a master diver I know about this.

Well that's interesting, I have never heard of a G belt and I have never heard of the sinus trouble?

- 36:30 G being gravity, it is a gravity belt. But they all, up at Pearce when we go up there, they are a mach one point one plane, one point one times the speed of sound and they have to go out to sea to go through, you know the crack when you get the

Breaking the sound barrier?

Sound barrier.

- 37:00 **When you're going that fast is it hard to control an aircraft, I am just assuming that there is so much,**

No, because you don't cut your motor you have got to keep your motor on. In fact to get out of a juddering situation you put rudder on, do you know why? Because the airfoil surface is too, it builds out and you can't when you're at the speed of sound

- 37:30 the whole plane judders and that's where it is difficult to pull out. In fact they sent a warning to us, the Thunderbolts, they had four Thunderbolts and all of your controls reverse, you pull your stick back you kept going down, so push your stick forward and they you can pull up because the air over the control surfaces of the plane compresses,

- 38:00 normally air is that, here is your leading edge, here is your trailing edge and if the air compresses to a point where you have gone past the point of the trailing edge your controls all reversed. And that's why you get a lot of juddering.

Oh I see. Is it really difficult to go at the speed you were going at because I am thinking, you know Yugoslavia

- 38:30 **and that sort of mountainous area,**

Well it depends on the height you are at. You use, air is compressed close to the surface, the higher you are the less air you have to compress because it is rarefied, so we, when you judder that's because you are getting close to the speed of sound. And I only

- 39:00 ever had juddering once, you have got to leave the throttle on, you're still diving at sixty degrees, you're still normally at about seven or eight thousand feet.

Is it difficult to see where exactly your target is when you're coming down at such a speed?

No, because you're weaving on the way down and spraying bullets to get the enemy to keep their head down. So we're carrying five thousand rounds of point five.

- 39:30 And that's a lot of ammunition and every trip we would fire our guns on the way down to dive bomb. So you're actually twisting like that to stop the enemy from pointing their gun at one place.

But it would make it easier for you I suppose to control the plane, sort of seeing where you're going?

Yeah.

- 40:00 **Were there any other sort of acrobatics that you would have to get good at in order to become a good dive bomber?**

You'll find my book there which is a bit of a diary tells you whether I had a direct hit or a near miss and so on. So that's why I thought if you read that you would understand who I flew with and what the results are and so on.

But the thing is we need to hear it from you because we're talking to you on camera so we can't really sit here and read the book.

40:30 But I always skidded up sideways, and this is a good reason why they would always been shooting here and in point of fact the ammunition would be going there, so you never went straight up you always went up sideways like that.

Sounds incredibly difficult as far as I am concerned?

Well this is why I am here today. We could always tell the guys who weren't going to make it,

41:00 they wouldn't do enough weaving. In fact I picked one guy as soon as he came in I said, "He is not going to make it." and within about two trips he was dead. He was just, he had come from flying up north, a guy named Ted Adams and in fighting the Japs they didn't have anti-aircraft fire concentration like we had. No doubt you have seen films

41:30 in Europe, the concentration, out here all around the north here they had long distances to fly they couldn't afford to use up the juice, they had to get there as fast as they could and consequently two guys we had, Ted Adams and Horse Harrison, both of them when they first came over they weren't weaving enough and they didn't make it.

Because they were trying to conserve petrol?

42:00 Not only that because they were accustomed.

42:02 End of tape

Tape 6

00:30 They were such lovely people they really were, they were well chosen and Bob Davies as I said he became the Bishop of Tasmania, he is dead now. And these guys, most of them at reunions and the padres always come to the reunions. We used to go the church, if it was Catholic, I am not a Catholic,

01:00 we would go to the Catholic, if it was Protestant, whatever we would just go because we liked the people and wanted to support them.

So there were no real divisions there then?

No, nobody worried about religion, survival was the name of the game.

Apart from liking the people was there any other reason you would attend?

No. We felt that we wanted to be loyal to them as they were, as I say they buried our dead and

01:30 gave a service for our dead and we just got to know them so well. At one stage we had generally twelve pilots, whilst it was an Australian squadron we had South Africans, New Zealanders, British replacements because we were losing so many.

How did that affect your morale?

02:00 Oh you know in their sermons they would put out a message that would be close to home, whatever you were feeling at the time. And most of the time you were a bit frightened if they were saying, "Take heart, take courage you'll make it." I always believed that if you were

02:30 doing the right thing by other people, they would do the right thing by you and that was the sort of message they would put out all of the time. Be at peace with the world other than the bloody Germans.

Sounds like a fairly healthy philosophy.

You wouldn't have seen any of those posters.

No what were they?

Oh they had 'Your Country Needs You'. And they had an Allied soldier with a

03:00 slouch hat pointing at you, 'Your Country Needs You, Join Up' and then they had other Churchill I have forgotten his saying now, but he had some sayings which illustrated posters. 'The Only Good German Is A Dead German'.

03:30 **To the point.**

It took quite a while, in fact I had a personal friend who was German I went back to Germany after the war and in fact they still had a lot of their reunions like we have been having our reunions and they would be singing their songs, I have got words of our songs that we used to sing. They would have a reunion and on one occasion I went in,

04:00 "Vor der Kaserne...Lili Marleen," have you - you haven't heard? "Wie einst Lili Marleen, wie einst Lili Marleen," this is about the little girl, you know we all had dreams about girls that were attractive. And I was telling you about this other friend of mine, I will come to him, even though he has just died his wife is still

04:30 around. I was saying when we were coming out to fight the Japs the Brits opened all the NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute], do you know what a NAAFI is?

Is that a kitchen?

It's a shop that sells clothing and alcohol and they opened it up and

05:00 gave us a chance to take this home because the war had finished in Europe and we were going out to fight the Japs so they opened up the NAAFI to us to take out what we could, get it home if you could, don't drink it all. So we drank what we could and we got an eighty-eight shell case full of it and took it on the ship. And you can imagine carrying an eighty-eight shell which is a metal case,

05:30 full of alcohol. And we got sixteen days, so we managed to get thirty-two bottles in this and carry it up the side of the ship and stowed it in the base, it is supposed to be a dry ship, you don't have alcohol on it. but we had gotten used to alcohol at that stage. Some time after we got back it took a while for me to break from it.

06:00 **Just before we return from Europe, you were discussing some of your experiences in Yugoslavia before?**

Oh well, I was just saying that the warning was if you get caught they had three different political, Yugoslavia was mainly communist, but they had three different sects, very troubled, they were all fighting each other.

06:30 And the communists were the Ustashi and the Ustashi women they said, "Don't be taken prisoner by a Ustashi woman soldier because they will castrate you." So we were all very careful that when we were coming back from Yugoslavia we came back on the deck

07:00 across the Adriatic, and as I say when I was coming back once on the deck of the Adriatic I had a fish on the grill, a cooked fish.

That's travelling pretty close to the deck?

Well he probably heard the noise and had a three foot jump and landed in my grill.

Was that a real threat these women would castrate you if you were captured?

Oh well, yes I didn't do any

07:30 missions across to Yugoslavia but occasionally they would split the squadron and give one of the flight commanders to go over and fight for the Yugoslavs, so if you got on that mission you were under threat.

Can you tell me about the raid on Venice?

Yes well you might want to hear

08:00 first about when I was shot down and what happened.

Sure.

That actually appears in that book. That was, there were three bridges we had to bomb and as fast as we bombed them the Germans put, have you heard of the Bailey Bridge, it is a steel artificial bridge

08:30 just strong enough to carry the tanks and the trucks and what have you across it. And the Germans were retreating at this stage and we were given the job to knock these bridges out. I did ten trips, as fast as we dropped the bridges they would rebuild them overnight. And we put delayed action

09:00 bombs so that while they were working on them at night they would explode and knock off a few Germans. I was, I did ten missions on these because I kept being sent back, but I had a very good record for accuracy with dive bombing. You didn't have to hit the bridge itself you had to hit the approach to the bridge.

09:30 Or after, so that they couldn't go forward or back. And I was at the.....

Rolling.

Anyhow where was I, Yugoslavia, I never did a, I did a trip close to Trieste,

- 10:00 Yugoslav is just under Trieste but half of our squadron used to get sent over and they would warn you about the Ustashi women. They were communists and they hated the British and they would castrate the men if they were prisoners. But our fellows that got shot down in the North of Italy they used to fight with the partisans as I fought with the New Zealanders.
- 10:30 But they were very friendly. It was the partisans who actually killed Mussolini. I had a friend, as a matter of fact he was a member of our golf club he survived the war and when he was shot down they gave him rifles and ammo to fight with them. I know quite a few people who had been shot down. At
- 11:00 one stage we had twelve pilots and eighteen aircraft because they could repair aircraft but as fast as you lost a pilot they would recruit and send a New Zealander or South African, British, someone who was close by, if they had been trained it didn't matter what their nationality was they would just put them into your squadron.
- 11:30 So we had a full squadron, 5SAF was a full squadron of South Africans and because they trained so many it was close to the war in North Africa, they over trained and we had surplus come onto our squadron when we lost, we lost every pilot on our squadron over two weeks except for me. I knew how to pull out of the dive bomb so I didn't get it.
- 12:00 We had one guy who did two tours on 3 Squadron and 450 and he was Jack Doyle who went across to England on that last memorial visit. Kew Gardens put a big memorial up for all of the troops that were lost fighting for Britain. And
- 12:30 Jack Doyle he had a charmed life. I will talk more about Jack Doyle later on. He is still alive, got himself a new girlfriend, he is eighty-five and he has got himself a new girlfriend who is eighty-nine. And they live together and sleep together. She is a very wealthy woman and he is not, he divorced,
- 13:00 he had two children from his first wife, and she was a nurse, head nurse in a hospital and somebody wealthy died and left her, she finished up with two hospitals, and she is very wealthy and after the war she went back to Italy with Jack Doyle and I went back after to show my son
- 13:30 where I got shot down. This Jack Doyle he was CO, DSO [Distinguished Service Order], DFC and bar [a second DFC]. So he did two full tours of operations.

You had just begun earlier to begin to describe the day that you were shot down?

Yes well on my tenth trip to knock these bridges out there was a

- 14:00 hole in the clouds and they had these four guns concentrated on this hole, they didn't even have to aim at me, as soon as they saw one come through they fired the four shells at this hole in the cloud and I happened to be the first, and they hit the engine.
- 14:30 Tremendous bang and it knocked my engine out, and I stayed with the aircraft, actually I went to jump and I saw all of this shrapnel coming up, all of the tracer bullets coming up so I climbed back in again. Having taken my helmet off, I had no communications because all of your communication is through the helmet. And I just managed to glide
- 15:00 to our side of the line and I took my son back and said, "This is where I put I down." And I landed alongside an American camp and of course they had a beautiful car. And gave me food, sleep and the put me into their hospital, because if you got shot down you had to spend overnight in case there was any shock. I, subsequently I had three crash landings,
- 15:30 I will tell you later at the end of the war had one crash, I wasn't flying it but about half way up Italy I was coming back from a trip and very low on fuel. He had no medical or no training but he helped
- 16:00 one lady give birth to a baby and it was a successful birth. So he was just a good natural highly intelligent person.

He sounds like an amazing person.

Yeah. He as I say he got a forty mill cannon shell through his leg and he was in hospital for two years after the war and he studied law while he was in hospital.

You were saying earlier that

- 16:30 **you were running low on fuel?**

Oh running low on fuel and I had to find another drome and I called up and I said, "Give me a clue where to find a drome," and they said, "If you head XYZ direction," whatever it was, "for two miles you should just make it." And I just landed with a dead motor and I

- 17:00 landed on this with no fuel left just as a crowd of Americans taking off in their Thunderbolts and of course they're taking off that way and I am trying to land there with no fuel and they took off just over my head. And I was a little bit shattered then and I went into town to have a drink of wine.
- 17:30 And in the town there is a guy that is still alive here living at City Beach, Doug McKee, he had been my

sergeant in the army in the 16th Battalion and he had transferred to the air force and he was there flying for another squadron. Strange co-incidence, I never knew that he had even got out of the army.

It must have felt like a small world?

- 18:00 Well we had a couple of drinks in celebration. Another time we had a Liberator came back that had crashed landed it had been on this Ploesti Oil Raid? I don't know whether you heard of that it was a very famous raid, Ploesti Oil Fields, and they came back and they crashed on our drome. And the, we had metal strips and the metal strip, the Italian
- 18:30 workers were supposed to have filled all of the soil under the metal strip and they didn't have time, I had to come in and land, and I landed and my wheel went down under one of these strips and I went up on my nose and skidded for about a hundred metres. Just sitting on the nose, if a plane had come over that way, a three tonne plane it would have crushed me
- 19:00 The plane was just sitting on its nose and then it just fell back that way. And I didn't know, we had a rule that if you managed to get your plane back, the first one to it got the clock. The aircraft clock. They all had a watch in them. And pilots all dead anxious, but if you landed on your own drome it was the first one to it. And I landed on this drome,
- 19:30 and skidded on my nose and sat back and next thing there was an arm over my shoulder and someone was trying to get my clock. And I was at a reunion and I said, "Still trying to find out who got my clock?" and the next thing there is a photograph of my plane up on its, wheels all collapsed and a photograph of the guy, didn't know who
- 20:00 with my clock. He was the one, so I never found out who it was that got my clock.

That sounds like a fairly unusual tradition to approach a crashed plane and take the clock and not attend to the pilot?

Well you had to go in, as soon as was convenient they lifted you out and put you in hospital straight away because every time you had a crash you had to go to hospital in case shock set in. later on after the war I will tell

- 20:30 you how I had another crash and I didn't go into hospital for observation, I ran.

Well should we explore what happened on the raid on Venice?

The raid on Venice. Well there was this hole in the cloud and they had these four guns all concentrated upon it. and I

- 21:00 got hit and put it down, just managed to land on our side and got driven back. But because the normal fuel range of a Kitty Hawke was about forty minutes, and this I didn't get back for a couple of days and I was posted missing. And when I, because
- 21:30 they didn't know that I was not missing, and when I went to get aboard the troop ship with the other guys going home they were all agreeably surprised that I wasn't missing at all. I was well and truly alive and with an eighty-eight shell case full of beer.

It must have been a welcome sight?

Well yes as a matter of fact I got the scream from a guy named

- 22:00 Jennings, Jennings who was a great friend of mine before the war said, "Watty!" In other words, "You made it!"

Where did you get reunited with those blokes?

Oh yes. Well Jennings he married an English girl and she talked him into going back to England. She came to a few of our parties back here but she got lonely and talked him into going back to, he is still in England

- 22:30 if he is still alive.

Whereabouts were you reunited though when you first came back from the missing list?

When I first came back?

From the missing list, where were you first reunited with the guys?

Well from memory I was at Fano, we were at Fano on a lot of missions and well I suppose it leads up to where I

- 23:00 finished up my tour of operations and finished up in the army.

How did that come about Stanley?

Well you had to, Col Moreton, he was, went onto training other pilots and because I had been in the

16th Battalion they said, "You have had army experience." But all of that was training, no action.

- 23:30 So they had a crowd called mobile operations room unit, MORU and they said, "Well you can now go and serve on MORU," and when I, because I hadn't read an army map before because I was only a corporal. And they said, "Here is your jeep here is the reference you go and find this brigade headquarters where they will give you instructions."
- 24:00 And I didn't know how to read the map and I said to one of the officers there, "Will you tell me where to find this?" so they gave me the clue and I could go to it. But I made the mistake of driving up too fast and raised a cloud of dust and next thing the Germans came over and
- 24:30 dropped these eighty-eight shells in where I had stopped because I gave them a perfect pinpoint to the brigade headquarters. And that was a British organization, 56th London Division as a matter of fact, and they got mad with me because next thing they were like me, underneath all of these tanks and trucks and what have you dodging shells from the Germans.
- 25:00 Anyhow that was the start of my, and then I was handed over to the 2nd New Zealand Division. They tell you where to go and I was roving, I was called Rover David, and that was my call sign. I was given a half track or a tank, I said, "Look I will take a half track," that's a half a motor, half a
- 25:30 tank. And I used to call up from the half track, I had a radio in there and my job was to call up, receive targets from the army, brigade headquarters and they would tell you where your targets were and you call the dive bombers in on them. Now
- 26:00 I was only a flying officer at that time and my intelligence officer was a captain. So they gave me a flight lieutenant rank because I was in charge of the whole unit. So I was a flight lieutenant for about six weeks. And of course the
- 26:30 Australian government, they didn't believe in paying more than they had to, but the Brits after the war, three years after the war I got eighty-four pound sterling, the difference. You know what the sterling is relative to the pound? Which is the difference between my pay and the flying officer in the book I only ever call myself a flying officer. But I had at one stage a temporary acting, unpaid, flight lieutenant job.
- 27:00 The Brits came good and they gave me the money difference.

How long were you operating in that capacity for?

Oh it was about six weeks but the problem with that was that I was sleeping out on the ground. The Germans at that stage had rockets and they used to bring a

- 27:30 ten tonne truck up with sixteen rocket launchers on this truck and they would knock down every building in the place hoping that you were taking shelter in the building. So I used to sleep out in the open and this is in the middle of winter. And I tell you what I have never been as cold in my life as in the north of Italy. And we, this captain,
- 28:00 British army captain and myself on the groundsheet, just pulled an army blanket over, cold as can be and just had my nose outside it. I did that for six weeks and after the shelling from these rockets, and incidentally I had to go through an army training course for one week, firing twenty-five pounders.
- 28:30 Mortars, sniping, all of this training, and at some stage they put me through action in all of those fields. I don't think I have told you, when I was sniping, sniping one bank of the Po River to the other bank because they were all congesting the troops. And I was sniping across the river
- 29:00 which was only about a hundred yards wide, and I had a snipers rifle, and if anybody poked their head up, bingo. But I had experience firing the twenty-five pounders, which is part of the reason why I am partially deaf today, now of course, I don't know if you know, on the twenty-five pounders they have ears muffs. We didn't have anything. And,
- 29:30 I think I have just got to where I transferred over from the 56th London Division to the 2nd New Zealand Division.

Why were you transferred Stanley?

Well wherever the need was. 56th London Division had been in action for quite a while, and they were, they pulled people out of action. Generally speaking you could only take about two weeks

- 30:00 of gun fire, shell fire, dive bombing. Two weeks is as much as you can take otherwise you go silly. And the New Zealanders had just come back out of the line and they were fresh and I was transferred over to them.
- 30:30 Oh I had been with someone else, I forget who it was now but I spent the last two weeks with the Kiwis. And the war finished and I was, oh after I was shot down I went back to the squadron but I had finished my tour of operations. But I saw all of my buddies and they had captured a lot of German alcohol, wine.
- 31:00 And they gave me oodles of wine, which I went back into the hospital in Northern Italy because I had, I got injured, with my half track we were going through a village and there were a lot of villages giving

you a, "Hey!"

- 31:30 they didn't know we were Australians or who we were, and they were just giving us a whoopee, and a little girl ran out in front of the half track. And I was, well prior to that, when they were trying to cross the Po River the Germans had Bailey bridges
- 32:00 and I called the dive bombers in and knocked the bridges out and as a consequence they couldn't get across and then I called the dive bombers in to machine gun all of the guys. And I know we had a big problem because what we would have to do before we moved on is get all of these bodies tie a rope around their legs on the jeep and bring them to the side of the road so that the burial people
- 32:30 can bury them. I don't know if you have smelt a body that has been there for a couple of days but boy, you just had to get them buried as fast as possible. So I reckon there would have been about fourteen hundred Germans. I can remember with this Fiat panel van a guy had got a burst through his guts and it was all over the place.
- 33:00 And it was also a food wagon and there was fat everywhere, anyhow I had been sleeping on the ground and I managed to get a hold of a bed and I put it in the back of this and when we were getting the big hooray from the Italians and a little girl ran onto the road I jammed on the brakes and a half track came into the back of me and the bed hit me across the back of the neck there,
- 33:30 and the shoulders, that's why I have got a bit of a crook shoulder. And I had a bit of loot that we had picked up, as the Germans were looting they had a lot of loot and we picked up loot that they had taken. And when I rolled out of this, there was no door on it, I
- 34:00 rolled out of it, I was concussed and the Fiat panel van went down to the bottom of the canal. And when I came to because officers got spirits, the other ranks got beer, the beer was terrible beer, fermented onions and fermented potatoes. And that was the beer. But I prefer that I don't
- 34:30 drink spirits, never have, never will. But somebody got a hold of my bottle of whiskey and I was unconscious and they poured that down my neck, and when I came to they took me to a casualty clearing station, which they collect everybody who is wounded, and they put me on a stretcher. An Indian was
- 35:00 taken out of the stretcher and he had the crabs, and guess who got the crabs? I was rather keen on a New Zealand lass and she was a nurse and I went to hospital with the crabs, and she had to shave me all over, I am a hairy person, and she had to shave me to treat the crabs. And I said to her, "Look, I feel terrible about this." And she said, "Don't worry I am a nurse, I can handle it."
- 35:30 And I said, "Well look, you get my clothes will you? I want to get back to the unit, leave them in the ablution hut am I am off. You don't know anything about this." And she was quite a good sport so I got back to the squadron to see me old mates again.

What were you wearing by this stage?

Air force blue uniform, trousers and a blue shirt.

- 36:00 Because my clothes all got cleaned and I was in hospital next to an Italian. The Italian, all of his stomach was shot and he was still alive and they were draining him, screaming through the night with all of the pain because they had him in plaster of Paris to stop him from moving,
- 36:30 and tubes into his gut, down into a container. And he was in a lot of pain. And that's what made me think, look I have got to get out of this, and so I got the New Zealand nurse to get my clothes clean and ready to go again.

How did you get the crabs?

- 37:00 From this Indian.

How were you contracted from him?

Well wherever he had been, I don't know but I know that I hadn't been anywhere I shouldn't have. These are the guys that used to go to the cookery, I haven't told you another experience of mine was having to do a night patrol, and I hadn't been trained to do a night patrol. I was asked

- 37:30 to do a night patrol and I said, "No I am a flier, I hate flying at night, I hate going out at night, you guys go out on your own." And the sergeant said, "All right you stay in this house, close the door." And I said, "Well when you come back, you whistle Annie Laurie. Do you know Annie Laurie?" "Yeah," and the band played Annie Laurie, and he came back and whistled, of course I said, "If you don't whistle and you poke your head through you are going to get this Smith and Wesson."
- 38:00 At that stage I am sorry I had a German pistol, not a pistol it was a Luger. German Luger. The New Zealanders subsequently gave me a Luger, which I brought back and subsequently handed over to the police here.

With the amnesty?

- 38:30 Yes and the ammo. This is a later story, we had a number of parties with the New Zealanders, this wasn't the one at Florence where we got full and flew full, but we were out with, every opportunity the Australians and the New Zealanders would have a bit of a party together. A major in the New Zealand said,
- 39:00 "Oh there is a bit of a party on, plenty of grog come on over." So went over to their mess and we used to reciprocate to our mess. Anyway "Come over to our - I have got your Luger." I said, "I want a Luger." He said, "I have got a Luger, this is from a German in the front line," they were given two weeks break. He said, "I have got your Luger." I said, "Did you get my Beretta? You said you would get me a Beretta." "Oh I will get you a Beretta," he disappeared, this is a
- 39:30 commissioned officer in the army, and he has got a Beretta with a holster and everything. And I said, "Where did you get that from?" Because only the police at that stage were given Berettas, didn't trust the Italians. So he said, "A police man happened to come around the corner, so I waved him, clocked him and took his Beretta off him." So the other amusing
- 40:00 thing was he said, "Oh, it is pretty late now and I am pretty full I don't think I should be driving you home I will just get you one of our jeeps." And this was pretty late at night, got in the jeep and we went to get across the river in the jeep, which they had a snorkel on these to get across. And when it got light I saw it was a military police jeep.
- 40:30 So I called a, swam across this river and I have done a lot of swimming which I will tell you about later, and he organised a tractor to come and pick us up and carry it across. And so we didn't get caught, we put it in the South African squadrons parking area. Let them take the blame. He was a wild bloke, this major.

What kind of relationship

41:00 did you have with him?

Well he had been to a number of our parties and we had been to a number of his parties so I knew him pretty well but I didn't know he was such a wild bigger he got me the revolver, oh, full round of ammo. I don't know if you know the German Luger but it is a recoil and it is not a rotation.

- 41:30 Revolver rotates, this thing when you fire it it is, you could hit kerosene tin at fifty yards. We used to put in out and fire a lot of this ammo off with a kero tin, put it out and see, on the off shore breeze and play games and shoot with this. Anyway I had a lot of ammo. Anyway I gave the Beretta

- 42:00 away, and he had -

Tape 7

- 00:43 Right in a town called Forley, which is quite a big place they had a marsala [fortified wine] factory and the New Zealanders said, "Send your water truck up," and we sent our water truck up and got it absolutely full of

- 01:00 marsala and took it back to the squadron and shared it amongst all of the other squadrons. But we also got a number of bottle of marsala, and this Brian Brown was with me and we drank this marsala on the side of the road, we were going to hitchhike down the road, we got four days

- 01:30 and we hitchhiked down on a Polish truck and by the time we got to Rome we weren't sure whether we saw that or not, or thought we saw one of the truck roll over and sit on its hood. And I had the worst hangover I have ever had in my life, we drank a bottle of marsala each.

- 02:00 And the first day of our holiday was getting over this damned hangover.

Is it a wine or a spirit?

A wine a very potent wine. I didn't, other than that time when they put the whisky down my neck when I was unconscious and the doc said, "Well he doesn't need any anaesthetic, he has already has his." Anyway we got down to

- 02:30 Rome and this bloke Brownie, we only had one more trip to do each to finish our tour of operations, and he got killed on his last trip, his last mission.

This is the guy you went to Rome with?

Yes. And when we got back he had to do his last trip and I didn't get my last trip because the

- 03:00 CO said, "You are going through a bit of shock now with Brownie." So two hundred hours was the most you could do and I had a hundred and ninety eight hours ten minutes. And he said, "Well you can't do any more, Brownie is gone." At that stage the Germans were clustering their eighty-eight guns in groups of four and they

- 03:30 hit him and he just blew up completely. I went to look for his body or grave afterwards and there was nothing there. I don't know if I mentioned to you that my last ten trips, missions, I got hit with anti-aircraft fire every time, so time was running out. Fortunately the CO said, "Well, you have got through a lot of shock losing Brownie, your tour's expired." So I didn't do my two hundred hours,
- 04:00 a hundred and ninety-eight hours, ten minutes.
- Did you feel as though your luck was running out, being hit ten times in the last ten trips?**
- That's true, yes. And being hit and getting the shrapnel through your plane, you not only smell the eighty-eights but you feel the shock of them and it is quite frightening, I don't know if you have even heard a twenty-five pounder go off?
- 04:30 The loud bang is quite a nerve shattering experience.
- I believe you. Did you ever have any good luck charms that you would take with you?**
- No I didn't believe in luck, I believed in calculating, you take your risks. Well we were talking about then going through with the new Zealanders.
- 05:00 Well I went into Austria to get some loot, and I got a Daimler Steyr General's Staff car and I drove this down through Udine and to Monfalcone, which was where the base was, the New Zealand base, and I used to do a lot of swimming there, it is right on the coast just before you get into Trieste.
- 05:30 My job in Trieste was intelligence, the Russians had come in, up through Yugoslavia and they had a roadblock.
- How did you get this job because this is pretty different to what you were doing before?**
- Well once you're in the army you don't have a choice you just do as your told.
- Well how did you get in the army, because we have just basically finished with you being a fighter pilot and then you went on holiday to Rome for four days**
- 06:00 **for leave?**
- When I finished my tour of operation they said, "Well you have had army experience in the 16th Battalion, you now will take on this MORU," mobile operations room unit. So that's where I was posted.
- Was that unusual to have that sort of a transfer?**
- Jack Doyle did it, he had done it before hand
- 06:30 and he was my CO, he had done it because he was told that he had to do it before me and I had to do it because I had army experience. And I was then on the mission, as I say I was with the British army and then the New Zealand army, and I then was the
- 07:00 war the was finished and I was in Monfalcone having to go into Trieste each day through the Trieste, through the road block and they had a Russian Yugoslav road block and they had a New Zealand road block. I had no trouble
- 07:30 getting through the roadblock. But going in, one of the Russians put a pistol to my neck, forced myself and a South African I was with, back across, it really hurt, back across this Daimler Steyr and this South African I was with he was a wild guy too. He said,
- 08:00 "One of these days I am going to get these bastards." And then I forgot all about this and we were due to drive back. And he said, "Do you mind if I have a drive of your Daimler Steyr?" and I said, "No." And so anyhow he is driving this thing back and it was very fast and he was driving along and these guards came out and he put his foot down and tried to run them down.
- 08:30 And they opened up, I am flat on the floor and we got a hail of bullets coming through, they had the automatics. And that was the last time I could take the Daimler Steyr in, it was too evident who we were, so we just dumped that and from there on worked out of jeeps so they knew who we were.
- 09:00 But that was the job to do to go and sight the machine guns on every street corner and we had to make a report when we got back. And I was at this Monfalcone. The war was over and the New Zealanders threw a party,
- To celebrate the war being over?**
- Yeah.
- 09:30 **What happened then?**
- Well I had this shoulder hurt and I was in and out of hospital quite a bit, New Zealand hospital, and when I got into the hospital the next time I took an arm full of grog, I was going

10:00 to say, the Germans they had an equivalent of a NAAFI and we took all of the grog off them and one of the guys took off and tried to run away with all of the cash register, all of the money. And he had a bag full of lira and one of our guys up after him and he had a Smith and Wesson and just clonked

10:30 him over the head, dropped him and just took his money. We finished up with a stack of lire.

What did you do with it?

Spent it, it had been valued fifty percent, while it was a lot of lira at the end of the war they devalued the liras. But I took all of this grog into hospital, and when I woke up the next

11:00 morning, all of the staff had drunk the grog and they were all as full as ticks. I can still remember there were blokes and lasses, all of the staff, doctors and nurses, they were all draped all over the room they had drunk all of this grog.

Bad influence.

Yeah, at least we didn't have to drink it.

What sort of facilities did you have to stay in when you were doing that? Were you under canvas

11:30 **or were you in buildings?**

Oh no we were in Castella Miramori, it was a castle we were living in a castle just out of Trieste and the PR [public relations] guy of the 2nd New Zealanders actually organised a dance and because they had that much captured grog, they got a

12:00 whole lot of fruit juice and mixed all of the alcohol in with it and the I forget, anyhow the head lady of Trieste got the bus to come in and pick up all of their girls and bring them out. And I don't know what happened to all of the girls, I wasn't there but they didn't get home, they were all hung over the next morning. And

12:30 whether there was an progeny from that I don't know but the New Zealanders they weren't backward. I don't think I told you, when we were going to go away, they were all down Rowe Street?

Yes.

So they were all very active.

Did you have anything to do with communication equipment? .

Only the VHF, the radio that we used on the aircraft. I am

13:00 sorry when I was calling the aircraft in to do the dive-bombing, yes I had UHF. VHF in aircraft, UHF, that's long distance for calling the aircraft in to do the dive-bombing.

And what was that like as a job being on the other side?

Well, I got that job because

13:30 was experienced, and we had what they call cab rank, we had aircraft in the air all of the time. Six aircraft in the air and they would go up and down the line looking for targets and if they didn't get called up for a target you had an alternative target briefing. No that was a job that I thought was going to be quite a safe job, but when I was under shell fire all

14:00 of that time I came out a nervous wreck.

This is when you couldn't hold your cup of tea?

That's right, I was going to tell you about Freyberg who subsequently became the Governor General of New Zealand, heard of him? General Freyberg.

I am afraid my history on New Zealand isn't too flash.

Well he was a mad swimmer and I used to go down swimming at Castella Miramori every morning. And he used to go down swimming every morning, I still go down to Cottesloe

14:30 every morning for eight months of the year and swim from North Cottesloe to Cottesloe sorry. Anyhow he was a mad swimmer and when he came back through Perth to go home he was entertained by our local general.

15:00 Freyberg said, "Stan was from Perth, is he still around?" "Oh yes." "Well get him down here I want to see him," So I went to this, I knew Freyberg well I didn't know the local general that well and I went to this party and Freyberg, I don't know whether I told you but the junior officers duty on a victory dinner is serving the

15:30 senior officer and I spilt the soup over Freyberg his new uniform. I just couldn't hold it steady. He said, "Stan you do remember spilling all of that soup over me? Okay well you won't be penalised now the war

is over.” He remember that quite clearly. But we used to swim together at Castella Miramori.

It sounds quite picturesque?

It is it is a beautiful place.

16:00 **Were there really nice facilities there for you all?**

Well a castle in Italy is very plush, the officers got into the castle, the troops got into tents. I was a commissioned officer, I was a flight lieutenant at that stage so,

So you managed to get into the castle?

Yes.

16:30 **What did it look like?**

Have you been to Europe?

Yes.

Been to Germany, if you go down on the Ruhr you will see a lot of castles there, all very luxurious. And of course the New Zealanders got into the best of the Castella Miramori.

Why do you think Australians always get on so well with New Zealanders?

17:00 I don't know, my Dad was in World War I and he got on well with them .we always got on well with them. Well they fought together in World War I and my Dad lost his two brothers fighting with New Zealanders in France so I think they just went through a lot of hardship together. And as I said as soon as they had a party going and grog on they would always ring

17:30 us up or send a truck around and say, “Well there is a party on tonight be there as soon as you can.”

Have we talked about the crossing of the Po River when there was a whole lot of Germans killed?

When they made the Bailey Bridges across?

Yes we have talked about that I just wanted to make sure.

There must have been about fourteen hundred Germans were killed

18:00 putting the rope around them and towing them feet first to the side of the road. For the burial crew to come and bury them.

How anxious were you to get back home after the war was announced over?

Very anxious, well I was going to tell you when we were waiting for a ship the

18:30 South Africans, they rioted because they wanted a ship to get them home first before us and we were held in a place called Kasfareet which is half was down the canal and we were stuck there for about six weeks. And we decided that we wanted to go and have a look, of course I had heard

19:00 quite a bit about Israel and so I wanted to go and have a look at Israel and of course the Israeli girls, they didn't have, the Jewish girls didn't have any change rooms so they would just put a towel around them and drop their duds and get into their bathers with one hand and we decided we wanted to see how they could do that. So this guy who died quite

19:30 recently and I decided we would see if we could get a ride and we got a plane from Kasfareet and it was a plane that, it was for carrying, it was a two engine plane and they said to us, “Look there is a lot of things wrong with this plane if you want to fly up there you take your own risk.” So we got out about twenty minutes from Kasfareet and next thing the

20:00 the starboard motor caught fire.

What sort of a plane was this?

Oh you wouldn't know it.

It just sounds like it has got a lot of difficulties attached to it?

It had a lot of difficulties attached to it, it was an air sea rescue plane, anybody in the Mediterranean they would fly this out

20:30 and drop it on a parachute, drop the boat down so it is a very unusual thing and it is not known at all out here. Anyway the port motor caught fire and we had to throw all of the pyrotechnics in it, it had a lot of pyrotechnics in it, didn't have guns. And flares and you name it and on one motor it was gradually losing height, and the war is over at this stage

21:00 and we are waiting to go home and here we are bumming a ride up to Israel for the wrong reason.

Anyhow we finally crash landed about thirty miles east of Alexandria, you know where Alex is? Right on the coast, but there are salt lakes all along there. And of course if you are in a crash at all you have to go into hospital for observation, but there were eleven people on this plane that was only licensed to carry four people.

21:30 So one of the guys grabbed a parachute and he went to jump and this other Perth guy he I can mention his name now, Pat Markham, he was a teacher at Wesley College, I went to Wesley and I knew him beforehand. He gave him a rugby tackle and brought this guy down because he went to jump, there were two types of parachute, one where

22:00 you put the harness on and clip the harness on and one where you sit on and pull the rip cord. Anyway Pat pulled this guy, rugby tackled and brought him down because he would have jumped without a parachute had he knot. Anyway we landed and when you land on ground she bounces,

22:30 hits and both Pat and I didn't want to go to the hospital for observation so we got out and I cut my thumb, I can remember I was getting out, running for the door and I cut my thumb. We ran like billyo and we didn't get caught and have to go into, and then we got a lift back through Gaza, which my Dad was in, Gaza World War I,

23:00 which I wanted to see anyway. So I got somebody to give me a lift in a vehicle and went back and started again in Kasfareet. So that was another experience we had after the war was over.

You were very lucky not to come to grief with that crash landing by the sounds of it?

I think I was more lucky with the New Zealand 2nd Division army doing that MORU job because I was under shellfire all of that time.

23:30 And I didn't say, this MORU unit I had to be on this half track, call up the aircraft, first daylight and last daylight and then drive up to the next post wherever the line had moved to. So I was getting about three hours sleep a night. Sleeping out on the ground, bitterly cold and I was a bit of a nervous wreck by the time I got home.

Sounds like you would have been suffering from exhaustion as well with those

24:00 **sorts of hours?**

Well, Shirley will remember when I came back I went to the university, Shirley was at the university, she has done two degrees and is a doctor and I met Alec Kerr and he had been a prisoner of war for two years and he talked me into doing it so I did the Bachelor of Arts with Alec Kerr and we have been buddies ever since.

24:30 **Just getting back to your time in Gaza, so did you actually get to see these girls disrobe?**

No that was at Lydda in Israel.

Did you actually get to see what they did?

You couldn't see anything they were too good at it.

How disappointing for you?

Yeah. Oh we have made up for that since, you know they have got some nuddy beaches here one at Rottnest and one at Swanbourne, so I and other blokes

25:00 we used to always go to, mind you if you have been to Europe on the beaches over there you have got young and old, Shirley reckons I am a pervert but, they swim over there in the nuddy [nude] young and old. Down in the South of France.

25:30 **Did you do anything else to fill in your time while you were waiting for a ship to come back?**

Yeah we used to play a lot of cards, play cards in the daytime so that we could sleep at night. I was a pretty good card player, we were waiting all of this time to get home. And of course when we did get home,

Well how did you get home, on what sort of a ship?

We got a ship called the, it was a luxury ship but we had five thousand

26:00 people on board and you can imagine trying to feed and sleep five thousand people on a fifteen thousand tonne boat. They used to bring the food up three times a day, carry it in dixies, slop in onto your plate, and under where we were sleeping, it was a hammock, we would just sit there, play cards, eat your food and then carry your plates up,

26:30 give it a wash in the salt water and then sleep in the hammock above where you were eating. That was sixteen days coming home.

It sound pretty tedious for four weeks? Is that four weeks?

Sixteen days is two weeks roughly.

So that's not that long?

No.

Where did you stop on the way back home?

27:00 We didn't stop, it took us from the canal to Fremantle, we went straight to Fremantle, a lot of the other went on New Zealand ships and they went through to New Zealand. We came straight to Fremantle. With five thousand troops on board and all of the guys on our squadron, they weren't all West Australians, they all got on one side and the captain was yelling, "Get back, you men get back!"

27:30 because we all rushed to that side and then rushed to that side and he got really mad. Finally we had enough of that so we got to get off. At least we got to see the family and my family were all down at Fremantle to welcome me home.

Well how did you let them know that you would be coming home at that time?

We had those little letters they were, I don't know whether you know

28:00 they had a special code, you fill out a code, "We'll see you soon going to such a such a destination." So you sent a code home telling them should be home on say the 28th of the 11th, it was all coded.

So while we're on the subject of mail I think you mentioned to me in one of the breaks that you had a [UNCLEAR] while you were away?

28:30 Yes, Gwen Williams, she is in there. And when I got back she was four years older than I and she was very religious, I have got a daughter who is very religious, but at that stage I didn't want to get married and I met Shirley down at the university. She was five years younger, I was twenty-three when I got back and

29:00 Shirley was eighteen, so we got married fairly quickly.

Well that's quick work really isn't it?

Bit anxious.

Just on the subject of mail how important was mail to you while you were away?

Well very important, in my book I mention a lot of the letters that we wrote and I have included some of those in part of the book to show you what the mood was at the time.

29:30 And when I lost Ping I went out and got drunk and cried my eyes out, grown up men don't cry but I sure did on that occasion.

Well you have got to get it out somewhere or else I think you will end up worse for wear.

Yeah we also had another session where in England when we were doing the training on Masters,

30:00 a lass led me to believe that she was in love with me. And I hadn't had a drink until then and she tells me this night, "I am afraid I misled you, my husband has been a prisoner of war, and he is on his way home now?" "Why didn't you tell me all of this?" so I went out and

30:30 that was the first time I had a drink, I was nineteen years of age.

So you were dating somebody you didn't know was married?

Yeah. She didn't tell me. So I had more than one drink so the guys carried me, helped me back, there was a fence there, and they put me over the fence with my hands off the ground and my feet off the ground and they left me there and went back to the pub and got into it and came and picked me up later on.

31:00 So that was the first time I had a drink.

Did you get any care packages when you were away like from the Red Cross or anything like that?

Really from home, my Mum was a great knitter and knitted me lovely socks. She was a very caring lovely lady and she used to send parcels over, food, and

31:30 on Ping's birthday

What sort of food?

Well cakes. As a matter of fact my Mum made a cake for Ping's twenty-first birthday, he was a week older than I and she had a thing around the cake and it was all pinned to the cake and I got a gut ache because I hadn't had any rich food for a long time, and I went to

32:00 Doc Scanlon and said, "I think I have swallowed some pins." He said, "Well will have to x-ray you then."

So I had to go and get x-rayed, and all it is was the rich food. We weren't used to rich food. It was a beautiful birthday cake.

How important was it to get packages like that from home?

It was important but we had,

32:30 you know you had to, there was no meat we were eating five meals a day just on vegetables in England because England was very short of food. And because we were on vegetables only we were eating five meals a day. And in Italy they sent food out but it was all concentrated food, not good healthy food.

33:00 When you say you were eating vegetables all of the time in London? What was it just boiled or potatoes or what sort of vegetables?

Yeah any vegetable you name it, we were hungry all of the time. They used to kill their horses over there, so you would have to look under the

33:30 potato to find a little bit of horse meat. That's how much meat we got and that was only one meal a day out of five, veggies don't last you very long.

What do you think was the best thing about returning to Australia?

Well at that stage it was back to see Gwen Williams, the girl that I was engaged to, well I wasn't engaged, but she was keener on me than I was on her.

34:00 I didn't, I wasn't that religious, I had been to Sunday school and I subsequently joined the Masonic Lodge, too much ritual lack of sincerity and when I got back I said well she was four years older

34:30 that didn't influence, because she wrote to me every week while I was away.

That's a big commitment.

She was very keen. And I was a disappointed her because I took her out once and said, "Look I am far too young." - married. And I didn't say, "Because you have got a lot more faith in you than I have in myself." I just took her out and said, "I am too young." And that's it.

35:00 And she was a very proper girl and to make my point I put my hand on her breast and that was the wrong thing to do of course and she was very upset about that and she thought oh well you have changed, when you went away you were a little eighteen year old and to do a thing like that. Don't tell Shirley that. That's how I got rid of her.

You wouldn't think she would mind if she was four years older?

35:30 Well she was very religious, and people don't do that sort of thing.

So how were you demobbed [demobilised] when you got back?

Well I met a lot of the guys, I met Alec Kerr, I met this Roy Jennings I was telling you about. I met another guy who had been in the air force who was a great buddy of mine Don Allan. He became an observer,

36:00 I don't know if you know a pilot, observer and gunner in a plane? He was an observer. And met up with all of them and we all knew each other and all went down to the university together and did a degree.

What sort of things were you interested in when you came back from the war?

My first thing I wanted to keep flying and I did some research on running a country, commercial flying,

36:30 I wanted to keep flying and my Dad pointed out to me. I said, "Well they have got good commercial planes." And he said, "Well cattle cost is one thing operating costs is another, you haven't got the money. You just don't have the money to do that." So I finished up went to work for my Dad in Imperial Printing Company.

How disappointing was the for you that you

37:00 couldn't continue to fly on a professional basis?

Oh, I was disappointed but I did do some flying. For example my Dad was managing director for an oil company and while he was away somebody had brought three planes, and he said, "Well we have got to see these planes could you bring them over so we can sell them here?" So in England I stole from the

37:30 Americans an Auster and that became the squadron planes we got it all repaired and so on. He said, "One of these planes is an Auster, do you think you can fly that?" so I went down got my flying licence and with Alec Kerr the two of us flew over from Moravian, from Melbourne and landed at the Mainlands which was a small drome in those days. I also had another guy

38:00 in three squadron who had a plane and I used to fly his plane. When I went to Italy I went back to Fano where I had been flying and there was still a drome with Italian planes and the CFI, chief flying instructor said, "Oh do you want to have a look where you used to do some dive bombing?" "Yeah." So

he said, "Well come up with me and we'll go."

- 38:30 It was a twin seater and he said, "Do you want to try a slow roll?" I said, "All your instruments are in different positions." We had what they called the Sperry panel they were standard on all of the British planes, I said, "Do you mind if we go up to five thousand and do a slow roll, turn the plane upside down and do a slow roll." He said,
- 39:00 "Oh well, I will demonstrate for you." But by that time we were nearly out of time. And he did a slow roll at a thousand, perfect slow roll of course the judgement is that you don't go above or below or sideways, you have got to go very slowly upside down and so on so he did it for me. I said, "Thanks very much, I will do the landing now if that's okay with you?" so I did the take offs and landing.
- 39:30 I have, you know it is like driving a car once you have driven, I was flying all of the time up until the, what they call seat of the pants flying. You can feel where the G is if you're going that way or that way, so flying is not a problem but doing a slow roll at a thousand feet, not on.

Did you ever get to fly in Mustangs?

- 40:00 Yes, you will find in my book there 3 Squadron got the Mustangs, we got the conversion Mustangs, so I only flew four Mustangs. But they were fast, and the first Mustang, the P51D had a scoop on it that if it got too hot while you were taxiing the motor cut. And we had a number of people, I had heard of this problem
- 40:30 so I would taxi to the take off point., cut the motor let the motor cool right down and then take off so I flew it, and I flew it along the beach and we were flying on the Kitty Hawke at two seventy knots and I was flying along the east coast of Italy at three fifty knots. It is fast, they were subsequently used, 3 Squadron got them and they put overload tanks on them and they were escorting the bombers
- 41:00 through to Berlin from Foggia.

Were there any other aircraft that you got to fly?

Harvard. Part of our Harvard was, and Bill Wiley, I don't know if you know Bill Wiley here?

Listening to what you're saying it is very hard for me to remember if we have interviewed him.

Bill Wiley made all of his money, he is listed in

- 41:30 the wealthy he has got two hundred and seventy million dollars ad he bought one of these Mustangs and converted into a two seater. They are recovering a lot of planes that have been crashed, and done up. And Bill bought that and a Harvard, and I rang up Bill because the Harvard has a torque, do you know what a torque is, T-O-R-Q-U-E? It's a bias because you give it full throttle,
- 42:00 which you have got to do, the thing swings.
- 42:02 End of tape

Tape 8

- 00:40 We were going to talk about Venice?

Yeah you were going to talk about Venice?

Well Vencie was what they call an open city. Venice, Florence and Rome where it was agreed with the Germans that they would not damage those cities

- 01:00 and Venice they didn't quite do the thing, the Germans they blew up one of the bridges across the Arno in Venice. But when it got to, when it got to we had to be very careful that we didn't bomb. The Germans were sending their, originally they came down the mountains through all of these tunnels with trains
- 01:30 and brought the supplies in and railed through to Rimini. And then when that was, we knocked that out we had to stop them bringing it down by train to Venice and they would bring it down because the concentration of Allies coming north they decided they would send the Venice to Rimini
- 02:00 Rimini was a very focal point of the withdrawal of the Germans. They loaded all of the wharves up with the armaments and especially the ammunition and all of the explosives on the wharves
- 02:30 and then put those on what they call Siebel ferries, these were ferries that had been captured and given cannons to stop the allies coming in and they put them all on the wharves and we had to dive bomb. And they had seventy-eight dive bombers, American and our wing. They had so many because the Germans had, there is a lot of islands in and around Venice,

- 03:00 you will see them there and they had anti-aircraft guns there. They had seventy-eight aircraft go in so they go the most accurate people who had the record for accuracy because if you came in on the ships and you missed you would hit the wharf, and blow up all of the stuff on the wharf
- 03:30 and our squadron was one of those to do the dive bombing on the wharf. The others were all used for knocking out the anti-aircraft fire on these islands. So those that were firing rockets were put on the anti-aircraft so that we didn't get
- 04:00 distracted and drop a bomb on the city of Venice. Open city. And I was fortunate to be one of the four leaders on that. They had a Spitfire photographing that up at eighteen thousand feet and they were photographing the whole thing, all of this is photographs of the islands and the planes coming down
- 04:30 and I hit one of the Siebel ferries and you will read from that there were other transport boats and they were shipping all of their supplies down to Rimini. And then from Rimini then they would rail again inland, so it was vital that the Venice
- 05:00 equipment was all destroyed and we weren't allowed to land bomb, we didn't hit Venice at all but we hit the wharves. So it was vital, they put all of these aircraft, seventy-eight knocking out the anti-aircraft guns, protecting those that were going in. when they actually blew up all
- 05:30 of that equipment on the wharves the book tells you there, the Spitfire that was photographing the whole thing at eighteen thousand feet the blast blew it up another thousand feet. That's how big the blast was. And it tells you on there how massive an explosion it was. I can remember very clearly, even though
- 06:00 I dived and pulled away I still got a lot of loft from the explosion when the stuff on the wharf went up.

What stage of your dive were you in when all of that stuff went up?

Well I was at the beginning of my dive, I was one of the very few aircraft that was leading, there were three fours, I led one four. And we all went in,

- 06:30 as you will see there one after the other. We totally destroyed the whole wharf and all of that and that was vital to stomp that from getting down to Rimini where it could be transported across by train from Rimini.

How many dives did you make during that raid?

Just one.

- 07:00 Couldn't get a second because whilst they got nearly all of the anti-aircraft guns they didn't get them all. But we were only armed with enough to do one raid so we only had one set of bombs each on the four aircraft and they were three five hundred pounders. So we had to be accurate. And because on my diary there you can see that I
- 07:30 was very accurate. I worked out when to start pulling out, how to escape without being blown up, and as I say diving at sixty degrees and knowing when to pull out and to come up side ways so the anti-aircraft fire would
- 08:00 train behind you. Not in front of you otherwise you would run into it. My record in there showed that I was, actually I was chosen and two other guys. Ted Strong who is now gone, Bush Barry who is written up in there and the three of us actually led the twelve aircraft
- 08:30 in the squadron.

Why were you selected to lead the aircraft?

Because of my history of accuracy, accurate dive bombing.

How was that accuracy measured apart from in your diary?

Because we had to report the results and it is in our logbook whether we hit or near miss or drop short or over shot. It is all recorded and the squadron leader had to sign that that was a true and accurate record and if he

- 09:00 wasn't than the leader, I led the squadron on a number of raids but I had to agree with whatever the person said on the raid, but I had to be in the raid and agree and sign that that had happened.

How were you regarded for your accuracy by the men you flew with?

I think I was regarded

- 09:30 highly because I was selected to lead on that Venice raid. And the fact that I could hit a ship, a small ship there shows I was selected so I must have been good.

What was the significance of the raid on Venice?

Well to stop all

10:00 of that ammunition and getting down to Rimini. And as I say, I did a raid on Rimini and I sped twenty-five miles out to sea, it was well protected.

With the raid on Venice how were you briefed prior to the fact?

Well there

10:30 was a selection and a brief and a recording as to our performance, for about two weeks before that because being an open city they had to have persons most accurate. We weren't allowed to make a mistake.

How were you briefed on the day before the raid?

Well we had been rehearsing and practicing and recording our results from previous,

11:00 and then we were just told what ships were there and what you were to aim at. The whole idea was that if you came from a certain direction you aimed at a ship and if you overshot you hit the wharf. It just so happened that I hit the ship I didn't have to get the wharf, nobody got blown up, we had no casualties at all on that raid.

11:30 **Were you given a stirring send off prior to the raid?**

No it was just another mission.

What about the debrief following the mission?

Well we were all very excited of course because had been so successful. We just reported accurately what had happened, you had to have a

12:00 flying officer in charge verifying it. So my sebel ferry was verified. I claimed that and somebody else had to say, "Yes, well I saw that blown up."

Were there any celebrations following the raid?

No it was pretty well I actually took that Auster that we borrowed from the Yanks,

12:30 up and went onto Valeto there, do you know Valeto? There is a strip of land and they had a landing there, at that stage all of the, they had a flying training school in Austria and all of the Germans and people in their side were flying down and landing on Valeto trying to escape. Well what they didn't know was

13:00 there is a bridge across, and they were all making for Valeto trying to get the planes. Well we got out fast, it was full of Germans, the war was over, they were trying to get away from the Allies and we got away because we were flying there, the Auster and we flew straight away and let the Germans have the other planes that had been brought down from the training school in Austria.

13:30 **Was this the last raid you flew, Stan?**

Yes. You will find that I think it was the 21st of March that was the last time I flew 1945.

You mentioned earlier that you had reached your hours, and you were told you didn't have to fly any more, was that after this or was this one last?

No that was my last and I was chosen. The CO said,

14:00 "Look I am going on holidays and I want you to," because of my accuracy, "I want you to lead one of the fours on that." Bush Barry, Ted Strong and myself were the three that were chosen we had the best accuracy.

So would you describe the raid as 'one last hurrah', or - ?

Well I was very pleased that it was all over, what I didn't know of course

14:30 was that I was going to be posted onto this MORU. Which I went straight onto after that raid.

Was that a difficult transition to make?

Yes although we were that close quite often to the bomb line that we were being shelled while we were taking off.

15:00 See we were, the bomb line was within nine miles of our drome if we had a drome or paddock and they would spot and when they would see the dust where we were taking off they would send eighty-eight shells over and try to get us while we were taking off. So we would do a quick smart turn and turn away from where they were coming in.

15:30 **It sounds like you took on some incredible challenges?**

Well your option weren't many, once you see I had a lot of experience, the average guy had a hundred and fifty hours, I had nearly two hundred hours so I was very experienced.

Why did you have more than most men?

Well if their record wasn't good as a

16:00 dive bomber they were posted after a hundred and fifty hours and they went on training or we had one LMF, lack of moral fibre. On the dive bomb instead of pulling the release at four thousand feet he would pull it at six thousand feet and throw the bomb away. You know, LMF wasn't uncommon, it is not easy to go through three layers.

16:30 Black, brown white and all anti-aircraft fire and a lot of people chickened out.

How were they looked upon by the pilots that they flew with?

Poorly., in fact most of them were sent home LMF, lack of moral fibre, and that was the biggest disgrace you could ever, having trained all of that time you had to live with that.

17:00 "What did you do in the war Dad?" "Oh well I came home early, lack of moral fibre." Shame.

So there was no sympathy felt for those pilots at all?

None no, we figured well we have been through it they should have been able to steel themselves. They knew what they were letting themselves in for.

And there were a number of instances of LMF that you recall?

17:30 Well there was another guy, this guy Johnny Woods that I told you about, he didn't come home early, he actually got thrown on his back as he was going down and he threw his bomb away because he wasn't going down in the normal way but everybody knew what had happened to him because he was spotted upside down when he shouldn't have been. That was because he got blown with a shell.

18:00 No there was a lot of shame, anybody who got sent home LMF went home in shame.

Would there be any, were you aware of any conflict between crews and pilots who were suspected of being LMF prior to being labelled?

Well you would know, everything was stereotyped. You had to be exact

18:30 to dive bomb to know when to pull out and when to start your weaving, and when to start firing there is that much training into doing that .that's why we had training in England, we had training in the desert we had what they call shadow firing, we had drogue firing in the desert, why we were so long getting to the action, there was a lot of

19:00 training to be done. And so the shadow firing was where they put a plane down, well the shadow and you had to fire at the shadow, and if he is weaving around and so on you had to follow him around. but you obviously couldn't hit him, same as drogue firing. They put a guy there, I got a very good firing record with a drogue and then they would count afterwards how many holes there were in that drogue.

19:30 and that's just a hollow thing that got towed behind the plane. But I worked out how to get the most there, I would wait until the very last moment because your cone of fire is three hundred yards, and I worked out when to start firing, when to stop firing and I would come down and just go under and missed the drogue by inches,

20:00 but I would fire with the cone of fire until the last moment and I got the best score.

So what you're saying is that you were a highly efficient fighting team and there was zero tolerance for anyone who was going to let the team down?

Yes. One guy that I remember at the time he was very brave with his fists, he when his

20:30 fighting and he was full of shame when he found that he couldn't face all that flak coming up, he went home on LMF.

Did he nominate himself LMF or?

No, no. He didn't get a chance because the CO just said, "Well you don't have the courage to go through all of that flak. Here is

21:00 your logbook, discharge LMF." And once it had gone in the logbook, that's it.

It doesn't sound like there was much empathy when obviously there was a lot of danger and fear would be a fairly normal response?

Oh no

21:30 well we all had to face the things that he chickened out on and we didn't feel sympathetic to him at all, I suppose we should have done. But we had gone through all of the training, we had figured that we had

got on top of our nerves, sure he was unlucky that he didn't have that courage to do

22:00 it but we didn't feel sympathy to him.

And would you allow stigma to be attached to those pilots even after the war?

I never met any of them after the war. I think they buried their heads in shame, I never met anybody who was LMF after the war.

It just sounds like a horrible price to pay?

Yes,

22:30 it really was but then again they had to do what we had to, conquer your nerves and if they couldn't it is just bad luck. I mean your quite fateless when you're laying your life on the line day after day, I mean even to fly there were times when you're flying your Mustangs, you're taking off and

23:00 your engines cut because you had it running too hot and it got overheated. That was a calculation you had to make. And if you died because, and quite a few did die because they took too long to take off and when you gave it the gun you had to make sure you had your right rudder on hard otherwise you turn left. We had one guy on 3 squadron that gave it the gun

23:30 torqued to early and he ran into three other aircraft all lining up to take off. Destroyed three other aircraft.

So the expectation had to be high of one another?

Yes.

I think earlier in the interview, Stanley, we had some home from the war and we were talking about you settling back into life at home?

Yes well, I wanted to fly but I realised that I didn't have the money to fly

24:00 and I met up with these other three pre-war buddies of mien and we went to the university. And at that stage it wasn't easy to get as job and Dad had a print works and I worked from the bottom up and he made sure I always earn less than everybody else. But he had this philosophy that you will never lead until you learn to serve, and he

24:30 repeated that to me, if you want to become a leader. When he died I was managing director, he had this mining company, I went and set up this Quick Print, Snap Print and it wasn't chance because I went and learnt it. I went to the Harvard School in Hawaii and learnt it. Learnt management

25:00 I learnt how to plan and grow a business and now we have got over two thousand franchise owners in Snap.

So you were the creator of that franchise here in?

I opened it up in 1967 in Perth and now it is in, I opened it up in Singapore, it is still going in New Zealand and Ireland.

25:30 But I made sure that I have selected good people. And I got one guy his name is Paddy Thompson who is Irish and he took us into Ireland and he was a southern Irishman and during the war on a holiday I went down to Southern Ireland and had my only time when I went to gaol, actually spent a night in gaol.

26:00 **Who did? You did?**

Yeah I did.

Why?

Well I had a camera and of course Ireland was pro-German. The Republic of Ireland down the bottom was pro-Germans and I had this little mini-camera and somebody spotted me and one of the IRA [Irish Republican Army] lieutenants, "Come with me." I haven't told this story. We had no money,

26:30 we used to allow ourselves ten shillings, we got into civvies [civilian clothes, out of uniform], this is myself and another guy. We went across to Enniskillen where there were Australians and Hadify [? UNCLEAR] in one of the PBYS [Patrol Bomber, Y = Consolidated Aircraft Company, manufacturer's code] there and got into their mess and we rode train, on the outside of the train down to Dublin. From Enniskillen to Dublin. Happened to run across after we got out of

27:00 gaol, happened to run across a professor at Trinity College and he said, "Well I have got a spare bedroom at my place you're welcome to come. And if you're prepared to come there you can get a meal at the Trinity College." So everything was done on the cheap. We spent this money in civvies and later on I went back to Trinity College

27:30 after the war and the professor had moved on. But he said, "No, none of we faculty know anything about flying would you like to give a talk. Because you have got a free feed I think you should give a talk

and answer any questions." So we gave a talk on the theory of aerodynamics. We did everything on the cheap but we got a holiday in Dublin.

28:00 **Just coming back to your return from the war, did you find any difficulty settling into Civvy [civilian] Street?**

Well of course I got married fairly soon after, that was very settling and we had two children very quickly. I had a big argument with my Dad about putting up the money for automatic

28:30 printing machines instead of hand fed machines and he had the saying, "All you're trying to do know is send me into old age with a debt around my neck." And I said, "No I am trying to make the organisation more efficient." Letter press was the thing there and I said, "We have got into offset or litho," and eventually I talked him into that and eventually he came around my way and as a

29:00 consequence. I also was a great believer just after the war in the technical side of things women weren't accepted we would accept any woman that wanted, would put her hand up and I got a girl out of the binding room after hours how to run a printing press. I got a mother and a daughter over in Sydney

29:30 and they became leaders, Snap Print leaders. So women were not generally accepted the union was very strong, when we went to New Zealand I said, "Look, we have people, the unions in Australia have accepted women," because the argument was a woman couldn't work a guillotine, well you had to do everything if you were going to be a printer. And they said, "Well if you have got

30:00 away with it in Australia it is all right by us." So I got the show going in New Zealand and that was telling a white lie but we did. And these two mother and daughter, Mrs Blaker and her daughter, and we had a Mary Watts here in Perth who learnt after hours. She had the will to come out of the binding room in to

30:30 you know what a binding room is? Where they finish off printing. So as long as they were prepared I used to say well, "The best unused faculty in the printing is women." Subsequently we had very good printers.

Just coming back to your personal life Stanley were you traumatised at all by your experiences while you were away serving during the war?

31:00 Oh yeah I had a few nightmares afterwards. Especially those two guys when we had been drunk and they went in. we shouldn't have been drinking, we should have said to the CO, "Look we have had too much to drink." And I was a bit traumatised there. And at the book launch they asked me to talk about times and

31:30 I was a bit traumatised there especially with my mate Ping being killed, he got killed in an accident, he didn't get killed on operations. He used to write to me and say how lucky I was to be going on operations and he was just doing an OTU, and he was firing a rocket and it went off under the wing and it went straight t in and he was killed. I have a plaque to him,

32:00 in King's Park, one of those plaques they put on the trees. Yeah I was going through a hard time for a while.

How did you manage through that hard time?

Again, will power. I have always been pretty strong willed same with the scuba diving it was a great challenge and I became a leader scuba diving. Jack Doyle started me,

32:30 he was a scuba diver, he was a very courageous guy. He was the first into that Rover business and they named it after him, Rover Jack. And I still see him from time to time.

What was your health like when you came back Stanley did you have to spend any time in hospital for any treatment?

33:00 Yes I had a lot of tonsillitis from being in the Middle East and the hygiene over there. I was in Hollywood Hospital off and on with my shoulder and tonsillitis.

And what kind of treatment or care did you receive?

Well I had my tonsils out.

33:30 I have had a lot of massage and a lot of examination of my shoulder and they tell me they can never fix it.

Were you given any counselling for the trauma that you may have been experiencing?

No I figured I am strong enough in my mind, I feel I can get on top of it.

34:00 I have always felt that way, it is the same as the scuba diving I went up to Trip Lagoon and I scuba dived down to a hundred and fifty feet and that's deep.

That's deep.

And I had six of my buddies. Also when I had trouble on that having to bail out, I am in legacy and down at Legacy for children's camp there was a guy that had done a training course in parachute jumping.

34:30 So at sixty-two years of age, take me through I want to do a parachute jump, so I did a parachute jump with his tuition. I figure, you don't let anything beat you, you just keep steeling yourself until you can get on top of your fears.

Do you march on Anzac Day?

35:00 Yes I march with the fighter, I am a member of the Fighter Association and we had a Fighter Association march, we have our own flag, and I also go to the dawn service because Ping, my buddy, he has got a plaque just up near that, I actually walk up there, I am a great walker, or ride the bike

35:30 and just have a minutes silence and think of him. We were very close buddies, Cyril Ayres you will see from that he figured that we were born, we joined up together just a shame that I got posted overseas, and I think even in the book there some of the letters he wrote to me how lucky it was for me to get on operations while he was

36:00 purely being an instructor.

What do you think about on Anzac Day?

I think it's great. I think it's really good it gives a realisation that if you go to war there is a good chance you're going to get hurt. And as I say my Dad lost his two brothers in France on World War I and he

36:30 was very active in the RSL. I have joined the RSL and I have joined Legacy, he was in those and I had followed and I have been a good Legatee ever since, I have been member of those ever since the war.

What about your association your Fighter Association, how often do you meet?

Well we only meet on Anzac Days.

37:00 We don't most of the guys that are in Fighter Association are also, Mick Michael, who used to be the mayor, I don't know if you know him. Mick is a Legatee we see him at legacy meetings, well we meet every week or two. We see each other from time to time,

37:30 not regularly. But I got to the squadron reunion every year.

Were is that held?

Oh different places. Last time it was held at Ballarat, which was too far going to Williamstown next time where we held a previous one and that's not that far from Sydney.

How important is it to get together with your old mates?

38:00 Well Doug Millar, I haven't told you about him. Doug was the guy who was a gunner and did a tour and got two German aircraft who converted to pilot and came over to England., he finally got shot down crashed, and in the book it tells you there how he broke his legs when he landed and I went in after him. And he got

38:30 the gun sight, he has been a good buddy ever since. In fact we had to go through a minefield to pull him out and get him into an ambulance. And he said, "You're not going to meet up with me unless I buy you a beer." So every time, I hardly drink at all now and he has to buy me a beer. He and Jack Doyle.

39:00 Jack and I lifted him out. Jacks a tall guy, we went through a minefield, I have got very short legs, Jack a pulled him out and I got his legs and we carried him across to the ambulance. So Jack Doyle and myself and Doug Millar have been close friends ever since. I stay at their place when I go over to Sydney.

One last question for today Stanley, would you do it all again?

39:30 Go through war again? No bloody fear. As I say I was a nervous wreck when I got back. I suppose if I was eighteen again I would. You're seeking adventure at eighteen. But having been through what I went through I wouldn't be wanting to do that again, not at my age anyhow.

Do you consider yourself a lucky man?

40:00 Yeah I think I was lucky. I had a lot so skills that I optimised my skills to survive so here I am.

Well thanks very much for spending the day with us today, Stanley, it had been a pleasure hearing your experiences.

Well it has been a pleasure helping you out, I only hope that helps somebody else.

It's been great.

40:28 **End of tape**

