

Australians at War Film Archive

Albert Sieber (David Sieb) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1591>

Tape 1

00:36 **So what was it like, growing up in Perth?**

I didn't grow up in Perth. I had my first three or four years of growth in Perth, but I don't remember very much about that. The first real memory that I have,

01:05 was at the Yalgoo, where my father, who had previously been an estate agent, he went broke at the very brink of the Depression, and we moved to Yalgoo. Yalgoo is north east of Perth, it is a way, but it is on the rabbit-proof fence,

01:30 and there he had a couple of camels, and an open buggy, and I remember the camels, because he took me down to see them one day. He said, "Never trust a camel," and I never have since that day. And I also remember him undoing the hobbles on the hoofs of

02:00 the camels, and then diving into the buggy before they took off. I can see it in my mind's eye, as the buggy goes rocketing down a bush road with the camels bolting. And that's about the only memory I have of Yalgoo. And from Yalgoo he transferred to Cunderdin,

02:30 which is about a hundred and four miles from Perth.

What was your father actually doing on the rabbit-proof fence?

Well, he was repairing the fence, and patrolling the fence to see that it was in good condition, and if it wasn't in good condition he had to repair it. That's what he was doing. And the Cunderdin Depot is on the rabbit-proof fence also, and

03:00 he transferred in the Department of Agriculture, and it was on a government farm, and the government farmer was named Clarke. And he and my father and mother and myself, we had a house, nearby. And he used to patrol the

03:30 rabbit proof fence. He had a horse and a spring cart with a cover over it. And I remember one time he took me on this journey, I suppose, it was overnight so far as I know, it may have been longer, and one thing that I remember I said that I was hungry, and he reached behind him and pulled a Weet Bix [cereal biscuit] out of a packet,

04:03 and gave it to me. No jam or butter or anything, but I knew better than to complain. I just ate the dry old Weet Bix. And my job was to rake the leaves in the evening that he had beside the track along the fence. Now, I

04:30 only remember going out one night, but I have lots of photographs that show the outstations they had along the rabbit proof fence. And my father went from one end of the rabbit-proof fence, which is up near Karratha, to the other, which is down near Esperance. He went to both ends of the rabbit-proof fence but not all at once. He didn't make the one journey, that was various times of his stay

05:00 at the rabbit-proof fence. If I remember correctly, he had a Federal truck, and his job was to - apart from patrolling the fence, was to keep the gate in good condition. Because there was a gate across the road, and it was a very heavy gate, and he had to put cat's eyes, as we

05:30 called them, reflectors on the gate, so that vehicles coming along of a night-time would see it. They very often didn't and they'd smash into the gate. That kept him occupied, straightening the gate out and putting it back onto the hinges again, and things like that. My brother was born in Cunderdin Hospital. And he was so

06:00 young and so weak that mother used to dip his dummy in cream so that he would have the jersey cream, in between his ordinary meals. I know it's a no-no to say that you eat cream these days, because of all the cholesterol and all that sort of nonsense, and dummies are definitely a no-no,

06:31 but they did in those days. And we went from there to Kojonup -

Are you the oldest in the family?

Yes, there are two of us in the family, my brother and myself. And my mother and father have passed away. My brother has a farm down at Barrina, that's been in the family since 1905 or something. And I became

07:00 a teacher, after the war. The thing I remember then is the asbestos shed, I suppose you could call it, that we lived in and fleas, eating my brother. Then from there we went to Bridgetown -

What was your father doing in Kojonup?

He was working on a farm.

07:32 What he was doing I don't know. But we went to Bridgetown and he worked on an orchard, and we lived in a proper house at Bridgetown. We weren't very rich, we were very poor, actually, and we had bread and dripping and white onions for tea. Now how many times we had that, I don't know. But I do know that my father

08:00 caught a goanna, a racehorse goanna, stealing the eggs from the fowl house and he killed the goanna and gutted it, and cooked it. I wanted so much to eat it, because it smelt so delicious, but he fed it to the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. I remember the farm house in which we lived was built

08:30 on the slope of a hill, and my young brother disappeared one day and we found him on the bridge, trying to catch gilgies [freshwater crayfish], with a piece of grass. He didn't have any success, of course. We had plenty of apples, because Dad worked on the farm. Cleo apples, and I've never liked Cleo apples since. And that's when I started correspondence school, with the

09:00 WA Correspondence School. It's now called Distance Education, I think. And the teacher used to send the lessons once a fortnight, I think it was. And mother would supervise me doing lessons. From Bridgetown we moved to Colombo Street -

09:33 **How difficult is correspondence school for a kid, out in the middle of nowhere?**

Well, I suppose it was difficult, but I didn't think anything of it. It was something to be done, a job to be done, and so it had to be done, and mother supervised me very closely, and so closely that the teacher imagined the work was mother's work, and mother was horrified to think that anybody would think that she would cheat.

10:00 And the work was all mine, and fortunately mother kept that number two set, and I have that number two set in my collection of papers. And it was pretty good work for a kid of six and a half. And then we moved to Colombo Street, in East Victoria Park. And

10:30 Dad did any work that he could possibly find. And then we moved to Harvey Street, and I went to the Victoria Park State School.

How old are you at this time?

I was about seven. And I went into second bubs [infants].

11:07 The thing that I remembered in Harvey Street, we used to listen to a crystal set [radio], Dad had a crystal set in a cigar box. And we had an earphone to go with this us. And my brother and I had one earphone each, and we used to listen to Peter and Pongo, pretty ancient sort of characters.

11:32 They were on 6PR [radio station]. That was the kid's session. And I remember the bloke next door had platens, bananas, and that's about all I remember of Harvey Street. And then we moved to East Victoria

12:00 Park, and I went to the East Victoria State School, and this was at the end of a street called Basinghall Street. It's still there, today. And I went to the East Victoria State Park School's Infant Section, and I was only there a short time when I was transferred from second bubs to standard one.

12:33 I went through the whole of the state school. Standard six was the end of the primary school years, and I went from there to Wesley College. And I used to ride a bike from East Victoria Park to Wesley College.

13:00 **What was Wesley College like in those days?**

I don't suppose it's changed very much. We had Mildred Smith who became famous, because her father was in charge of the Perth Zoo. She became Mildred Manning, she married very late in life. And while I was there at Wesley College, the war

13:30 broke out, and I was too young to go to the war. But they had a newspaper that they used to get each morning, they would get the West Australian newspaper, and they would put it in a special little alcove, and anybody could read the newspaper and we did, assiduously, read the newspaper.

14:00 1938, I went there, '39 and '40, at Wesley. And I was a dismal failure as a student. We were supposed to,

in those days, the Junior Certificate was the ultimate. That was the thing for which everybody aimed. But the Junior Certificate -

14:31 Most people got four or five subjects in their junior. The exam was set by the university, and I managed two. So I was a dismal failure as a student. Then I went to work at the Royal Mint -

How were you at sport?

I was a dismal failure at everything except boxing. I was all right at boxing. My father was determined that I was

15:00 going to learn boxing, and I did learn boxing. And I used to get into the finals each year, in boxing. But I never did anything else -

Was it a competitive thing, the boxing?

Oh yes, it was quite competitive. It was only three rounds, you were required to do. But if you could knock out the other person, you certainly did. There wasn't any messing around. It wasn't fun, it was serious. It was deadly serious.

15:30 And we had a famous man - I've forgotten his name, who would referee the boxing matches each year. But we trained assiduously every Saturday morning, boxing, then at the end of the year we had the boxing tournament. And we would box and

16:00 really seriously box at one another.

How big would these tournaments be?

Well, there was only three or four or five matches, I suppose. I was about fourteen or fifteen at this time. I used to box

16:30 with a fellow who became quite famous. Cook, his name is, and he's been on the show for valuing antiques and things like that. How he got into that I have no idea. Peter Cook his name was, he became quite famous as a valuer of antiques and things like that.

17:03 Well, I went to work at the Royal Mint -

How did you get that job?

Dad happened to hear of it going, that the job was going, and I just reported at the Royal Mint and the chap said, "Yeah, you'll do, for a couple of weeks." And I was there for

17:30 two to three years. When I first started at the Royal Mint, the melting house used to provide the coining hall with these 'fillets' we called them, they were about a metre long and three or four centimetres thick, then we had to roll them down to thickness of a penny.

18:00 Now a penny is an extinct coin today. A penny would be about as thick as a dollar coin today, and it was considerably bigger. So we had to roll them and then they were rolled to a certain thickness on the small mills, then they were put onto the big mills to roll them down to thickness of a coin.

18:30 What are you rolling them with?

Rolling machines which were electrically driven by belts and electric motors. So you had to be careful that you didn't catch your hand. They had special stops on these machines that could stop a machine going instantly. Because if your hand got caught, it would be crushed, and rolled to the thickness of a dollar coin.

19:01 I moved from there to a special machine. It was a rolling mill, but it did the final rolling of the fillets, and we were provided with gloves, which had special palms on them of rawhide leather, and we were provided with shirts, and

19:30 if you were injured and you weren't wearing one of the shirts, then it was too bad. If you were wearing one of the shirts they would pay for all injuries. But if you weren't wearing one of the shirts, they deny all knowledge of the injury. And the shirts were made of flannel, and they were sort of singlets and one size

20:00 fits all. We had padding on our trousers, too, in case the fillets jumped when they came out of the mill, because sometimes they did, and they would catch us on the arm or catch us on the leg. We often had burns on our arms from these hot fillets, as they came out of the roller.

It sounds quite dangerous -

20:30 Yeah, well I suppose it was. We didn't think anything about it, it was just a job. Then I went from there to the coining presses, which pressed the reverse and the obverse on the coins. So they had the King's head on one side and the kangaroo on the other. That was considered the plum job in the coining hall. And because of the Americans

- 21:00 and the coin for small coins, we were mainly involved with making pennies and ha'pennies. [halfpennies] One cents and half cents, talking in today's language. Because the Americans needed the change, and the change was needed desperately, we would turn out say three hundred
- 21:30 pounds worth - there was two hundred and forty pence in a pound. Three hundred pounds worth of coins per day was perhaps the maximum. We used to do two hundred to two hundred and fifty pounds per day, in money coins, in worth not weight.

Why was there such a need for small - ?

Well, the Americans were in Australia,

- 22:00 and thousands of them were coming to Australia for rest leave and rehabilitation leave. Thousands of them were stationed in Perth, and in the eastern states, because we used to do coins for the whole of Australia. And the thrup'ny [threepenny] pieces, which were three cents, and the sixpenny pieces which are five cents, nowadays,
- 22:30 and the ten cent pieces, which were shillings, were done in the mint in Canberra, and some of them were done in the Denver Mint in the USA. Some of our coins were stamped there, because we couldn't keep up with the demand for coins, and change. With the Americans flooding into Australia.
- 23:00 and Australian money was used in New Guinea as well. And so we had New Guinea and Australia to supply, and that's why there was such a demand for it, because of the number of Americans. We had New Zealanders that came in, on their way to the Middle East, or other places. And they may spend a week or a fortnight in Perth, before they got onto their boats and
- 23:30 went off to wherever they were going. So you had a sort of a floating population of Americans and New Zealanders, and a floating population of Australians, too, who moving through Perth on their way to the Middle East or other theatres of war. And the same thing happened in the eastern states, in the three capitals of the eastern states. Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane were the main ones
- 24:01 that had people moving through them. So Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, and perhaps Perth, were the main cities through which people travelled. I worked in the Royal Mint until I turned eighteen, and I'll be eighty this year, so I've had a very good life, and a very lucky one.

24:31 **Did you enjoy working in the mint?**

Yes, I did enjoy working in the mint, it was good fun. We, on the coining presses, were privileged in a way when I think of it. They used to carry the coins in trolleys, and we were all teenagers I guess. We

- 25:00 used to ride the trolleys and skid them around, because they had steel wheels and it was on cement. And I think Rogers, the deputy manager, looked kindly upon us. Because when I think about it, we got away with murder. We did. We were given a lot of laxity in our job.
- 25:30 Because of the attitude of the deputy manager and the other senior men in the mint, we enjoyed our stay in the mint. They provided us with clothes, as I said, and boots as well. They provided a lunch room and showers and things like that, it was very good. But you couldn't go out of the mint until such time as
- 26:00 the signed clearance had been presented at the gate. And you had to wait until the signed clearance had been presented at the gate, so nobody could steal - You could steal pennies, I suppose, by putting them in your pocket but we never bothered about that. We never thought about stealing anything at all. I remember one time there was a bit of a catastrophe in the melting house. Because they used to melt
- 26:30 all the gold, all the gold from Kalgoorlie used to be melted into ingots. And one time the - ingot pot broke from the chain, and the pot broke, hit the ground and broke and scattered gold everywhere.
- 27:01 They pulled up all the flooring as much as they could, and all the pipes, and they vacuumed the whole place to get the gold. Because gold was - It's more expensive today than it was in those days, but it was still was considered a very, very valuable commodity. And they vacuumed the whole of the place out to make sure they got all the gold. And we had to wait
- 27:31 for half an hour - This happened in the morning, and they spent most of the day vacuuming the place. And we had to wait for about half an hour before we got a clearance to go. And the clearance was fairly perfunctory, I suppose, because they would just say, "Yes, you can go," and away we'd go, and the gate master would let us out of the gate. And
- 28:00 I did that up until I turned eighteen in August, and I was 'manpowered'. Manpower in those days meant that you were not allowed to change your job. You had to stay in the same job, irrespective of whether you could get another job or not, you had to stay in the particular job, until the boss said that you could go. And I finally managed to talk him into letting me go,
- 28:30 in January the following year, 1943. So I joined the air force on the 15th of January, 1943.

Just rewinding a little bit there, with manpower, were you manpowered because it was so

critical to get this small change out?

Yes, that was the reason. The whole of the workforce

- 29:00 in the mint was manpowered. As I said, the mint was very good, because they built shelters for us, because of possible air raids. And they built shelters in the grounds, and we used to have air raid practices and we'd go into the shelters and things like that. But the whole of the workforce was manpowered because of the need to get the coins to the troops,
- 29:30 and into the shops, so the shops could give change to the troops when they spent money. Most of the men who were in the mint were not of a military age, they were older, or there was something wrong with them. I was fortunate, and Ron Smith, the bloke who was with me on the coining presses,
- 30:01 he joined the navy and I joined the air force. And we were fortunate because we were younger than the majority of men in the mint, who had been in the mint since they'd left school, final year of primary school. We who came later, were younger -
- 30:33 In 1943, things were turning the way of the Allies, so we were able to go and be non-manpowered I suppose.

Did you socialise much with the other blokes at the mint?

No, not with the people at the mint.

- 31:01 One fellow, a chap called Murphy, I had a lot of socialising with him. But we didn't socialise much in those days. You went home, and you stayed home. Sometimes you went to the pictures, and sometimes you didn't go to the pictures. At that time, I was going with my present wife Dot. We
- 31:31 went to the pictures once or twice I suppose but that was about it.

How did you meet Dot?

She worked in a shop near the mint, it was a newsagent's and general sort of everything shop. I used to go there to get my tobacco ration, because although horror of horrors nowadays, everybody smoked in those days.

- 32:00 Everybody who turned seventeen or eighteen used to smoke, except the women. To see a woman smoke was considered definitely infra dig [abnormal]. And we all had a tobacco ration, and you could cigarettes or tobacco or cigars. If you were lucky you would get cigars. And the cheapest way, the best way to
- 32:30 get the most was to get a tobacco ration. And I got a tobacco ration and Dot used to save - Occasionally they had cigarettes additional to the tobacco ration, and Dot would save those packets of cigarettes for me. So we met like that, and started going out together and so on. It just sort
- 33:00 of happened. There wasn't anything such as we'd call a relationship today. It was quite platonic, and non-sexual, but it was the correct thing to do in those days. She saved me the tobacco ration and I used to go and get the tobacco ration from here. And if
- 33:31 she had spare cigarettes, she would sell me a packet. I always paid for them. I paid for the tobacco and matches and papers and cigarettes and things like that. And then when I joined the air force, I did that while I was working at the Royal Mint,
- 34:00 I joined the air force -

How did you go about signing up?

I just sent in an application form and was called up. St George's Terrace where they had the recruiting office, you just sent went in and signed your name on the thing, and swore, "to uphold the Constitution of Australia, and serve the King faithfully - "

- 34:30 And you were in.

Why did you decide on the air force?

I had always been interested in aeroplanes, always, ever since I could remember I was interested in aeroplanes. Mother used to say that I used to say to Mr Clarke, the government farmer, I used to say "Another crash, Mr Clarke." And I'd pretend that I was a crashing aeroplane. And I was always interested in aeroplanes.

- 35:00 And my father took me on Empire Day - We don't have Empire Day now, but we had an Empire Day in those days and it was a holiday, to go on a flight in an aircraft. It must have nearly cost him a week's wages. And then Sir Charles Kingsford Smith [aviation pioneer], whom you may remember crossed the Pacific, both ways. The first man to
- 35:30 pilot an aircraft both ways across the Pacific, long before the Americans thought about doing it. And he had a new aircraft, a Lockheed Altair, which he had brought from the USA. And it could go almost

vertically upwards. Nowadays going vertically upwards means nothing because jets do it all the time. But in those days

36:00 it was considered a tremendous feat, and he flew into Maylands, which is now the police academy but was in those days the airport for Western Australia, and he flew his aeroplane around Perth, and did the vertical climb, and my father and I stood on the hill in Victoria Park and watched this aeroplane go.

36:38 So I had always been interested in aeroplanes, and I wanted very badly to join the air force.

How did that first flight you had impress you?

Well, I remember it was Viv James, he's since dead of course, and he flew us in an aircraft called a Boos Moth, which was a

37:00 Tiger Moth with seats for two passengers in the fuselage, and the thing I remember most was looking down on Perth, and just thrilled to bits at being in a flight. Another time father took me in an open cockpit aircraft,

37:30 Dad took me on a flight for that, too. So I had two flights before I joined the air force, then I saw Charles Kingsford Smith, do his famous almost vertical climbing flight.

What did your father and mother think about you joining the air force?

Well, they didn't say anything. Dad had to sign the thing to say I could join the air force,

38:00 and he signed it quite willingly. And mother, I suppose like all mothers, she was upset for me going into this dangerous game. Because the air force in those days was dangerous. I suppose she was worried about her little son going into the air force -

38:32 After you've signed up and you're down in St George's Terrace, what happens next?

Well, then we got onto a train, we went down to Busselton, Number Four Recruit Depot, and we spent

39:00 a month down at Number Four Recruit Depot, and we had rifle drill and parade ground work etc. They've got a brick wall and also a plaque set into the wall to say it was the Number Four Recruit Depot, and Busselton Historical Society has my story of recruit time at the recruit depot, etc.

39:32 And there I got all the needles and vaccination shots, teeth removed or fixed up or whatever. They did the whole lot. But I had two large teeth out, and I had to go each day to the cookhouse to get mashed potatoes and fried eggs,

40:00 was what we were able to eat, we weren't supposed to eat any hard food, but mashed potatoes and fried eggs -

Was there still quite a bit of pressure to join one of the services when you joined up?

Well, everybody was joining up. Everybody who was eighteen or older joined up. You didn't think anything about it. I said to one person many years later,

40:33 that if you heard the bands and everybody was joining, you would join, too. And young men and women of today don't believe it, but they would. They'd go just the same as we went. They don't have to go, we didn't have to go either. But we went because it was the done thing. Everybody was going, so you went.

41:02 And from Fourth Recruitment Depot, I was a bit fortunate because we had ex-AIF [Australian Imperial Force] fellows with us. I think there were thirty or forty in a hut, and we had a corporal who sent in the little room at the end of the hut, and the rest of us slept in the hut,

41:30 and this Corporal Mac, that's all I know, he had been in the Scots Greys [British Regiment] and we used to call him Mac, and he trained us in rifle drill and squad ground drill and that sort of business.

Tape 2

00:34 We went to Pearce as air crew guards. That means we were going to go in air crew, but in the meantime, until such a time that an air crew called you up, you were a guard. Blokes went various places. Anyway, I went to Pearce as an air guard. And I used to be

01:02 guard on the main gate. And at night-time they used to send us out to various places where they had wireless equipment, and things like that. Apart from the main wireless equipment they had at the camp in Pearce itself, they had it staged in various places around, and we had to guard those places, and they

01:30 were pretty hair-raising times to be in the bush. From twelve o'clock to four o'clock was an awful long time, I can tell you. And you used to have your rifle there and you had to wander around all the time. You weren't allowed to sleep. And it was an awful long time. And they'd take you out there

- 02:00 after tea, before it got dark, and dump the three or four of you into the place, then you had to toss coins to see who went to various shifts. I don't think it was a four hour, I think it was only a two hour shift. From six to eight, and from eight to ten, and from ten to twelve, and twelve to two, and so on. Then,
- 02:30 while there, I got into trouble. The only time I got into trouble in air force I think it was. I used to stand on the gate and have a Smith and Wesson 45 revolver on my hip, and every car or truck that came in you used to have to take the driver's name and the passenger's name, if there was a passenger,
- 03:00 and you would enter them into the books. On the other side of the gate was the person who had to slope arms and salute according to the passenger that happened to be there. If it was somebody very senior, you had to present arms, and if it was a junior officer, then you saluted him with the rifle butt.
- 03:32 And one day things had got very, very quite, nothing happened at all. And I went across to this bloke, his name was Taylor. We called him Squizzy, because every Taylor was called Squizzy [1920s Melbourne gangster], in those days. I said, "Squiz? Show us how to operate this revolver." He said, "No trouble at all, Sieb - " They used to call me 'Sieb'. So I handed him
- 04:00 the revolver, he turned away and fired a shot across the road, into the bush. And he said, "Christ! You better have it back again." So I put it back in holster again and went back to the other side of the gate. Then I got the giggles. We both got the giggles [uncontrolled laughter]
- 04:31 at having fired off this thing without permission. And the flight sergeant came out and said, "What's going on?" And we told him, and we giggled and giggled. And he said, "Well, I'm going to have to put you on a charge." So he put us on a charge, and we had to go up to the commanding officer, in a couple of day's time, and he gave us seven days CB, which meant we were confined to barracks. And I was going to take Dot out on the weekend, and
- 05:00 I didn't get out. I was confined to the base, and had to stay there over the weekend. Squizzy and I, he being an old ex-AIF bloke, he had the story pretty right. He said, "We'll tell the story, and we'll get the stories together. You came across and asked me how to fire this thing,
- 05:30 and I said I didn't know. And I fired it. And all you did was hear a shot and I handed you back the revolver and you went across to - " I said, "That's good. That's my story." When he went before the CO he said, "I didn't know whether it revolved to the right or to the left." And I'm bloody sure the CO didn't know. Anyhow
- 06:00 he said, "I did fire off, and I thought that it revolved to the right and it revolved to the left." It was a revolver. So he got 1 days CB and I got seven days CB and that was it. The next thing I remember is being posted to Clontarf, which was a Roman Catholic boys' school for orphans.
- 06:32 It was called ITS [Initial Training School]. There we learned aircraft recognition, navigation, Morse [code], aeroplane engines and all sorts of things, that connected at all in anyway to the air force.
- They sound like some fairly complicated subjects -**
- 07:02 They were. But they were done intensely, very high powered. Also, after the war we did something similar, very high powered indeed. They weren't easy subjects. We had sport once a week. And I was playing basketball this time, and I went to stop
- 07:30 a fellow throwing the ball, and I spun over his hip. My hip hit his hip and I went over and I twisted my arm, and snapped the bone off the end. And I went to the Hollywood Hospital. In Hollywood Hospital I had a couple of adventures. One time the sister woke me up about five o'clock
- 08:00 in the morning. She said, "Pull down your pyjamas, David." So I pulled them down, you always did as the sister told you. And she squeezed my thigh and she said, "That's a lovely big fat muscle you've got there, David." And I said, "Well, what are you going to do?" And she said, "I'm going to give you this." And she had a huge syringe and a huge needle on the end of it, and she said, "I'm going to give you this." And I said
- 08:30 "Good heavens, sister." And she said, "That's a lovely fat muscle you've got on your thigh." And she said, "Really you can pull your pyjamas up because it's not for you, it's for somebody else." She paddled off down the ward to someone else who was fortunately not me, got the needle in the muscle. She was teasing me, yes. And another time a little nurse, her name was Doreen.
- 09:01 And we used to tease her like billy-o [shamelessly], Doreen, and she was only a little dot of a woman. And she was very shy, and very bashful and everything. And this whole ward of blokes, all men in the ward, and she came and washed me one day. And she washed all my chest and arms and face and neck and my legs. And she didn't touch me around the genital area,
- 09:30 and she said, "You can do the rest yourself." And threw the wash cloth on my tummy, and walked away. Poor Doreen, we used to tease her like mad after that. Those are the only two things that I remember - There was one fellow who had a crash in a Bristol Blenheim [bomber] in the desert, and he had smashed his leg badly. He had bicycle spokes

10:02 through his legs to try and stretch them, and the spokes were connected to pulleys and weights, to try and stretch them, and when you walked anywhere near him, you had to walk very carefully indeed so you didn't rattle the bed or anything like that. And he was a very nice fellow, and a very cheerful sort of bloke, considering the trauma he was going through.

10:31 And he had screws in his - They put ordinary carpenter screws into his knees to try and help him. Well I went back to Clontarf ITS, and I went to 42 Course, because 39 Course had gone on. And I lived in a tent. And two things I remember particularly in the tent. Somebody stole my towel.

11:00 We were given two towels when we went to the air force, both snow white. And at Clontarf we had to have one towel spread across the foot of the bed, and the other towel we used for drying ourselves after showers. And we had to double [run] everywhere. You were never allowed to walk until five o'clock. When five o'clock came, you were allowed to walk.

11:30 But up to five o'clock you had to double everywhere, and run at the double. And when we changed classes, you used to have to double everywhere.

That must have been quite amusing to see people running around on the double?

We didn't think it was amusing. We used to curse the doubling. But still, it had to be done. I suppose it would be amusing now days, but we didn't find it very amusing at all.

12:00 The reason we had to double was to save time. Because if you went from navigation classes to Morse classes, and it be from end to the other end, you had to double up to save time, so that they could start the Morse class, spot on time. He wouldn't wait for anybody, he would start straight

12:30 on time. And if you were late getting in, well you were late getting in. And they wanted to know why you were late, and your name was taken.

How did you find Morse?

I had a lot of trouble with Morse. I tell you this other experience first. These towels, my mother had brought me a towel and she had to pay coupons for a towel, because all clothing

13:00 was rationed, so you had to pay coupons. All butter was rationed, all tea was rationed, tobacco as I mentioned was rationed, most things were rationed, and you had to provide ration tickets every time you bought anything. And mother bought a small towel, it was the only one she could get. And I used to leave my ordinary towel stretched across the foot of the bed.

13:30 But one time I used it, I had to use it. And the warrant officer came along and said, "That towel's been used. It's not supposed to be used. It's supposed to be clean." And every day for five days I had to take a clean towel to the warrant officer disciplinary, who would smell it to make sure that it had not been used at all,

14:00 and then give it back to me and I would go and put it on the foot of the bed. We had a palliasse to sleep on, and that was a bag filled with straw. I had wire put through the end of it to stop it opening, so the straw would stay in. And it was supposed to

14:30 be shaped in the shape of an S. Now mine was too short to shape in an 'S'. And so, I used to fold mine over, and the warrant officer disciplinary [WOD] discovered it had been folded over and it wasn't shaped as an S like all the others had to be. So every day I had to take my palliasse, for five days, to the WOD as he stood in the quadrangle, and show him my palliasse shaped as an S.

15:03 Now to get back to the Morse, I was dreadful at Morse, and I always have been. Other fellows had no trouble at all with Morse. But I was lucky to get to eight words per minute. I was dreadful at Morse, everything else I was okay with, but Morse flattened me absolutely.

15:30 And I managed to get to eight words per minute, which enabled me to go onto the next stage. Had I not got those eight words, then I would have been held back, of course, and I went to Ballarat. At Clontarf you were categorised into pilots

16:00 or wireless air gunners or navigators or whatever. And I was categorised as a wireless air gunner. Now why in the name of fortune they categorised me as a wireless air gunner, I don't know. Probably because I'm short, I'm five foot six, and they needed little air gunners to fit into turrets. And the big blokes got the pilots' jobs. Anyhow, I went to Ballarat, which was a

16:30 wireless air gunners' school.

How did you get to Ballarat?

Train.

Was the train full of troops?

Oh yes, it was a troop train. And going across the Nullabor, I remember, they asked for volunteers to go into cattle tracks. And stupidly, that was the only time I volunteered in my life, I volunteered to go into a cattle truck. Fortunately I did, because in the cattle truck,

- 17:00 it was just a cattle truck, too, there was no seats, they had a palliasse and blankets that we could lie down on. There was a bucket in the corner that was the toilet. The blokes in the carriages slept on the luggage racks or on the floor or on the seats, wherever they could. They didn't have any palliasses, you see. But in the cattle trucks we had palliasses
- 17:30 and blankets, and we could sleep properly, stretched out, in relative comfort. Whereas the fellows in the carriages didn't have that luxury. It took us about four days to go across, we had to be fed, of course. They'd stop on the Nullabor Plain and there would be nothing there, absolutely nothing. And they had a special
- 18:00 truck that was the kitchen. And you would line up with your mess tins, and they'd give you tinned sausages and a slice of bread, and a cup of tea. You'd go and sit down somewhere on the Nullabor Plain and eat your tinned sausages and slice or bread and margarine, and drink your cup of tea. And occasionally,
- 18:30 aborigines came around and used to sell things to you. Boomerangs and kangaroos carved out of mulga wood, and they always charged two bob. That was two shillings. They said, "Two bob." And if you gave them a ten shilling note they wouldn't accept that, they would only accept two bob. And so we got to Ballarat
- 19:00 and we froze. At Ballarat it was freezing. And I did two lots of air experience there, in Wackett trainers. And I couldn't, for the life of me, take the Morse code. And to stop us from journalising, as they said, they would send the Morse code sometimes in a foreign language. Latin and French and German -
- 19:30 That would stop you guessing the next word, you see. So you couldn't journalise. Once he sent Latin and I translated it and I thought, "That's enough for me." So I went to see the flight lieutenant, and he said, "If you hate Morse that much
- 20:00 it's not good trying, you cannot go as a straight AG." Another friend of mine, he also had a great deal of trouble with Morse, he went as straight AG, but he got three days in the kitchen, because he put his hand into his great pocket. You weren't allowed to put your hands into your greatcoat pockets. You could wear gloves, if you had them. And very, very few of us did have them.
- 20:32 But you weren't allowed to put your hand into your greatcoat pocket. He put his hand in there to take his cigarettes and matches out, and he got caught for having his hand in his pocket. He got three days kitchen duty, washing pots and pans, because he had his hand in his pocket. That's how strict they were.
- Did that discipline cause a bit of a stir?**
- No, it didn't. It was
- 21:00 accepted as part of a system. You were told when you first went there that you would probably wear your great-coat during the day, and you were not allowed to put your hand into your greatcoat pocket. And once you were told that, that was Law, that was it. It never caused a stir. I used to sleep, and most of the blokes used to sleep in their flying suits. The woolly bull as we used to call it.
- 21:31 It was a one piece overall which fitted you completely and had a zip down the front. And that was a padded overall, I suppose you would call it. It had thick padding and we used to sleep in that, and some fellow devised a method that - we were given an extra blanket we went there. We had three blankets that we carried with us all the time.
- 22:00 And when we got to Ballarat they gave us an extra blanket because it was cold. And some fellow devised a method of having seven covers of blanket over the top of us, and two underneath. And we used to make our beds like that every night. And then we'd wriggle into it with our woolly bulls on. And sometimes we had to wear our flying boots as well because our feet were so cold, and our flying gloves as well.
- 22:30 It was so very cold. And I remember going to Ballarat town, on a bus, because the air force provided a bus for people who were going to town. And the place was full of Yanks, Americans. And two big Americans with baseball
- 23:00 bats, "What are you guys doing in town?" "We've come in to see the pictures." "Well, I think you better get back on that bus, boy, 'cause there's going to be trouble today." So we got back on the bus and went back to Ballarat. And on the way back it snowed, and I had never seen snow before.
- 23:30 And it wasn't quite as cold as it had been previously, because Ballarat air force station was built on a plain, and this wind used to whistle across this plain and around the huts and in the huts and everywhere. It was terrible. I did guard duty there for a time, until 39 Course moved on. I'd caught up with 39 Course actually, and
- 24:00 when I became a straight air gunner, instead of a wireless air gunner, then I went to 39 Course which only had a week or two to go.

When did you become the straight air gunner?

When I found I was translating the Morse - And I remember the word, it was 'Sunt', and it meant A-R-E,

24:30 it was in Latin. And when I found out I was translating it, I went to the flight lieutenant and said, "I'm translating this stuff and it's no good." One guy at the end of the bench writhed on the floor and said, "I tried, I tried, I tried to get it!" He was unconscious and they had to cart him off to hospital.

25:00 They didn't have to cart me off to hospital. I just went to the flight lieutenant and said, "I've had enough of this."

You took that as a warning sign?

I took that as a warning sign. Anyhow, we went to BAGs, [Bombing and Gunnery School]. There we flew in Airspeed Oxfords. And it was the only time I was ever airsick was in this Airspeed Oxford. We went

25:30 around and around in circles firing at this object on the ground. I was terribly airsick. And then after having three or four flights in an Airspeed Oxford, we went into Fairey Battles, and these Fairey Battles had been used in France, years before, and they were all patched. They were really old aeroplanes.

26:00 And some of them didn't have any floor in them. You just sat where you stood. To tell your pilot that you had finished your gunnery and it was time to go home, you had to go over this space, and down below was the ocean. And you walked along this space, either side of the bomb bay, the bomb bay doors were missing, and you tapped the pilot on the shoulder and said

26:31 "Go home." So he would take us home. The Go Guns, as they were called, the gas operated Vickers K guns were very, very good guns. But the ones we had were very, very old guns and sometimes they would shoot off the barrel. And if you shot off the barrel then you used to go and tell the pilot to go home because it was a waste of time shooting at the drogues. And a drogue [target]

27:01 towed behind another aeroplane, and you fired at it. And each person, when you got your three hundred rounds to fire you signed for it. And you had to sign that you had blue, or red, or green. And when the drogue was dropped, they would count the number of green holes, or the

27:30 number of red holes, or the number of blue holes in the drogue, and that would be the percentage you got. Heaven knows what they counted when the barrel got shot off the gun, I don't know, or when we got a number two or number three stoppage, which meant the gun would stop and you would have to take it back to the armoury, you had

28:00 to strip it down, and find out where the stoppage was, then repair the machine gun. We had American Browning machine guns, too. And we had to take these things, the Browning machine gun which is an ordinary sort of machine gun that you see in films, and the GO gun, the gas operated gun, we had to strip

28:30 blind-folded, then put them together again blind-folded. And the idea was this, if you were caught at night-time and the Browning or the Go gun went bung, [broke down] you had to be able to strip the gun down to its component parts, then fix up whatever happened to it, then put it together again. We had to do that. We did it on benches of course. The instructor

29:00 was there to blindfold you. He'd say "Now, the gun's in front of you. You can put your hand on it and feel the gun." And then he'd say "Right, strip it." And you have to do strip it down. Now the Go gun was fairly easy to strip. It was three or four parts, finished. If you took off the back off the Go you could it up and tip the bits out onto the bench. But the Browning gun was considerably more complicated than that, and we had to

29:30 strip the Brownings and put them together again, blind-folded. Well, I became a sergeant air gunner, having left BAGs [Ballarat Air Gunners School]. When I left BAGs I got my wings, and my [sergeant's] stripes. And women in those days used to volunteer for all sorts of jobs, and the women from -

30:14 Sale, a town in Victoria, used to come out and sew the stripes on our uniforms for us, and sew the wings on for us, they do that volunteer work.

30:30 And you'd take your uniform over, and your stripes and your wings and hand them to the women and they would sew them on your sleeves and breast. I went from there down to Number 1 PD, which is personnel depot. Which was the Victorian Melbourne Cricket Ground, and we slept

31:00 on stretchers where the seats would be put, and then we would go down and get our kit. And I was in the line to get kit to go to Great Britain, which was the ultimate, of course. And a fellow three in front of me, Charlie Kent, a good friend of mine,

31:30 he lives in Victoria, got his kit to go to the UK, then he got his battle dress and his battle dress trousers and shoes and everything like that. And they stopped the line. And they said, "All those who have not been issued with their kit report to the CO's office." So there was six or eight of us that reported to the CO's [Commanding Officer] office.

32:01 And he said, "I want six fellows to fly with the Dutchmen, 18 Squadron. The Netherlands East Indies RAF Squadron." And he said, "You'll be gunners." So we thought 'That's not for us. We don't want to fly

with the Dutchmen, we want to go to England." So none of us volunteered. He said, "It's alright, fellows. I don't blame you blokes for not volunteering, but I'm going to have six of you anyhow."

32:31 He said, "Put your names in the hat." So we wrote our names on a bit of paper, he took his hat from the hat stand, we put our names in it, and he drew out six. And he said, "Those six step forward." And those six stepped forward. He said, "You are too tall, and you are too tall. You'll never fit into a Bendix turret." He said, "You step backwards." He said, "I'll have two others. You and you." And I thought 'I've gone.

33:00 I'm short," you know? And he didn't pick me, he picked two others. And one them, I know, returned from flying with the Dutchmen, what happened to the rest, I have no idea. They may have lived and they may not have lived. He said, "The rest of you go back and sit on your beds and wait until I send for you." So the next

33:30 thing he sent for us, and he was a human being, the CO. He said, "Now listen you blokes, go down to the Q Store," that's the quartermaster's store, "and pick up your uniforms." So we went down to the Q store and we were issued with tropical gear. We were issued with a slouch hat and a large sea kit bag. The large kit bag

34:00 was called a sea bag, and the small kit bag was the smaller one that you carried your ordinary gear in. And I was issued with khaki trousers and a pair of green trousers, and a khaki shirt and a green shirt, and boots, and tropical socks, and putties, the things that kept the trousers neat from

34:30 getting mess on them. The next thing I know I'm on the Spirit Of Progress [express train] with a lot of other blokes, going to fly with the Americans.

Can I quickly ask you, what other things did you have in your kit bag?

Well, I don't know what else I had in my kit bag. We had two or three shirts and two or three pairs of khaki trousers,

35:00 and two or three pairs of socks and a pair of boots and - our ordinary blue uniform and the field service cap, which was the cap that we normally wore. The flying gear that we had been issued with, the winter flying gear, which comprised an outer flying

35:30 suit of rubberised cloth, and an inner flying suit, the woolly bull, and flying boots and helmets - We were allowed to keep our helmets and goggles, but the flying suits and two of the blankets went into the big sea kit bag, and they gave us a receipt for that.

36:00 I've still got a copy of the receipt. I never ever got my flying gear back again. It cost me five pounds, in the end, when I ended in December, 1945. We went to Sydney, then we got on a train and took us as far as -

36:34 **You mentioned before something about flying with the Americans. Were you told where you were being posted?**

No, we got on this train and we went to Brisbane, and there we were loaded onto C47s, which was a Douglas Dakota. We called them C47s, because

37:00 we were flying with the Americans, and we flew up to [Port]Moresby. And I came very close to being sick on the Dakotas, because the Dakotas used to have me buffaloed. [beaten] I used to think, "If I'm going to fly on a Dakota, I can go and be sick, on the edge of the field." And I lay down in the Dakota, and the doors didn't fit very well on the Dakota, and I put my head against the crack of the doors so I could get

37:30 the cold air blowing on my forehead. I landed at Moresby, and there we were taken over by the Americans. There was a whole lot of Australians. We lived with the Americans, we messed [ate] with the Americans, we had the same food as they had, and we used to go to their PX canteen, which was their canteen, I suppose.

38:01 We used to call it the canteen, they used to call it the PX.

What were your impressions of being posted to the American squadron?

I think, and I can only say what I think I thought in those days, remember it's sixty years ago, I think that we were rather pleased that we were going to fly with the Yanks.

38:33 We thought that they were great, the Yanks. And they treated us very well indeed. We used to sleep in an ordinary tent, an Australian tent, but we would mess with the Americans. And we marched with them to gunnery practise, and we had

39:00 much better gunnery practise with them than had we been with the British or the Australians, because we had skeet shooting, which is clay pigeon shooting, and we used to shoot these clay pigeons with a shotgun, and then they had a shotgun mounted on turrets, and there were two of you, two to a turret, and one sitting in the turret would control the turret, and the other person standing on a board outside

39:30 the turret would load the shotgun. And so we would shoot the clay pigeons using the shotgun and the

turret, which was wonderful training. I don't know if we ever hit any clay pigeon shooting from the turret, but it was wonderful training for us, because we had to trace the

40:00 clay pigeon with the turret, using the turret sight and everything like that, and when we pulled the triggers the gun fired.

So where was the skeet range?

It was part of the system that the Yanks had set up in Moresby. We were on Seven Mile. There was a Three Mile and Seven Mile, they were the two [air] strips.

40:30 Seven Mile became Jackson Strip, it was called Jackson or Seven Mile. It's now the main airport for Port Moresby and it's called Jackson Airport.

Why was it called Seven or Three Miles?

Because it was seven miles or three miles from Moresby, and Jackson, I don't know who it was named after, an American perhaps

41:01 who had done something brave. But we used to call it Jackson's Strip or Seven Mile Strip. The Yanks were remarkably good with the food, although the food was not as neatly prepared as we were used to, having special cooks and having special people

41:30 who were doing the kitchen duty to give you the food. Sometimes they'd have a couple of Yanks would come straight off the strip, working on an engine, and they'd be shoved into the kitchen, and the perspiration and oil they had on their bodies would be dripping off into the potatoes or meat or whatever it was. And they used to haphazardly put the food out -

Tape 3

00:30 - would have seen them in Matilda Bay, and I remember the Cats boats [Catalina flying boats] the Spitfires [fighters] used to attack them when they came back, it was called fighter affiliation, and the old Cat boat used to do about ninety miles an hour, flat out, and the Cat boat would go stooging along and the Spitfire would come down to attack him, and the Cat would just pull back on the throttles like that and slow down to fifty miles an hour

01:00 and turn the corner and go over there, and this Spitfire would take about three or four miles to turn around and come back at him. The skipper told me that when he was in Hudsons [bombers] and they were getting attacked by the Zeros [Japanese fighters], they used to drop the flaps, drop the undercart and pull back the throttles and put

01:30 everything into the left hand corner, and they'd go away, and as soon as they got out of the sight of the Zeros, they would pull up the flaps, pull up the undercart, slam the throttles forward and go like hell. It was the only way they could avoid them.

We were talking about the food, and the -

Oh yes. The Americans would have -

02:00 baked potatoes, or mashed potatoes, then custard, then meat, and then pears or peaches or plums or something, and then gravy. And we used to say "What have they got in that?" And they'd say "Baked potatoes." And they'd put the potatoes in there and put them behind our backs. "What's the next one?" "Custard." "Well, put it in that." So we

02:30 would get the sweets separated from the main course. But the Americans had a mess tin system similar to ours, but they also had, and for the later ones they had, a steel tray with dents punched in it. And they wouldn't get them mixed up, because they would have the meat and potatoes in here and here,

03:01 and they'd have the sweets there and there, all in this one big steel tray. We didn't have that. We had two mess tins, which were about five centimetres deep, and about eight or ten centimetres by eight or ten centimetres, and they'd fit one inside the other, and they'd have a handle on them, and we would have

03:30 those two mess tins to get our two courses.

Sounds a bit better than what the Americans had?

Well, we thought it was better than what the Americans had. The Yanks used to have, instead of having tea or coffee or something hot, they used to have ice-cold grapefruit juice or something like that, and they would get their pannekin of grapefruit juice

04:00 and they'd get a slice of bread with butter or margarine and they'd put the thick peanut butter all over it, and they'd sit down and scoff this, and it used to horrify us. Because we would try and eat - We didn't

like the juice that they had, we didn't like it one tiny bit, and where possible we used to make our own tea or coffee. That was Moresby

04:30 and we learned to fire the Tommy gun at Moresby. The Thompson sub machine gun.

What was that like as a weapon?

That was quite good. It was very noisy and it was heavy and it fired high to the right, I think it was. But it was a good weapon, it would stop you. It had a point four five [calibre] slug [bullet], and that would stop anything.

05:00 And they had a very heavy pistol for firing, that fired - The sort of thing you see on television, a great big pistol, and we had thirty eight revolvers, and Owen machine guns, which were a much lower weight, easier to carry and everything like that.

05:30 But the Yanks treated us very well indeed. My skipper was the squadron leader. He was friends with a fellow who was an officer in charge of the Moresby motor pool, and he had an old ute [utility vehicle] there that was no good to him, and he said to the skipper, "You can keep this while you're in Moresby." So the skipper used to take us into town and places like that. And

06:00 when we'd pull up to fill up, there would be a notice on the board, 'If there's nobody in attendance, help yourself. So we used to help ourselves to the petrol and fill the tank of the utility and go off. I remember going into Moresby one time. There was nothing much in there, a couple of shops and that was all. The main thing I remember was seeing a squad of Papua New Guinea policemen.

06:33 They were doing some drill or something like that, I think it was. And then I got posted from there - I was in a crew with a bloke called McDonald, he was the squadron leader. We called him Flaps, because he had big ears. I never knew his first name, we just used to call him Flaps. But we treated him with respect,

07:02 as he treated us with respect, and there was this feeling of respect between the members of the crew, that each person had a job to do and that was it. He got sick and went south, and I was there for a month, doing nothing, and then I went to the beginning of the Kokoda Trail, and saw what a hell of a job those blokes had -

07:32 **When you first arrived, were you doing some sort of a training program?**

Oh, yes, we went straight into training. When we arrived with the Yanks, we were allocated to the tents, then we had to fall out and we were put into squads -

How did that process work where you were put into squads?

Sometimes we had this

08:00 skeet shooting, which I mentioned, this clay pigeon shooting. Sometimes it was revolver shooting, sometimes it was Thompson machine gun shooting, sometimes it was turret, learning the turrets. We had to learn American turrets because we had been trained on a British turret -

What's the difference between a British turret and an American turret?

The British turrets were mainly hydraulically operated and the American

08:30 turrets were hydraulically operated but they had a different hydraulics system that used to squeal as it was being brought to power. The British turrets were very quiet, and the American turrets were very noisy turrets. Later on, when we got American equipment for the RAAF, we had electric turrets, American turrets, which were silent turrets, and they were beautiful turrets to sit in and work in, because

09:00 they were spacious and everything like that. So we had aircraft recognition of the Japanese aircraft we were expected to see, turret work learning the turrets, the mid-upper turret and the nose turret and tail turrets that were different from the other turrets. The shooting with the shotguns from the turrets -

09:32 And in between - and the Thompson sub machine gun, and in between this there was flying. We had to fly on navigation exercises, and gunnery and bombing exercises, and things like that, when we were with the Americans.

Were they actual exercises or were they operations?

They were exercises. When we went with them, I crewed up with

10:00 a squadron leader called John Finlayson, his name was. We called him Mick. And we used to call him Mickey Finn and Mickey Finn was a drink that had been spiked, and given to you to make you drunk. And he was always in trouble, Mick was.

10:30 I called him Mick, and I didn't know his name was John until I had been flying with him for some months. I used to call him Mick, and he used to call me Sieb, and we used to call the other blokes by their nicknames or whatever name. But we always treated him with respect, and he treated me with

respect. Because he depended on me when we were over the target, and I depended on him

11:00 to get us to the target and home again. Similar with the navigator. It's a strange sort of business because when you are flying with a person, and your life depends on him, and his life depends on you - At the museum, and I'm digressing here a bit, at the museum the blokes who flew in the UK, and the blokes who flew in the Pacific,

11:31 when they meet one another, they're sort of comrades, they're friends. And a fellow who hasn't been in the services and hasn't been flying with anybody, he once said to me "I wish I was like you blokes." And I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "You fellows that have flown in the air force during the war, you are immediately friends." He said, "But I'm

12:00 an outsider." Although he spent six years in the air force, he was an outsider because he hadn't flown as a crewman, with a crew. I was with Mick Finn, and his crew, and I flew with him, bombing and gunnery exercises -

How did you actually crew up together?

We were just told. The Englishmen, I believe, put them all

12:31 into a big room and said, "Right, now pick your crews." And they used to pick one another, sort of business, but we were just told who we were going to, we didn't have any choice in the matter, we just went with the person with whom we were told to go. And we were told who was captain, and who was co-pilot and who was the front gunner, etc, etc -

13:01 And with Flaps McDonald's crew I was going to be in the mid-upper turret. With Mick Finn I was the nose turret. And when I'd flown with Mick and done bombing and gunnery exercises and things like that, and learned the turrets properly, then we went to the 380th Bomb Group, which was flying from Darwin at the time. They'd been at Fenton and Longs strips.

13:32 We flew with the 380th, the Yanks, on operations. It was pure operations. We went to the Celebes, which is now called Sulawesi, under the Indonesians, and we went to Surabaya, and Java and Bali and those places -

14:01 **Can you tell me a little bit about what the Liberator [bomber] looked like, from your point of view?**

It was a big aeroplane, with a hundred and ten foot wing span. I don't know long it is. But we got so used to working and living in the Liberator that it just became part of our lives. It had four engines and we used to

14:30 fly in the Lib, and we'd walk up and own the bomb bay. The path to walk on was about eight inches wide. And we didn't think anything about walking up and down the bomb bay when the bomb bay doors were open. One fellow said, "Weren't you frightened?" You never had time to be frightened, you were always busy doing something. Even if it was

15:00 sitting and looking and watching for attacking aircraft, you were busy doing something. So we never had time to be frightened. It was a bit of an adventure, I suppose, for me. It wasn't so much for Mick, who had been in Hudsons before and at the beginning of the Japanese War.

15:31 It wasn't so much an adventure for him I suppose, but it was an adventure for me, I was a young bloke. And the tail gunner was young, and I don't think any of the others had been on operations. Or Eddie East, one of our wireless air gunners had been on operation in the UK, but the rest of them I don't think had been on operations. When we were with the Americans in Port Moresby, we were doing training

16:01 and we weren't allowed near the operation areas at all, because the aircraft were worn out and they weren't meant to be in operations, they were meant for training, and we trained on them. And it didn't matter so much, if you made a muck up then, as long as you didn't make a muck up when you were on operations.

16:30 **Can you give me a really detailed description of the different turrets you were in, and how they operated?**

We'll start at the nose, the Consolidated turret which was put into the nose, was really a tail turret, built by Consolidated. And when the aeroplanes were taken out to Hawaii, they used to take the glasshouse nose off them, and they'd put a tail turret on the nose -

17:00 And it was a Consolidated turret, it was driven by hydraulics and it used to scream its head off every time it wanted to build up power to make the turret go. The guns were old and the turrets were old. Going backwards, to the back of the aircraft, below the front turret was

17:30 the bombardier, with his Norton bomb sight, and going backwards there were the two pilots sitting on the flight deck. There were two storeys in the Liberator. There was the flight deck and there was the ordinary deck of the aircraft, and you moved underneath the flight deck to get to the back of the aeroplane. And on the flight deck there would be the pilot, who always,

- 18:00 in an aircraft, sits on the left hand side. It doesn't matter whether it's a British or Australian or American aeroplane, he always sits on the left hand side, the captain. And the co pilot sat next to him. And behind him was the navigator, with a desk, and places for his maps etc. Next to him there was the wireless operator.
- 18:30 Above the navigator and the wireless operator was the central, mid-upper turret, and the fellow climbed into that, and had a seat to sit on. That was a Martin turret, an electric turret. Then there was the bulkhead of the aeroplane, which was a wall virtually,
- 19:00 with a door through it so that you could get through into the bomb bay. Then there was the bomb bay. In the aircraft that I flew in, the bombs were lying horizontal, where in earlier aircraft they were vertical. Then at the end of the bomb bay was another bulkhead, and there was a door in that. On the other side of the bulkhead was
- 19:30 the waist position, where the waist gunners would be, and that would lead down through a sort of tunnel, to the tail gunner, who would crawl down and get into his tail turret. The waist gunners had a point five, half inch, calibre gun on either waist, and the turrets had two point fives in them.
- 20:00 With the Americans, they didn't have a belly gunner. They had a place where the belly gun had been, and that was a hole in the floor the plane, and the engineer that used to have fun with the guns, pretending he was firing at something because he would just be firing blind at most things.
- 20:32 With the 380th Bomb Group, we had a similar sort of set-up. Then when we flew with the RAAF we had belly turrets, and an extra gunner was posted.

Why do you need hydraulics in a turret?

To drive them,

- 21:00 to make them move around. To drive them around because they were too heavy to move. And to move the guns up and down, to move the turret from side to side, and to move the guns up and down, you had the hydraulics in the turret.
- 21:31 Later on, when we got American aircraft supplied to the RAAF, we had two types of tail position. One was where the gunner, the tail gunner, had the guns entirely dependent on his own power. The power that he could use in lifting the guns and pointing them and swinging them from side to side.
- 22:04 And after that. That was in the Ls, and in the Ms, the B23 M, they had a small electric motor that attached to the guns, that assisted the gunner in moving them from side to side and up and down. In the nose turret and the mid-upper turret and the early tail turrets, the guns and the turrets were so heavy they needed the hydraulic tail system.

22:42 What is the actual crew procedure during an operation and how did that all work together and operate?

We all depended on the pilot, and the captain usually did this work

- 23:02 took the aircraft off the ground. When he got up to operating height, he would hand it over to the co-pilot, or put it on 'George'. 'George' was an automatic pilot, and it was very rough. 'George' was very rough, because the automatic pilot would adjust it immediately and very quickly, whereas as a human pilot would adjust the flight of the aircraft, or turning or anything like that,
- 23:30 gently and could feel the aeroplane, whereas 'George' did everything abruptly, like brakes on a motor car. You put your foot on the brake, the things clamp and it stops. But if you're driving a motor car and you put your foot slowly down on the brake, then it brings it slowly to a halt - Then the navigator, of course, would be starting work, immediately the aircraft was airborne,
- 24:00 he would start his work, and he would work for the whole of the twelve or fourteen or whatever number of hours. And we all depended on him, entirely, for his navigation. And the wireless operator would only operate when he got permission to operate the wireless. And he would be listening out for
- 24:30 Japanese transmissions and Australian transmissions and American transmissions. He'd be listening out for those transmissions but he wouldn't be transmitting himself. We had two wireless operators in the B-24. And I think we should have had two navigators, but thank heavens we didn't. We had one navigator who knew what he was doing all the time, and he was brilliant. Absolutely brilliant navigator. He was only a warrant officer,
- 25:01 that means he was the most senior of the NCOs, but he was better qualified than the pilot. Because the pilot, the captain of the aircraft, was qualified to fly the aeroplane, but the navigator was qualified to do the navigation, to do the gunnery, and observing.
- 25:31 Our navigator was entitled to wear an observers' badge wing. An O with a wing on it. The later navigators had an N, which meant they were suitable only for navigation. But he was suitable for pretty well anything to do with aeroplane. And that's why he was so good, because he had been doing it for years, and he had learnt in the old observers' school.

26:03 **What's an observers' school?**

- An observers' school is an observer, a person who observes what goes on, on the ground and that sort of business. He was a photographer as well. And he took photographs of certain aspects of the action. And he was a jack of all trades, really,
- 26:30 the observer. And he was usually used as a gunner, in the earlier aircraft where they didn't have turrets and things like that. But he had no guns, and had to do the observation and do the photography and drop bombs and do every blessed thing under the sun. He was an entitled to be a bombardier. And a bombardier had a B, and
- 27:00 they were only supposed to drop bombs. And the air gunners had an AG, they were supposed to operate guns. And the pilots had the double wing, but they were only supposed to fly. But the observer had every job accredited to him -
- 27:30 The navigator had a log book just the same as that, whereas the pilot's log book was very much larger. In my view, he should have had the large log book because he did everything under the sun. Then the bombardier would wait until we had reached the target. The gunners would wait until they were told to go into their turrets by the skipper, who would tell them about an hour or two hours beforehand to man the guns, and
- 28:00 they would go into the turrets, and the fellows in the waist would load the guns, ready for firing. If they saw any enemy aircraft. And then the bombardier would take over control of the aircraft, while the aircraft was flying on its course to drop the bombs, the bombardier would have control of the aircraft, and he would control it through his
- 28:30 bomb site. And then as soon as he finished dropping the bombs, he would hand back to the pilot and the captain would then fly the aeroplane from there on. The navigator had to keep a track of the turns and the twists and everything like that that were made by the aircraft. And particularly later on in the war, when our job was not bombing targets so much
- 29:00 as chasing barges and motor boats and yachts and things like that. Anything the Japanese could use to transport troops and supplies in. They would transport them from one island to another, because their merchant marine had been settled completely by the American submarines, who in my view don't get sufficient credit for what they did. And the navigator had to keep track of
- 29:30 everywhere that we flew. And when we were chasing around islands, and chasing barges and yachts and things like that, our track must have changed tremendously, and it was the navigator's job to keep us on the ball and to bring us back home again, as he did. And one particular night, we did a harassing raid on one place,
- 30:00 and a harassing raid was to go out and to drop bombs on this place, at night-time. And somebody started at eight o'clock at night, and they bombed the place with a hundred pound bomb, and a couple of dozen beer bottles. The beer bottles because they made a noise like a bomb when they went down, and they would hit and they wouldn't know whether it was a beer bottle or a bomb
- 30:30 unexploded, on a fine schedule. We took over at twelve o'clock and dropped the bombs and beer bottles, etc. We would drop the bomb and beers and go away for half an hour and come back, and then half an hour's time we'd drop another bomb and a few dozen beer bottles, then go away for half an hour and come back - And we did that until four o'clock, and somebody took over at four. We couldn't see them, we just had to believe
- 31:00 that they were going to be there at four o'clock, and this is how trustworthy we were of the navigator, because we were believed that the navigator would bring that aircraft to that place at four o'clock, and we would go home, and leave it to them. So they'd drop their bombs and beer bottles from four o'clock to eight o'clock and then they'd come home at eight o'clock.
- 31:30 And we had to depend on the navigators to take us to this spot and to take us away for half an hour, and to bring us back to the same spot - so the navigator's job was perhaps the most important job of all. And they had to take us to the target - and I remember one time we were flying with the Americans, with the 380th, and skipper has called up
- 32:00 over the microphone, over the RT [radio transmitter], everyone had earphones, and he said, "One minute to bomb drop." And the navigator called up and said, "I make it five minutes." And anyhow, we were bombing with the Americans, so we bombed on the bombing leader. When he dropped his bombs, our bombs had to be dropped too.
- 32:30 And we bombed the wrong target. Because the American navigator was four minutes out. And our navigator said, "Five minutes to Kalbarrie." And the Americans reckoned we were at Kalbarrie. As luck would have it, the Japanese had moved their aeroplanes from Kalbarrie down to this other strip which we bombed, by mistake.
- 33:00 And so I could watch the bombs dropping from the aeroplanes, on the aircraft, where the Japanese

aeroplanes were stationed.

How much could you actually see from your position?

Well, my position was very fortunate. I suppose every position is very fortunate. I was very fortunate because I could see everything happen first before it happened. As soon as it happened. I remember

33:31 the first trip I did, I made an arse of myself by saying, "Enemy aircraft ahead." We were supposed to be in the first formation, but some other aeroplanes had beaten us to it, and they were in the first formation. And I saw these aeroplanes over the target and I called up that they were enemy aircraft. And they weren't of course, they were American. But they'd got out of kilter and they had got to the target before our flight had

34:00 and our flight was supposed to be the first over the target. So I suppose there was some excuse for me -

Could you actually see where the bombs were dropping?

If they were dropped by another aircraft, yes, by another aircraft in front of me, because I could see the bombs dropping and hitting the ground, but our own bombs I couldn't see dropping and I couldn't see the bombs of an aircraft that was level with us.

34:30 Couldn't see those bombs dropping. I could hear them because the bomb aimer would say, "Bombs away." We occasionally fired guns at yachts and barges and things like that and set them alight, I could see them. I could see where my bullets went and things like that.

35:02 **What would be the checking procedure that you would be doing in the turret before you go - ?.**

Well, we used to check the turrets the day before, and do a final check on the turret before you went. You just had to pull the toggles to make sure the guns operated, without any shells going into them. And clean them, if they needed cleaning,

35:31 and clean the turret to make sure that it was spotless and everything, so that you wouldn't get phased by insect blobs on the turret. I used to like flying through clouds, because as we flew through the cloud I would turn the turret to one side, and it used to wash the turret clean. And that used to please me, because it meant my turret was always clean, when we were flying through cloud.

36:00 One time I was checking the turret and putting rounds through the guns, with all the switches off and everything like that, and a Jeep full of Yanks pulled up in front, that was when we were flying with the Americans - . And the turret was an old, old turret, and they were old, old guns and they just fired themselves. And the bullets went into the ground alongside this Jeep, then shot off into the air over the Darwin strip, and I've never seen

36:30 Yanks move so quick. But it wasn't my fault. All the switches were turned off, but the guns were just so old and the turret was so old that the guns just went off. It happened once before when I was doing a flight. I toggled one gun and both guns started firing. Just because they were so old.

37:01 It was all part of the system.

So how did you actually finish up in Moresby and get yourself to Darwin?

Well, when we finished in Moresby, and the skipper could fly the aeroplane, and the Australians who flew with the Americans - One of them had one twenty minute flight, and that was enough. The Yanks said, "You can go by yourself now. You can fly the aeroplane." Because these blokes had been flying

37:30 multi-engine aeroplanes, for years. Instead of having two engines, they had four engines. It didn't make any difference to them. We stayed only a month in Moresby, then we were posted to the 380th Heavy Bomb Group in Darwin. That was the 531st Squadron of the

38:00 380th Heavy Bomb Group was the one I went to, with the crew. The whole crew were posted, too.

Were you excited about this posting?

No, it was just another step in the procedure. That's all. You didn't worry about it or think about it so much. It was just another step in the business of flying. You were trained, supposedly, and you had to go now and put the training into effect. So we went on operations

38:30 with the Americans, in the 531st squadron, and we did ten or eleven flights with them. The American system, you were allocated a different aircraft every time. Sometimes you got the same aircraft you had before, sometimes you didn't. But it didn't matter, they were the same sort of aeroplane, so you flew in them.

There wasn't an unlucky one and a lucky one?

39:00 I don't think so. We flew in 'Paddy's Pig' twice, for example, when we last flew with the Americans. Then the third time we were going to fly on 'Paddy's Pig', Les Prest said to Mick, "What about letting me fly 'Paddy's Pig', because it's the newest plane in the 531st Squadron and I'd like to fly the new aeroplane, before I get shunted back to the USA?." He was going back to the USA,

- 39:30 this was his last trip. So Mick said, "Yeah, okay." It didn't worry Mick and it didn't worry the rest of us, either. One Liberator was another Liberator was another Liberator - Anyhow, the CO of the squadron said, "You can fly in them. The crews can change, but the aeroplanes have to stay in the same position." And it was supposed to be a milk run over Koepang. And when we got over Koepang, radar predicted ack ack. [anti-aircraft fire], I remember sitting there in the turret saying
- 40:00 "The last shot was there, the next one is going to be there, the next one is going to be there - " Because it was so accurate, you know. The 'Paddy's Pig' got shot, hit in the - I thought it was between the pilot and the number two engine. And the engineer said it was in the bomb bay
- 40:30 and the tail gunner said it was in the bomb bay. So the aeroplane drew madly up, somebody must have bumped the controls. Because an aeroplane flew right in front of us, it was supposed to fly number two and he flew up like that to become number one. Then he started to come towards, and there's bit of aeroplane and smoke and everything coming towards me in the turret. Towards our aeroplane. There were lumps of aeroplane flying
- 41:00 off this thing that was hit, and he just went down below us and I thought he was going to come into the turret with me, he went down below us, and the skipper said, "Bother this, let's go." And he broke off to the right, and all the Americans broke off to the left, and the skipper just followed this other aeroplane down. We went into Koepang Harbour, just a puff of smoke, and the water closed over it.
- 41:32 So 'Paddy's Pig' was unlucky, I suppose, in some ways. That was our last trip with the Americans. We were then transferred to 21 Squadron.

Tape 4

- 00:31 Well, the first thing I wanted to mention to you was about the Coca-Cola syrup. The Americans, when we were flying with 380th, you could go to the canteen and get all sorts of chocolates and things. But you could take up your mug and they would give you a measure of Coca-Cola syrup out of the syrup bottles into your mug and then he would put the soda in. And all Coca-Cola
- 01:00 was sold like that, not in bottles, when we flew with the Americans. And I used to go each day and have a drink of Coca-Cola. Anyway, I was feeling a bit off colour and I mentioned this to one of the Yanks, one day, I was just talking to him - Because we got on very well with them, they treated us very well indeed, I must say. And they were very good, they were good sort of blokes. And I mentioned
- 01:30 this one day to this Yank and he said, "Do you drink Coca-Cola, Dave?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, just knock off for a week or two." And I knocked off Coca-Cola - so he saw me in a couple of weeks and he said, "Are you feeling better?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "The Coca-Cola probably upset you." And since that day, I very rarely drink Coca-Cola. But I thought I would just mention to you
- 02:00 the syrup and the soda put in afterwards made me sick. The Yanks used to reckon we had six meals a day. We'd have breakfast, we'd have morning tea, we'd have lunch, we'd have afternoon tea, we'd have tea, what we call tea, and then we'd have supper.
- 02:30 So they used to say "You goddamned Australians, used to having six meals a day." And we used to go to the American mess and say "Can we have butter and bread?" And they'd say "Yes, no trouble at all." And they give us butter and bread, and we'd go to the PX and buy asparagus, and we'd have toast and asparagus and cups of tea and things like that. They never hesitated in
- 03:00 giving us anything at all we wanted. And attached to a tree - I suppose about two, was a three litre oxygen tank, and coming out of the oxygen tank was a long copper pipe, and the copper pipe finished in a whirl, in a spring shape,
- 03:30 and little holes put in it. And we would boil water over that. The tank would have range fuel, which was a mixture of petrol and oil, and we'd turn the tape on and then the range fuel would run down the tubes and come out of the little holes and we'd set it alight and boil the billy for the coffee or the tea, or make toast. And that was the six meals a day.
- 04:00 Well, one of the Yanks, who was hillbilly, and he was a real hillbilly - His job was to do the latrines. But the Yanks were very, very keen on hygiene. The Australians used to have what they called pissaphones.
- 04:32 They were funnel shaped things, which were set into the ground, and if you wanted to urinate you would just urinate into these pissaphones. But the latrines were forty four gallon drums turned upside down, on sleepers, and a hole cut in the bottom to stick your bum on, half a dozen of these around in a ring, and there was a hole down the bottom
- 05:00 where the droppings went. Now this Yank had the job of setting alight to these latrines, every week or whatever it was. He would come along and pour the range fuel into all the holes, then he would throw a match in and it would burn all the droppings. This particular time he came down, and then he used to

very often he would come and have a cup of tea. And this particular time he came along and poured

05:30 the range fuel in, and it was a stinking hot day, then he came into the tent and had a cup of tea. He didn't speak. I don't think he ever said please, or thank you, or anything like that. He used to just come in and we'd give him a cup of tea and then he would go, and set alight to the latrines. Well, he went out and set alight to the latrines, and of course the range fuel had evaporated by then and left vapour. And the whole lot went up, kaboom, the whole lot. Bang!

06:00 The chimney went miles in the air like a rocket, and bits of clod and dirt and stuff went everywhere. It went into the tents or on top of the tents. And you couldn't go near the latrine for about twenty four hours or forty eight hours.

What happened to him?

He got a hell of a fright, of course, but he scampered out of it. And we all took it as part of the system, and it was quite amusing.

06:33 He came back a couple of days later, when you could go near the latrines and set alight to them again, the same as usual. Everything just went on the same as usual. And our flying food with the Americans was poor. But the meals in the mess itself were excellent, because we used to have

07:01 chicken and roasts and everything like that that you could possibly mention. The Yanks would feed their air crew with their ground crew. The flying meals were terrible, though. The Yanks used to slap anything onto a bit of bread and butter, margarine it was, wrap it in toilet paper and slap it into a

07:30 box and that was it. Then throw in a couple of cans of grapefruit juice. And this particular time, that I remember, opening the meals and unwrapping the toilet paper from the sandwiches, and there was an egg, straight out of a pan, straight onto a slice of bread, another slice of bread

08:00 put on top. And the bread had curled up because it was dry, and the egg was rigid with fat. That was the meal, the flying meal. Now, in the RAAF the flying meals were well done, well presented, and wrapped neatly in tissue paper and things like that. And yet the meals in the mess were terrible. Bully beef stew everyday and all that sort of caper.

08:30 So it was just a contrast between the Americans and the Australian food. Talking about the American meals, one time an American bombed Adelaide with a bomb bay full of food - The Yank had been down to get some food for the mess. Never mind about getting it from the PX, they

09:00 used to send down to Adelaide. They used to load a Liberator up with apples and oranges and fresh greens and fresh food and fresh food and fresh chickens and Coca-Cola and beer and whiskey and anything you can possibly think of. Anyhow, this chap decided one day. . . he took off from Parafield in Adelaide, and he decided he would do a shoot up [low flying run] of Adelaide. So he did a shoot up at nought feet across Adelaide, then pulled up.

09:30 As he pulled up, the extra gravity broke the bomb bay doors and showered Adelaide with fruit and veggies and Coca-Cola and whiskey. Nobody was hurt, fortunately, but the bombing of Adelaide became quite famous, with the Americans and us. But nobody was every hurt. Though one fellow had a very near miss,

10:01 a crate of Coca-Cola almost hit him as he was going into his WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK yard. But it didn't hurt anybody at all.

While you were at the Seven Mile Strip, can you describe the aerodrome there?

It was just a strip of

10:31 bitumen, with what they called Marsden matting. It was steel strips about a foot wide, and about seven feet long. And it was interlocked. And after a while, it used to stretch, and the strip used to ripple in front of you as you went along.

11:08 Did that ever cause any problems?

No, not that I know of, no problems at all. It was just one of those things that happened.

What about in the area, what kind of buildings and facilities were there?

Most of the buildings were tents. Some of the buildings were good wooden buildings that the Yanks put up themselves, and we had

11:30 in the - RAAF, we also had substantial buildings put up, and they were usually asbestos buildings and asbestos concrete, because we didn't have laws and things to stop it in those days.

12:00 The mess hall at Seven Mile Strip was a building that was completely surrounded by fly-wire netting, and so were the latrines, the American latrines were surrounded by netting. They were quite substantial buildings. The floors in the mess hall were concrete, so they would be easier to clean. I suppose they were just

12:30 ordinary buildings. Not brick, usually asbestos fibre, and wood.

What about the surrounding countryside at Seven Mile Strip?

It was just like you would expect to see in jungles. The surrounding countryside, in the immediate tent area was all bare, because it had bulldozed bare, but there was also lots of jungle about.

13:04 I went out to the beginning of the Kokoda Track and that was all jungle out there. When we went into Moresby it was jungle most of the way in. Just jungle.

And was it mountainous in the area?

Well, I don't remember it being particularly mountainous, particularly not where the Three Mile Strip and Seven Mile Strip were, it was pretty level sort of ground

13:30 there. It was pretty level ground where the tents were, too.

Obviously you were on some sort of coastal land or strip, but how far inland was it to the mountain ranges?

I think in television and films etc, etc, they play on the mountains too much. New Guinea is not all mountains,

14:00 and neither is Vietnam, they're not all mountains. There are lots of coastal areas that are flat. During the '30s, Junkers [German freight planes] used to fly in and out of the New Guinea highlands, and they used to take a long run, and they carried gold in-out, and they carried machinery in,

14:31 and the Junkers was quite famous for that sort of work. They were three motors and they were fairly big aircraft.

What were the flying conditions like in New Guinea?

We found them pretty good. In the islands, generally, you had storms. Particularly in the Timor Sea, you used to get storms.

15:01 When we were flying with the RAAF, we were flying at nought feet so we never worried about storms or anything like that. When we were flying with the Yanks we used to sometimes fly through a storm and come out the other side, just part of the system.

You flew only with the Yanks over New Guinea?

No, I flew with the RAAF. After the 380th Heavy Bomb Group, which we flew in Darwin -

Did you go back up to the islands from Darwin?

15:30 No. 21 Squadron, I was there about a month and I got posted to 23 Squadron because the skipper was posted to OCB Flight 23 Squadron, so I went back to Amberley in Queensland and we formed up 23 Squadron. Then 23 Squadron flew from Long Strip, which is probably one of the shortest strips that we ever flew on - 21 and 24 were at Fenton.

16:00 And then later we flew to Darwin. But we flew quite a bit from Long Strip and from Darwin. We flew mainly in the islands chasing these boats and barges and motor boats and yachts and things like that, that the Japanese would use to transport their troops and

16:30 supplies between islands. I remember a couple of times we flew over native canoes to make sure that they were native canoes, and we flew very low over them, it must have been terrible to have four two thousand horsepower aeroplanes flying over the blinking things. But they used to wave to us. And sometimes we used to fly so low that we came back with

17:01 wet corrosion strips on the underneath of the aircraft. Obviously waves had washed up and touched aircraft. We had corrosion strips on the aeroplane and we used wipe those off when we got back.

How many operations did you do with the Yanks?

With the Americans, with the 380th Heavy Bomb Group,

17:30 I think it was ten or eleven, that was operations.

What were those operations?

Well, they were mainly bombing operations. We went up to Celebes, then to Java and Timor and places like that, where we dropped bombs on the Japanese installations and establishments, etc. That was mainly with the Americans.

18:02 Later on with the RAAF we did the chasing of the barges, and so on.

What was the agreement between the Australian and the American governments?

Well, I believe that the Consolidated B24 Liberator, there was more of those built than any other American aeroplane. There were eighteen thousand plus Consolidated Liberators built in three different factories.

18:32 There were only about fourteen thousand Flying Fortresses, B17s, built. Now the Americans used the Liberators in both the UK, over Germany, in Egypt and Libya and places like that. They used to go Hungary and Austria and places like that.

19:00 And then in the Pacific as well. The reason they were used in the Pacific and one of the reasons they were used in Libya, was their long range. They had a very long range indeed. Longer than any other aircraft that flew in the war. And the three factories in the USA that turned out the Consolidated Liberators, turned them out so rapidly and so quickly,

19:30 that Americans couldn't use them as fast as they were. So there was an agreement between the RAAF, the Australian Government, and the American Government, that RAAF crews would fly with the Americans, in Liberators. The Australian government would buy Liberators and so we were sent to Moresby to learn

20:00 to fly Liberators and learn their equipment etc, etc. Then when we had flown with the 380th Bomb Group on missions, on operations, we were then transferred back to the RAAF because we had Liberators then as well, you see. So the Australian Government and the American Government agreed that the excess Liberators

20:31 would be transferred to the RAAF. And that's what happened -

How would you compare the Liberators with the Flying Fortresses?

I never flew in the Fortresses, I never flew in any other aeroplane other than Liberators, except training. And so I don't know. I really can't compare them. Although the Flying Fortresses get a lot of the credit, I think a lot of the credit belongs to the Liberators.

21:00 The Liberator was the only plane that could fly non-stop from the USA to Europe. And 120 Squadron, RAAF, in Europe, used them as submarine hunters because they could stay in the air and cover the area that's not covered by any other aeroplane. Before the Liberators came on the scheme, there was a

21:30 three hundred mile gap between the Americans covering the convoys and the British covering the convoys. And in that three hundred mile gap, the submarines used to congregate, of course. The Liberator was the only one that could cover that three hundred mile gap. And once they started to use a lot of these Liberators - In fact, 120 Squadron in the RAF used Liberators,

22:01 and then they were taken away from them, and they were put on the bombing of Europe. And of course the submarines had a wonderful time in the three hundred mile gap again. And the losses of the British merchant ships went up so dramatically that it looked like the Germans would blockade Great Britain into submission. Well, when the Liberators were put on

22:30 they were able to close that three hundred mile gap. And not only that, they would carry more anti-submarine depth charges and bombs than the Sunderlands [flying boats] or the other aeroplanes we used, the Liberator could stay out much longer than any other aircraft the Allies had. And it could go further.

23:00 It had a much greater range. That was one of the reasons that [US General] Kenny got rid of nearly all the B17s in the 5th Air Force, which was the Pacific Air Force. And then the 13th and the 20th came later. And replaced them all with B24s, because the B24 had the long, long range. I think the Yanks had a record of staying out better than seventeen hours with the Liberators, from

23:31 Darwin to Balikpapan, I think it was. The last one in had just under seventeen hours in the air. And that's a long way. Nowadays it's not so bad, but in those days it was a hell of a long way for an aeroplane to stay in the air. And the Liberators, the B24s, were the ones that did it.

How did you go about converting to the Liberator when you arrived in New Guinea?

I had flown with British equipment, training in Australia. We just went up and we were told "That's the aeroplane you're going to fly in." And we just flew in it."And that's the turret." They had room where all turrets were, and we

24:30 trained in the turrets. We trained how to use them and how to repair them, and that sort of thing. They said, "Now you've done your training with the turrets on the ground, you can fly in them." So we just flew in them, and that's all there was to it.

Can you tell me how you actually operate the turret?

I'll speak mainly of the best turret I ever used. It was the Amazon Electric.

25:00 It had two handles, and you held onto those handles as soon as you got into the turret. Now on top of the handles there was two red strips, and when you pressed those they actuated the turrets, the electric motors that drove the turrets. Underneath were two triggers, one on each handle, so you grabbed the

- handles as tightly as you could and then you moved them, like that. And if you moved them
- 25:30 backwards, the guns used to go, you moved them forward, the guns went down, you moved to the right and you went to the right, you moved to the left and you went to right. And then as well, on those handles, they had an M switch, which was the microphone switch, and when you wanted to talk through the microphone you pressed them, and the other one was S switch, which was a high speed switch, and that
- 26:00 would move your turret as twice as fast as ordinarily. When you pushed the S switch, like that, you could move your turret twice as fast. We had throat microphones, too, we didn't have these sort of things you see on television. They were strung around the back, and you had one microphone on either side of your voice box,
- 26:30 and you spoke ordinarily into it, just as I'm talking to you. You just pressed the mic [microphone] switch and you spoke as if you were speaking to another person. There wasn't another person in sight. You would say "Front gunner to skipper." And the skipper would say "Over." And you'd say "Well I saw
- 27:01 a barge down there," or something like that, you see. So the skipper would say "Where?" So you'd say "Nine o'clock." And so he'd go around and have a look at the barge, and decide whether or not it should be attacked - So that's how you operated a turret.

How fast do they rotate?

Ah ha. I couldn't say, really.

You mentioned earlier you were doing

- 27:30 **turret training or practise on a skeet range. Now those clay pigeons come out of the tower pretty quickly. -**

Oh yes, the turrets used to keep up with them. They used to come out fairly quickly, as you say, and the turrets used to keep up with them alright. They were fairly quick, but I really couldn't say how fast they were.

- 28:04 **Did you enjoy operating the turret?**

Oh yes, I enjoyed it. The turrets were good fun. I suppose every person in the aircraft thought their position was good. The flight engineer was the bloke who had to run around and watch the fuel. You couldn't repair

- 28:30 the engines in the air. In fact, sometimes when the aircraft were on the ground and the engineers were working on them, they couldn't work on them during the day because they were so hot. They got too hot to touch the metal. They used to park them in revetments, which were huge walls of dirt built up around the aeroplane, so that if a bomb dropped outside,
- 29:00 the blast would be directed upwards and over the top of the aeroplane. And that's where the blokes used to work mainly, on the engines and that sort of business. One fellow nearly drowned himself one time, I was watching him undoing the bottom of the tank, and all fuel poured out over him. He undid it too rapidly. It poured out all over him. So he was stinging hot one moment and he was
- 29:30 freezing cold the next. We dragged him out into the sun and let him - defrost, I suppose that's the best term. He defrosted and he was pretty well right then.

What was your relationship like with the ground crew?

Very good. When we went on bombing and gunnery exercises, and when you weren't flying operations you were flying bombing and gunnery exercises,

- 30:02 navigation exercises, he would take a couple of the ground crew with us, so that they could see what we did. And they would sit in the turrets, and stand at the waist guns and that sort of business. And Mick used to say that this was good PR [public relations] for the ground crew,
- 30:30 because they could fly with us and see what we did and how we behaved in the air, and let them see that we had confidence in them. I used to thank the ground crew very many times when we were out, five or six hours, when the engines kept on turning and aeroplane kept on flying, with another five or six hours back again, I always used to say thank to the air crew and the ground crew. Although they didn't see me, say thank you,
- 31:01 I often said thank you to them, because of the wonderful job that they did. It seems to me a great pity that the ground crew don't get more credit than they do, because usually you see, on the television and in films, it's the pilot that gets the credit, but there is lots of other people in the aeroplane, besides the pilot. And lots of people on the ground who keep the aeroplane flying. Even if it's the bloke only
- 31:30 that tops up the oxygen, if he forgets to top up the oxygen, you pass out at twelve thousand feet. So it doesn't matter who it is, everybody on the ground had a job, the same as everybody in the air had a job. And if the job wasn't done properly, somebody paid for it, and not the bloke who was supposed to have

done the job, somebody else paid for it, with a death or a wounding or something like that.

How efficient was

32:00 that team collaboration?

It wasn't so much a collaboration as you might find in a workshop. The air crew came in and brought the aeroplane back to the revetment area, then they got off and went into a bus or a truck, usually a truck, and they drove you to the headquarters and you were debriefed. You know, you told them everything you did.

32:30 While that was happening, the ground crew came out and they'd attend to the aeroplane. So that the next time you went, you went into the crew rooms and you were briefed on what was going to happen, or what they expected would happen. It didn't always happen, what you expected to happen - And then you'd go back and get into a truck, and the truck would take you down and drop you at your aeroplane.

33:00 By that time, the ground crew blokes had gone home, gone back to their tents. And they weren't there anymore. Only with the skipper, when he was going on bombing, gunnery and navigation exercises, he used to say, "Right, well I had two blokes came last time. I want two different blokes." And two different blokes would go. He'd hand them parachutes and everything,

33:30 they'd get into the aeroplane and go off for a flight, for two hours or three hours, depending on what it was.

Did the planes have names?

Well, the Americans used to give their aircraft names, all sorts of names. Our plane was called the Sea Goose, after one of the Popeye things which were popular in those days, cartoon strips.

34:00 But very rarely did the Australians give their aircraft names. They used to have their numbers. Our number was A72103. And there were other aircraft, A72. All Liberators in the Australian air force were A72-something. But the Americans used to give them names, but the Australians didn't both so much about names.

34:30 Why do you think not?

I don't know. We just thought it was a bit silly to give them names, I suppose. The Yanks used to get terribly emotional about things that happened, and we didn't. We were just matter of fact about them. . If an American was killed, they used

35:00 to carry on. But we used to say "Oh well, he bought it." That's all, finished, forgot about him, and you never considered him again, he wasn't with you anymore, he just wasn't there.

35:35 What were the main differences between Australian and American air crew?

I suppose the language. They used to say that we spoke with a very Cockney accent, and we do, I found that out later on. The Yanks used to walk past our tent and they'd say

36:00 "Any moil today, moite?" And that was supposed to be "Any mail today, mate?" And I found out later on, when I was teaching migrants, and I was teaching them January, February, March, April, May, and I said to them "Say that." And the migrants all said, "January, February, Aproil, Moiy - " I said, "It's not Aproil, Moiy. It's April, May." And they said, "Yeah, that's what we said."

36:31 And I realised then that I had to accentuate the 'A' sound. That was different. But they said, as the Yanks used to say, every 'A' sound comes out as an 'I' sound. And we do speak like that, we do have an accent.

Did you plan any tricks on one another?

Not really.

37:04 Although I was only eighteen or nineteen, I suppose were too mature to play. It sounds stupid. The only trick that I ever had played on me, we used to go Mindil Beach in Darwin, when I was with the 380th, and there was a big American called 'Al'. It was only later when I read the books that his name was

37:30 Victor Altruda, and he was a Brooklyn bloke, and he was huge. A big tall fellow. And we used to go swimming at Mindil Beach in the nude. We never worried about bathers or anything like that. And I was squatting down trying to convince this hermit crab it ought to come out of the shell. Like that. And the hermit crab

38:00 wouldn't come out, you see. Anyhow, I saw these pair of feet in front of me and I looked up and there's big Al, he said, "I'll give you three to run, Dave." He could have picked me up and carried me anywhere he liked with one hand. And I turned around and ran up the beach as fast as I could, I looked back to see if Al was following me and I tripped over the Red Cross nurses. I wouldn't bother now, but in those days I was a bashful teenager

38:30 and I turned around and ran out, and the tide was out, and I had to run about three quarters of a mile before I came to sufficient water to hide myself. That was perhaps the only time I had a trick played on

me, I suppose. We had a water fight and that was it.

You didn't play any sort of cultural games?

No, I don't think so.

39:01 **Did you do any trading with them?**

Some of the fellows took up beer and wine and whisky and things like that, and traded with the Yanks. They brought gaiters and shirts. I got an American shirt at one stage of the game, I don't know where I got it from, or how I got it, even. But we never

39:30 traded very much at all with them. Some of the blokes used to buy guns from them. If you wanted to keep your revolver, or whatever, you used to say that you lost it on a mission, and they gave you another one. And then you could - The Americans would kill for an Australian six shooter.

Why?

40:00 I don't know, they were just "Goddamn! Six shooters!"

They didn't have those sort of weapons?

No, they had the forty five Colt. With the magazine in the handle, that's right, and ten shots. The Australians had a thirty eight revolver, in a holster -

40:31 And it was a revolver with six shots in it. And the Yanks used to think it was wonderful, because they could sling the revolver down, and have it tied with a couple of strings. Not all of them, but just one or two used to get like that. Most of them were very, very good blokes. I would be pleased to fly alongside one of those fellows any day.

Tape 5

00:32 **We were talking about Darwin. So you received your assignment to relocate to Darwin?**

01:00 The 380th Heavy Bomb Group, we flew from Darwin.

What did your base at Darwin look like?

A mess. That's about all you could say. Most of the places were bombed out. We lived in tents.

01:35 And I don't remember very much about it actually. Darwin itself, I don't remember much about at all.

Can you describe in a broad range what it was you were supposed to be doing in Darwin?

Well, we were doing operations in Darwin with the Americans. And learning

02:00 about the B24 and how to use it. We had to learn how to fly it, and live with it and use it, I suppose, as a tool. That's about all I can say about it really.

Were there any advantages and disadvantages?

02:31 Well, the advantage was that the B24 had a very long range, and this enabled it to go out and do flights of twelve or fourteen hours. We spent most of the days that we were flying over the sea, chasing the barges, and motor boats

03:00 and yachts and things like that.

Would you say that the level of stress had increased or decreased?

About the same. I didn't notice that there was any level of stress. It was just a job to be done and we went and did it.

Can you give me an idea of what your average day was like?

Well, I suppose you got up at five o'clock, or

03:30 four o'clock in the morning, something like that, had a shower and shave, had breakfast, then went down to the aircraft. It was usually daytime flying, although some night flying involved. You had prepared the aircraft the day before and you just made sure you had it prepared it properly.

04:00 Then got in and taxied out and went off, that's all.

How was mail getting to you in Darwin?

Mail was fairly good. I've forgotten now how it was delivered, but it used to arrive fairly regularly, and we didn't have any problems with the mail. The only problems we had was

04:30 that we weren't allowed to come to Western Australia for our leave. We could go to the eastern states for leave, you could go to Sydney or Melbourne, but West Australia was a no-no.

Why was that?

I have no idea - unless they thought it was so far away that they thought we might scarper [run away], and not go back.

Surely, from Darwin it's the same distance as it -

Oh yes, but

05:00 Perth and Western Australia wasn't considered as anything in those days. It's not considered much now. People of the eastern seaboard seem to think they're the ants pants, the cat's pyjamas, and everything revolves around them. We know it doesn't, but we allow them to think so.

So when you did take leave, what did you do?

05:31 Well, I had the big leave, that was after the 5 51st Squadron, 380 Heavy Bomb Group, and I came home then to Western Australia and had three or four weeks' leave - That was before I was supposed to report to 21 Squadron, RAAF, and they were already at Fenton, and I did

06:00 report to 21 Squadron, RAAF, at Fenton, and was allocated a tent and then waited for the rest of the crew to come. But they didn't ever come, because the whole crew was posted to 23 Squadron in Amberley, Queensland, and we had to go there and help form up 23 Squadron.

06:32 **Is it 21 Squadron, is that what happened when you came back from New Guinea, or did that happen after you were in Darwin, and you had leave in Darwin and then you came back -**

I came from New Guinea to the Americans in Darwin, and flew with the Americans on eleven operations, and then I went on leave, and then went to 21 Squadron.

07:00 Because those people in 24 and 21 Squadron had been flying with the Americans before I did, and they had flown their time with the Yanks, then they had got B24s, Liberators, and formed up with the RAAF squadrons. But the leave happened after I had left the Americans,

07:30 and I was to go to the RAAF, back to the RAAF again.

What did you do with your leave?

I came home, I spent some in Perth, then some time out at Balingup, my mother's and father's farm, where I was planning to go and look after my brother's place while he went and his wife went and had a holiday. And

08:00 that is about all that I can say. I spent some time out at the farm.

It would have been a pretty big difference going from those really intense team times back to your normal life in Western Australia?

I didn't consider it. I was on leave and I expected to go back to the RAAF.

08:32 And do the same job as I had done before, only with the RAAF this time, instead of with the Americans. And as I said, I went to Leyburn and we had new Liberators flown in and we formed up 23 Squadron. And then

09:00 from Amberley we went down to Brisbane and then they had semi-trailer trucks, and we just threw our gear into the back of the semi-trailers and climbed on after it and they took across the top of Australia to Larrimah, I think it is, in Northern Territory, and

09:30 there we got into cattle trucks and went on up to Darwin. When they put us in the cattle trucks, they were quite open. Somebody said, "How many here?" And we yelled out "Six." They said, "Three tins of bully beef and six packets of biscuits, that's your lunch." So that was it. That had to do us until we got to Darwin. When we got to Darwin

10:00 we got into trucks again and came down to Long Strip, which is down near Fenton, it's about half a day's trip I suppose down from Darwin, then we settled into Long Strip, in tents. There was nothing built, we had no buildings there. The Americans had taken most of the buildings with them

10:30 when they'd gone, so we had to have extra buildings built, and from Long we carried on with the work that we had been doing with the Yanks, mainly chasing the barges and yachts and motorboats as I mentioned, that was with the RAAF.

Was there any opportunity to do freelance bombing raids?

11:00 Most every trip with 23 Squadron was a freelance trip because you went by yourself, you didn't have anybody with you, no escorts or any other B24s with you. Your job was to go to Surabaya, and you went. And you went at nought feet

11:30 all the way, hoping to see Japanese barges and motor boats and yachts and things like that. So you were freelancing nearly the whole time, rather than going as a squadron we went as individuals.

How did you get on with your ground crew there?

Very much the same as we had before. We made sure that when we did

12:00 bombing and navigation exercises, and gunnery exercises, we took them with us, to make sure that they understood the sort of jobs that we were doing, and show them that we had faith in their work and ability to maintain the aircraft in a good flying condition.

How were the weather conditions in Australia to what you trained in, in New Guinea?

12:30 The weather conditions were tropical weather, and you were likely to get a storm at any tick of the clock. We were usually able to fly under the storms, rather than through them, because we were always flying at low level. It wasn't hot days like it is today in Darwin and in

13:00 Northern Australia, but then when you got out over the Timor Sea you were likely to run into a storm. Mostly sunny days, I guess. That's mostly how I remember it anyhow. We used to go to Darwin and then fly out to a place called Truscott, which is on the Anjou Peninsula, up the north west highest point of Western Australia, I suppose. That was the new strip that was made.

13:32 And we'd refuel and bomb up at Truscott, and then go off and do the jobs. That used to give us about an hour and a half, two hours extra flying time. We would refuel at Truscott, that was about two hours from Darwin. And a couple of my friends were lost at Truscott. The aircraft didn't take off properly, it

14:00 just took off and crashed into the sea. People say "Weren't you upset?" You were upset for a few minutes I suppose, but you didn't think anything about it.

Did you actually witness it?

No, I didn't witness it. They were doing the same as we were doing, which means they were flying solo on their journeys, and we were flying solo, too. And we didn't go out when they went out and they didn't go when we

14:30 went out. There might have been two Liberators in Truscott, waiting to take off, but I didn't see it happen, no.

What was going on in the war around about this time?

The Americans had moved up to the Halmaheras, and we went up one time to cover the landing at Labuan,

15:00 in Borneo.

Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Well, there wasn't much to do, we just went up there and we lived in tents with the Americans - We walked on duck boards [wooden walkways] everywhere because there was so much mud around. The only place there wasn't mud was on the airstrips. There was mud all the time and you had to walk on duck boards

15:30 to make sure that your boots didn't sink down into the mud. Some of us were left behind while they went off the cover the Labuan landing. There was nothing spectacular about that, it was quiet. The only spectacular thing I suppose was the army going in to take over the island from the Japanese.

And what could you see?

We couldn't see anything at all.

So did you see any point for you being there?

16:01 Oh yeah, I suppose there was a point in being there. It was just a show of strength, really, to show the Japanese that they couldn't mess about, that the war was nearly finished and that we were going to take over Labuan. The navy was there in full strength. And the army moved in, the barges went up onto the beaches,

16:30 we flew around over the top of them, to protect them I suppose. I don't know what the hell we could have done if they had been attacked. I suppose we could have found something to do.

So you weren't under any sort of ground -

No there wasn't any stress at all in that sort of job. A piece of cake. [easy] Just a holiday - Then we came home -

17:03 **Sounds like the mud and the living conditions there were quite ugly?**

They were but we didn't think anything of it. The Halmaheras, the islands, were half occupied by the Japanese and half by the Americans. And the Japanese used to sneak in occasionally and kill a few Americans, or steal food and things like that. It was fairly

17:30 messy sort of business, I suppose, but mud is messy.

So you would have had to have been on alert?

Oh yes. But we used to believe that the American army could control the Japanese and hold them out from us. And it wasn't any good lying awake at night waiting to be killed and wanting to sleep. I don't think there was anything

18:00 extra special about it. When we came back, we were out on a bombing and gunnery exercise when we heard that the war had finished -

Sorry, where were you?

Out from Darwin. We left Long Strip and we were out from Darwin, doing a bombing and gunnery exercise when we heard that the war had finished. We had two ground crew with us,

18:31 and we came back and landed and thought "Well, that's it. Finished."

How did you actually hear about the war being over?

I just heard it through the skipper, he told us, over the thing that the war had finished. He had heard from the wireless operator, had picked up the

19:00 signals from RAAF Darwin and relayed it to the skipper and he told us that the war was finished. We spent some time around Darwin, and then we got the job of transporting troops, those that had been in the war for four or five years, and were brought back to Darwin and transhipped onto our aircraft

19:30 and we took them down to Sydney and Melbourne and places like that.

Can you be a bit more specific about who you were transporting from where?

They were brought into Darwin, these blokes who had been in the south for a long time, brought into Darwin by Dakotas, I believe. C47s. Then

20:00 they were loaded onto our aeroplane with all their gear, and we took off and took them down to Sydney. We did low level, so they could see what was happening. At one time, the navigator called up and told the skipper there was a hill about five minutes in front,

20:30 so Mick said, "Yeah, righto." And when he got there he just lifted his left wing over the hill, down the other side and went on. There was nothing spectacular about that. The most spectacular thing was that the troops got a surprise when the wings took lift and started to lift the aircraft, the wings lifted up into the air,

21:00 and the troops thought that the wings should be rigid, and they weren't rigid, they had to be able to move, and they got a hell of a surprise.

How many fellows could you transport at a time?

That I couldn't say.

The aeroplane doesn't sound that

21:30 **large as far as capacity and size -**

It wasn't large. We couldn't put them in the bomb bay because that didn't have any padding or proper gear to stop them falling out. They would have fallen out through the bomb bay. So we crowded them into the waist position. I was required to fly in the waist position and tell the skipper when everything was okay

22:00 and he could take off. Then he said, "Is everything okay for landing?" And I said, "Yes." And I told the troops where to sit and how to sit down so they wouldn't be in the road and wouldn't get hurt if anything went wrong, they would be quite safe. So I just told them where to sit and that was it, and we landed and they got out, and got all their gear out, and away they went.

22:30 **Would you have to fly straight back or would you have a day off?**

We stayed there the night, and came back the next day. I don't know where we slept. I know one time we went to Townsville and we slept in pig pens at the Showgrounds. There was nowhere else to sleep, so you slept where you could. It's not glamorous, but the whole thing wasn't glamorous, really.

23:03 **Was there any thought that you had to yourself about what you were going to do now the war was over?**

While we were waiting to be brought south and be de-mobbed[demobilised], the air force arranged and

they did the same with army and navy, every person did aptitude tests and psychological tests -

23:32 I had never heard of IQ [intelligence quotient] before, but all of a sudden it became the 'in' word. And then we were told the results and I was told that I'd make a good carpenter or a good advertising man. And then when I came south

24:01 I forgot all about that, and I went to get my job back at the mint and I was told they couldn't give me the job back, but I said, "I've got a piece of paper here that says I have to have my job back." And he said, "But that's Australian Government, this is British Government. The Australian Mint is British Government and that piece of paper doesn't mean anything, and so I'm not going to give you your job back." He said, "If you can't find a better job than this, then you don't deserve to get a job."

24:31 So there I was without a job and nowhere to go -

Had you been de-mobbed by this point?

Yes, I had been. De-mobbed, it came down to 5PD, which is Five Personnel Depot, at Subiaco it was.

25:00 I was promoted to warrant officer, because my promotion was six months behind. They paid me the extra few pence per day that I got as a warrant officer. Then I was given a piece of paper and I had to get clearances from the various people,

25:30 and that was it. I spent a few days down at Subiaco. I used to get leave each day, and I got a cold down there and I remember they gave me some Vicks [cold medicine] in a tin, with some hot water, and I had to sniff this and help get rid of the cold. Then I was de-mobbed.

26:00 That was it. You just had to get these five or ten signatures or whatever it was, to say you had a clearance. And I never did get my flying gear back, as I mentioned previously. I asked for the job back and was told I couldn't have it, and I'd have to go and find another one. So a good friend of Dot's told me to put on my warrant officer gear and go in and ask for a job in the sub treasury,

26:30 which I did, and I subsequently got a job in the Commonwealth Sub Treasury, as a land sale inquiry clerk. All land in those days was subject to permission given by the delegate of the treasurer for the sale to take place. You couldn't buy or sell land without getting the permission of the delegate of the Treasury, because

27:00 it was all tied up. Your title deeds weren't allowed to be made over or anything like that at all, until you got permission from the treasurer. So I was an enquiry clerk and then after that I got shifted to the head office of the Treasury, in Perth. The fellow who was in charge of the ledgers didn't want that job, it was too hard for him,

27:30 so I got the job of being ledger keeper for all the Commonwealth accounts in West Australia.

When you keep a ledger, exactly what does that mean?

In those days they had a thing called the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Scheme and every person who had been in the services and

28:00 been overseas, and I had been, were given the chance to train in something that they wished to do. My brother in law, of course, became a plasterer. He had never been a plasterer before, but he trained to be a plasterer. I trained to be a teacher. Others trained for carpentry and brick-laying and all sorts of jobs. And

28:30 the employer who employed the person had to pay them, after three months, had to pay them a full wage as an adult. As they weren't entitled to a full wage they were only forty percent proficient. The Commonwealth Government paid the employer the difference between the amount that he paid the

29:00 employee and the full adult wages. So if you were doing a job as an adult and you were getting five pounds a week, then you might be getting from your employer a pound a week and the Commonwealth Government made the other four pounds up.

29:31 I had to keep the accounts of all the Commonwealth people, who were getting this Commonwealth money. The most difficult thing there was the time, certain things had to be done by a certain time, and the Friday was always a mad panic day, because that was the day when the fellow had to go around to the bank and he used to give the bank the authority to pay

30:00 the various employers the amount of money they were entitled to. And hell was to pay if they didn't receive their cheque on the Monday or Tuesday. So that was another learning curve, I suppose, in the process of readjusting to civvy [civilian] life. Then I was called up by the

30:32 rehabilitation people and I was to go for an interview, so I went for an interview. And the chap said, "You wanted to be a carpenter?" Well, I put down I wanted to be a carpenter because I couldn't think of anything else. And I said, "Yes, I know I've put down a carpenter, but I can't saw up bits of wood for the rest of my life, I would go balmy." So he said, "Go outside a have a smoke."

31:01 Everybody smoked in those days. When I was flying with the Americans we used to get four cartons of

cigarettes, and a carton of cigarettes was two hundred cigarettes, and a packet of matches for eleven shillings. And that was very, very cheap.

31:30 So anyhow, he said go outside and have a smoke, so I went outside and had a smoke and I came in and he said, "You're pretty good with words, according to this." He said, "What about being a teacher?" I said, "That's the last thing I possibly thought of." So I went home and talked it over with Dot, and she said, "Well, you better go for it." So I did.

Dot, are you married to Dot yet?

32:00 Yes, I married Dot in 1946. We corresponded the whole time I was away. I have a bit of a smile when the Prime Minister comes to greet the blokes who've been away for two months [Iraq, 2004]. We were away for two or three years and no prime ministers came to meet me when I came home. The way they carry on is

32:30 a bit nonsensical to me. Still, I must admit that I'm getting old. We didn't do things that way in those days. If you were away for two years, and some of these fellows were prisoners of war for four years, and when they came home, they came home and they were given a pat on the back, thanks very much for the good job you've done and ta-ta and that will do.

Did you transport any POWs [prisoners of war] in that time?

33:00 Well, there was probably POWs in the groups that we transported to Sydney and Melbourne from Darwin. But I wasn't aware that they were POWs. They were just blokes that were going home.

When did you have time to get married to Dot?

In 1946, I was working in the Sub Treasury

33:30 as an enquiry clerk and I got a week off, to get married and have a honeymoon.

Where did you go for your honeymoon?

We went to the hills. A place called Dalrey Lodge up in Darlington. Then

34:00 my mother had a house in Gwentyfred Road, South Perth, and we went to live out there. We were fortunate that we didn't have to live with either in-laws. Mother was down at the farm where Dad was. And Dot's mother had, what you would call a boarding house, it was flats, and she used to let the flats out to various women,

34:30 mostly women, whose husbands were overseas, so we were fortunate we didn't have to live with either in-laws, we were lucky that way, that we had a house to ourselves. And our eldest son was born there in 1948. And when the chap said, "Do you want to be a carpenter or whatever?" I got called up to the Education

35:00 Department and they wanted me to start straightaway. And I said, "No, I'm not going to start straight away." So I came home and talked it over with Dot and decided I would do a twelve month correspondence course, which I did in Maths, History and English.

This is a teaching correspondence course?

I didn't have to attend night school, fortunately. I took correspondence courses.

35:33 We didn't have any leisure time. The only leisure time we used to have was Saturday afternoon when we used to play tennis, but every night when I came home from work I would study, because I had left school years before and I had no qualifications at all, and I knew that I had to get some sort of qualification to do the rehab course,

36:00 which was the twelve month course that I did, to go to teachers college. It was called a qualifying course. And if you passed that you qualified to go to teachers' college at the university.

Do you think the time you spent in the war actually encouraged you to continue your schooling, after the war?

Probably, I knew that this was a chance that I had to

36:30 prove that I could do something, and it was a chance to improve myself and it was much better than working in the Royal Mint, which was a dead-end sort of job. I could stay there for the rest of my life and it would be a comfortable sort of wage, it would be a reasonable sort of wage, but it wouldn't be anything good or exciting or challenging or anything like that. And

37:00 so, when the chance came to go in the qualifying course I seized it with both hands. We had three lecturers and a university bod who lectured to us as well. We did English and European History and Arithmetic, and we

37:30 studied and we studied eight Shakespearean plays instead of one, and four novels instead of one - We became very close friends with the tutors, we called them by their first name and they called us by our

first name. And because we were mature people, we were men. . . There weren't any women in my course

38:00 but there were in the subsequent courses - when we passed that, we went to teacher's college, or university. Some of the tutors that we had at the qualifying course became teachers at the teacher's college, too, because they were experienced teachers who taught high school and primary school -

38:30 **Did you actually enjoy learning things like Shakespeare?**

Yes, I did. I enjoyed it immensely. It was hard work because I had left school at - I enjoyed study. I was lucky in that way, that I enjoyed study. After, I finished in the top six out of teachers' college. And then I did my higher certificate,

39:00 which meant I had to study at university second and third year level. The higher certificate was specifically designed by Education Department for people who couldn't attend university because they were in the bush.

It seems like you were doing a lot of courses that have been collided together?

Yeah.

39:34 When I left teachers' college, I went out to a one teacher's school, and somebody once said to me "One teacher school's are good, Dave. Because you sink or swim. And it doesn't matter whether you sink or swim, it's your fault." If you are successful it's your fault, and if you are not successful it's your fault. And I had

40:00 about ten or twelve children I suppose, in this little one teacher's school in the forestry settlement area. And I was told by the Education Department that it was bachelor's quarters - and bachelor's quarters consisted of one room about as big as this, and a lean-to, if you were lucky. But we were fortunate, we had a house in the forestry, and the forestry looked after us very well indeed.

40:30 And from there I went to another house in a place called Pantapin. Both of these places are closed down. Willowdale is now a big aluminium project -

Tape 6

00:33 **So do you think that teaching was the right profession for you?**

Oh yes. I was called up, as I said, and they wanted me to start then and there, and I said I would wait until the beginning of the next year, which I did, and did correspondence. And I've never regretted the fact that I went from

01:00 seven or eight pounds a week, down to five pounds a week. Almost half. When I went to teachers college, I was on almost half of what I had been getting in the Commonwealth Treasury. And I was married and had a child. And still, I've never regretted it. When I went to the one teacher's school that I mentioned, I

01:32 did the higher certificate, and I enjoyed that study, and when I came down to Perth and I could go to university, I went to university and got a couple of degrees, and I've always enjoyed study. Just one of those things that I enjoy doing.

02:00 And it's been very good to me, I've been very fortunate indeed. I've had a very good life. We came down in 1957, we built a house down there, and then ten years ago we battle-axed the block and built this place, then sold that place. So that's it.

Have you belonged to any associations since your service?

Well, I belong to the Royal Aeronautical Society.

02:30 I never thought that I would ever be able to belong to that. It's a very ancient, 1866 I think it was, the great British Royal Aeronautical Society. And we have a branch here in Western Australia and I'm on the committee. I belong to the World Aerospace Education Organisation, which sounds terribly impressive, but it's not anywhere near as impressive as it sounds. And I belong to the

03:00 RAAF Association, and I do two days a month in the Aviation Museum, as a guide. And that's not a very onerous task, that's just a matter of knowing the aeroplanes that are in the museum and a bit about them, and talking about them. As I've always been interested in aeroplanes, it was very easy indeed.

03:32 And I've had twenty five years now as a guide at the Aviation Museum. And I still enjoy it. It's still good fun.

Are there many visitors?

Oh yes, we get quite a few visitors through. Particularly on the weekends, Saturday or Sunday. That's

why I would prefer to work on Saturday

04:00 or Sunday.

What kind of people visit?

All sorts of people. One couple that stuck in my mind was the woman, was not very interested, she was sitting down and I offered to get her a cup of coffee, and she said, "No thanks, I'll be right." And I said, "You're not very interested?" And she said, "No, we just got off the plane from Great Britain and we came straight out here. My husband demanded it."

04:32 And there were lots of people like that. Lots of women come in and they feel that they are going to be bored, and they find out that it's such an interesting place that they're not bored at all, and that they're very interested indeed. A number of them come back two or three times to see the exhibition, because it's such a good one. It's probably the best in Australia,

05:00 and it's probably the biggest in Australia as well. You need to go out and spend a couple of hours to see it, to have a decent look at the exhibits.

05:34 If you had to choose an exhibit, what do you think is the most interesting?

Well, probably for me because I'm interested in aeroplanes generally, the Avro Anson is the most interesting exhibit. Because it was the first monoplane in the RAF and the RAAF. It was the first with an enclosed cabin for the crew.

06:10 It was the first with a retractable undercarriage and the first that carried bombs internally, a lot of firsts in it. The Lancaster is a very impressive sort of aeroplane, but the Avro Anson was the one that initiated

06:30 a lot of new things, that we take for granted now, into aviation. That's why I think it's perhaps the most interesting aeroplane in the whole exhibit. Although it's not the most popular. I suppose the most popular is the Lancaster, then the Dakota and perhaps the Camel. But I think the Anson is the most interesting.

07:00 Certainly a lot of Australian pilots did an important part of their training in the Avro Anson -

Yes, lots of pilots trained in the Avro Anson during the Second World War. Particularly the bods that were going onto multi-engine aircraft, they trained in Ansons, both in Great Britain, Canada and Australia. The Canadians had some American aeroplanes

07:30 as well, as you would expect. But the people who were going onto multi-engine very often trained in Ansons. In fact, two Ansons, one landed on top of another. They were both off the ground and the pilot on the bottom landed the aircraft, both of them, safely. That happened up in Geraldton and also the eastern states. They had lots

08:00 of aircraft in the eastern states of course. Lots more than we had here. But Geraldton and Cunderdin, they were big bases for aircraft in Western Australian - And then I've found out since Onslow and places like that were refuelling bases for submarines and navy and air force. And you'd think that

08:30 Onslow was nothing. It wasn't even on half the maps. But it was an important place during the war.

Are you still very fond of the Liberators?

Oh yes, they're restoring one in the eastern states, in Victoria, and my wife and I have been to see it a couple of times. I'm a member of the restoration group, although I can't do anything. I can just send in my donation every now and again

09:00 to help to rebuild it.

When do you expect it to be completed?

I doubt that it will ever be completed because they are trying to restore it to original condition. They have a lot of institute of technology young characters go down there to help. And they're building,

09:30 doing fiddly bits and pieces that would make the Liberator more up to the original than it is now. But probably another five or ten years it will be near enough to be completed, I guess.

Are there any flying in other parts of the world?

There is one flying Liberator flying in the USA, but another one is supposed to be being brought to flying conditions. It seems strange

10:01 It seems strange to me that the Liberator was built in greater numbers than any other four engine aircraft on the enemy or the Allied side, and there is few of them any other. Most of the Libs were - . literally sawn up, with power saws and

10:30 chainsaws and turned into washing machines and all sorts of things, that needed aluminium, that needed light metals in them. It's a pity that that happened to them, but still -

There seems to have been an incredible amount of disposal and waste at the end of the war?

Yeah, there was a great deal of waste. Three or four hundred

11:00 Australian Liberators, and God knows how many Americans, were chopped up. Even the B29, the Enola Gay and those aircraft - The Enola Gay has been pretty much reconstructed to pretty much the same as it was when it dropped the atomic bomb. There were hundreds of Mustangs and Spitfires and Hurricanes [US, UK fighters],

11:30 you name it, that were chopped up. It was a waste, I guess.

I've heard that they were even dumped in the ocean?

The Americans have said that the aircraft that were not being able to be used, were not to be used for commercial reasons. They could be kept by the air force, but if the air force didn't want them they had to be dumped in the ocean. And the

12:00 Catalinas that flew the double sunrise between Perth and Colombo, many of them had been sunk outside Rottneest [Island]. They just fired bullets into them until they sank, and they sank into the water, and that was the end of it.

Why do you think they had that philosophy?

The Americans had that philosophy because they wanted to

12:30 build new aircraft themselves, and they didn't want the old aircraft used. They wanted to build and sell new aeroplanes. So that was the reason that they had that philosophy and I don't think there's any other reason. The Englishmen had a similar sort of reason, although they used a lot of their aeroplanes for peace time uses after the war.

13:00 But the Americans didn't. They got rid of everything and started again.

Incredibly wasteful, isn't it?

Oh, I'll say, incredibly wasteful.

How important have the various associations that you've been a member of been to you?

Well, the RAAF Association has been very important to me, because we go there most Friday nights, not every Friday night, but most Friday nights, to the club.

13:31 They have built retirement villages at Albury, Busselton, two at Mandurah, one up at Hillary's, and they've got one over at Bull Creek Drive. I've had my name down to go into a retirement village, and they rang and said

14:00 "Are you ready to go?" I said, "No, I'm not ready to go. In five or six years time I will be ready to go." They provide not only that, but they provide care for the people who aren't able to look after themselves. A friend of mine who has got Alzheimer's is in the lodge over there. And other people I know are the lodges, and they're nursed and

14:30 looked after. They're not sick enough to go into a nursing home, per se, a nursing home where they cannot attend to themselves, but they're too sick to be let out. So the Air Force Association looks after them and pays for their looking after. Part of their pension, as it is, goes to the Air Force Association for looking after them.

15:01 The World Aerospace Education Organisation, I'm the editor of the newsletter for that. And I find it an interesting organisation because you get the latest news. And the Royal Aeronautical Society of which I'm a member, I went to a meeting last night, actually, and they have lectures and talks and visits to various places to do with

15:30 aeroplanes, and that suits me down to the ground. From the Royal Aeronautical Society I receive two magazines per month, and they give you the latest news and things like that in that, and I find that most interesting indeed.

16:01 I'm on the internet with a computer and I can communicate with people in the USA or the eastern states to get aircraft information.

So how many aircraft are you currently researching?

I'm not researching any myself. I've got for the Imperial War Museum,

16:30 a couple of photographs that I'm going to send to him, to put with the tapes to go to the Imperial War Museum. And that's about it.

Are you a member of the RSL [Returned and Services League]?

No. I joined the RSL when I first came out of the Services, but then the RAAF Association is the sort of RSL for

17:00 the RAAF people. So I'm a member of the RAAF Association. Both Dot and myself are full financial voting members of the association. And we can go to the club each Friday without having to sign in or anything like that. We go to functions over there. As I said, I give a hand in the

17:30 museum.

So the RSL hasn't really been -

No, I attend ceremonies for the RAAF Association at King's Park. I give talks to the RAAF when

18:00 they have Darwin Day and things like that, I talk about Darwin Day. And tomorrow evening I'm going to the retirement village at Cambray to talk about Cambray and the effect of the Australian Flying Corps, AFC, and the part that they played in the Battle of Cambray [France].

What can you tell me about that?

18:32 Well, in 1917, 1918, the battle of Cambray played an important part in the First World War history. That was the first time that tanks were used en masse. And numbers 2, 3 and 4 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps were involved in the battle of Cambray and played an important part. And that's

19:00 what I will be talking about tomorrow night.

I've visited Cambray but I didn't know the significance of its name?

Yeah, in France. Cambray is a place in France

19:30 and the Battle of Cambray was the first time that tanks were used en masse. Previously the generals in charge used to bombard the opposition with as much as they could for a week or more, then they'd send the troops across and capture perhaps five yards of territory. But then the Battle of Cambray came along and the fellow in charge

20:00 said that he wanted to use tanks, and he really used them properly the way tanks should be used, instead of cavalry. And they over ran the Germans. And 2, 3 and 4 Squadron of the AFC were involved with the tanks, so that the general in charge, and he should have got a VC [Victoria Cross] for this for

20:30 using his brains, the only time a general ever used his brains I think - He sent the aircraft across, and the aircraft bombed and strafed the Germans, and the tanks went after them, and so the Battle of Cambray was a very important one in World War 1. The next year, in 1918,

21:02 the squadrons 2, 3 and 4 of the AFC played their full part in repelling the German counter offensive, and the Allied counter offensive, so they brought the War to an end. So really the AFC played a very important part. Before that, the Number 1 Squadron AFC had been in Iraq, what

21:30 we know now as Iraq, Mesopotamia as it was called. And there was a half squadron sent to Mesopotamia, Very shortly after the Australian Flying Corps, Number 1 Squadron went to the Middle East and supported the

22:00 fight against the Turks and Arabs.

So you have this varied knowledge but you can't remember much about the time you spent in Darwin?

Well, most of the time I spent in Darwin was not in Darwin itself, but in a tent, and we used to come home from the trip, go to the tent, and have a shower.

22:30 Get debriefed. With the Americans, we used to get a shot of two fingers of bourbon and a couple of doughnuts and a cup of coffee if you wanted it, you see, and that was supplied by the Red Cross nurses. They were supposed to be Red Cross nurses, but they were just women. I'm not saying they didn't do a good job, I don't mean that. They weren't nurses, they were Red Cross women

23:00 sent out by the American Red Cross to dispense grog [alcohol] and doughnuts to the intrepid airmen who came back.

They must have been popular?

They were - women.

Any romances?

Not that I knew of. There probably were. The Australians and the Americans differed in lots of ways. But one of the ways in which they differed,

23:31 the Australians had WAAAFs [Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force] and AWAS, that's the Australian Women's Army Service, and the WRANs, the Women of [Women's] Royal Naval Service, who were privates, and corporals and sergeants, all the way up. And they could mix with privates and sergeants and corporals, there was a lot of mixture going on.

- 24:00 But with the Americans, the American women always had to be with officers. They could never go with a man who might be their social equal in ordinary life. That's one of the things that Mitchener in his book *Tales Of The South Pacific* keeps harping on, that the ordinary woman from the USA.
- 24:30 who would socially mix with the ordinary man from the USA, when she joined the services she was made an officer and wasn't allowed to mix with a person who was their social equal in ordinary situations, had to mix with officers. And that caused a lot of problems for both the women and the men,
- 25:00 because the officers could go with the women, and the women could go with the officers, but they weren't allowed to go with anyone else. And that was noticeable in Darwin. As I said we used to swimming in the nude. And the women would come down to go swimming, and they would come down with two officers, the two women from the Red Cross place used to come down with the two officers, and I remember once there was about a hundred blokes in the water,
- 25:30 and one Yank stood up and said, "Hell, I'm getting out of here." And the whole lot of the hundred all stood up and walked out, with all the dangly bits and everything showing, and the women ignored all that and walked on out to the water, because the tide was out. But I never went into Darwin town itself. Why? What was there in Darwin town? Nothing.

26:00 Just bombed out buildings, that's all, in Darwin town. I never used to go in and I'm sure the other blokes didn't.

There's been a bit of conjecture over the years about the size of the Darwin bombing?

Well, I've got a book out there that gives me the numbers of the aircraft that bombed. And Fujita, the Japanese leader of the group, said it was a hammer to crack an egg shell,

- 26:30 and he was quite right. The Northern Territory was bombed sixty four or sixty five times. And sometimes by one aircraft, but most times by lots of aeroplanes. And from what we know now, the Japanese didn't ever intend to invade Australia but wanted to keep Darwin quiet because it was going to be used as a base by the Americans
- 27:00 in their return to the islands, you see. And I think Darwin deserves a place alongside Britain, although there was not as many houses or shops or things that they had in Britain, but it deserves a place alongside Britain in the Battle of Britain and the Battle of Darwin. Because after all the Battle of Britain was really won by the
- 27:30 Royal Navy. And the Royal Navy fought the battle for Britain for five years. And the Royal Air Force fought the Battle for Britain for a couple of months, perhaps. Had the submarines, the U boats, been able to prevent the merchant vessels from reaching Great Britain then Britain would have starved, because she had so many
- 28:01 men there, and women, who were in the services, Americans, Australians, Canadians, South Africans, everybody, and all the English of course, and they would have starved had the Royal Navy not fought the Battle of the Atlantic and won. That's why I say the Liberator was so important because it assisted greatly
- 28:30 in the Battle of the Atlantic. The three hundred [mile] gap that existed was closed by the Liberator bomber. And this is not decrying or detracting from the work done by the RAF, or the Lancasters or the other bombers, but I'm saying it, I'm emphasising it, because
- 29:00 I want the tape to show that the Japanese war was every bit as bad as the European one. And perhaps in some ways worse. But still it was every bit as bad.

How many people lost their lives in the Battle of Darwin?

That I couldn't say. And I don't suppose anybody will ever know, because no doubt a number of the people killed, their bodies

29:30 were just buried on the beaches and wherever they happened to be, and no count was probably made.

The official reports are quite low, though -

Yes they are. The numbers of people involved wasn't so much as compared with the European. But remember the area over which the battle with Japan over Australia was fought,

30:02 was huge. It was about a third of the world. The Europeans fought on a very narrow front, and had thousands and thousands of men, so thousands and thousands got killed. In the First World War, I think one battle six hundred thousand were killed, Germans and British, French -

30:31 I've heard someone compare the size of the bombing on Darwin to that of Pearl Harbor?

Two different things altogether, I think. Darwin was bombed, so that the Australians and the Americans couldn't make it a base. Pearl Harbor was bombed to prevent the ships being used against the Japanese. I think they were two different sorts of bombings,

31:00 two different aims in the bombings. In Darwin, certainly, they managed to catch a number of ships in

the harbour. They caught a number of aircraft on the ground. Pell, the American major, who was in charge of a group of fighters, came to Darwin with nine fighters, and he picked up a Oestreicher there,

31:30 and they were going to fly across to Timor, because the Japanese hadn't yet captured Timor. And they ran into storms. And they had no way of combating the storms, so they turned around and came back again. Pell left five fighters, Oestreicher was one of them, and he landed with the other five to have them refuelled. Unfortunately for Pell,

32:00 that was time the Japanese attacked. Oestreicher sought the Japanese fighters, and he's called out the bandits [enemy aircraft] were attacking. But by that time an American fighter pilot had been shot down, Oestreicher himself got two. And so the first Japanese fighter to be shot down over Australian soil was shot down by Americans.

32:30 Pell was killed and his aircraft was blown up, and he was shot to death by strafing Japanese. So it was altogether a different show.

I think the comparison that I heard was with regard to the losses of, say for instance, US ships, aeroplanes and lives -

33:05 There were a lot more losses of United States ships and planes, I guess in Pearl Harbor than there was in Darwin -

The comparison that I heard was different. They suspected that Darwin was big, if not bigger.

I wouldn't have thought so. Three or five American battleships were sunk

33:30 in Pearl Harbor. And I don't think the Americans - there may have been one or two Americans that got off the ground to attack the Japanese. But there was two, maybe three, waves of Japanese in Pearl Harbor. But only one wave in Darwin. I would have thought that Pearl Harbor was bigger than Darwin in losses

34:02 compared.

You mentioned Darwin Day earlier, can you tell me what Darwin Day is?

Well, nearest the 19th of February each year, the RAAF Association holds a Darwin Day ceremony. It's a very simple little ceremony. People who were at Darwin

34:30 or representing those that were at Darwin, lay a wreath on the memorial over there. And then somebody, it's usually been me the last five or six times, gives a talk on Darwin Day, why and how and what happened, and then they have morning tea, and that's about it.

How long do you give your talk for?

35:01 At the maximum? Ten minutes. You're threatened with extinction if you talk anymore.

You mentioned earlier that you believe, and it is widely believed, that the Japanese had no intentions of invading Australia -

Well, the Japanese navy, I think, wanted to invade Australia. But the army said, "We haven't got sufficient men

35:30 to occupy such a harsh land mass as Australia," and I think they were pretty right. I mean, fancy trying to occupy beyond Kalgoorlie out to Ceduna, say. How could you occupy that? And perhaps the navy was thinking of the Brisbane Line, because a line was drawn between Brisbane and Adelaide -

36:00 If the worst came to the worst, then the Australians were going to retreat behind the Brisbane Line and try and defend - they wouldn't have been in the race, actually. They had a much better show of defending Australia from Darwin, and other area to the north. Don't forget there were other areas like Groote Eylandt and places like that,

36:31 that the Australians were defending as well. But I don't think they would have had any sort of a show defending the Brisbane Line because it was so large, so big. And that was the thing that stopped the Japanese Army, I believe, from invading Australia, it was too big. Too big to occupy. The little islands and that sort of thing, they could handle those pretty well,

37:02 you only needed half a dozen soldiers to defend some of those islands. In fact, Baba, one of the islands to the north, if you had half a dozen and a bicycle you would have been right.

When you consider, though, that they were making their way through New Guinea, across the Kokoda Track, it's almost the back alley way to Australia, though -

37:30 They wanted to capture Moresby, because Port Moresby, if you look on a map, is quite close to Australia. And had they captured Moresby they would have driven the Americans out of New Guinea altogether, and they would have had the whole of New Guinea, then, as their own. Because they came into Milne Bay, and there is very little known about Milne Bay, but it was a very important battle fought by Australians

- 38:02 and they tried to get in the back way by getting into Milne Bay. In the Battle of the Coral Sea they had tried to come down to capture Moresby, and they had an aircraft carrier and several ships with troops on board, and a naval vessel as well. But the Americans sent their small carrier the Soho
- 38:30 and frightened the others off, and in doing so they saved Port Moresby. Now when that failed, they then tried to come down the Kokoda Track, and we know that thankfully, by the Australians, they were prevented from coming down the Kokoda Track. The Americans went up the Kapakapa Trail, which is to the east of
- 39:00 the Kokoda Track, and was not as bad or anywhere near as fiercely contested. So the Japanese never got Port Moresby. They came close. When they came to Kokoda they came awfully close.
- Hypothetically, if the Japanese had succeeded in securing**
- 39:31 **New Guinea and taking Port Moresby, then don't you think that would have given them a place to mass before pursuing Australia?**
- Yes, it would have, but I doubt very much if they would have bothered about invading Australia. They would have come down the Solomon Islands. That's where the Yanks took
- 40:00 Guadalcanal, and had they captured that, then they would cut Australia off from America altogether, and America would not have had the great land mass of Australia to use as a jumping off point. Hypothetically they would have been in a very strong position to destroy Australia,
- 40:30 and also to cut off the American supplies. But the Americans probably would have come through New Zealand to get to Australia, because they needed Australia, and the Yanks have never done anything they haven't needed to do, and they needed Australia to provide them with a base. New Guinea wasn't any sort of a base, it was just a little dump,
- 41:00 and Moresby, and most of the others were little places, they weren't big enough for the Americans to worry about. Although in New Guinea after the Kokoda Trail and things had settled down a bit, they then put B24 squadrons in there and B25 squadrons and A20 squadrons and that sort of business, they
- 41:30 still wouldn't have had sufficient room to build a big area, I don't think, for a few years anyhow.

Tape 7

- 00:31 **You were just saying that the Japanese were a far greater threat than the Indonesians ever were?**
- Yes, only because the Indonesians, at that stage of the game, were under the control of the Dutch, and it was called the Netherlands East Indies.
- 01:00 The Dutch were a colonial power, the same as Great Britain were a colonial power in Australia, early on, and then in India for a long time. And the Dutch controlled the Indonesians to a considerable extent. And the Indonesians didn't have very much say in anything at all. The Dutch had a scheme whereby -
- 01:30 if an Indonesian woman bore a Dutch man's child, then the child became considered white and was equal with the Dutchman. But when the Japanese came, they drove the Dutch out and made the Indonesians self governing to an extent, as they did in Malaya and they did in Borneo
- 02:00 and they did in other places. So it was the end of the colonialism as we know it, and the beginning of independence for those people. And that's why the Japanese did those people a great service. Although they may have been cruel and antagonistic towards the Indonesians,
- 02:31 and the people who lived on Borneo and other places, they did give them the feeling that the white man could be beaten. And previously there was the feeling among the colonial people, the Indonesians and the Indians and Malaysians, that the white man could never be beaten. And here was an Asiatic power
- 03:00 which came into their country and showed them that the white man could be beaten. And soundly beaten what is more, so the Indonesians were never a threat to Australia until after the war when they developed their own self-governing country and put themselves
- 03:30 under the one flag. Although people knock the flags, the flags are terribly important to people. They use them as rallying points. And the flags are very important to the Indonesians and the Malaysians and the people who live in Borneo.
- 04:00 But they were important rallying points. And when the Japanese left, as they were driven back to their own country, those people rallied behind the flag, developed their own flag, that sort of thing.
- What was your reaction when you heard about some of the Japanese atrocities that happened in the Pacific?**

I was annoyed. I was thankful that it hadn't happened to me.

04:30 And I suppose like everybody we were sorry for the people to whom it had happened. And sorry for the wives and children of those men. I don't suppose we've ever forgiven the Japanese for those sort of atrocities that they carried out. That's about all I can say about that.

05:00 I guess we've never forgiven the Japanese for it.

Do you think it was the correct thing to do, to drop the [atomic] bomb?

I've just read a book called *Ruin From The Air*, and I'm convinced it was the correct thing to do. That if they had not dropped the bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, that there would have been millions of American and Australian

05:30 lives lost. There's an old saying, "All is fair in love and war." And I guess that's true, in that particular case anyhow. I think we were justified in dropping the bomb, and I think Truman was an extremely strong president to say that the bomb would be dropped. It's a pity that the Americans don't remember that they were the first to drop the bombs,

06:01 and that India and Pakistan and a number of other countries in the world do have weapons of mass destruction, even if we're not one of them.

What sort of subjects did you end up teaching in your teaching career?

I taught in the primary, so I taught every subject there was to teach.

06:30 I don't suppose I specialised in anything until later in my career, when I specialised in nature studies or the natural science. I worked with Harry Butler and people like that -

How did that happen?

Well, when I came down from the bush in 1957, I was posted to Morley.

07:00 The Education Department in those days was like a big family. If you didn't like your posting you didn't cry and carry on and weep and wail, you just went and saw somebody and said, "Look, I'm fed up with that. Why did I have to go there?" And they would try and fit you into where you wanted to go. And I said to the Education Department when I applied for a posting to the metropolitan area, I didn't want to go where my children

07:30 would be going to school. And they went to school at Cleveland Street, which is now a Muslim school up here, and I went to Morley. So they obliged me in that way and they have obliged me ever since. I taught three or four years at Morley, then I went to what is now called Westminster School, it was called North Nollamara in those days, I taught there for a couple of years -

08:02 Are you always teaching primary?

Yes, I wanted to teach primary.

Why?

Because I think it's far more interesting than high school.

Before they get crazy?

Oh yes, that's part of the reason. One of the most interesting classes to teach, I think, is Grade One and Two, where you can tell them stories and they believe you.

08:31 They sit on the edge of their seats, and they love it. They love stories. I used to tell stories to the kids of Grade One and Two when I was teaching up at Morley, whether I was teaching that class or not, the teacher used to say "Come up and tell a story to the kids." So I'd hand over to the headmaster and go and tell a story to the kids in One and Two. I loved it and so would they -

09:00 Would you make them up?

No, they were stories that I had heard and learnt about. I used to add a bit of variation to it, of course. Then I was out at Westminster one time, and we had a big Arbour Day do. And Vince Serventy came out and he gave a talk.

09:32 What's his position?

What's his position? He is over in Sydney, in Hunters Hill as far as I know, and he must be about eighty-four or eighty-five.

What did he give a talk about?

He gave a talk about saving plants and trees and birds and things like that. He's a conservationist. And because I had done

10:00 such a good job on the Arbour Day, he decided that I should go and work with him. And two years later I did. I got transferred to the Nature Advisory Service, which doesn't exist anymore -

What was the objective of the Nature Advisory Service?

Well, it's conservation. Teaching teachers about conservation, so they would teach conservation -

10:32 It was an advisory service so it means we advised the teachers, we didn't teach the kids. And Harry Butler left and went to work for West Australian Petroleum, and he did a wonderful job up at Barrow Island and places like that. And then Vince Serventy got a chance to do film, The Nature Walkabout as he called it,

11:00 and I was left in charge of the Nature Advisory Service. Well then they had Olive Seymour, who was in charge of the WA Gould League, which is the oldest conservation organisation in Western Australia. And we had a special room built, for us, and we got tied up with visual education and

11:30 anything that sent the message.

With being in this advisory service, would teachers come to you or would you actively market yourself?

We actively went out. So every school we visited, we'd send out a note to every school to say that on such and such a day

12:00 "We expect to be visiting your school, would you fill in the enclosed form and say what teachers teach what." And we sent out a list of leaflets and things like that, because we had leaflets on almost every subject, every tree, and leaflets on every living bird. Four or five hundred leaflets I suppose.

12:33 Then I got sent to East Perth, and I later found out they sent us to East Perth because they wanted to retain the land for the Education Department. That's where they built Silver City down there, on that area. And I went to Clover House. And I was most unhappy in Clover House. Fortunately the boss of Clover House went on long service leave and

13:00 the fellow who took his place was a good friend of mine. And he said, "Wouldn't you rather be at the zoo than Clover House?" And I said, "My word I would." And so we went to the zoo.

What was Clover House?

Clover House was just a building of offices. They shifted the Special Services Branch of the Education Department, shifted there, and they didn't know what the hell to do with the Nature Advisory Service, so they called us Special Services, so we went there.

13:33 **It was like an emasculating sort of -**

It was just to get rid of us, actually. And finally we went to the zoo, and I had the zoo education. There was a bloke called Jim Quinn who was Director of Schools in those days, and Jim rang me up one day and he said

14:00 "We're going to give them ten bucks to bring their kids by bus to the school, and if they are going to have ten dollars they ought to do something for it." I said, "Yeah, good on you, Jim. I agree with you." Because in those days everybody knew everybody, and you called senior officers by their first names, with respect, always with respect, but you called them by their first names.

14:30 And Jim said, "What do you think about having an in service course?" We used to have in service courses. Before the teachers brought their class to the zoo, they had to attend one of these courses, which introduced them to the zoo. And Eric McCrumb, who was on my staff, and I used to split the teachers in half and take a half each. And he'd do a section of the zoo and I would do a section of the zoo. .

Is this like a guided tour?

Yeah, a sort of guided tour,

15:00 so that they could think up questions to ask the children. Because the kids weren't coming to the zoo for a holiday, it was to work. They came to work. And the teachers were a bit upset about this at first, but they got used to the idea. They didn't mind, really. And then we extended it to King's Park. The principal officer at King's Park,

15:31 who's since passed on, said, "We've got a place up here, Dave, that you could use." And I said, "Right. What is it?" And he said, "Come and have a look." So I went and had a look, at that lookout place where you can overlook Perth Waters. Underneath that is a glass enclosed area which we turned

16:00 into a classroom. And we had curtains all around it and projectors and everything. And I had a couple of teachers up there. And the teachers used to bring their groups in, and they would come into an in service course first, and they would be introduced to where they were going to walk and all that business, and then they'd bring their classes in and their classes would be handed over to these two advisory teachers, and these two advisory teachers would take

- 16:30 the kids on the walk and introduce them to Australia's native plants. That went very successfully, very well indeed. They introduced docents, they called them, they were guides.
- 17:00 And the bloke from King's Park said, "I'm not going to have any docents up there, only guides." And I said, "Good on you, I'm on your side." So anyway this fellow went to the USA and got this wonderful idea of having docents, as he called them. They were guides for the ordinary general public. You could ask them a question
- 17:30 and they would be able to answer it, but don't ask them too many questions - And I had the WA Gould League -
- Are you still doing things with that?**
- Yes, yes. We had the WA Gould League
- 18:00 and I had three teachers, primary school teachers, who had come from Victoria and she was going to reorganise the entire school zoo education . And I'm just as pig-headed as she was. I was the boss, I won. And she conducted in service courses for the secondary teachers, and conducted in service courses
- 18:30 for the primary teachers. And we had Kings Park going as well. When they got short of money they closed down education and health, the first two things they closed down, and they closed down zoo education and King's Park education. They closed down the education section. Now before they did
- 19:00 that, the WA Gould League became separated from the Education Department and became incorporated itself, and we built, with the help of the World Wildlife Fund, although they still owe us ninety thousand dollars, they don't acknowledge that, we built the Herdsmen's Lake Wildlife Centre, and I was involved with the designing and the architectural work, which I must say that I didn't
- 19:30 do any architectural work, I just advised. And that was to be the Gould Leagues headquarters, and Elizabeth Hancock, who was then the Gould League Secretary, and I moved across to Herdsmen's Lake, and within twelve months the zoo education centre had closed down.
- 20:00 And when I retired at the end of that year, Eric McCrumb, who was 2IC [second in command] in a roundabout way, became connected with the WA Gould League and the Herdsmen's Lake Wildlife Centre, and he ran it for a couple of years until he retired. And they're still going today.
- 20:31 The WA Gould League was started by the Education Department, from an idea that originated in the eastern states. And Gould was a famous ornithologist, and a bird man, and his wife did a tremendous amount of painting, and she published a book Birds Of Australia, and she did most of the paintings in that book
- 21:00 and they're worth thousands of dollars, those original sheets that she painted. Dot and I are on the council of the Gould League, and we still attend the council meetings. But it's time we gave it away, because it's time for younger people to take it over and run the Gould League and the council.
- What sort of things does the league actually do?**
- 21:30 It has badges and membership cards for children who are members, if they want to be. If they get a hundred percent in the classroom they get a pennant to put on the wall, and they have groups of children and teachers going to the Herdsman's Lake Wildlife Centre to learn about conservation. Primarily birds because they are
- 22:00 the most obvious feature of the Wildlife Centre. And they have children going there in sleepovers. When they sleep at night, they have half girls and half boys, and they divide the blankets down the centre of the work room. And lots of people from overseas come. Dot and I used to a
- 22:30 Sunday afternoon. And the admission is a donation. Dot and I used to do the Sunday afternoons and answer questions about the centre and that sort of thing. But unfortunately the Zoo Education Centre and the King's Park Education Centre have gone by the board. And Tom Spence
- 23:00 was the director of the Zoo, John Beard was director of King's Park, and after - came Paul Wychley, as director of King's Park. And those fellows who had education as their main thing have gone. And the Gould League used to run a fortnight camp, and they used to have forty two selected children from all over the state,
- 23:30 and six teachers, so that meant there were seven kids to each teacher. And we ran a fortnight's camp, and it was based on nature studies, the whole camp. From the time they got up in the morning until they went to bed at night, they did nature studies. And of course you can't do nature studies without doing arithmetic and English and history and everything. And so we used to incorporate all of this, as
- 24:00 well as the children reporting what they'd seen on their trails. They would stand in front of a group of children and talk about what they had seen. We never expected them to talk about things that they hadn't seen. And they talked about things they had seen, so it was the best sort of education. Vince Serventy and Harry Butler used to go there, until they left,

- 24:30 and then when they left I took over. And we used to do this fortnight and the kids used to go back completely enthralled, with the folder of all that they'd done, and they used to have to write up their diary everyday. And they also had to do kitchen work and the setting and serving the tables, and all those sort of jobs that go with the camp. And
- 25:00 one of the most popular things amongst the boys was chopping wood, because the city boys never had to chop wood. And the country boys used to love that, because they could show them how to chop wood. And the city boys used to fight them to get to chop the wood. "When am I going to be on wood chop?" And the wood chop duty was not an onerous one, it used to start half an hour before the meal and they'd have to chop the wood,
- 25:30 then cart it in and stoke the fires up and keep them going, but they loved it, because they'd never done it.

You must have seen a bit of a change as far as kids and conservation -

Oh yes, yes. There's a good thing in some ways and bad in others. Being one of the old school I expect the children to behave properly,

- 26:00 do as they're told, when they're told. I expected that of Ross and Pat Bamfield, too, as much as anybody, and they did. Conservation is a growing awareness - Mark Latham's visit to Tasmania

- 26:32 was an indication of the importance of conservation in Australia. I think in Australia we do have a unique opportunity to conserve our unusual flora and fauna.

- 27:00 (BREAK) And it shows the unusual animals and plants that we have in Australia.

- 27:30 And I'll put in a plug for my own idea. I reckon Australia is the Garden of Eden. I know that's a terrible heresy, but I think it is because we've got the oldest land mass in the world.

Some of our megafauna was pretty frightening -

Oh yes. Anyhow, that's the way it goes. I think there is a place for conservation and I think

- 28:00 the children of today are conservationists -

What do you think about Anzac Day?

I think it's very important, and I think it's becoming more important. Not Anzac Day because the ANZACs [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] landed on Gallipoli. But Anzac Day to remember all of them,

- 28:30 and there were plenty of them. I think it's a great day and the people who march and those that go and line the route, enjoy it. And I think it's a great day because it's a remembrance of all wars, not just one war, but

- 29:00 it's for all wars. And I think it's important that we should remember that. And we should remember the soldiers and sailors and airmen who went, and we should try and remember that we don't have one again. I think that Anzac Day - That should be the Anzac message that we don't have another one, like the First World War, where they got slaughtered on the beaches of Anzac Cove.

- 29:30 **How do you usually spend Anzac Day?**

I have in the past few years marched, with the rest of the old hands. And my son has marched also. I normally, if I don't march, I usually spend it as an ordinary day at home. And because I don't have to go to work anymore,

- 30:00 having retired, that's how I spend Anzac Day.

How do you see that Anzac Day has changed over the years?

Well, I don't think it has changed a great deal. Maybe I am not wanting it to change, but I don't think it has changed. We have had Vietnam vets, and Malaysian people and Koreans and

- 30:30 the other veterans. I hope the veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq, that those soldiers will march as well of the Second World War and the First World War still do. I don't think it's changed, it's just new faces arrive, because the old faces die out and the new ones replace them. I think that's

- 31:00 the message of Anzac Day.

How important was mateship with being involved in a war?

I think that's tremendously important. If two people meet, say at the museum, up at Morley at the Galleria, and they know that they both

- 31:30 have been in the war, then there is an instant friendship. An instant camaraderie developed. If one of

them hasn't been in the war, then there is almost a gulf between the two. And a fellow who'd been in the service six years mentioned this to me, he said, "I envy you blokes for being

32:01 in the stoush because you recognise one another." I guess that's the best way to say. It's the camaraderie - It doesn't matter whether you flew in Europe or whether you flew in the Pacific, the fact that you flew in the war is important. And I suppose in a way that's selfish, but - in a way,

32:30 it's good, to have this camaraderie.

How do you think being involved in the war has changed you as a person?

It made me more mature. I left Western Australia as a callow youth, and when I came back I was a young man, ready to accept responsibility and

33:00 to take responsibility, and I did, I got married. And it made me a much more mature person. I flew with mature men, and I became mature. The skipper, as I mentioned, had flown before the war, and the others - One of them was a journalist and he was an 'agony aunt' [columnist who responds to readers' letters] in Brisbane. One of them was

33:30 a funeral director's son. The navigator was a Mobil man, he worked for Mobil Oil as an accountant. Two of them worked in the bank. And they were mature men, and I was not, and I must become mature working

34:00 and flying with mature men. You must become mature, and I think it made me a more mature person. That's the biggest effect it had upon me, and the other effect it had upon me was I didn't want to go back and work, or saw up bits of wood for the rest of my life.

Do you have any regrets about being involved in the war?

No, none at all. I was very fortunate because I flew with a skipper who was a

34:30 sensible man. And I think this was shown over Koepang, when 'Paddy's Pig' went down, he said, "Bother, then I'm going my way." And we came home by ourselves, because he knew going that way was going into danger. And when we flew against barges and motorboats and yachts and things like that, he would never fly over them. And I said

35:00 to him once, "Why don't you fly over them, Mick?" And he said, "I don't fly over them because they might have a twenty millimetre gun and they could hit me quite easily. A big aeroplane like this." So he used to fly off to one side of them, and then if there was no repercussions from them, he might fly over them. But rarely he would fly over them, he would always fly to one side and so I was lucky that I flew with him

35:30 And they had a wonderful navigator, who used to say, "I think we will be over Darwin at eleven twenty five and a half," and at eleven twenty five and a half he would be smack over Darwin strip, as sure as eggs. All of them, even Bill Vine the co-pilot was a mature man, and he was a big strapping fellow, but he was a nice bloke. They were all nice fellows.

36:01 **Do you have any philosophy that you gained out of your life experience that you would like to pass onto future generations?**

I don't know - I think HG Wells made me realise there were other things besides my life. His First Men In The Moon broadened my mind so much and

36:30 it's still in my book shelf there. HG Wells' First Men In The Moon. And he made me realise, and I've developed this philosophy over my life, that we're only small cogs, little tiny things and we have evolved, and perhaps we might evolve further, if we give ourselves.

37:04 And I think we will give ourselves a chance, because I think we will get over Iraq and Afghanistan and those places. They will recede into the distance and become history. Unpleasant sort of history, perhaps, but they will become history and we will go onto better things.

37:30 And I don't mean flying to the moon or Mars or things like that, but as an animal. We are animals, and as an animal we will evolve. And other animals will evolve with us, so that we won't notice evolving so much. Trees are evolving, you can see it happening all the time. The green plant is the essential thing of the world. Without green plants

38:00 the rest of them will die. And I don't mean eating them, I mean breathing the air that they exhale and that sort of stuff. And that's why I like to have green plants around us all the time, because I think that they're terribly important. Very important.

Thanks very much for talking to us today.

I've enjoyed it, too.

Thank you.

