Australians at War Film Archive

James Flemming (Big Jim) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 31st March 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1703

Tape 1

00:41 **Thanks so much for your time today. To begin with could you share with me a brief overview of your life, where you were born to where you are now?**

Yeah, well I don't remember being born but it was in Sydney at

01:00 a hospital in Randwick, but my folks all came from the bush. My mother's parents were on the New South Wales side of the Queensland border and my father's people were on the Queensland side of the border, a place called Texas in Queensland and Bonshaw in New South Wales. And I remember growing up there, going to school there and eventually came down when my

01:30 parents to moved to Sydney. I came down and went to school in Sydney at first of all in Randwick and then at the Christian Brothers' College at Waverly. That's the sort of fleeting recollection I've got of those years. I was at Waverly College when the war broke out and that's actually the reason I was in the air force because of the fact I actually saw the Japanese float plane fly over Sydney in the very early hours of the morning.

02:00 I can't remember now but it was either three or four o'clock in the morning. And I saw this thing which I saw were bombs on and actually were floats as it turned out, and I got so incensed about that I decided that I'd give the school away and go up and join the air force in the city, was my original intention. And from then on I stayed in the air force for the next 40 years.

Just looking at your career during World War II, where did you actually

02:30 **train to prepare?**

Well first thing I did training at Bradfield Park was in Sydney, was the Initial Training School and from there went out to Temora, 10 EFTS [Elementary Flying Training School] Temora, where we were flying on Tiger Moths. I'd been selected at Bradfield Park for aircrew and they offered me a couple of times of other persuasions such as air gunner and navigator. I didn't want any of that – I wanted to fly. So eventually

03:00 I got to the stage where I could fly. And I got to Temora and they told me I was too short to be able to fly fighters therefore I'd have to go and be trained in Canada, which was no hard deal. So I went across to Canada and I flew Oxfords over there and got my wings on Oxfords, and then they decided they wanted to elect people to go over to England where things were things weren't happening very much, or to come back to the Pacific. So I elected to come back to the Pacific and they said, "You go onto fighters," and I said,

03:30 "Well I've been told I'm too short for fighters," and they said, "Don't argue. You're on fighters." So I went into fighters and flew them for the next 38 years.

So after World War II you went to Japan?

I went to Japan with the occupation force [BCOF – British Commonwealth Occupation Force], the war had finished and I went to Japan with the occupation force. And we lived in Japan, first of all at Bofu down on the southern highland of Honshu and then Iwakuni, and we were at Iwakuni

04:00 flying when the Korean War broke out. In actual fact we were packed up ready to come home when the Korean War broke out. And within about, oh, I suppose three or four days we were ready to go to combat and a week later we actually in combat in Korea.

Can you list for me some of the sorties you went on?

What, in Korea? Oh we initially started up, everything was supporting the army in the field there was very little for a start. We saw

04:30 several elderly piston-engine Yaks and things around the place but no real air combat. The whole thing was supporting the army, who were first of all moving forward and then rapidly being forced back. And

for the first couple of months of the Korean War we did nothing else but support the army in the field at the time and stop them getting annihilated. And we used to fly up to six missions a day in those days, just supporting and flying within 50 or 100

05:00 metres in front of the front line to try and keep the enemy back. We did that right through the first few days of the war. And of course that's one of the most parts of the war is the ground fire, close support stuff, because everybody and his dog is firing at you so it's one of those things that had to be done. But without the air force, the army would never have survived.

So what year did you return to Australia after Korea?

05:30 '51, I came back here in '51. I flew on the first day of the Korean War, which was the 2nd July '50, and I came back here in '51 and went out to Canberra to Fairbairn and flew with 3 Squadron, Mustang Squadron, for a while and then got sent down to Sale to become a flying instructor.

So you were a flying instructor for?

Well I flew as a flying instructor from 1951 through till 1957

06:00 and I was then sent to the [United] States [of America] on exchange duty.

So what was the reason for going to America?

Well I was a flying instructor at Central Flying School in Sale in Victoria and we have an exchange program. A certain amount of Americans out here and we go there and fly the different sorts of aeroplanes. And they were looking for a fighter exchange, someone who was a fighter exchange, and they found that at that stage I was the only one who

06:30 was in the category who was still currently flying. So they elected me to go across on the fighter exchange program. I went from being a flying instructor at Sale to flying a F100 Super Saver in America.

So what was your role in America?

I was the, what they called the operations officer of a squadron, the 476 Squadron. And the operations officer is the number two, he works the whole operation or the outfit, does all the planning, all the operational planning

07:00 for the outfit. The commander officer, a bit different to Australia, the commanding officer over there is virtually the administrator, runs the squadron on behalf of the base commander, and the operations officer does the day-to-day flying. And I flew with them for the next 2½ years.

And over there that was the time you did the Mark 2?

Well we were on F100s, which is quite a thrill really cause the best thing I'd ever flown back here was a Sabre. And

07:30 our squadron was selected to be the first squadron to get the F104 Star Fighter, and of course being the ops [operations] officer I was the first guy with the CO [Commanding Officer] to fly. The two of us got into it first of all then started it off then converted the rest of the pilots into the squadron onto it. It was the first genuine twice the speed of sound fighter which would do it in level flight.

So when did you finish up in America?

I finished up in America, must have been

08:00 early '60 and I came back here to Australia up to Williamtown in Newcastle and took over a fighter unit up there.

Now did you have any involvement in the Vietnam and supplying there?

Well later on, much later because I was, I'd gone through the phase of in the Mirages and that in Australia, and I had the Mirage squadron over in Butterworth and we'd taken up, or

08:30 I think 1967 we flew up to, direct to Williamtown, Darwin, Darwin direct to Butterworth, through Indonesia. And we were operating there and when the Vietnamese War broke out they asked for people to… No, they didn't ask for volunteers. They said they would select people to become forward air controllers. So they asked us at one of our

09:00 schools would we be forward air controllers and a lot of them said yes, we would be. And some of our guys went across and became forward air controllers. But I didn't I was the CO of the squadron there but I was also flying with the support group flying a Dakota in and out of Vietnam, so we did a lot of support work in Vietnam, from Butterworth but not based in Vietnam.

Just before Vietnam, did you have any involvement in the Malaysian war?

No not in the Malaysian war,

09:30 at all. I was never there when the confrontation was on. I was in Malaysia prior to that but not when the

confrontation was on.

And just before Vietnam you got married, is that right?

I got married way back in 1953. That was before, long before our involvement in Vietnam.

So after sort of your time at serving at Vietnam, what did you do next?

From where, I beg your pardon?

10:00 **After Vietnam, what did you do next?**

After Vietnam I came home in 1969 and for my sins I was made the senior administrative staff officer in support command of Melbourne and I worked down there for, oh, ’69, ’70, ’71, ’72, four years in

10:30 very sort of mundane circumstances, looking after all the problems of the air force. And I got promoted and got sent up to Williamtown to become OC [Officer in Command] of the base at Williamtown. So from ’73 to ’74 I was the officer commander of Williamtown, which was interesting because I’d been at Williamtown every rank from flight sergeant up till then. So that was quite good fun. I was an air commodore then so it was quite good.

And after Williamtown?

From Williamtown I get sent to London to do

11:00 the year long Royal College of Defence Studies which took all of ’75 and when I came back here in ’76 and ’77 I was reigned the new Fighter Replacement Project, which is a great period of time because I got to fly all sort of exotic things around the world at that stage of the game. And I stayed there until 1977 and went

11:30 back to Malaysia in ’78 as the commander of the Five Nation Integrated Air Defence System, but I was promoted at that stage to air vice marshal so I got sent up there as that. And I ran that from 1978 until 1982.

Excellent, and from there?

1982 I was in a funny position. I’d been, it was suggested to me by the Chief of the Defence Force that I become the next Chief of the Air Force,

12:00 and the only problem was at that stage they had elected to buy the F18 to replace the Mirage. Now as I’d run the whole project development before that wasn’t our recommendation that we were up for, we wanted the F15, or if the F15 was too expensive, the F16. But politically they decided to buy the F18 and I couldn’t see myself doing another three or four years at the air force

12:30 trying to support an aeroplane I didn’t believe in. So I said to them, “Look I’ve been in the air force for 40 years and I really don’t see myself doing another three years as this,” so I decided to resign. And that caused a hell of stir because they had a bit of a gap and they had to try and fill it. A very good friend of mine, Air Marshal Dave Evans, was promoted to air marshal and made Chief of the Air Force instead. And I got out

13:00 and started my own airline so it was a bit different. But of course I joined up early, I’d run away from school and joined up early and at that stage of the game, it was ’55, and I’d done 39 years service so I thought that’s good enough.

And then you, after that, your own airline, you got involved in the War Memorial?

Well not airline but an air charter service. I had three little aeroplanes and used to deliver the newspapers. I was the highest paid newspaper boy in the world. I used to

13:30 deliver newspapers from Canberra all down the south coast. And it was interesting, good fun, but used to work a 100 hours a week or more and just crack even. The way to make a small fortune is to start with a big fortune and buy a aeroplane, then you wind up with a small fortune. But I got head hunted around the place by a bunch of people and they said to me, “We want you to be the head of the Australian War Memorial.” So reluctantly I decided

14:00 I’d do it, but it turned out the greatest job I ever had. I loved every minute of it; it was fantastic. It’s the most amazing institute and it’s unique in the world and I had a great time there for over four years.

And after the War Memorial?

After the War Memorial I fiddled around for a while and I got into an international network marketing and set up a whole

14:30 group of people in network marketing and did extremely well out of it. But then again I got head hunted again later on for that by the Northern Territory Government and they appointed me as the head of the advisory board to the government on Arts and Heritage in the Northern Territory. And I helped set up their aviation museums and their galleries and that sort of thing for the next four or five years. And after that stage of the game it got…

15:00 The place was up there, it was fairly self sufficient, there was nothing much else to do and I was really bored going up and down to Darwin every six weeks and I elected to quit. So then I quit and said, "That's it." I'd been in the work force for 60-odd years so I said, "That's good enough, I'll start playing golf," virtually full time, so that's what I do now.

Excellent, thank you so much for sharing all that with us.

Oh, no problem.

Just going back now

15:30 **to your childhood, what are your first memories of growing up?**

First memories of growing up really are in the bush, animals, wide spaces, grandparents, very devoted grandparents. My grandfather was virtually a squatter who'd taken up a big tract of land in southern Queensland and they had a very, very extensive property. He had a passion for blood

16:00 horses, he had a whole bunch of full blooded horses, mares and foals running around, and the whole atmosphere was great. I remember feeding poddy pigs and poddy calves. I remember he made me a little feeder with 8 bottles on it with 8 nipples because we had a mother pig had died and there were 8 piglets, and I used to feed these piglets with this little thing and they thought I was their mother. And that's one of my early memories.

16:30 Another very early memory was my father gave me a baby koala bear that had fallen out of a tree, his mother had died, and he used to walk round sitting on my shoulder all day. And whenever he'd get frightened he'd hang on and he'd hang with his claws and give me the most dreadful claw. And I'd cry and he'd cry, and the more I cried the more he'd cry. They'd have to come and save us. That's a very, very early… I must have been only three or four at that stage; that's a very early memory. And the whole fact of growing up and learning all things about

17:00 being a grazier on the farm and doing all the things you needed to do. You know, running 50 or 100 rabbit traps at night-time, running them twice a day, once in the afternoon and once at night. Skinning rabbits, selling the skins because in those days the skins were very valuable – they were making fur felt hats out of the skins and it was big money. I think in those days we were getting six shillings a pound or something or other for it, which was very, very big money. We'd never see the money cause all our money went into the

17:30 main pool, the family, and we just lived on occasional pocket money. Riding a pony three miles to school. Getting up early in the morning, getting the cows and calves separated, milking 40 cows before going to school. Coming home of an afternoon go and get the cows again and separating the calves. Going to sleep at night-time sleeping on the verandas of a big country homestead with the calves crying down

18:00 the yard because they were separated from their mothers and all that until I eventually got sent down to Sydney to go to school.

So your mum and dad were living on one of the farms?

My Mum's came from one family on this side of the river and my Dad came from one from the other side of the river. They lived with my mother's parents, who had four boys and four girls, which my mother was the youngest. And Mum and Dad lived there with them

18:30 working on the property for quite some time until Dad decided to come down to Sydney to work in Sydney. And for a long time in Sydney he was in the fire brigade for a while, not that I've got any memory of this, but I know, and later on the first memory I've got of him as being a policeman and he wound up as a inspector of police in Sydney. And I remember, it was funny, during the early days at Bradfield Park we used to only get off about once every fortnight

19:00 for a day or something, and because I was at Bradfield Park and we lived at Randwick he used to get one of the North Sydney police cars to pick me up at the main gate which was great. It saved me… They'd drive me right down into town then I'd get another car out to Randwick and would save me, you know, two or three hours travelling. And after I'd been at Bradfield Park for about six weeks I was called in and told that it was unlikely I'd graduate because they were aware I'd been picked up by the police five times already in that period of time.

19:30 So I had, and this was difficult for me, the simple reason, see, I was illegally in the air force under age and my mother and father weren't for that at all, so I couldn't really get him to perform anything for me. He was working on the assumption that they'd find out and kick me out, was going to teach me a lesson. Well they eventually found out but it was 27 years later.

So why did your mum and dad decided to move down to Sydney themselves?

I think

20:00 my Dad was not happy living in the circumstances they were living in. He'd come from a family, not a big family only a small family but a very wealthy family on the Queensland side and he wasn't quite happy and he wanted to do his own thing. I think he wasn't really for the bush so he decided to come down to Sydney and do what he wanted to do, and of course Mum came with him. And I was the only

child. And I was the only child for 17 years, I've got one sister only

20:30 and there's 17 years' difference in us.

You mentioned you were reasonably close to your grandparents, what were they like as people?

Wonderful people. The grandfather, James, was a typical old patriarch of that era. He had four sons and four daughters and the idea was the boys would work the way he worked and they would inherit everything. And they actually did. They worked all the time, I think back now, and they'd spend all day cutting

21:00 scrub down, out there with a axe cutting down trees and all day ploughing and all day everything you do in the bush. And the idea was it would just go from generation to generation. And of course the sad part is it's now all passed on.

So your dad, was he the only boy in the family?

Only child, he was the only child in the Fleming side of the family who lived in Queensland.

And he wanted no part?

Wanted no part in that bush life.

21:30 **Your grandparents or fathers, had they served in any wars, World War I, Boer?**

No, the wrong generation for it. They were sort of not in that period of time. As a matter of fact the only one in both sides of the family that served were my Uncle Les, who was Mum's younger brother, he was in the Australian Army, and my Dad's first cousin. See it's a funny

22:00 relationship. There were two sisters married two brothers, and Dad was the offspring of one side and the other one I'll mention now was Terry was the offspring of the other side. He joined the air force and was a wireless air gunner on Lancasters in the UK [United Kingdom] during the war and survived the war. He only died about a few years ago. But that was the only background they had. I mean I'd never ever seen an aeroplane on the ground until I joined the air force. The thing that got me going was

22:30 the fact that I was incensed by this Japanese airplane flying over Sydney and I thought, "What right's he got to do that? I'm going to fix him." The rest is history.

So what did you know of the Boer War or World War I growing up?

Nothing, not a thing, no background whatever at all. I was up in the bush at Bonshaw where I came from when the war broke out and I remember listening to it on the radio in the room. Another thing, see my grandfather

23:00 in the lounge room was sacrosanct in our house and you were only allowed in there when there were guests of any sort, and this particular day was interesting because he's invited all the family and all the boys who'd been working in and turned the radio on to listen to it, and we heard the news that war had been declared. It didn't mean much to us at all at that stage of the game. That's the first inkling we had that there was a problem. But we soon learnt. See later on we went up there… See we would have been part of the Brisbane Line and all our

23:30 stumps around our houses had drums of fuel around them. All the machinery in the sheds were all wired to be blown up and one of the jobs that my uncle had was to shoot all the horses and things, and that was all part of the plan at that early stage when the war was getting, this is 1941 from then on. Things were pretty frightening for a young bloke coming up and thinking that could happen, and of course it could happen because

24:00 we were right in the front line at that stage to be invaded. Because see within three months of Pearl Harbour, which was December 7, we had a Japanese float plane over practically every capital city in Australia, see most people don't know that. But Sydney was overflown three times in the first early part. One of the ones was the one that I actually saw the aeroplane and that was in early '42, February or

24:30 March '42. But every other city had been flown over too, including Melbourne and Tasmania and all that.

In respect of your grandfather's farm, was there an evacuation area he was to take the family?

There was a evacuation plan to come south, that's all I can remember as we were all going to come south. He used to always drive a Desoto, American Desoto, big Desoto, they had a couple of them and they had a couple of trucks and things and these were all planned to be loaded up

25:00 when told to and come down south. And we as young fellows, I was only about 12 or something or other, or 13 maybe, we were part of the Volunteer Defence Corps and we were all running around playing calvary on horses with rifles and doing all sorts of exercises and things and our job was to be a sort of rearguard action if we had to move, But everyone had to come south, where south God only knows.

25:30 **What can you tell me about some of the training for the Voluntary Defence Corps?**

It was interesting and the fact that we were all pretty good horseman at that stage of the game and the idea was going to be a cavalry unit. So we were trained along military lines – we did normal ground drill, rifle drill, lot of firing practice. A lot of night cross-country work, which was fascinating, map reading with up to 20,

26:00 30, 40, 50 horses, and riders of course. And the thing I always remember was one night I had a job of leading 12 horses while 12 people went on patrol and we made a classic mistake, we left the stirrups hanging down, as they normally would be, and as we led the 12 through as a diversion the stirrups were clanking, which we found out would have been a dead giveaway to the enemy that they weren't being ridden. So we

26:30 learnt to put the stirrups up. I never forgot that. That's one of those early things that you do learn. But it was quite good, not that I think we would have been very good but at least we would have been something. Because we had, you probably wouldn't remember, we had very little, practically nothing at all of any sort. And the idea was just to do what you could with what you had. See on the reverse side in Sydney in 1942 when the Japanese submarine was trying to shell Rose Bay in the Flameboat base and the shells were falling round

27:00 in Bellevue Hill, everybody then evacuated and went north, they headed north. Now whereas all the people living round the southern Queensland area were all geared up ready to sort of head south. We weren't really well organised in those days. You remember, well I remember when Darwin was attacked, within a couple of days half of Darwin were down in the southern states with no evacuation plan – they just all left. We didn't

27:30 have very much at all, all round.

Just in respect to the Voluntary Defence Corps, you were so young, there was sort of no thought… I guess you were about 13 at the time?

Yeah, yeah.

No thought in respect to there's a certain age in which…?

No, no not at all, anybody could do it and you did, that's the way you work in the bush, everybody does their job as best they can with what they can do. And you sort of got pretty quick in the bush because you get used to life.

28:00 I mean you have to go through the early stage of learning all about animal sex long before you learn about human sex because you watch thoroughbred stallions breeding and all that sort of thing. And you have to learn how to breed and deliver calves and things, which is part of just the normal growing up sort of stuff. So age has really got nothing to do with it as long you can do it, what they want you to do you could do it. I could ride, we could all ride pretty well, well you had to that's the way you got around,

28:30 and when they wanted people we all just joined. And of course I went in because my uncles, well the youngest one's not much older than me, Mum's younger brother, and the other three were all in it together so we all went, the whole five of us.

Were uniforms or arms supplied?

Uniforms and 303s, ordinary standard AIF [Australian Imperial Force] uniforms, no jackets, just riding breeches and boots and leggings, leather leggings,

29:00 khaki shirts and slouch hats, bandoliers, belts, 303s, bayonet and mess tins, water bottles and all that sort of stuff.

Many World War I fellows involved in this?

Quite a few, all the bush people around the place a lot of them were World War I fellows and they were all involved. Everyone that was on the properties in that area was all involved.

Excellent. Just coming back now before the war the Depression,

29:30 **what are your memories of the Depression?**

None, none whatever, we didn't have any Depressions in the bush; the bush is always up or down. You're either a millionaire or you're a pauper depending on the season, and the fact is in the bush you're never really short of food, you're never really short of entertainment cause you entertain yourself, and life was pretty simple because the simple reason you'd work all day and you'd go to bed early

30:00 cause you had lamps, had candles and lamps, didn't have any electricity. And it was just a way of life. We all accepted it and to us the highlight was once a month we'd drive to Inverell to do shopping and Grandma would do all the shopping for the next month. And the Rawleighs man would come round with all his Rawleigh ointments and things around the place as a travelling salesman, and all the various travellers would come round and call, which was a highlight for us. The best thing was

30:30 the mail car, every afternoon I think it was about four o'clock the mail car used to drive from Inverell through to Texas, would stop at the front and put the mail in the box and we'd, it was a very simple life,

a good happy wholesome, mainly cause we didn't know any better, that's the way we operated. But as far as the Depression, it didn't really affect us on the property in that time.

Do you remember any droughts or floods?

Remember droughts very much, remember droughts.

31:00 I can't never think of the year but I think I was about 8 or 9, must have been '35, '36 or so, and seeing lambs, newborn lambs actually dying and having the crows pick their eyes out. That's one of the most depressing things I've ever seen, distressing things I've ever seen, it was awful. And we used to have, Grandfather used to put up big crow traps,

31:30 big chicken wire, oh it would be half as big as this house, and they'd catch all these crows that would get in there and they'd go out and knock them all down, and it was pretty gruesome but it was better than having the lambs killed. You'd see the poor old kangaroos and things would come down with no food at all and they'd be so skinny that they could just barely move around. But they'd eat more grass than a sheep would so then they had to

32:00 get rid of the kangaroos also. But then it's like in the bush within a year or so the rains would come and then the thing would bloom and everything would go, everything would be green, everything would be lush, everything would grow and of course everybody would be wealthy again. And I remember in those days that's when Grandfather would buy a new car, there'd always be a new car at that stage of the game because they all had money. And it was an up and down slope, I think it's much the same now, whether or not the droughts are longer or not I don't know,

32:30 but they're not pleasant to be in.

Was there anything unusual you ate on the farm?

Yes, every meal was much the same. We'd have roast mutton, boiled mutton, salt mutton, fried mutton, you name it, it was the whole thing. Bread and butter pudding, very little fresh fruit. Occasionally you'd get fruit from the traveller would come past.

33:00 Grandma and my mother and people would grow the local vegetables in the garden but nothing major. We had an orange orchard and lemon orchard – there was always plenty of average oranges to eat. Several prize ones which my grandfather would guard with his life, and you were allowed to have one every now and again. But nothing really apart from the mundane

33:30 sameness all the time. But big meals, everybody would eat big meals and we'd have five meals a day, breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner and supper. But of course the boys would work all the time anyway. They were all like greyhound dogs – they were all long and thin and rangy cause they'd work all the time.

What about discipline? What sort of discipline did you get from your grandfather or father?

Oh

34:00 complete discipline, you did as you were told, that's all there was to it, you did as you were told. You can think for yourself, do what you like as long as you did what you were told, and the easiest way was to conform cause the alternative was a kick in the backside.

So would you get the strap or anything like that?

Yeah, oh yeah, severely. Mum's favourite was the wooden spoon, the mixing spoon. I remember to this day she used to say, "One more of those and out

34:30 comes the wooden spoon," so you leant what to do.

So what sort of things did you get in trouble for?

Oh the normal things that kids do, disobedience, you know, told not to do it and you do it. Being late. One thing was being late if you were away somewhere, because you had a lot of freedom in the bush, I'd run 50, 100 rabbit traps and I'd be out 9, 10 o'clock at night on my own. But if they said be home by a certain time you had

35:00 to be otherwise they thought something could have happened to you, which is quite right, and if you weren't by gees you were disciplined for that. So you learnt to be on time all the time. And get up early, I mean I've always been an early riser from the time I can ever remember because of that. six of us used to sleep on the veranda, we didn't have bedrooms, we'd all sleep on the veranda on our own beds. In the very cold

35:30 nights where the temperature would get down to minus two and 3s and 4s, would freeze the water, you used to have blankets on top but you also have a rug made of kangaroo skins on top, which was fantastic cause it's warm. And you'd be in this wonderful warm cocoon and daylight would come and you'd have to get out and do it and my goodness, wash in cold water, that's another thing too, so you didn't wash very much. But oh no, it was, actually

36:00 it was a good healthy way growing up.

Schooling, what are your memories of school at that time?

Riding the horse to school, to a one-room schoolhouse with about let's say 30 or 40 children, I suppose, of all grades in the one room all being taught by the one teacher in the one room. How we ever learnt anything I don't know, but we did.

36:30 And the other thing that got me was the fact that the Aboriginal kids, we used to have three or four Aboriginal families working on our property with us to who were, just lived in houses we had for them, and their kids would come to school too. And I was about 10 before I knew they were black. They were just ordinary kids. We grew up together, we had no problems at all. There was none of this racist rubbish that goes on we were all in together. We used to always play football together,

37:00 we used to always abuse each other for being whites and darkies, it was good fun. It was only later on when I came to the city that I learnt there was a difference and it's been developed since then. But it was a very healthy growing up attitude in those days. The Aboriginal males would still go through their tribal customs. They'd go walkabout every now and again. Where they go what they do nobody knew but they'd disappear. But it didn't make any difference, the grandparents would still

37:30 feed the families and look after the families medically and this way until they came back. And they were good stockmen, very good stockmen. They worked well and it was a good, happy relationship. And school was fun. We used to have a lot of fun – we'd play sport together, play football together and play cricket together. But it was always work because you'd have to get your horse in, we just let them free when we were at school then catch them, put a saddle on, ride him back home again then go through the routine of getting the cows in and all the things you had to do.

38:00 But it was good fun, but as I say it must have been very hard for one teacher and one-room schoolhouse, but we all sort of survived, so there it was.

In respect to the Aboriginal people, did they actually exist on your land or…?

Yeah, lived with us.

As a tribal community wandering or as…?

No, no as a family in a house. We had houses for them and they'd all just live there quite happily, and some

38:30 of the ladies would work in the homestead and do jobs as maids and things in the homestead and all the men were all stockmen and all the kids were just like us, we all do things together. I've still got friends that are, well very old men now, but black as the inside of a cow, great fellows, we get on famously. But they used to always say in these later years it's not the black fellows that's the problem it's the bloody yellow fellows

39:00 the problem, the half caste people in the middle who are not accepted by either side and they were causing the problems around the place.

Were they around there as well?

No, not many because they virtually used to all permeate to the cities, there weren't many around there. There were a few Chinese Aborigine crosses around the place because the Chinese had most of the stores in the cities around the place, they used to run the main stores in the cities and a few inter-marriages

39:30 and things there. But there was never any hint of any racial problem whatsoever. We had a whole stack of Italian families, they used to grow tobacco along the river, along the Germanic River, and they were all integrated with us to going to school and that sort of thing. They used to always refer to the funny old Ities down the road and they used to laugh at us, but no bad feeling, all good feeling stuff.

40:00 **Well just pause there and change tapes, but that's excellent.**

Tape 2

00:44 **What year did you come to Sydney and start studying at Waverley?**

Yeah, I think I came to Sydney in '37, I think. I think I

01:00 was 10, yeah, and I first went to the Marist Brothers at Randwick and for some reason, which I can't recall, my parents moved me across to Waverly, to Waverly College and I was at Waverly College from '39 till '42. At that stage is when Dad had come to Sydney to live and Mum had come to Sydney to live and we were living in a house in Randwick, and that's my first memory of being in Sydney.

01:30 **Now your dad originally came to be a fireman?**

Yeah.

How'd he actually transfer into the police force, what's the story there?

I've got no idea, no idea at all because I don't really remember it all I remember was living in Randwick. I remember living in Randwick and I remember him being in the fire brigade and I remember him being in the police force and that's all I remember. How, or how it happened, I've got no idea.

What can you share

02:00 **with me about the local community of Randwick?**

Typical back street in Randwick, semi-detached house, two houses on the one block, joined with a communal wall. Very happy days, we used to play. We had no… A big highlight was the pictures of a Saturday afternoon, I can recall distinctively we used to get sixpence to go in and a penny to spend was the idea, and then

02:30 when you got to, must have been 12 I suppose or 11, it went from sixpence and threepence, nine pence you got, sixpence to get in and threepence to spend, which was big time in those days. Life was very good. There was no TV [television], there was nothing at all. We used to play a whole bunch of community things, we were always on bikes, on scooters, playing cricket, playing football,

03:00 playing tennis, playing something all the time to fill in the time of an afternoon. Normal communal living around the suburbs, life was very pleasant, things were, nothing was very short, no one had very much money but everyone was pretty happy with what was going on. And those pre war years to my way was very pleasant. I enjoyed going to Waverly College. I thought Waverly was a wonderful place, but I used to ride my bike from Randwick to

03:30 Waverly, back everyday, must have been, what, 15 miles I suppose in those days, 25 k [kilometres], and so did a lot of other people, so no problem at all – it was just a way of life.

Do you know how you actually got down from Queensland to Sydney?

Train, by train. And I remember one of those ones where you got into a carriage and they shut the door when you all sat looking at each other, five on that side and five on this side.

04:00 And you sat there for 20 hours or something to get to Sydney, and every time now and then in winter they'd open the door and they'd slide in a big metal canister which had some chemical in it which made it hot, and they'd slide that in and you'd all put your feet on it.

And what were your first impressions of Sydney when you arrived?

Big, big, never seen anything so big in all my life. The harbour intrigued me. The ocean intrigued me because coming from out there we'd never

04:30 really seen the ocean and I thought Coogee Beach was the most marvellous thing I'd ever seen in my life. I eventually got into the Coogee Surf Club later on, which was wonderful. But the whole, the size, I just couldn't imagine there was so much thing going on. And we didn't like it, I didn't like it – too many people. See being up in the bush and on your own you do a lot stuff by yourself. You go out on your pony and four or five dogs and you ride out all day, you'd be out all day on your own and never see another soul,

05:00 and it's a bit tricky to suddenly be in the middle of George Street and see what's going on. But it was an eye opener.

Now your mum and dad sent you to a Catholic school, were they religious?

Yes both Catholics, both brought up as Catholics. I'd been to a, now what was the name of the school?

05:30 Catholic School. St Michael's, St Michael's at Daceyville in Sydney. I was there for a little while before I went to Marist Brothers and that's my first recollection of a Catholic upbringing. But they were not churchgoing Catholics, they used to bring me up with Catholic belief but not churchgoing. And I think my mother had,

06:00 I'm sure she had a hang-up that she only had one child, and I think for that reason she wouldn't go to mass at all or anything, and my father didn't either. But they always made sure that I did and that's why I went up at Catholic colleges, and I've just stayed that way ever since.

So tell me about your mum and dad, what were they like as characters?

06:30 Well Mum was a classic country woman coming from a big family, most wonderful woman, she would do anything for anybody and go without herself to give to you. And I know now that in the early stages that she used to go without things so that I could have them. I, as you are in those days you're pretty ungrateful because you don't realise. Dad was a very strict disciplinarian, you did exactly what

07:00 you were told all the time with no shades of grey – black and white, and you were bought up that way. And one of the most difficult things I had was when I decided to run away from school, which I did, I ran away from Waverly and I joined up, I had to get Mum and Dad's signature on it and I knew they'd never sign so we forged both of them. One of my friends signed for my mother and one of my other friends at

school signed for my father. And they didn't find out for quite some time,

07:30 and when they did Mum was horrified and wanted me out straight away, but Dad said, "No, we'll teach him a lesson, he'll get caught, they'll never let him get through, they'll find him and they'll kick him out and they'll send him back to Waverly and he'll have to repeat the year with the junior kids and that will be the greatest lesson he's ever learnt." And I'm glad he thought that way cause it never ever happened. 27 years later they found out, and well I admitted it to them 27 years later but still.

So your mum being horrified and wanting to kick you out, does that mean

08:00 **let you out on your own type situation?**

No, wanted me out of the service. She was frightened she'd lose me, she was horrified that I should ever think about being in the services. And see they never ever knew I was in the army, they had no idea I was in the army. The first I think they really knew was when I in the air force and the only reason they knew then was because I was getting posted to Canada and I couldn't hide the fact that I was no longer at Waverly College, I was going to Canada. So I had to admit that I hadn't been at Waverly for three months, I'd been at Temora flying Tiger

08:30 Moths. Eventually she wanted me out straight away and of course Dad said, "They'll never let him on the boat, there's no way in the world he'll get away, they'll catch him this time," but they never ever did. And then later on, once I survived and World War II went behind and I was posted to Japan, they all got the other feeling, "He might survive."

What was your dad's role as a policeman in those early years in the war?

09:00 He was in a group called 21 Division, which was an area of vice squad people, used to look after the crookies in the bad area. Down in Regent Street in Sydney, down to the railway was a very bad area. And I think every crook in Sydney knew him because he had a hell of a reputation for getting things done. One of my fondest memories,

09:30 we were working home one Sunday morning – he'd come to mass with me one Sunday morning – we were walking home past a park and there was a guy lying on the park bench and he walked over to him and he tapped him and he said, "What are you doing?" and he said, "Good morning, Mr Flemming. I'm just going home," and got up and walked off. And I thought, "Well Dad's reputation is pretty wide around here and the place." He was very highly thought of as a policeman around the area, but once again very, very strong disciplinarian.

10:00 **Cause 21 Squadron had a fearless reputation in Sydney?**

Yes.

Sorting out brawls and crims [criminals]?

That's the one he was in. A lot of football players who were policeman were also in 21 Division and I remember Dad used to say whenever there was a brawl they'd walk in and the rule was go and hit every head in sight. And I remember also things like when the wharves strikes were on and

10:30 they wouldn't load things, and he and a bunch would go down there and it would be over pretty quick. What they did and how they did it I don't know, but it used to work fairly well. But I know he was very highly thought of in that regard.

So growing up did your dad teach you how to fight?

No, as a matter of fact, strange enough, Dad didn't teach me much at all. He just told me to get on with it, do it. I was much closer to my mother than I was

11:00 to my father and then when, thinking back now it must have been a terrible shock to her when she found out I was actually in the air force and the war was on. I hate to think the way it would be if my children had done the same thing cause when you're only 15 or 16 and you've been together all this time and all of a sudden you're on your own. It must have been a terrible shock for them.

Waverly College, was there cadets there that you'd

11:30 **joined beforehand?**

Yeah, joined the cadets. Army cadets. The biggest problem was at that stage a few of us couldn't afford the uniforms. You had to buy your own uniform at that stage and we couldn't afford our uniforms and several of us were a bit embarrassed each time we'd be drilling and we'd be not in uniform and the others who could afford it would be in uniform. But it was a good training thing, used to learn discipline, drill and all that sort of stuff.

12:00 **Were you also in the Air Training Corps?**

Yeah training corps 100 Squadron in Sydney. Yeah training corps used to met up at Fort Street High School, up near the [Sydney] Harbour Bridge, and learn all the things you do in the Air Training Corps. It was one of the things when the Air Training Corps were doing country visits, they had a group going up to Inverell so they selected a whole bunch of people to go out of this thing, and I wasn't one of them

12:30 and I said, “That’s ridiculous, that’s where I come from. I want to go to.” So when they called the names out I just went across the other side anyway and went and no one ever questioned it. It taught me a lesson. I thought, “The thing is, you’ve got to think for yourself.” So I did that from then on in and that’s how I eventually got in the service. But Air Training Corps was good fun. I got a lot of friends who joined the air force later on from it – we met over the years.

13:00 **Share with me now I guess the day you saw the Japanese plane fly over, what happened that day?**

We were at Waverley and it was about, I’d been up home in the bush to see my grandparents for the holidays and I was back at school and they decided, because the war was on, Dad

13:30 decided I’d be a boarder at this stage because rather than evacuate all the family, he couldn’t leave because he was in the police, he wouldn’t let him go anyway. So he decided to make me a boarder, which was good fun, so I decided to be a boarder. I’d only been there a little while and early one morning there was a noise and lights and things, we used to often see the searchlights from South Head. So we got out on the veranda and looked, or whatever it was, up in the second or third floor, I think it was Burl Street in Waverly,

14:00 and we saw these lights flash in very low cloud, and out of the cloud popped this low wing aeroplane with these big things, which I thought were bombs on. And it flew up towards the Macquarie Lighthouse. Now Macquarie Lighthouse was going round and the light from the lighthouse was reflecting on the clouds, you could see everywhere. And I saw this thing and I thought, “That’s interesting,” and it popped back in the cloud and disappeared. And I said to the brother who was in charge, who was us making go back to bed, “That’s an aeroplane.” He said, “Oh, it’s only the practice.”

14:30 And the next day we woke up and found that the Japanese float planes had come into Sydney Harbour, Japanese float planes the Japanese submarines had come into Sydney Harbour and they’d torpedoed, or tried to torpedo the USS Chicago and the torpedo had missed and hit the wharf over near the navy ship the Kuttabul, which capsized and drowned a few naval ratings on board the thing. And this fellow had actually done all the survey around the area,

15:00 and the place. And we looked, this fellow named Geoff, and I, Geoff Clinton, he and I said, “This is not the way it should be. We’ll fix these buggers. We’re going to get out of here.” So we both decided we were going to join up so we left Waverly College, we had one of my mother’s sisters lived at Bondi and we went over there and took our uniforms off and put our ordinary clothes on and went down to Sydney,

15:30 to Victoria Barracks in Sydney and said, “We want to join up,” and the fellow said, “You need this, this and this.” So I borrowed my uncle’s birth certificate, who was about five or six years older than me and his name was Parker, and Geoff and I went down there and we enlisted. Because the fellow said the way to get into the air force is join the army cause they’re transferring people from the army very quickly into the air force, whereas in the air force you’ve got to wait.

16:00 Worst advice I’ve could have ever been given, but I accepted it. But of course at that stage of the game I was only 15½ anyway and we joined the army. And they took us in and I became Private Parker, and for the next six weeks or so we marched around the Sydney Cricket Ground with a broomstick with a bit of wood nailed on it simulating a rifle, and a backpack with three house bricks in it simulating a full backpack,

16:30 and did drill backward and forwards, all sorts of things up and down. And after about six weeks of this I thought, “Look, I’m not getting any closer to flying an aeroplane. I want to be in an aeroplane.” So I went over to a fellow who happen to be a corporal – I thought he was God but he was a corporal – and I said, “Look, I don’t want to sort of be here, I’m sick of this.” And he said, “Get back on the parade ground,” so I did. But then I found within a couple of days or so, it’s very hazy to me now, a fellow who was a lieutenant,

17:00 and I thought a lieutenant must have been one above God because he was real high, and I said to him, “I don’t want to be here,” and he said, “What do you want to do?” I said, “I should be back at school.” He said, “Why should you be at school?” I said, “Well I should be getting ready for my Leaving certificate at school and I don’t want to be here.” And he said, “How old are you?” and I said, “Well I’m not quite 16.” So within I suppose 48 hours I was out. But they made a classic error. In those days you had to go to a place called a Manpower Authority, and the Manpower Authority

17:30 game permission to move anywhere, from A to B. They used to have protected industries and people could only work in certain places. So they said to me, “Oh you tried to join up, did you?” and I said, “Yeah.” And they said, “Oh, they caught you,” and I said, “Yes.” And they said, “Oh well, they’ve given you an honourable discharge but it’s in the name of Parker.” He said, “Your name’s not Parker?” I said, “No, Flemming.” He said, “I’ll get that fixed.” So he went and had that re-done and came back and I got an honourable discharge in the name of Flemming. And he said, “Well what are you going to do now? You going back to the bush?”

18:00 And I said, “Yes.” I didn’t know what I was doing. I said, “Yes.” So he gave me a Manpower clearance to travel, which mean I had an honourable discharge from the army and clearance to travel – the only thing that I was missing was a birth certificate. So in those days I’d learnt the difference between boys and girls and I had a girlfriend that was in the air force, a WAAAF [Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air

Force] and I said… Well we got a birth certificate, I think we paid two [shillings] and six [sixpence] for it

18:30 and instead of being born in December 1926 we changed the six to a four on the typewriter, and she got some of that pink rouge stuff on her face and rubbed over it. And it looked pretty good, I've still got it to this day, it looked pretty good and she folded it down where the four and the six should be and it looked like 1924. So I took this down to Woolloomooloo where the recruiting depot was, put it in and said, "I want to join the air force." And then I got the second worst advice I've ever had in my life.

19:00 A fellow said, "Well don't try and get into aircrew because you won't get in, there's too many people waiting to get into aircrew, Join the ground staff and then it's very easy to transfer." So young and stupid I said, "Yes," and joined the ground staff. And I was taken in as AC1 [Aircraftsman First Class] JH Flemming and away I went. And the fellow said to me, "Well, what do you want to do?" and I said, "Well I don't really know." He said, "Well you can do so-and-so and so, or you can be

19:30 an aircraft rigger or an engine fitter." I thought engine fitter would be good because up home in the bush we used to take engines out with the trucks and put them back in again, I thought that would be good – you put engines in. I said, "I'll be an engine fitter." They said, "Okay, you're in," so I became an engine fitter. And they sent me down to a place outside Melbourne called Ascot Vale where there's a mechanical training organisation, and for days I used to be in this big, cold windy, hangar with a hacksaw cutting metal

20:00 and doing stuff. And I thought, "This is not fitting bloody engines like I do," and I never forget, the fellow said, "There's a block of metal." Rough metal and there was four files. "I want you to make this one-inch cube by file." So file, file… And then you'd measure it best you could and say, "Right," then the inspector would come along and he'd get his micrometer out and say, "It's out by so-and-so," so I'd file a little bit more. And I never ever got it because I'd always take too much off one side, little bit off one side,

20:30 I never got anything close to it. So eventually they said, "It doesn't look like you'll be an engine fitter." I said, "I don't want to be an engine fitter any more." So they made me an airfield defence guard. So I got sent over to Tocumwal in west New South Wales and they said, "You're an airfield guard." So I'm in the guard, they give me a rifle. I'll never forget to this day. They gave me two rounds of ammunition, two 303 rounds of ammunition, and I had to sign a piece of paper for them to accept it and I had to sign a thing

21:00 I was not to fire them without permission from the warrant officer who was in charge of the guards. So I'm now… Tocumwal's a great big base, it was built like a town with all the barrack blocks were houses, looked from the air like a town. And we were about 8 or 10 miles from the main gate, where the guard box was round the back in a sort of wheat field way over the side of the airfield. And I'm walking up and down this thing like that and under no circumstances am I allowed to fire without permission. Now how you got permission from anybody I don't know, but anyway

21:30 I don't know what I was guarding against. I thought to myself, "I'm not getting any closer to the bloody air force." Now I'd been in the services since about August of '41 and this is about June, May or June of '42, '43 I mean, '42 to '43. So I went back, I'm sitting that night in the airmen's canteen, and I didn't drink in those days but there was a couple of wild fellows alongside me, these were three or four army guys who had come back from the Middle East,

22:00 and they were pretty old blokes, they were 22 or 23, they were real old buggers. And they were chatting away about various things and they said, "Oh we've all been accepted were going, soon we'll all be in aircrew," They'd made it very easy for ex army people to transfer from the army, particularly if they had combat into aircrew. And the fellow said, "Hey, young Jim, why don't you come and join us?" and I said, "What have you got to do?" They said, "Oh, you've got to have one of these forms and you need a, got to have a discharge and got to have this." I said, "Well." He said, "I'll get you a form."

22:30 So he got me a form and it had all the things, it had an army number and an army discharge thing on it, but when it had combat I didn't fill that in at all, I just left that cause I didn't have any, and I put it in like that and I was accepted. They all went together, and these five ex army blokes and me we were accepted for aircrew, so the next thing I know I'm posted from Tocumwal over to Bradfield Park. And at Bradfield Park I'm doing all the normal things you do, you know, training there, and then

23:00 they elected, wanted me to be an air gunner and all this and I knocked it all back and said, "No, I want to be a pilot," and eventually got through.

Before we actually talk a bit further about that, I might ask you a few questions about what you've shared. Your father, did he ever find out about the army and your enlistment?

Oh many years later, before he died, many years later before he died. He always thought the army I talked about was the Volunteer Defence Corps, which was when I was in the bush. But he never really knew I was actually in the army for a while.

23:30 **The Japanese plane that flew over, can you just describe for me what it looked like and what you saw?**

It was this little aeroplane, see I used to watch, when I was at Waverly, or at Randwick, at Randwick the main runway, not the main runway but the east-west runway, all aeroplanes used to land over our house,

cause we lived at Randwick and they used to come over our house. And I was intrigued with aeroplanes and I used to watch these things, and I saw this little thing pop out and it was,

24:00 in those days I thought it was black cause it was night-time and there was clouds around. This black thing with this one wing and these long bomb-like things below it, and it did a bit of a orbit around the place and then it headed for Macquarie Light. And then from Macquarie Light it went back out to sea. And I thought, "That's strange." So I told the brother who was in charge what it was, "That's the navy doing some training." And it was only the next day that I found out they'd come into, submarines had come in and he'd been the

24:30 float plane. And, strangely enough, the pilot of that aeroplane, I met him in Japan years later when I was in the occupation force I met him, which is quite a coincidence really. As a matter of fact I think he's alive to this day, he's over 90 but he's the big head of a computer organisation in Tokyo and he's been back to Australia since. But he flew over Australia, flew over Sydney twice in '42 and '43.

So the flight that you saw, was the first flight?

The

25:00 first one, there was a second, the second Japanese float plane over Sydney but the first one that I saw, he was the reccie [reconnaissance] for the submarines because he was recci-ing [reconnoitring] the harbour to see what the targets were in the harbour. And they were after the USS Chicago, which was the biggest battleship there. And this bloke was a real guts man, it was black and at one stage of the game he was down to 200, 300 feet over the water between the Harbour Bridge and where the Chicago was moored. And

25:30 he flew out to sea and landed in the dark and actually hit something in the water, tipped upside down and his aeroplane sank. He tried to get in and get his navigator out, but his navigator had been rescued by the submarine. And they eventually pulled him out and put him on the thing and away he went. And not only did he survive the war but he came back a year later and did the same thing again over Sydney. Launched up near Newcastle and flew right down the coast, all across, right across Sydney, head down to

26:00 Port Kembla and Kiama and then back and landed back on the submarine again. But he wound up with a fishing tackle shop at Iwakuni in Japan after the war.

So what did you talk about when you did actually met him?

We talked about that because the fellow who introduced me was my boss, a bloke named 'Bay' Adams, and 'Bay' was a legend in his own time, he'd been a fighter pilot in Europe and he was with

26:30 PX Closten in that, the book, the big show and that sort of thing, that's the 'Bay' Adams, and he won a couple of decorations in Japan for his shooting and that sort of thing, but heck of a good guy, and he knew him pretty well. And we went down this day to buy a fishing rod and went into this little shop and talked to the guy and he wouldn't say very much at all but he'd been trained by the Brits [British] early in the war, or before the war, and he liked a drop whisky every now and

27:00 then so 'Bay' would take a bottle of scotch [whisky] in and he'd have three or four then he'd start to talk about the way he trained and where he was and where he'd come from, that sort of thing. And the flight over Sydney, and he showed us a pre-war Shell road map, which they had Sydney on it, and they had all the main things in Sydney, the picture theatres and thing with lights on all marked so he knew where he was, and Macquarie Lighthouse and that sort of thing. And an interesting guy to talk to but a real professional, I mean he was a warrant officer

27:30 in those days and he was only about 22 or 23 or maybe more, 24. Anyway he was a survivor went right through the war and went back and had the fishing tackle shop. And then years later he developed this computer firm in Tokyo. He came back to Australia as a guest of the Air Force Association in the '90s some time, or late '80s, because a fisherman had probably suggested they'd found his aeroplane. They'd found a piece of an aeroplane in a net

28:00 off Sydney Heads and they thought it might have been his and he was down as a guest. But a real, a very brave man. You think, that far from home in the middle of the night in a little thing like that, launching in the dark and then going back and landing again in the bloody dark, that's real guts stuff.

Did he discuss his training with you at all?

Yes he did, he did, it was fairly conventional like us

28:30 but they didn't sort of have any sort of areas, you either failed or you succeeded with them. And these guys were real professionals and they'd trained well. See in World War I they were allies, the Japanese, and a lot of training had been done by the Brits and they followed a lot of the Brit patterns. So his training was good and he had a lot of experience, and the way they had these float planes

29:00 set up on the submarines were quite fantastic. They had a thing like a big ship's boiler bolted on the top, on deck, and they had about 100 metres of wooden runway with a wire they'd attach to the thing and spin it and drag the thing along 100 metres. And it would actually get off the submarine and actually hit the water before it would actually fly – quite remarkable stuff. And when it would land back

it would taxi alongside the submarine and they'd put out a hook and pick it up and

29:30 put it back on the submarine again. And it used to fold up into about five parts, the wings would fold, the tail would fold, the thing would fold and they'd slide it back in this thing. Now the actual hangar, we used to call it a hangar, the boiler, was accessible from inside the submarine, so before they were ready to leave they'd get up there and do all the things with it, get it all ready to go. Then they'd get on the surface, open the front door pull it out, and I think within four minutes they'd have the thing ready, with all the wings out ready to go, ready to launch and away they'd go.

30:00 **Did he comment at all about the submarine attacking the ships and not actually hitting the intended target?**

No, he didn't, no. See what happened was, and I've only found out later on the submarine that actually did the firing in Sydney Harbour, the first one, one was caught in the net on the way in, that was the first, that's a story in itself that happened. The second one came in and got, actually got torpedoed and

30:30 sunk up near, in the bay around from Taronga Park, around there. The third one is the one that actually fired but his gyros had been affected by the, a couple of the depth charges they'd put out for him and he was trying to do it manually. And when the alert came on, the USS Chicago were getting ready to steam out, so they had full steam going and the smoke was coming out of the smoke stacks and the guy in the submarine

31:00 thought it was moving so they actually allowed the flex at the head of it. But it wasn't it was stationary and what he could see with his manual sight the torpedoes went in front of it and went all the way across over to Rose Bay and hit the sea wall just up from the Kuttabul and of course the Kuttabul rolled over and that's what killed all the sailors. But no-one ever knows what happened to him; he just disappeared. There's one blip of what they think is a submarine

31:30 leaving the harbour at a particular time and that's the last they heard of him, cause he would have run out of air and would have run out of power shortly afterwards. And they think he's in the water somewhere down Cronulla, somewhere in the deep water down there, but no-one ever knows to this day.

Did you mention to this particular pilot that he was the catalyst for getting you involved in the air force?

Oh yeah, he thought it was great. He thought it was terrific and I remember him saying, "You'd never catch me," because he said, "When they were all looking for me," he said

32:00 "they were all way up high and I was only at 500 feet over Sydney Harbour." He didn't have any English but he had a good sense of humour.

And when you saw it the Brothers had said it was just a training plane?

Oh yes, because we'd had several interruptions at night-time with searchlights on and noises and they'd have practice air-raid sirens and things like this. The thing is they said, "All you guys, into bed."

32:30 We should be in bed anyway. They just said, "Get back into bed, it's just an exercise." And then shortly after that, of course the, another submarine came and shelled Sydney Harbour. They were trying to knock out the flying boat base at Rose Bay and the shells were coming over Bellevue Hill. Of course Waverly's not very far from Bellevue Hill. At that stage there was great panic in Sydney; people were going everywhere.

So what do you remember of that day, the shelling?

I wasn't there. I was in

33:00 the army, I was down at Victoria Barracks, the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Okay. Coming back now to Bradfield Park, they listed several roles for you to do but you kept saying no?

Well what you do at Bradfield Park, you do all sorts of aptitude tests, everything you can think of you do. One thing, for example, one thing you'd get onto a stretcher, on a swing, and they'd

33:30 start a machine and it would rock you from the vertical that way to the vertical this way. And they do that to see if you become airsick, had nothing to do with bloody airsickness as I found out later on. But everybody would get sick eventually. The thing was… And then they'd time how long it took you to get sick. And we used to call it the flying vomit room, it was, everybody would get sick, it was just like being at Luna Park on a thing you pay to go on, but just on a stretcher like that,

34:00 that's one thing. Then there'd be another thing you'd have a control in your hand which would control a green light on a screen and they'd have a red light moving around which someone would control, and you'd try and chase it with the green light, try and catch it. You did all sorts of Morse training, you did all sorts of Aldis lamp training, you did everything, all the basics of everything you could do. Then based on the results of your tests they then say well you'll people would be selected for

34:30 navigator, you'd be selected for pilot, you'd be selected for air gunner. All these things came through.

Well now this particular stage we came through, I got selected all right and I was going to be a pilot but I went up to be interviewed by a fellow named Ashton, I'll never forget his name. He came from a polo-playing family which were very well known in Australia's polo playing, and we had an interview and he said, "Oh, you're

35:00 from the bush?" "Yes." "And you ride?" "Yes." "And do you hunt?" And hunting! I thought he meant with my dog and rabbits – he meant jumping – I didn't know what he meant so I said, "Yes." and he said, "Well how do you jump a normal fence?" and I said, "I don't jump a normal fence, I get through it" and he said, "Don't be bloody smart with me, son." He said, "You know what I mean," and I really didn't know what he mean. And he said, "When you're riding and you jump." And I said,

35:30 "Oh, you mean riding?" and he said, "Yes." He said, "Do you jump with a loose reign or a tight reign?" and I said, "Gees, I jump with a tight reign cause if I don't the horse will fall over." "Oh," he said, "that's complexly wrong." He said, "You let the horse take its head. He selects when he jumps." And of course he's talking about bloody prize polo pony that had been trained, I'm talking about bush scrubbers that you've got to hang on. So he came out there unlikely to become an efficient pilot because he's no coordination with jumping.

36:00 So I went back to the thing and did another several, so they put me back through this coordination test again, with the lights and things and I passed that again. And they eventually said, "Well we've decided you can become a navigator or a wireless operator." I said, "I'm not going to be either of those. I'm going to be pilot or I'm out of here." And the fellow said, "You can't get out of here," and I said, "You'll be surprised if I can." Cause all I had to say was I was under age and I would have gone. And eventually the bloke said, "Oh well, if you're determined to be a pilot," he said, "well try you one more time." So they gave me one more aptitude test and I went through it like that, and didn't

36:30 do an interview about jumping horses any more, which was good.

So the aptitude test was with someone totally different to the first guy?

Yeah, oh entirely different, yeah. And I got selected to go to Temora and I went to Temora and that's the first time I'd actually ever seen an aeroplane on the ground, when I got to Temora. And I thought to myself, "I wonder if I've done the right thing here." But I had no trouble. I got into it and I loved every minute of it.

37:00 The only thing at Temora that really sticks in my mind is when you've done four or five hours or whatever it is, six hours, the instructor says you can go solo, for your first solo test, and he takes you across and he gets out and he ties his straps in and says, "Away you go." And you go up and do your first solo and you come back and you land and you stop and you pick him up. I came back and landed and I was so elated by the fact that I'm on the ground that I taxied all the way back up to where we

37:30 parked and I look back and there's an irate bloody instructor – he'd walked the full width of the airfield carrying his parachute, very unhappy with me. So for my punishment I had to walk around the airfield twice with two parachutes, his parachute and mine, had to walk all the way round the airfield twice. That was my first solo, and I've never forgotten. The only thing see what really saddened me, I couldn't tell Mum and Dad. I was dying to tell them but of course I couldn't tell them,

38:00 cause they thought I was over doing algebra at school. Shouldn't have been at Temora at all.

So what planes were you flying there at Temora?

Tiger Moths, the old Tiger Moths.

Do you remember your actual first flight in them, not as a solo but as a...?

Yeah, first flight I just had an unimaginable feeling of becoming airborne for the first time, and it's great flying because you're out in the air up to your shoulders, you've got helmet and goggles on

38:30 and the little windscreen, windscreen in your face and you're actually for the first time you're as light as the air – it's quite a fantastic feeling. And I took to it immediately, I loved it, I thought it was great.

Did any fellows that had sort of come in this particular group from Bradfield Park not like it at all?

Oh yeah we had, I think we had 40 from the course and I think 15 or 16 of those didn't get through Temora at all,

39:00 and a lot of them fall by the wayside. You go through your first training school, which is the basic training, Tiger Moths, and then in Australia you went onto the Wirraways. But of course they told me I was too short to fly fighters therefore I'd have to go to Canada, so I elected to go to Canada which was good, I was quite pleased to do that.

Any accidents during this early time?

No, no we were lucky. Couple of close calls but no

39:30 accidents. We had a wonderful fellow, the CO of the base at Temora named Hal Harding, Wing Commander Harding. The base was such a well-run base they used to call it Harding's Country Club, it

was known to the air force. And he was a wonderful fellow, he had a Tiger Moth with the front canopy, front cockpit faired in, sealed in. See in actual fact

40:00 it was a single-seat Tiger Moth, the only one. And he had it all cleaned and polished and waxed and it would, had about, oh, five or 10 knots faster than any other Tiger Moth, and he used to fly this thing around the place. And one day we were out doing solo exercises, and you were always told this is what you're suppose to do, but everybody tries to do something different. So were out this particular one day and I'm trying to do something I shouldn't have been doing, fiddling around and I got this funny, funny feeling that… And I look up there

40:30 and there's the CO in his Tiger Moth, upside down like that, looking at me going, with his finger, and frightened the living daylights out of me. And I believe he done that to several people around the place, but great guy, very highly thought of man.

Well just stop there and change tapes.

Tape 3

00:41 **How did you mix with the other blokes when you joined the services, being so much younger?**

Well it's all relative.

01:00 I mentioned to you earlier when you come from the bush you grow up pretty quickly and there's really not much difference between 15 and 18, and we were all a bunch of young blokes together. I mean I've got a picture I'll show you, it was all Bradfield Park and virtually you can't tell the difference any of us. No-one ever knew and I was never going to tell anybody, and in wartime a lot of fellows joined up under age but most of them got caught, most got found out.

01:30 But the actual lifestyle was just normal, just normal trainees.

What did you do on leave?

Went home, dressed up in my Waverly College uniform, went home told Mum life was good, did the normal things, went to the pictures, chased girls did all the things you could normally do. Except I was more proficient at chasing girls than I was learning the quick way from all my army friends in the air force at Bradfield Park. Just became

02:00 a normal ordinary schoolboy home for the weekend.

What about when you had an evening off or a weekend to…?

Well you didn't have any evenings off when you were training, you got off between Saturday lunchtime and Monday morning at 7 o'clock. That's why it was always convenient for Dad to have me picked up in a car because the simple reason is otherwise it would take me too long to travel by train and bus back to Waverly again, so I'd get the full

02:30 time. So I'd get home, I'd be home by say two or three Saturday afternoon and just normal at home. That Saturday night we'd maybe have somebody in for dinner or something, Mum would do something for dinner, Sunday we'd get up and go to mass in the morning. Sunday we'd usually go to the beach, usually spend most of the day at Coogee Beach, Sunday night a great meal and everything and then back to camp. It was pretty mundane sort of lifestyle,

03:00 but it was so much better than being in the camp and eating the stuff I was getting there to get a bit of Mum's cooking again.

What were the mix of blokes like that were going into the air force at that stage?

All the people like myself were going in for a particular reason. They were going in because we were at war – we were being under attack and we were going to do what we could to stop it. It was all to do with patriotism in those days. But another thing, see people are funny,

03:30 I was sitting on a tram coming from somewhere to somewhere in my Waverly uniform and I must have looked older than I was and a lady gave me a white feather, said, "Why aren't you in the services?" Well I couldn't say, "I'm bloody only 15. I'm at school." Well I could have. I thought people are funny that way. Well you've still got those cranks around today but it was a bit off putting for people because

04:00 in those days everybody that was able bodied who could were in the services. The only ones who weren't in the services were the ones that weren't permitted to go and they weren't very happy about it, like my Dad was terribly unhappy because he couldn't go, but he wasn't allowed because he was a policeman.

How had Sydney transformed during the war? How did you know that the war was on when you were in Sydney at the time?

Well I knew the war was on because I listen to war being declared in 1939.

I'm talking about how,

04:30 **what signs of the war would you see on the street?**

I don't really follow your question.

People in uniform, were there blackout restrictions?

Oh I see. Very little in Sydney, very little blackouts and things that's why when the Japanese float planes came over. They could see all the picture theatres in George Street were all alight. We got a little bit of blackout things later on but not very severe. But people in uniform everywhere. My

05:00 biggest impression was seeing the first lot of Americans who came when the American fleet came in the very first time, seeing all these American sailors with their funny sailor hats on, which I had not seen before. And everybody that you knew, in all the family you knew somebody in the family was in uniform and it just became normal way of life. The thing is people were different in those days, people used to go out of their way to help people in uniform. You couldn't really pay to go anywhere. If you walked out on the street somewhere someone would stop

05:30 the car and pick you up and give you a ride. You could travel anywhere you wanted in the tram in Sydney for one penny, was all it cost you in uniform, one penny to go anywhere at all. You could, they had several areas where they had canteens which would provide food and drink for you, go in there and have lunch and that for free. And the general things was everybody was part of the effort to keep the war going, you know, support the people in the war.

What was

06:00 **the generally held opinion of the American servicemen in Sydney?**

Overpaid and over here, that was the general opinion. But it wasn't their fault. I mean the thing is their lifestyle was so far ahead of ours. They had far too much money, in our terms, and of course that's why they were attractive to all the young girls around the place. And that's why there were big fights up in Brisbane and Townsville and things because our guys

06:30 in uniform were at a disadvantage with the Americans. But there was no real animosity or anything about it. The thing is that the average Australia realised, but for the Americans we were in terrible trouble.

Had you had any dealings with Americans yourself?

Never heard one, never met one, very few Americans out where I came from.

Until you went over to Canada was the first time?

Canada yeah, got to San Francisco and that was a new life.

07:00 **Well how did that come about, you had finished the course at Temora?**

Finished the course at Temora and I could have gone to Point Cook or Wagga, Uranquinty. But because I was too short in the legs, according to the experts, I couldn't train on Wirraways so they selected us to go to Canada to train on a thing called an Oxford, twin-engine Airspeed Oxford, and that's how I went up in that group.

What was your opinion of being sort of directed

07:30 **towards the multi engine?**

Oh anti, dead anti. I wanted to be a fighter pilot. I was going to chase that guy over Sydney, that was my idea, and I didn't like it at all. I liked to fly and the flying was good, we were based out at a place called Red Deer in Alberta and we just only an hour from Banff and Lake Louise and right along the Rockies [Rocky Mountains]. It was the most wonderful lifestyle because in Canada there was no

08:00 shortage of anything, everything was the land of milk and honey. But I must admit that the base was a Royal Air Force base, there were four or five Royal Air Force bases in Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme. And this base they put themselves all on the rations as wartime England, which I thought was tremendous effort. We didn't like it, but the thing is they did. To get up of a morning, we had to fly early, and you get a bloody dead fish on your plate,

08:30 you know a kipper for breakfast and you think, "Christ, what's this?" But just down the road was the Red Deer town and we'd go and eat there on occasion. But I admired their attitude to what they were doing and the land of milk and honey – they were living in these very spare conditions.

Can you tell us about your... the lead up to your departure for Canada and going over there?

Temora got sent down to Melbourne, into the Melbourne Cricket Ground, in those days the cricket grounds

09:00 were all holding depots for people. And sleeping in the stand of the Melbourne Cricket Ground where

they had the tiered seats and we had metal stretchers. To make the stretchers level they had two house bricks on that seat with the legs on, and the legs on the seat there so that the stretcher was level. So you had all these tiers. And the big trick is if you come home at night-time, late at night-time and kick the first two house bricks out of the top bed,

09:30 and he'd fall over and hit the next one and you'd have 40 beds all in a heap down in the bottom. And if they caught you'd they'd kill you, but they never did. That was part of the trick of it – good fun. Then we got on a troop train and decided we had to go to Brisbane, we had to sail from Brisbane into Sandgate and we were on the train for six days from Melbourne to Brisbane. six of us to an 8-person carriage and every time we'd stop,

10:00 we'd stop for breakfast and morning tea, every time we stop we'd have the same meal. We'd have bread and butter and sausages and mashed potato and gravy and tea and jelly and custard, that was the same meal every meal except breakfast for the whole time we went up there. Because the people, the country folks who'd been told by the authorities that we were coming through, this is what they want for their meal, but they didn't realise that over six days you got bloody sick of sausages.

10:30 But it was good. We had a lot of fun as normal kids do. Did some terrible things, used to get out of the train window and walk along the side of the train hanging on and get in the next window and all that sort of ridiculous thing. Got to Sandgate and stayed there for a couple of nights and got put on a ship called the SS Lurline, one of the Maximum Line ships, and it had been made as one of the big white passenger,

11:00 you know, the Love Boat pre war. The only trouble was that we were on board and there was I think 2,000, 3,000 American, what were they, Americans, I think marines. Anyway coming back they'd done the landing, a lot of landing up north and they were on their way back through Australia, they'd had some R&R [Rest and Recreation] on the way back to the States again and we had…

11:30 This ship was absolutely stocked to capacity so we had a meal ticket, a coloured meal ticket, and we were only allowed to eat twice a day; we'd eat morning and night depending on what your hours were. And I'll never forget this day our breakfast in the morning was 5.30 was our breakfast time and our dinner time at night-time was 7.00 at night. And we had nothing in between except they had a canteen on board which you could buy things and they used to have chocolates called Hershey bars, and we'd buy them by the box full and we'd eat these bloody

12:00 chocolates all day and play cards and do things to fill in the time. But we were on that ship for, oh, nearly a month.

Where did you land?

Nowhere on the way over.

San Francisco, when you arrived?

San Francisco, but didn't land anywhere on the way over.

And what were your impression of San Francisco?

Oh well it was like seeing Disneyland for the first time, couldn't believe it, couldn't believe it could be so big. I never, ever,

12:30 ever in the world met more hospitable people, absolutely unbelievable. People actually waiting outside the wharves in cars picking us up just to take us and do something with us around the place. We only had a couple of days free but there was a place called the Pepsi Cola Centre in San Francisco and it had full-time, 24 hours a day free meals and free Pepsi Cola and free everything all the time there. And full of

13:00 good-looking young women who were serving there and being company for the fellows, and you could dance and do things 24 hours a day all for free. You'd walk out on the street and the first thing you'd notice someone would pick you up and say, "Where can I help you? Where can you go?" And even in those days Australians were the flavour of the month over there. They didn't know much about us; they didn't know where we came from. A lot of them thought we should be all black, a lot of them couldn't understand how we spoke English. But the thing

13:30 is we were very popular. To a young bloke, to see that sort of thing was incredible. And from San Francisco we went up to Vancouver. We saw snow for the first time. I'd never ever seen snow. We woke up one morning, we had those Pullman carriages trains where they make up the double-decker beds and they've all got these coloured boys come along in their little green caps and their coats and say, "Time to get up sir, time to get up sir," and all this white stuff outside. So we got all

14:00 these bloody mad Australians out there in their no shoes, and underpants, running around in the snow for the first time ever. That was a place called Eugene, Oregon, I've never forgotten that where the first snow I'd ever seen. And then of course got to Edmonton, Alberta, and it was 26 below zero, just couldn't believe it could be so cold. And they had to issue us with all sorts of… We didn't have any clothes, they had to issue us with all sorts of insulated boots

14:30 and insulated gloves and hats with insulated ear pieces because in those climates if you don't have your

ears covered your ears will fall off, actually freeze and fall off. We soon adjusted to it.

What had you packed from Australia to go on this trip?

Your kitbag, one kitbag, four pairs of underpants, two shorts, one pair of things, whatever issue you had – you didn't own anything else. No civilian clothes of any sort, no personal equipment at all, apart from

15:00 a toothbrush and that sort of thing, but just the standard issue equipment and one kitbag.

And what sort of new clothing were you issued with once you got into the freezing temperatures?

Well we got boots, insulated boots, calf-high boots, insulated gloves, caps with earmuffs on, real parkas, real genuine parkas with hoods and things. Thermal underwear.

15:30 All the stuff that you needed for the cold. And you couldn't operate without it.

Was that Canadian air force uniform?

Canadian gear yeah, all Canadian.

How did you find the Canadians as opposed to the hospitality of the United States? Was it similar or different?

Same, same, exactly the same except they were more closely knit to the war. See the war was on as far as they were concerned and they'd been part of it right from the time it had

16:00 started, whereas the Canadians were fairly new boys, this is 1942, 43, they were fairly new boys. And the Americans were behind over backwards to try and make an effort, well the Canadians also but they had more things on their mind than that. And they were very much like ourselves.

What was the base you arrived on at Edmonton like?

The which?

The place at Edmonton?

Oh very nice big city, a big capital city

16:30 base on the river, on a river, some very gracious old buildings. The base we were on was a place called the Manning Depot outside, there'd been a place much like the Sydney Showground and they'd take that over completely for us. The only thing they had was a funny custom, they had a, not a custom, a regulation they had to salute the flag, whenever they marched

17:00 past they'd have to salute the flag as they went past. And for some reason that stuck in the Australians, we didn't do that so the big trick at Edmonton was to see who could cut the flag pole down. So every now and again there'd be a flag pole disappear and they knew the Australians had done it and we'd all get chastised and they'd put another one up, just one of those funny things.

What other pranks took place at any of your training?

We had a very, what's the word for it,

17:30 ferocious drill instructor and he used to give us a very hard time, so what we'd do there we used to go over to his, we knew where he lived, and we used to get a bucket of water and throw a bucket of water on his front veranda, on his steps. And when he'd walk out in the morning he'd hit this and he'd go skidding across on his backside down the front steps, and we thought that was good fun. The other thing used to be to come back at night-time and you'd,

18:00 we all had air locks on our huts, you'd open the first door and go inside and then open the second door and go inside. And what we would do is put, pour water on the outside step there also and they'd go to go out, they'd all get dressed and they'd open the door and they'd go zip and go sliding on the ground. All the things we couldn't do in Australia cause we didn't have the freezing atmosphere, that was all good fun.

What was the discipline like on the

18:30 **Canadian base?**

Very strong, very strong discipline, much like ourselves. You did as you were told, you didn't break rules. If you bent them too far you'd get caught and done things for. And the main thing was that it was our fear of getting kicked off course, that was the big thing, so you didn't do too much and we were all keen to fly and we wanted to keep going so you did as you were told. But when your free time was on you could do what you liked, life was good.

What punishments

19:00 **were issued then apart from throwing you off course?**

Confined to barracks for periods of time, if it was serious enough, such as happened to a couple of us

with illegal low flying, a detention in the cells for a period of time and things like that. Extraneous duties, you'd get a limit on the number of times you could go to the canteen, they'd say the canteen is barred for 48 hours or a week

19:30 whatever it was, which was a hell of a hardship because of the eating, you know the meals weren't that good and you used to rely on that to boost your meals a bit. But just the normal punishment that happened to you.

What did you do when you had time to yourself?

Chase girls, which were easy to catch in Canada cause they were short of fellows like we all were, and I suppose being overseas people were a bit exotic as far as they were concerned. And everybody had

20:00 girlfriends around the place, used to have some wonderful times, used to get on the river at night-time, the river was frozen over and you'd skate four or five miles down the river and then stop and have a barbecue in the snow. That's called a weenie roast, you'd sit there and cook a weenie and things, or hot dogs, and then skate back home again. It was all pretty much above board, there wasn't that much sexuality amongst it all, until towards, when you'd be finishing your course and you were going to be posted to England or somewhere

20:30 then a little bit of, it would get a bit sort of this way. And we had several fellows married girls there at that stage, they'd get a bit closer. It was all a lot, hell of good fun, but you were never without company, it was always on.

You mentioned growing up on a farm you had a pretty good sex education from the animals, was there any offered by the air force or…?

No.

At any time?

Yeah how not to catch VD [Venereal Disease], and the most vivid movies you've ever

21:00 seen in your life of various stages of VD which would frighten the living Christ out of anybody, and that was their idea – to frighten you. And they did, but it was not sex education, it was disease education.

Where was that offered?

Right from the start at Bradfield Park, right from when we went in and it was pretty effective. Yes I remember the sign used to say 'If

21:30 you go out, use a condom'. Not a condom, What did they call them in those days? Not a condom. They were called something else. 'Use protection' I think, 'If you don't, you'll get I'. That was on the gate and that's pretty effective.

Were you equipped with condoms?

Oh yeah, used to give them, cigarettes, condoms, razorblades, [Australian] Comforts [Fund] parcels always had those sort of things in them, all the time.

Did you have any particularly

22:00 **special girlfriends during your time in Canada?**

Yeah, many and several. One of my big problems, wasn't my big problem, but one of their problems in Canada if they ever got a little too ambitious they were always three or four years older than me, they didn't realise but they always were. See I'm 16 and there all 19, 20, cause that was the age group of the fellows I was with, and these fellows often discuss whether they get engaged, get married

22:30 and stuff and I just said, "It's not for me. I'm off, out of here."

What about other things that the older lads were obvious interested in, drinking and that kind of stuff?

Well in Canada it was interesting because you couldn't drink in Canada until you were 18, had to have a licence for it. And because I had my age bracket, born in 1924, I had a liquor permit and they used to use me to buy liquor, a lot of liquor for them, and cause

23:00 the 18-year-olds that just arrived there couldn't get one and I'd buy the liquor for them. You had to go to the liquor store, and I forget how much you could buy, but you could buy a certain amount each week. You couldn't buy liquor in pubs and clubs and things, at all, only in liquor stores. Oh you could buy drinks in places but you couldn't buy bottles. So I'd go to the liquor store and buy it for them. But you had to have an identity card and you had to show it all the time. It's the first time I'd ever seen identity cards, but you had to have one there.

Was there any trouble with

23:30 **riotous behaviour or…?**

No, no very little, not enough booze to have real drunken behaviour at all. As a matter of fact thinking back the parties and things you had were pretty mild really; it was more based on good fun than anything at all.

When you got a bit of leave in Canada, where would you go?

Well one, for example,

24:00 another fellow and I, what you'd do you got straight down the road to the highway and put your thumb out, and whichever way the car was going you'd go. We went across over to, where's the place now, Cleveland and we used to go round and we'd get part-time jobs to make money. And we got a job in the Swiss canning factory, they were canning meats and things and

24:30 we used to go there and I think we were getting something like $1.80 or $2.00 an hour, which was about double what our air force pay was. And my job was to tally the sides of pork coming through and his job was a big metal stamp with a big stamp pad, he'd hit it and put a big purple mark on it. You probably seen it on the sides of meat. He'd hit them as they'd go through and I'd tally them all off. And we were getting paid $1.80 or something like that and we worked there for three or four days then we'd move on somewhere else.

25:00 After, we'd only get a week or 10 days off and then we'd come back. Big leave, we had a month's leave towards the end of the course and we hitchhiked down to Hollywood and we spent three weeks in Hollywood and we had a great time there. We were guest to several people and several of the actors took us in and did things with us, showed us what they did and round the various studios and put us on their yacht and took us for a ride on their yacht. And then we hitchhiked

25:30 all the way back up to Canada again.

Why were so keen to supplement your air force wage?

Money, money, see when you're only getting six shillings a day, well in these terms that's 60 cents a day, even though things weren't dear you didn't have much money to spend at all. Not that you needed much money because you didn't need money in the camp but when you were out somewhere and you're trying to impress

26:00 a young lady you need some cash. And we found another good one was you could go and become a blood donor and they used to pay you $5.00 a pint, and we had a couple of kids got into terrible trouble cause they gave too much. You know it was a quick 20 bucks if you could give four pints, but if you give four pints you tend to spin in after a while. They put out a warning about that also, it was pretty effective though it used to get $5 for you, I've done it a

26:30 couple of times.

Just back to the training at Edmonton, how did you do on coming onto the Oxfords?

Well it was different cause I'd only ever flown Tiger Moths. You had to learn first of all to fly with your left hand, and the throttles in the middle, that's different, twin engines, you had to learn twin-engine flying, you had to learn flying a twin-engine aeroplane with one engine out.

27:00 And you had to learn all the things that you're to learn to be a bomber pilot. It was a good aeroplane to fly and the area around Canada and around Alberta was just superb, all dead flat wheat fields as far as you could see and beautiful weather, they used to get the Indian summer used to come in there and it was just wonderful, every day was like this. And the Rockies behind you, the snow-clad Rockies and it was great fun. See weekends there we got to Banff

27:30 and meet very wealthy people up there and look after us pretty well. But the flying was good. I enjoyed it very much and the RAF [Royal Air Force] were very good, highly qualified people. We still get together, our group who were trained way back in '43, '44, we still get together. We just had a reunion 6, 7 months ago. Not many left now – a few of them have fallen off the twig [passed away] – but it was

28:00 a great basis for future flying.

What were your personal instructors like?

Wonderful, wonderful guys they, there was no sort of hint that we were colonials or anything at all; we were just part of the team. They gave their very best, several of them had been in combat, we had a couple of Battle of Britain blokes who had been there that had gone back to flying instruction. Some of them were very frustrated because they couldn't get,

28:30 they hadn't been in action, they'd been training all the time. But wonderful dedicated people and their main aim was to teach you to fly, which they all did pretty well.

Were there any particular figures that stand out from any time in your training at mentors or…?

Ah yeah Peter Haynes, Flight Sergeant Peter Haynes, who was a RAF flight sergeant who should have been commissioned. I don't know why he wasn't. But all his friends had been commissioned and he was

the most dedicated guy, he'd come

29:00 round at night-time, after work and talk to you and help you and tutor you on things you needed to know to get through. And I think Pete had a hundred per cent success rate with his students. I don't think he lost a student while he was there. I had a lot of time for him. Never saw him again which, strange enough, I tried to find him years later and never could at all. The other instructor I remember very well was from Keith Walgon was my instructor at Temora

29:30 in Tiger Moths, he's the first one I'd ever had and we got on famously, and old Keith was very upset because his brother had been flying Kittyhawks in New Guinea and old Keith was stuck on training. And very, very sadly when I was in Canada, oh no, I might have come back to New Guinea I think, anyway he committed suicide and they reckon it was cause just frustration – he'd been all those years and never got to combat and his family had and he committed suicide, which

30:00 affected me quite a bit, actually. Both those two, Keith Walgon with the Tiger Moths and Peter Haynes in Canada.

Just going back to Temora for a moment, one thing we did skip over was talking about your first solo, how did you do on that occasion. Can you take us through that flight? What did you have to do?

Oh all you do is one circuit, see what you do, you go through the normal, your normal training learning to do all the things you have to do, and then you combine all the things you learn to do

30:30 into flying a circuit which is up, climbing, gliding, turning. And you take off and you do an oblong circuit like that, crosswind, downwind, crosswind and in to land. And as you're getting close to going solo, well you don't know but they know, and you come back and you might do four or five landings in a row. And on the fourth one you'll land, taxi in and he'll say, "Okay, I've been with you long enough. Go and do it on your own," and that's really a bloody shock to your system.

31:00 You think, "Christ!" And he gets out. But then you do exactly what you did before without having him to take over in case you get into trouble, so you just take off and do downwind. And I'll never forget as long as I live the first crosswind, turn downwind and I'm at the right height of 1,000 feet downwind and I looked out and I thought, "I'm on my own! I can't believe it! I'm on my own!" You know, "After all this time I'm here by myself!" And I was so elated that I came around and did a good landing but then I taxied and left him on the,

31:30 left him down there in the field and old Keith was not impressed with that at all.

What things did you find difficult in those early flights?

I found it all difficult. I was by no means, whatever a natural is I don't, yeah there are some naturals, I mean I've flown with so many people now that some can do it like that. But I luckily had coordination but I had to work at everything

32:00 I had to work hard. I had to listen to what they told me and don't try and think for myself do what they told me, and they were usually right. And I found I could fly the aeroplane very well. I had great trouble early with instrument flying. They used to put a hood over you like that and you had to fly on instruments. And I used to get all sorts of vertigo feelings in there because I had great trouble making myself believe that by looking at the instruments you could do it. And it's like anything, it's only a learning process –

32:30 eventually you can do it. Some people never can. I mean some people can never fly, some people just can't do two things. See flying is all to do with doing more than one movement at the one time, you move your hand like that and your feet like that and the throttle like that, and you've got to move the three of them. Now some people can't do it, some people do 1, 2, three or 1, 2, three but they can't get all the coordination. And I got three children, I've two boys and a girl. One bloke's a very good pilot flyer, my daughter's the best of all, she flies

33:00 beautifully, the third one's absolutely bloody hopeless because he'd can't do, he can't coordinate. He can do it by numbers, and I got them all solo and I said to him, "Don't do it any more, you're going to kill yourself or somebody else cause you just can't." See what happens is there are people who can learn to fly but there are people who are pilots and there's the difference. And one of the troubles nowadays with aero clubs, cause money's so tight they teach people to fly, whereas in the air force they teach

33:30 people to become a pilot and there's a very big difference between the two of them. But mine wasn't easy but by listening to what you were told to do and doing it, you found bit by bit a bit rubbed off, bit by bit. And there's no other teacher other than experience. You've got to keep doing, got to keep doing it, keep doing it. That's why if you don't fly regularly you can have an accident.

I've heard from other people talking about learning to fly that some

34:00 **of the difficult areas are your first stall in an aircraft?**

It's frightening not difficult, it's frightening.

What happens? Take us through it.

Well the thing is an aeroplane flying normally, in balanced flight it's got the air flow flowing over the wing and the shape of the wing gives you lift up that way, that's a factor. The weight of the aeroplane is the weight down there. The things that are poking out of the aeroplane cause wind resistance, which is called drag, and the engine gives you power, which is called thrust. So you've got lift, weight,

34:30 thrust and drag, and once they're all balanced the aeroplane's in balanced flight, no problem, and you can do most things with it. When you want to stall you cut out the thrust vector so the nose has to come out to give you lift to increase the lift factor, get a high angle, and it gets to a stage there where no longer there's the air flow over the wing. What happens, it breaks away. And when it breaks away the weight of the aeroplane centres around the centre of gravity will fall like that. So you see all of a sudden

35:00 way up here and it goes boom. Now it's not a nice feeling but if you know what it's going to do and how to do it, all you have to do is just do nothing and it will recover, and to make it recover earlier you put some power on and it will recover earlier. But a lot of people it's the fear factor. Now you get an aeroplane like a Wirraway, for example, which is a little different, when you stall it it's not always perfectly balanced. If it's not perfectly

35:30 balanced when it stalls, not only will it drop, it will flick. So you go from up there real high and it goes whack, and the next thing you know you're on your back this way. Now if you're not careful there it will spin, and once again a spin's not difficult but the first time it's frightening. But all you do in a spin is take recovery action opposite to what you're in, so if you're spinning to the right you put on full left rudder like that, which will kick it out, and then you put the stick forward will make it come back again. And it's a matter of teaching,

36:00 that's why the instructors were good because they would do it all and show you. But the first three or four stalls and spinning were quite terrifying because you're completely and utterly out of control. But when, later on when I was instructing up at Archie Field for a few years I used to go up, another fellow and I, and we'd get side by side and we'd stall, in two Tiger Moths and we'd spin and we'd do 11 turns of a spin from 3,000 feet. And then we'd recover and we'd recover head on,

36:30 like that. It used to really bring the crowd on their toes. But it's only just technique and we used to use that as a show thing. But learning to do it the first couple of times, I can understand people saying it's difficult.

One other thing in a Tiger Moth, how were you at judging your height on landing?

The hardest thing to do, that is the hardest thing to do, the hardest thing to do is judge height for landing. You'd have to look as far ahead of the airfield, way as far as you can

37:00 and try and get your eye balanced when it's level. If you look over there you can't judge the depth so it's not a matter of, it's depth perception, you have to look way ahead. The same as landing at night-time on flares – you don't look at the flares, you look at the flare pathway down there and as it starts to flatten out that's when you're near the ground. So in a Tiger Moth, or any other aeroplane, you come down and you're looking way ahead of you, and as it starts to flatten out you start to round out to try and fly it level. And as you start to fly it level you're about right, and then you keep

37:30 holding it off the ground as long as you possibly can, hold it off as long as you can and eventually it lands itself and that's the way it operates.

Were there blokes that couldn't just do that?

Yeah, yeah depth perception kills a lot. Not kills them, but depth perception scrubs a lot of people. They just can't get that idea. See the natural thing is you're going to try and land there, you look where you're going to try and land, and you try and land on an aircraft carrier and you can't do that cause you look like you're going to land in the bloody water – you've got to look what they've got over there.

38:00 It terrified me landing on an aircraft carrier for the first time, I thought, "My God, I'm going to fall in the water." But once again, that's technique.

Just getting back to your early training when you went onto the Oxfords what other things were they training you to be a bomber pilot rather than a fighter pilot?

Well that's what they train you for to be a bomber pilot. You did hours and hours on flying beam intercepts where there's a beam goes to the target and you fly along a beam,

38:30 get a cross-section beam and know where your checkpoint is. Tremendous amount of navigation training. The actual flying the aeroplane itself, the main thing there is to learn to fly on one engine and you spent hours and hours on actual flying. It's, some people like it. I didn't like it that much but luckily when the course finished they offered me the choice of going to England, which most people wanted to go, and we all applied to fly Mosquitos. Everyone wanted to fly Mosquitos.

39:00 We said that was for us. But there were no spaces available and they said to several of us, "Well you can go back to New Guinea and fly fighters," and I said, "Okay that's for me." I didn't tell them I wasn't allowed to fly fighters. And when I got home no-one ever knew the difference and said, "Away you go." So I did a conversion on Mustangs, well flew Liberators first then Mustangs and then went to Japan

with the occupation force.

Was there ever any sense in them saying that you were too short?

39:30 Yeah, because in the Wirraway in the back seat, or as an instructor in the Wirraway, the back seat is so far from the pedals that if you're not long enough in the legs you can't get full rudder on and full brake, the brake's on top of the pedals, you can't full brake. Cause what they don't realise is it's technique. If you want that, what you do is push that one forward, brings this one forward, then you can use the brake. And we all learnt that later on. But still to this day they give you a cushion

40:00 in the Wirraway in the back, you put a cushion in the back before you get in and you sit on the parachute. And the way people like me do it is push that one, bring the rudder forward then use your pedal. But a lot of things they wouldn't let people fly that had fillings in their teeth, originally, and you certainly couldn't fly if you were tall, shortsighted to any degree at all. You couldn't fly all sorts of things, which is a whole heap of nonsense, we've learnt since then. But a lot of good people were knocked out because of that reason.

40:30 **Right we'll just stop there and change over again.**

Tape 4

00:44 **Okay, we're going again. In a bit more detail, what happened at the end of the course in Canada?**

What happened at the end of the course in Canada? We were given a month leave, we went across to

01:00 Vancouver Island, to a base just outside of Victoria, which is the capital, and then we took off and we went all over, people went all over the States. We went down to southern California and did all the things you're suppose to do when you're on leave and got money in your pocket. And those that were coming back to Australia got put on a ship called the SS Matsonia in San Francisco, came out to Hawaii and had four days

01:30 of riotous behaviour in Hawaii. That's when the old Royal Hotels had barbed wire all over them, quite different to see them now. Then came up to New Caledonia and then went from New Caledonia across to Milne Bay, and we had three weeks from Milne Bay, Iorobaiwa, Finschhafen round to [Port] Moresby

02:00 and then from Moresby back out to New Caledonia and pick up a bunch of Americans in New Caledonia and then down to Brisbane, got off the ship in Brisbane.

What was the date, do you know roughly?

Yeah we'd be probably January '45, January, February '45, around about there.

Before you left Canada,

02:30 **what information were you being given through the news or through the air force about how the war was going in Europe and the war in the Pacific?**

We knew all the things that everyone knew. All the civilians knew that the war in New Cal [New Caledonia] was running down, that's why there were very few places for us to fly. A lot of people went from my course to England and did nothing at all for the next year, just did all sorts of fill in jobs. And those who were coming back here

03:00 knew that Pacific War was still going pretty much but it was moving up this way and they wanted people. We thought, the ones of us that came back here, thought we had more chance of flying if we came home than we would in the UK [United Kingdom], so that's why we came back.

It may sound a weird thing to say now, but were you concerned the war would end too quickly?

Yes very much so, we'd been training for 12 months and we wanted to go, and I wanted to still chase that bloke over Sydney and I wasn't getting any closer to catching him. I thought, "I want to get there before it stops."

03:30 That was our main thought was to get into action, get into combat.

Obviously you weren't going to be flying Mosquitos, what were you hoping to fly when you came back to Australia?

Kittyhawks, they said, "You come home to fly fighters." And when I came home I did a Wirraways conversion but the Kittyhawks had moved and we were re-equipping with Mustangs. So I then went from Wirraways to Mustangs and I stayed on Mustangs right through the Korean War

04:00 until we got the Meteors.

What about Beaufighters? That wasn't an option?

Never had the opportunity. I flew them later on when I was down at Central Flying School in Sale but not during the war. It never entered our head. I mean those of us who didn't really want to be bomber pilots anyway were not that interested in going anything at all. When the choice came, the best of the choice was the Mosquito. That's why we all elected Mosquitos and that's why none

04:30 of them got it. A lot of our Australians over in Canada were training on Harvards which, like the Wirraways… And they were training and they'd come and see us occasionally. And we were most envious of them because that's what we wanted to fly. But by coming home here we thought we had the chance of getting onto a Kittyhawks; that was the idea of it.

At what stage were you presented with your wings?

In, oh I was 18 in

05:00 December '44, so I got my wings in October '44.

And was that an emotional occasion?

Yes, because I was in jail and I thought it would be better to be somewhere else when I got them. Cause the three of us had been caught low flying. We were delivering some Oxfords across to another base in Canada and we were all low flying and one fellow flew too low and flew into the wheat field and

05:30 force landed into the wheat field. And he got out and he set fire to the aeroplane, which was pretty clever, and then said that it had an engine failure and he got away with it. And we were with him, came back and they found that two or three of them, the tops of the wheat had gone into the air scoops, we'd been low enough to get wheat, so the three of us were, he and Kev

06:00 and I, we were all taken up and charged with illegal low flying and we were held in the cells for 24 hours pending a court martial, which is on a Thursday, and our wings parade was on a Friday. So the wings parade was on Friday and they came down and gave us ours through the bars. They let us out on the weekend, got out on the Monday morning and found there was no case

06:30 to answer because his aeroplane had been completely destroyed and they took his word that there was an engine failure, and the course was finished and we could all go. But we weren't commissioned, Kev Hobb and I weren't commissioned. We were both NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] and most, the rest of the course were commissioned.

What was the thrill of low flying, can you talk about that?

Fantastic, fantastic! Ever driven a Mini [Mini Minor car]? It's like driving a Mini at 200 miles an hour – great feeling?

07:00 You can achieve the same sort of feeling by flying near the big cloud, big cumulus clouds and flying along there cause you get the actual sense of speed. See when you're flying you don't get any sense of speed, you can be flying at 2½ times the speed of sound and it makes no difference; all it is are the instruments are different. But when you're near the ground and things moving, and see you fly a thing like this Mirage and you're doing six miles a minute and you're at 50 feet going through the hills, it's fantastic. Well the same thing applies

07:30 whether you're a little aeroplane or a big aeroplane, same thing. My wife and I flew from Brisbane down to Moorabbin last year or so, and she'd never done it too and I took her low level all the way, went low level the whole coast all the way right round the corner, right down past Mallacoota, most beautiful trip seeing it like that and it's a great feeling.

Back on arriving in Australia, what happened

08:00 **to you then?**

I'm back in Australia from where, from Canada?

From Canada, yeah.

They decided to make me, because there was no flying available, I hadn't done my conversion, there was no flying so to fill in time they made me an air traffic controller. So I was in the control tower controlling aeroplanes up in Morotai in New Guinea and up in Darwin. I was up in Darwin when they were doing the tropical trials for the Meteors up there and things like that.

08:30 It was an interesting place. They were flying the, DC3s were flying on the Japan run, backwards and forwards. A bunch of Liberators were bringing back POWs through Darwin. Interesting time, good fun. And from there they said, "We want people that are interested in going to Japan on the occupations," so I applied. I came to Williamtown and did a conversion onto Wirraways, onto Mustangs, picked up the Mustangs

09:00 and flew the Mustangs up to Japan.

So was the war over when you arrived back in Australia from Canada?

Not really, but it was shortly after.

Do you remember where you were when the war ended?

Yes Uranquinty, not Uranquinty, Deniliquin, over in Deniliquin in western New South Wales because we'd had, we were posted from somewhere to somewhere and they said, "We want people who'd flown, had done Oxford training."

09:30 So two of us who were in the tower said, "We've got Oxford training." They sent us over to Deniliquin, which is the last Oxford training base, to fly the Oxfords over there prior to putting them into storage – they were flying them all out to a certain degree and then putting them into storage. So I went over there for six weeks and while we were there the war was declared over. That must been August, I think, '45, around about there, I can't remember. When did the war finish?

August '45. I've just got a slight problem when you're leaning back.

10:00 **You might just, yeah. What were the celebrations like in Deniliquin?**

Oh incredible, everything was open 24 hours a day, big country town, all the pubs, everything was open, everything was free. Our big trick we used to go into town and to get home, no bus, you'd steal a pushbike. And every 24 hours the police would come back and pick up all the pushbikes from alongside the mess and take it

10:30 back to town again. But no-one cared, it was all just full and free. And two of us stole a truck to try and get home and we drove it out of the main street turned the corner and got bogged, we took the wrong street and bogged it there. And still the blokes, no bloody thumping us or putting us in jail, they all laughed and said, "No problem, we'll pull it out," and then we walked back. But great celebrations went for days, the people had trouble believing it was all over.

11:00 Once again, great country people. And I went from there and did a Mustang conversion and went up in Japan.

Just before we talk about that, can you tell us a little bit more about your job as an air traffic controller in Darwin?

Well air traffic controller is a guy who controls traffic. He sits in the control tower, tells them where to go, what to go. And Darwin was a real bush town in those days, there was nothing at all. My big

11:30 memory of Darwin was the fact there was no booze of any sort. They had the booze boat would come in once a month and bring in beer and there was the Don Hotel and the Vic [Victoria] Hotel and the Hotel Darwin. Both the Don and the Vic were bombed out, but they had the shell there. And they'd bring the beer in and as far as you could see along the footpath on both sides they had all these people sitting in the gutter with their bottles of beer. And there's be a big booze up for

12:00 two or three days then there'd be no more beer. We used to drink, they had a bottling factory up there, they used to make soft drink but they had no bottles. They'd put it all in ex beer bottles and you wouldn't know what it was until you opened it. You'd have a gin and pink drink or a gin and green drink or gin and blue drink, whatever's in the, it was called lolly water – no label, just a brown bottle. And that used to cost I think the, twopence, twopence a bottle I think it was in those days.

12:30 But the actual flying side, the controlling side was interesting because I mentioned the aeroplanes before something was happening all the time on those sort of things and a lot of the exotic American aeroplanes were on the way back from New Guinea and from further north and brining back all sorts of people who had been picked up and people who'd been in POW [Prisoner of War] camps. And we were

13:00 pretty busy, plus the fact that the Lancastrian on the way, Qantas to London would come through to Darwin too and they'd arrive at middle of the night and we'd control those. The tropical trials for the new fighters were going on, they had a Meteor way back in those days was doing tropical trials in Darwin. They had the odd American aircraft carrier would come past

13:30 and land aircraft in Darwin, which was interesting. But just ordinary routine tower job, there wasn't much else going on anywhere at all. They had a glut of aircrew so you were lucky to get even close. This stage people were getting out by the dozen all over the place.

What sort of equipment or technology did you have at your disposal in air traffic controller then?

Aldis lamp to flash a light and a microphone with a 4-channel radio,

14:00 and that's all you had. And as long as you talked to the radio, if you couldn't talk to them with the radio you'd talk to them with lights. You'd go back your early training where you learnt to read Morse code on lamp.

Was there any radar used at that stage?

No, no radar, no it was used extensively in the UK. We had a few American portables ones in New Guinea and places but not in Australia.

What about in Morotai, when were you in Morotai?

14:30 The same period, up before, when the war finished, August, earlier in the year. The same thing operating with the Americans on a strip called Peto Strip and they all did the same sort of thing. They had, not better, oh better stuff I suppose, but more modern equipment that we had, that was the only difference. But we were all part of the same group in those days, we used to all use the

15:00 same stuff.

What was the situation on Morotai Island with the Japanese?

Well they had been bypassed. It was unsafe to walk around on your own anywhere because there was snipers all over the place, but there was no sort of active flying, they were mopping up, everywhere they were mopping up. And the Peto Strip was full of aeroplanes, all sorts of aeroplanes going everywhere and mainly people getting ready to go to Japan from there, cause they were

15:30 all on the move north.

What did you think when you heard about the atomic bomb? Where did you get that news? Maybe Deniliquin or earlier?

I was in Deniliquin when that happened, yeah, and I don't really recall what my reaction was at all. I think we all thought it was a bloody good thing the war's over, that's going to stop it. And see to my mind all the atomic bomb was was just a bigger bomb,

16:00 that's all it was, I mean you can do as much damage to a place with an ordinary bomb. Look at what the Brits did to Hamburg – didn't need an atomic bomb. But atomic became the buzz word and non nuclear all this crap, they've got this non nuclear, whatever the hell that means I don't know. But the thing is we just thought it was a big bomb which had gone a long way to finishing the war and we were all very pleased about it. My personal view

16:30 is that I don't think we really needed one on Nagasaki. I think if they'd have just waited a little while longer… But then again it was untried. They had no idea what it was going to be, they had no idea what the result of Hiroshima was. And I was in Hiroshima, what, '47, just shortly after it fell, and that's one of the most horrifying things you've ever see in your life. I mean as far as you can see it's just flat, nothing. But Nagasaki wasn't as bad because it was in a pocket.

17:00 But I personally don't think that was really necessary, but who can tell, it's all hindsight now. It certainly stopped the war.

Well come back to this and talk about it in more detail later, but just one question. When you did go to Hiroshima in '47 did you keep the opinion that it was just a bomb or did that sight change your…?

Yeah, no just a bomb, just a bomb. And all I saw all the early stuff, I saw all the early fuse glass and all that sort of thing.

17:30 I still think it's just a bomb.

What about the Japanese that had been affected by radiation, what did you see with them?

Well in those days, see, we didn't know anything about that at all. We had no idea of the thing. People that are affected by radiation, that is a bad effect of nuclear weapons, but it's not worse than biological. That frightens me

18:00 more than anything else; biological warfare is horrific. But the radiation thing was dreadful and those people that were affected by it, that's the effects of war.

Did that come out during your time in Japan or was that much later?

No, much later, much, much later. That's like if you go to the Peace Park in Japan now the sign up they have up there about this happened is for the Japanese, not for visitors, but for visitors saying, "This is the result of war. Don't do it again." But all the peaceniks

18:30 have turned that around and made as though it's for everybody else. The Japanese are very aware that that's the result of war. I think it's kept the world at peace for 50 years.

We'll come back to the Japanese in a moment. You were sent to fly the conversion on train on Mustangs after the war ended, where did you go?

Williamtown, up near Newcastle.

And can you tell us a bit about your first introduction to the Mustang?

Yeah, love at first sight,

19:00 beautiful aeroplane, great to fly, entirely different. The power on it was amazing. You know, to think that much power's unleashed. But no vices, great aeroplane, loved every minute of it. And I flew them from '46 right through to '51 when I came back. I still enjoy flying them. I flew them later on too, but I still enjoy it very much.

19:30 But good of course, no problem at all.

For the archives, can you give a description of the aircraft and what you thought was so good about it?

First of all I reckon any aeroplane that looks good usually flies good, and it certainly… It had a big comfortable cockpit, everything in it made sense, wide undercarriage, beautiful sounding

20:00 roll of the engine. And you, once you got the tail up and got it to fly it flew, beautiful controls, flew beautifully. It really had no vices. It was just a lovely, lovely aeroplane. And people try to compare it with the Spitfire but entirely different aeroplane, different in everything – it's like an apple and a orange. Whereas the Spitfire was nimble and made it an adds on, this was a multipurpose

20:30 aeroplane, long range. You could fly forever. We did one trip in Korea over six hours from Iwakuni right up to Hamhung and back without escorting between irons. But big, happy, comfortable, easy to fly, easy to land and great aeroplane.

How did it perform at altitude?

Beautiful. It had a supercharger in it that when you got through, I think it now, it's

21:00 too long ago, whatever height it was, must have been 18,000, 20,000 feet, the supercharger would cut in and away it would go and it would fly like a bird. I mean I had, old Dick Creswell will probably tell you he saved my life once. I tried to see how high I could go, being young and stupid, and had no oxygen and didn't realise the effects of oxygen, we didn't know in those days cause we used to fly with throat mikes. And didn't have oxygen mask and I got hypoxiac and I was passing out and they realised I was, something

21:30 wrong on the radio and Dick was on the ground and he leapt in an aeroplane and came up and found me. And I was heading for New Zealand, and I would never have got there, of course. And he got alongside me and said, "This is the CO," and abused me as he usually did and I suddenly took notice of him and he said, "Stay where you are and don't move," and I didn't. And eventually he got me down and when he passed 10,000 feet I sort of came good again and thought, "Christ, I wonder what he's doing, what's he doing here." And when we flew we eventually couldn't make Williamtown, we made

22:00 Richmond, we were that far south and out and landed at Richmond. And that saved my life. I was gone but for that.

What were the repercussions of that event for you?

No booze for a month, on the dry for a month, orderly officer at Williamtown for a month and that from Creswell, "That's your last mistake." It wasn't, of course, but still.

So can you tell us who, the squadron you were joining when you went to Williamtown or

22:30 **was it just a conversion unit?**

78 Squadron, it was the conversion squadron, 79 Squadron was the conversion squadron and Dick Creswell was the base commander and the squadron was run by a fellow named Doug Beatty and then Congo Cameron. And the idea was to train people then to go to Japan, and we did train and went to Japan.

What did you find the

23:00 **people at 78 Squadron, I mean you mentioned Dick Creswell obviously became an influence of you later on, what did you find the quality of the people at 78 squadron was like?**

Oh it was just like all of us who are keen, we were all a bit sad the war had finished really. I mean in a way in that we didn't think we'd contributed enough to it with all the training we'd done. But we were pleased to be there and we were so delighted to be flying Mustang, we thought going to Japan would be fantastic, which it was.

23:30 And a good feeling of looking forward to something that we always wanted to do and being trained well on a marvellous aeroplane, so it couldn't have been better as far as we were concerned. And they were very much the same, so all the same group are a bit like myself. The only difference I was younger than everybody, that was the only difference.

Had that come out yet?

No, no didn't come out for a long time after.

24:00 **Can you take us through the start-up procedure on a Mustang?**

Start-up procedure on a Mustang. Do a walk around, make sure all the cowls are up and it's in properly, make sure that the switch in the wheel is on so the power's on. Get in the cockpit, turn your fuel on, turn your ignition on, get the primer, turn the primer on, set the mixture at rich, set the throttle

24:30 at that much, one centimetre, and then turn around and hit the starter switch. And then when the thing starts to start, pull the mixer down to run, mixer to run position, runs and flies, beautiful. Now if you've got a problem alongside the starter switch, is the gun master arm switch on? If that's on and you hold the trigger the guns will go off naturally, so when you start a Mustang the control

25:00 column locks and unlocks the tail wheel, with the control column right back the tail wheel's locked, run's five degrees either way so that you can taxi. When the control columns full forward the control wheel will spin like this. So when you start you always put your arm round the stick and pull it back to your body like that so that you can set your throttle, set your power then lean down and hit the ignition switch. Now if the ignition switch happens to be on and you've done this, you've pulled the trigger.

25:30 And one day in Korea with a bunch of people that's exactly what happened. The fellows alongside me went down, turned his ignition on, at the same time his ignition the power went on and his guns fired. Looked out the front and there's a whole bunch of American brass lying in three inches of mud everywhere around the place. I thought, "Christ!" But that's the starting procedure, just normal, no different to any other aeroplane.

What about taxing? Was

26:00 **it difficult to taxi?**

Only, not difficult but hard to see. You've got these huge, huge big nose in front of you so to taxi you've got to turn left, look out the right, turn right, look out the left, and you do, you watch them taxing like that all the time. And that's why the tail wheel is locked, so you hold the stick back, hold the tail lock and it will only let you go five degrees, which is good.

Were there any other, you said the aeroplane had no vices whatsoever in your opinion, were there any things you found difficult about converting onto this aeroplane?

26:30 No, just the compression of time. Things happen so much quicker and you've got so much more power. I mean for takeoff you've got to have the rudder trim in so you've got full trim on, full rudder on, otherwise the torque of the engine will make the aeroplane go that way. But once you get used to that it's easy. No, I think it's the complete viceless aeroplane. Stalls perfectly flat, if it spins it will

27:00 spin and recovers the first turn, nothing like it. One bad thing, it had a fuel tank behind the seat, called a fuselage tank, and that used to hold, I think it's 60 Imperial or 60 US [United States], doesn't matter, of fuel, and with that fuel the C of G [Centre of Gravity] was back. It was a terrible unstable aeroplane, very unstable. And you had to be careful if you put on too much G [Gravity] you could actually pull the wing off, and that happened

27:30 in Japan. An young American colonel had been a visitor to Bofu and he did a fly past and pulled up too quickly and the bloody wing fell off, cause of the fuselage tank. So with those full, when you go on long range mission if you got jumped by anybody or had to fight you couldn't fight, cause you couldn't jettison and you couldn't drain it. So what we'd do is get airborne and as soon as we got airborne switch on the fuselage tank and use that fuel up

28:00 as fast as you could in the climb. The drops tanks were all right, you could drop them off, no problem. But the fuselage tank. But that was one failure, but they put that in so as the aeroplanes could go to Berlin and back. They used to go from England to Berlin and back and that's why the fuselage tank was there. And on our long range trips in Korea too we used to use it all the time. But we lost a couple of Australians the same way.

The Mustang was a multipurpose

28:30 **fighter aircraft, what role were you being trained for the BCOF?**

I think our role in the BCOF were policeman, really police, like peacekeepers. The idea was to have a show of force there but also we did a lot of patrol work for coastal patrol, smugglers

29:00 and things, and that was great fun because you'd see a vessel which wasn't suppose to be there and you'd fly past and he wouldn't stop so you were allowed to fire a burst across the front of him. And we used to have great fun. We used to fire one across the front and one up the side and one down the side and see who could get closer before hitting him. They eventually stop, and by the time they've stopped they'd have the coastal pick them up. But we did a lot of coastal patrol work, we did a lot of flag waving, showing

29:30 big formations of aeroplanes doing things. I think that was mainly for the Japanese public. But the main thing of being there was an occupation force as a peacekeeper.

So where did your training in formation training start?

Right from the time you started, right from the time you first started to fly, you always learnt to fly in formation and fighters always fly in formation, ones are there to support the other. And that's when I eventually joined the

30:00 aerobatic team and we had formation aerobatic and things, that goes right back to your early training days.

What about the gunnery aspects of ground attack or air-to-air combat, were you given training in that before you left for Japan?

All the time. Well I was never given any in the Oxfords; Oxford was always bombing. Spent hour after hour doing bombing runs with a guy looking over a bomb sight and you flying straight and level, and that's an art in itself, it really is.

30:30 But the first fighter training was when you got onto fighters, first day of flying there well you'd do half your time in armoury practice, guns, bombs and rockets. And that's what we did in Korea for the first six months of the Korean War, we did nothing else, all day every day, it becomes a way of life. In those days we did very little air-to-air training, very little air combat training. Later on

31:00 we did a lot of air combat training as we learnt, once we got onto the Sabres, or earlier than that. When we found that the Meteor was such a failure in Korea but we said we'd better get something and we got the Sabres, and all our flying was air-to-air. But in the early days in Mustangs it was all air-to-ground.

So can you take us through how you were trained, the gunnery training drills on the Mustang?

Not very difficult, I mean

31:30 if you're going to do gunnery training first of all you do, get shotguns and go up and do skeet shooting, you shoot skeets back and forward all the time. You go out to the small arms range and you fire rifles and you learn, you fire pistols and you learn deflection shooting, you learn wind effect and then they teach you in the classroom deflection shooting because something's moving this way and if I'm going to hit it I've got to aim out there because by the time the bullet takes to

32:00 fire to get there the thing will be there, so you learn deflection shooting. Air-to-ground shooting you've got to realise that the guns are set here at a certain point, in a fixed spot, so you've got to be able to assess the range. So you learn that theoretically, and then you get in the aeroplane and you got along to a big target, 30 x 30 foot target, and you come round the corner and you try and get the exact range to pull the trigger. And you've only got a short burst because as you're moving at 300 knots you've only got a short time to fly. If you go too

32:30 close your bullets will cross, if you're too early they won't get there, so you've got to be there. So you learn that and you do that over and over again, till eventually you get to the stage where you can hit it. And then you have big competitions in the squadrons, $2 in to see who's got the best score. And the same thing applies when you go on to rockets. Rockets are exactly the same thing. It's a matter of estimating range and estimating the drop. You've got to aim a lot higher than you would for guns and the time is a lot slower,

33:00 you've got to estimate the range properly so it's when your rockets come in. And bombing's exactly the same thing. Bombing, you aim to where the target is, how far up above you're going to drop so that when the bomb falls the bomb falls like that, so the bomb will fall where it is. And that's just repetition, repetition.

How were you evaluated?

Scores, on your scores, on a certain amount of number of rounds fired. Air-to-air's the same. You tow a

33:30 30-foot drogue behind you and you aim at that and you try and hit it, and they've got coloured paint on the bullet heads and you go along and count the number of colours on the rag. And you have to have a certain number of hits to qualify, and when you qualify for it you've got to qualify, whatever it is, every three months, same score. When you've got all, qualified, all those you got called combat ready and when you're combat ready then you can go and do anything, but you have to keep it up.

Who were the instructors?

34:00 **Was this done around Williamtown, what you just described?**

All around Williamtown.

And who was instructing you there?

I couldn't pick one fellow. I mean all the instructors at the conversion unit were all qualified fighter pilots and they were the ones who were doing the instructing, but names escape me at this stage.

They would have been Second World War veterans?

Yeah, Second World War, yeah.

34:30 **Was there anyone who stood out as an influence there, I mean?**

Hmm Ross Glossop, Ross Glossop was a guy who flew Boomerangs up in New Guinea and got a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] up in New Guinea. He was the chief instructor at Williamtown on the gunnery side, and he was a terrific influence to everybody. And he's still alive, lives up the Gold Coast. And he later on went up and did another tour in

35:00 Korea. But he was one of the outstanding ones.

What was your own reputation, I mean?

I don't know. How do you know if you've got a reputation or not?

Well from what I can gather about you getting your wings while you were in jail and flying until you got hypoxic in the air, were you a bit of a larrikin? How would you describe yourself at this point?

I suppose looking back I was, but luckily

35:30 I learnt quick enough to survive; that's the whole thing. I think you all go through that sort of a stage but I'm still here so I must have learnt.

When do you think that learning took place for you?

I think Dick Creswell had a big effect on me. When I realised how close I was to death that time I think it frightened me a bit. Cause then, of course as you get more experience

36:00 and you get more responsibility you're looking after people, it starts to bring home and you can't do it. But you become a bit more lenient on the other people to because you know you've been along that road. I think one of the best things that happened to me was not being commissioned off course. I think if I'd have been commissioned off course I would have been a different person. But as I was I went up to the war as a warrant officer and I'd flown with everybody, all the ranks around the place,

36:30 and I reckon I learnt more by being in the sergeants' mess than I ever would have done if I had have been an officer right from the word go. So when I was eventually commissioned in Korea I was in a position to apply. See in Korea I was leading a flight, I'd have three commissioned officers and I was leading it as a warrant officer. And I think it was a good thing in hindsight that I actually was in jail. The NCOs run the whole air force, no doubt about it.

37:00 Oh they run every business, all that level run everything you know. The people at the top think they do, but they don't.

What words did Dick Creswell have with you after you came down on that occasion?

I'd rather not say, it was most unkind and most rude – told me I was stupid, which was all true. But he was acting in my interest. But what I admired was he got off his backside and raced out, got in an aeroplane and come

37:30 and saved me, which was terrific stuff.

In the sergeants' mess you mentioned that they were running the air force, what particular things did they teach you that officers couldn't?

Well all airman and the NCOs work together all the time. See everything that goes on in the base the NCOs know about it, and the officers know what they're told, that's all. And a good CO will have the greatest rapport

38:00 with his NCOs of all, and his airmen. See the guy that does the last little adjustment on your aeroplane when you're flying a thing like the bloody 100 your life depends on him, so you don't treat him like a bloody peasant. Well I don't, but a lot of people did. And particularly navy, navy are terrible the way they treat their lower deck and I reckon it's silly because those guys, you depend on them. So they know everything that's going on

38:30 and because the NCOs are with them all the time they know everything that's going on and the officers know what they need to know. And with result, if you've got a very good sergeants' mess and running well and discipline is good, the whole base will run well. I mean I had several examples of that later on when I took over places which were very badly run down; it's all to do with discipline. If you discipline people it means that you care for them and they respond. It's just like your

39:00 children – if you don't discipline they know you don't care, they can get away with anything at all and they'll get away with what they can. And it's not that you don't care for them but you've got to do it this way. And I've always adopted that attitude and it's been very successful for me. And I've watched these other people that try and bend the other way and not discipline and they fail. Others are too strict and too despotic and they fail. You've got to get to the stage where you've

39:30 got rapport with the people, and the ones you go to get rapport with, get the NCOs in, there the ones and once you've got that working for you the rest is easy.

Right, well we'll pause there. That's a place to break and we have to change the tape anyway.

Tape 5

00:42 **If you could share with me now travelling to Japan for the British occupation forces there?**

To Japan,

01:00 left Morotai flew up to Clarke Field in Manila. That's the place where it was inundated with volcano a couple of years ago, you remember. Hard to imagine being 8 feet under that. Anyway it was a wonderful huge big base. Are you interested in anecdotes? Had a very interesting one at Clarke Field. We had aeroplane, a whole bunch of us landed there and we were

01:30 all getting ready to go the next day and my aeroplane had a very bad magneto drop in it. The CO said, "Oh you won't be able to go. You stay and pick up the next group," cause they were going from base. And I thought, "Gees, I'm going to be here for another three or four days on me own. It will be bloody awful." Anyway I was down in the NCOs', in the, they used to call it the Rocker Club, which was the sergeants' mess, cause

02:00 they've got rockers under their strips. I was complaining about this and this very big tall coloured guy, great guy, Leon was his name, staff sergeant, he said, "What's your trouble?" and I told him and he said, they used to laugh cause we were warrant officers, NCOs flying aeroplanes whereas all their pilots were all commissioned – they thought it was the funniest thing all the time. Anyway I told him what the problem was and he went down, at Clarke Field there must have been,

02:30 oh I suppose there must have been 500 Mustangs all over the place there and they were all ready to go back to the States eventually. And about six o'clock that night he came up to me and he said, "Hey, I think we've fixed your aeroplane," and I said, "Oh okay." He said, "Come down and have a look at it." So I came down and had a look and he said, "You run it," and I ran it beautiful, not a problem. So I went back to the boss and, it was Glen Cooper in those days, the CO, and I said,

03:00 "Listen, my plane's right again, I can fly." He said, "Oh right, you can come with us." So anyway, cut a long story short, I got in and next day I go up, all the way up Okana, all up in Japan. Landed no problem at all, and flew from 1948, 1949, the war started in 1950. And early in 1950 there was an enquiry came round about aeroplanes and this aeroplane of mine,

03:30 A68757, they found that the engine number in the aeroplane didn't match the airframe number and the engine number didn't match any aeroplane in the inventory. Now what had happened, the Staff Sergeant Leon and his mob at bloody Manila had gone down taken the engine out of one of theirs, took mine out and switched the engine over, which you could do in about four or five hours and never told anybody. And I, no-one ever knew.

04:00 We never ever checked and they were having all sorts of enquiries about what was going on. And that was the aeroplane that Graham Stroud was killed in in the first week of the Korean War, was my aeroplane, A68757. He got killed and that's all that stopped the enquiry because it went kaput, it was written off and the enquiry stopped. When I was the Deputy Chief of Air Staff I went through all the records and found it had got to that far and nothing further.

04:30 But I had no idea that that's what had actually happened, they'd actually changed the engine over, which is a typical American way of fixing something, which is great. So that was good fun, good trip; everything went well.

And you knew nothing of…?

Knew nothing. Well how would you know? I mean he was just a nice kind fellow helping me out, knew nothing about that at all, which was good. But the previous crowd that had gone up before us, they'd had a lot of accidents. They lost

05:00 two Mustangs coming into Japan, they led down in bad weather and they came down in the Sunda Straits and two of them hit the cliff. And for years after you could see the two marks on the side of the cliff, was a very sobering thing to fly around there and see them. But that was the group before us.

So were you given any sort of guidelines flying to Japan?

No, we had a Beaufighter out ahead, ahead

05:30 of us calling weather and just flew. See you had no radio, all you had in the aeroplane was a 4-channel VHF [Very High Frequency] set, nothing else, no aids of any sort just flying manually, look over the side and see where you were. But that wasn't difficult, you'd fly throughout the islands and most of the time was water, you didn't see much anyway.

I can imagine it must have been pretty monotonous?

Yeah monotonous, actually

06:00 I've gone to sleep in a Mustang. We used to do gun training exercises out of Williamtown around South Head and you'd fly around in a big racetrack pattern, a big oblong pattern at about 8 or 10,000 feet and the gun trackers, all the trainee army would be tracking guns and that. And you'd do an hour and a half this way and an hour and a half that way; on a nice day I've actually gone to sleep,

06:30 what's happened, cause monotony, boring.

So on the way up to Japan was there any sort of…?

Oh no, because it was, weather wasn't that good and you were working most of the time, but it was all right, no problem.

So where did you arrive in?

We arrived in Bofu, and Bofu's on the southern end of Honshu Island and that's where the wing 81 Wing was set up. And the

07:00 and the boss was at that stage Brian Eaton, Group Captain Brian Eaton, which was a bloody legend in his own time and they had the 3 Squadrons, 76, 77 and 82 Squadrons. And we joined 76 Squadron. The CO's name was Dick Wilson, called Doggery Dick for short when he was, anything but Doggery but they used to call him Doggery Dick. But he ran a very good outfit, his

07:30 first exercise for me to do training was to put me on his wing and go around the water where the big island was and turn towards me and fly around the island like that. And I either had to stay there or hit him or hit the bloody water. It made me a believer, I'll tell you. That's the way he used to train all his pilots for formation flying cause he said in formation flying up there with the weather the way you had to stick close and stay there otherwise you were dead.

08:00 And he used to teach us all that way – that was an eye opener to us.

So just in explaining, go out that particular day, he said, "I want you to stay close to me"?

Yeah, "I'm going to teach you to fly formation." We knew how to fly formation but, "You've got to stick with me and whatever we do stick with me." So we did and we'd fly along then he'd come to a place, like you would be in the island and you'd fly around the island with me on the inside like that. Then he'd reverse and go back on the outside. I could

08:30 see him and see the water and see the island – you learnt the hard way.

In respect of flying formation, does he make a call whether he was going to bank right or he just does it?

No, no call the only calls you get is if you've got to change power or do anything abruptly. Like, for example, you see in combat he says, "Brake," and you say, "Brake left," and goes like the clappers. If he says, "Brake right," you've got to get out of the way bloody quick if you're on this side. But no, it's

09:00 all just by looking at the aeroplane. You position yourself on the aeroplane and you watch his rise and fall and you fly what he flies, as he tilts you tilt, and actually it becomes automatic after a while. When you're flying aerobatics like this, yes, it becomes automatic; it's just as one.

Now arriving in Japan was there much to do to set up the base?

No it was all set up, it was all set up for us, it was all a going concern. The New Zealand army had been in and done all the base work there. All our

09:30 pre troops had gone up into the islands a couple of months before had set up all the barracks and all the messes and everything. No, the whole thing was a going concern and all we did was instead of operating from down in the tropics we operated up there where the weather was different, that was all.

The base itself, was it new or was it something…?

Old Japanese naval base, good runways and good buildings. The beer was one yen a bottle

10:00 you'd buy it then and the exchange rate was 1,000 yen to a pound, which was $2.00 or 500 into a dollar, bit different nowadays, 500 into a dollar. And we had continual free beer because you'd get paid, we'd get a 1,000 yen and we'd put a 1,000 yen on the bar and that would buy a 1,000 bottles of beer. So the thing is free beer continually.

Unbelievable.

10:30 **The base itself, was there any sort of relics left over from World War II?**

Yes there was lot of relics left over from World War II – bits of aeroplanes, vehicles, some bombed out buildings. All sorts of artefacts you could find around the place. But the main thing was the attitude of the Japanese, the attitude of the Japanese was no animosity whatsoever. The Emperor had said welcome us, so they welcomed us. And they all did.

11:00 It was outstanding for a young bloke to find that. I thought they'd be a bit funny. I mean if the boot was on the other foot and it was us and they were occupying us we wouldn't be that happy. But by gees they didn't show it. You could go anywhere at any time in complete confidence and complete safety.

What about in respect to the Australians, was there any animosity from them back?

None whatever, well see

11:30 most of the air force people had never been treated the way the Japanese treated the soldiers on the

ground; we were always fighting a clean war in the air. There was no real, we didn't like them but we didn't, well I didn't, I learnt to like them but we didn't like them originally. But you couldn't not like them, they're the most kindest, hospitable, politest people you'll ever meet ever. And they made us completely welcome. I mean goodness me everywhere you'd go you'd get the top of everything.

12:00 We used to go on, when there were elections on we'd go out, two of us in a jeep and we'd do supervising various elections and things and you'd be miles and miles from the nearest round eye, or English speaking person, but no problem, no sense of anything at all. The mayor would meet you and they'd put you in the hotel and they'd look after you, terrific stuff. Oh we had a, for a young bloke, a single bloke to be in the Japanese occupation

12:30 it was the nearest thing to heaven you could ever find in a million years. Life was very pleasant, no shortage of anything, and I mean anything. It was there all the time.

Can you give me some examples?

With difficulty. We were at a place called Miho once, which is way up in the top north coast of Honshu, and it's a town built on hot springs, a bit like Moree in Australia,

13:00 and beautiful place. And the hot springs are big, they'd be, oh, 50 metres or more, and each hotel has them. And this hotel we were at, it's a three-storey hotel and each level has a walkway down to the hot springs. And in Japan they all bathe before they get in the hot water so they had like a round pool where you'd come down and you'd bathe and then get in and soak in the water. And this, another fellow named Bill Mitchellson

13:30 and I are there one morning, about 7 o'clock or so and were having a quite Kirin beer just for fun, for breakfast in the pool, were sitting there. And all of a sudden on the second floor opens up and these, must have been 50 of these nubile maidens pop out and they walked down the little catwalk and all dropped their Kanakas off and all giggled and hopped in the water. And were looking at each other and he said, "You know something?" I said, "What?" He said, "I can see a hundred nipples."

14:00 And he said, "You know something else?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "And no-one will ever believe us." And this was the Takarazuka Girls' Opera were on tour and they were having their morning bath, because up there everyone bathed together so no problems at all. Make sure nothing unusual in this except these two bloody round eyes in the pool. I've never forgotten that, goodness me, it was true. You probably don't believe me but it was true. A lot of good fun there and we had,

14:30 everybody had a room girl, a full-time room girl do all your laundry and all the cleaning up you wanted to do. The mess was completely staffed by Japanese, all the waitresses and everything in the mess were all Japanese, beautifully trained, well mannered. All the guys had Japanese girlfriends and they had second homes set up all around the place – life was good. As a mater of fact that bloody Korean War ruined a wonderful occupation,

15:00 it was great up till then, then the Korean War came and we had to go and do something. But it was a great aero club, we'd fly all the time and no-one shooting back, do what you like around the place, great fun.

What was the air force's policy on having girlfriends?

They closed their eyes to it; it was inevitable. They used to run anti-VD clinics for you all the time,

15:30 and they used to also run medical checks for the girls, which was not official but they do it, which was very good, very handy. So we had a very, very low incident of disease or whatever. And Japanese are very, very loyal people. They will not fiddle about – if they've got a boyfriend or girlfriend, that's it. But a lot of young blokes a long way from home on their own living in those conditions it was pretty good. And the interesting part was that the married people

16:00 in the squadrons lived on the base in married quarters, and they all had Japanese staff also and they knew that all the single blokes had their own girlfriends, but they never ever got together and mixed, never a problem of any sort.

Pregnancies any problems there?

No, because up there they can finish like that. They make up their mind they want to or not and they do.

In a totally different area,

16:30 **but the area of brothels and geisha girls, do you know anything about that?**

Geisha girls are not prostitutes, geisha girls are entertainers. People think that but they're not. Geisha girls are very highly skilled, highly trained entertainers and they're brilliant. I mean they're the ones that sit alongside you while you're having dinner and feed you and pour the drink for you and then play their samisens and do all sort of things like that. The sleeping girls are different, a different breed altogether.

17:00 Brothels weren't really necessary. They had them around the place, I believe. I never ever went to one but I believe they had them around but they'd be only for very transit people, I suppose. Probably sailors on leave I would think, things like that. But we didn't have much association with them. A lot of

personal relationships though and a lot of marriages, a lot of fellows married them. And they're great people, they really are great people, no doubt about it.

17:30 Whether or not they would change again the way they were, who's to say? But the difference being that the Asian mind, they don't think the way we do. When the Emperor said, "You'll be not be subservient but you will be, you will welcome the people here," that's exactly what they did.

Fellows meeting these girls, were they just meeting the girls at work on the base?

Yes, yes, and various places. I mean we had

18:00 a couple of friends up in Hiroshima, which is interesting, we were up in Hiroshima and in the area where everything was dead flat and had these two or three beaut girls had an apartment there and we used to go up there and stay weekends and it was great fun. But once again no animosity about Hiroshima or anything at all and I found that strange.

What about the men, the Japanese men?

Yep, completely polite. All our

18:30 mechanics, not the skilled engineers, the mechanics were all Japanese. All our aeroplanes were maintained by Japanese, polished by Japanese, Japanese worked all over the base. And that to me is the enigma. If it had have been on the other foot we would have been, I think, opposite, but they weren't. They did what the Emperor said, and I think that's their upbringing, that's their way of life, that's their disciplined belief in what should be done.

While you were in Japan

19:00 **did you ever get to look over Japanese aircraft, Zeros and stuff like that?**

There was very little there at all. Nearly all the airfields had been completely cleaned up. All the major airfields had been taken over by the Americans and ourselves and there were a few on display of the old type around the place. A place called, Ebisu, Ebisu Barracks had been a training place for Japanese navy and they had

19:30 the training tanks, the submarines, and they were still training submarines there when the war was over. But the majority of it by 1947 had been cleaned up. At Iwakuni where we were, it was a seaplane base on the Inland Sea, all the hangars were still there and the slipways and that were still there, but they'd all been converted for our own use.

The Americans, did you have much

20:00 **involvement with them?**

Not that much, but they had a big base down at, we were at Iwakuni and they were at Itazuke, which is down on the next island and they had a big base in Inada in Tokyo and another one in Kure, not Kure, in Nagoya. We used to get with them on exercises and things like that but didn't mix that much socially. They had their job to do and we had our job to do.

What sort of exercises did you do

20:30 **together?**

Lots of gunnery exercises, lots of flag-waving exercises where a whole bunch of aeroplanes would get together and do things. We'd all fly up to one of their bases and operate with them and have one hell of a week with them, great fun, and do big fly past and all that sort of stuff. And then we'd have the inter competition, gunnery competition, that's when I mentioned 'Bay' Adams earlier – 'Bay' won it, he won the Far East competition against all punters up there, which was terrific.

21:00 **That competition was dropping bombs or shooting guns or…?**

Bombs, shooting guns, shooting banners the whole bit, right across the whole spectrum. And that was a terrific thing for us to win that against everybody. It shocked the Americans too, once more. That's why we were so popular in 77 Squadron. When the war broke out, the Americans asked for 77 Squadron.

'Bay' was attached to 77?

He was the ops officer, he was the number two in the squadron.

What were the Americans flying at that

21:30 **time?**

Mustangs, all flying Mustangs. And then in 1948, no '49 I think, they got some F80s, Shooting Stars; they had a couple of squadrons of Shooting Stars. And then when the war broke out in '50 they had all Shooting Stars and no Mustangs, so that's why 77 carried the brunt of the attack in the first six months of the war because the Americans didn't have anything but Shooting Stars and they were no good for what we were doing. So they got a whole bunch of American

22:00 Mustangs, air national guard was sent over and they operated also with us for the next six months or so.

The American planes were designed for what when the Korean War broke out?

What, the F80s?

The F80s.

Fighters, straight fighters and nothing else. They were, well useless for ground attack because they had no range, and no endurance so they bought a whole bunch

22:30 of Mustangs over too.

Now you mentioned a little bit earlier with the story of meeting the girls at the warm springs, you were up there for a reason, which is the elections?

The elections were on, yeah.

Could you tell me what you know of that and your involvement in them?

Oh, all we did was they'd have various areas and they'd have various polling places set up and our job was to supervise, to go round the various polling places and make sure it was being done, make sure it was

23:00 being run by someone or rather, get someone to sign a book that we'd visited and just keep a general eye on the place for the period of time, maybe a week or whatever it was. It was a good break for us too. That's one job we'd do. Another job we had to do was occasionally we'd get sent up, there was always a permanent guard on the Imperial Palace, which was manned by the Brits and the Americans and ourselves, and when it was our Australian turn some of us would go up there and become in charge of the guard

23:30 for a period of time. I did one of those, which was good fun. You'd get six weeks in Tokyo just as a guard commander. And the, anything to do with administration around the place, which we would do as an occupying force, we would do. As I mentioned earlier, it's just like peacekeeping these days. We really were a police force controlling the area.

During the elections, or even during this time in Tokyo, did you come across any problems at all?

None,

24:00 not a one, not a problem. I can't stress enough how the Japanese adapted to us being part of the occupation, they were pleased to have us there, they were pleased to trade with us, they were very happy to get the trading we were doing. The black market did exist but it didn't really exist as a black market. It wasn't people making millions, it was people exchanging commodities. You exchanged something you had for something they had. I've got a dinner

24:30 set here that I brought back for my mother in 1948 which I changed, I traded for six cakes of soap. Nowadays it's a Noritake dinner set worth a fortune, but in those days it was a change of commodities. These people had it and wanted to get rid of it and that was the price they asked. So all I did was saved up six cakes of soap and swapped it for them. And that's what they used to refer to as the black market, it wasn't really the black market except early days

25:00 they couldn't get any sugar or anything else so saccharin tablets were worth money. Cigarettes were always worth money, it was hard to get cigarettes, worth money. But they didn't lack in food and stuff. In general, the attitude of both ways was they were relying on each other.

Did you notice sort of the economic impact of the war upon the Japanese people

25:30 **themselves?**

No, didn't appear to have any at all except they didn't appear to have any money and we appeared to have money all the time. See what we thought was a thousand yen was peanuts, to them was a lot of money. But as far as we were concerned it didn't have any affect on us whatsoever.

During your time there were you ever affected by earthquakes or salt planes?

Yeah couple of times, earthquakes are a way of life, it's hard to imagine. We were in the, what's the name of the place now?

26:00 Oh, the Kawana Hotel, which was a leave hotel, and we'd had a big night the night before and a bloke by the name of Wal Rivers was in the other bed, two of us in the room. And I looked up and the lights doing that and I said to Wal, he said, "Oh gees, I've got a terrible hang over." He said, "The whole world's going round." And I said, "Look at the bloody light." It was one of those earthquake tremors had gone through and they'd evacuated the hotel but

26:30 we hadn't heard it; we slept right through it. He reckons the biggest hangover he'd ever had the whole world was moving. That's a great place, Kawana. We used to go up there, they had a beautiful golf course there and all the golf caddies were girls. The little girls about that high carried a big bag of clubs

and they would tell you exactly where the ball should be at the time

27:00 it should be. And you never ever lost a golf ball, they'd walk in the bush and come out, whether it was yours or not you never knew but you never lost a golf ball.

And the effects of the earthquakes?

Oh it had effects, a couple of cracks in the wall only, but in the village in town a lot of the buildings got knocked down, which is about three or four miles away, all the buildings had been knocked down, there was a tremor through the thing.

What about the aerodrome, was that affected, or the

27:30 **planes?**

Oh no that was further north up in the next plateau, didn't affect the aerodrome. Kawana is south-east of Tokyo down on the waterfront.

Could you share with me, you've sort of touched on a few of the operations you did during this time with ships, shooting in front of them.

Yeah.

Could you talk me through sort of an operation from the very beginning and flying out?

Yes, that's what we were there for. We were there for peacekeeping and one of the jobs was to look after,

28:00 check smugglers, tremendous number of smugglers. I mean when a country's been defeated like that there's a whole opportunity for smugglers to come from Korea and our job was to stop the smugglers. And we did coastal patrols back and forwards, all day, that was part of our job and the rest of the time was all training. But as I say it was a great; it was like a big aero club. We'd get to fly all the time and do what we want to do all the time and live the good life. I mean you couldn't live a better life. You had,

28:30 the domestic side was fantastic. You never had any dirty clothes – as fast as your clothes you took them off they'd have them washed and ironed and hung back up in the thing for you. We were actually ruined. And then I say the bloody Korean War came along.

Maybe you could tell me how you first heard about the Korean War ruining your lifestyle?

See what had happened 76, 77 and 82 Squadrons had combined into the one

29:00 big squadron, 77 Squadron, that was in 1949, they thought they'd only keep one squadron there. They made a big squadron, I think we had 28 pilots. And we'd been going and they got the word that we were going to come home towards the end of 1950. So in about February or March we got the word, yes, were going to pull out. So in May we started to fly our last missions and June they started to put the aeroplanes to bed, so they

29:30 got all the Mustangs and spent weeks unihabiting them all, they did, put the oil cocoon around all of them. And we decided to have a big farewell party at Iwakuni. Now because half of us were still NCOs we decided to have it in the sergeants' mess. So we were in the sergeants' mess and we organised this big shipwrecked party – the idea was everybody was to come dressed as they could come from a shipwreck. So it started off and we had a big outline of a boat built at the front of the sergeants' mess and a gangplank.

30:00 And Blue Thornton and I were dressed as pirates, we had little bucket full of scotch, and a water pistol. And to get into the mess you had to walk up on the gangplank and open your mouth and we'd squirt a scotch in. And that got the party going pretty well, of course. And they had a full dance band playing inside. No furniture, dinghies and pool, like a boat, and everybody was there from Lou Spencer, CO, and everyone down. And we had a hell of a party and it went right through, to such a degree

30:30 that the next morning at 8 o'clock that we got the band back again – it was still going. The band had gone home about two o'clock. And we so we got the band back at 8 o'clock and it still going strong and about 10 o'clock at night we rang up the CO and said, "Come back to the mess," and he said, "No," He's going on leave, he was going on leave and couldn't come back but carry on if we wanted to. And it was pretty good and all of a sudden we got a phone call from the duty officer, who was Rachel Wilco, and he went in and took the phone

31:00 call and he came back and we said, "What was that?" He said, "Oh one of those silly bloody Yanks, he rang me up and said wanted to talk to the duty officer and told me we had to get prepared for the next order coming in. The bloody North Koreans have invaded South Korea and we're going to be involved and war will be declared soon." And I told him to stop pissing us off cause he knows were going home, and he hung up on me. Next thing the phone ring again and this bloke saying,

31:30 "This is not a bloody joke. I'm fair dinkum. I'm really fair dinkum." So old Ray of course is trying to sober up at this stage of the game and he came back and said, "He might be right." I said, "Well we'd better tell the CO." So he hopped in and drove down to Lou Spencer. Lou was just getting ready to go on holidays up in Kawana in Tokyo. So he said, "Okay, I'll take it." He got the phone call and rang up and

sure enough it was the 5th Air Force, they'd called us from Tokyo and the South Koreans had been invaded that night, and they said,

32:00 "We have been asked to get 77 Squadron and were involved and to get ready." And he said, "We've got nothing were inhabited." Anyway he came back – I admire him very much, Lou Spencer – he came back to the mess and said, "Listen fellows," about 12 o'clock, he said, "Party's got to stop as of now. Here's the situation. We look like being in combat, we've got to get the aeroplanes ready and I want everybody involved." So we all went down, everybody, every rank went down to the thing and were trying to take all the crap

32:30 off these aeroplanes, which we did, took us three or four days I suppose, and we got them all back, everybody together. And on the 2nd of July we flew our first mission, first mission over Korea. And the rest is history. I mean Lou was killed 10 days later and the whole thing was just out of, completely out of the blue, no warning at all. And we'd gone from living the life of sublime luxury to all of a

33:00 sudden sitting in a bloody one-man tent at Taegu – that's another story.

Well that first operation you were on that?

Yeah, yeah.

Could you talk me through everything from being told where you're going through to what happened?

Well the tricky… I was on two. The first one we had to, we were briefed, six aeroplanes briefed to get airborne and link up

33:30 with some aeroplanes which were evacuating civilians out of Seoul. They got airborne and only 10 minutes out of airborne I had a problem with the controller rudder and couldn't fly at all, had to drop the drop tanks off and come back and land, which was very upsetting. But five went across and never ever made contact and came back. The next mission we were on we had to escort twelve B29s who were going to bomb an airfield

34:00 at Hamhung, which is up on the Russian Centurion border. So we six got airborne and flew out over the straits between Korea and Japan and met these B29s and then flew with them, escorted them all the way up the coast, way up to Hamhung and did the bombing raid over Hamhung. And heavy anti aircraft… And these people, I… Really, I admire them, they're all in close formation, stuff bursting all around them, they flew over the airfield and started

34:30 dropping their bombs and their bombs started inside the airfield perimeter and went right down the runway and stopped inside the perimeter and didn't hit anything else at all – that was the idea of it, which was incredible stuff – and then came back out again. And we followed them all the way around and we got shot at quite violently on the way out and then we started to fly back down south again. Down south again we got attacked by two Yaks, piston-engine Russian aeroplane, but only made one pass

35:00 at the first B29 who fired back and never saw him again. Then on the way back down they call up and said they had identified a submarine somewhere on the coast, could we identify, have a look for it. So one B29 and two Mustangs left and went down low level and flew down the coast for about a hour, couldn't find anything at all, and linked up with them again. And then we got down the bottom end of the straits between Korea and Japan they headed off once again, back… They

35:30 were going back to Okinawa and we came back and landed back at Iwakuni. We were airborne for over six hours and they were airborne for 12 hours; that was our first mission. And that was our first mission over North Korea and there's a painting of that in the War Memorial.

Just so that I understand the formations when you were linking up initially with them, what was their pattern of flight and yours?

They had three flights of 4,

36:00 1, two and 3, and we had two Mustangs up there, two Mustangs over here and two Mustangs high behind, like that. So you've got 12 aeroplanes in a group here, three lots of four and six of us, two high, one high there, one low there and one high at the back and that's the way we flew with them all the way.

What was the danger you were expecting, obviously fighters?

Air cover, cause they were close to being up to the Russian border

36:30 and we had no idea… At this stage the Chinese hadn't come into the war but we had no idea what the Koreans had or what was happening. You know, we expected heavy opposition; we didn't get any.

And where were you in this pattern of two?

On the left-hand, bottom left-hand side on the outside, yeah. Brick Bradford, me, Max Garraway, Gordon Harvey, Gordon was shot down and behind us Nobby Noble

37:00 and Dick Turner behind us up there.

He was shot down on this particular mission?

No, no shortly after.

When you came up to the bombing target did you follow them in?

Yeah stayed with them, stayed with them all the way.

Even with the anti-aircraft fire?

Yeah, you've got no choice – that's what you're there for. And had we never seen it before, had we? Never been shot before. That made you a believer, I tell you. But they had this box flak, they used to put up a box of it

37:30 and they'd fly through it, and when you realise that every black puff has got thousands of bits of metal going through it, gees they were guts men. I admire them for that.

I think you were a guts man going in as well?

Yeah well didn't know any better, we were stupid. That was your job, that's your job you've got to be there so.

So what did you see actually flying into the target?

Oh all you could see was nothing, nothing big, great big airfield

38:00 all buildings and all, but all you could see was this black puffs, can't see where it come from, don't know where they are but these black puffs. And different calibre, you know, heavy calibre and light calibre, different sizes. But the ones that were predicted was this radar stuff, they'd predict where the aeroplane was going to be and they'd put a box up with flak in it, everyone fires in that block knowing the bombers have got to fly into it. And of course with their bomb sights I think it's the last form, and they can't move, they've got to,

38:30 they're locked on and the bomb flies the target for them. But the bombing was spectacular, you know, right down the runway and didn't damage anything else at all cause they knew they were going to take over, cause later on we went up to Hamhung, 77 Squadron went up to Hamhung off the same base.

So they basically just took out the airfield completely?

Yeah, took out the airfield.

Do you remember what height you were flying in?

I think 15, I think. I think about 15,000 I think, can't recall now.

39:00 **Do you remember if you in your particular plane were sort of under the threat of being hit by gunfire?**

Oh all the time.

Was there sort of motion up and down from the effects?

No, yeah because of the concussion, the concussion you see, and you see a B29 would move like that and shortly after you'd move too. Oh no, it was quite there, it was quite marked.

Any of the planes in 77 Squadron damaged at all?

Not on that

39:30 no, not on that mission, no, it was very successful. No we had a great run for the first week or so and then we lost our ops officer so that shook everybody in my aeroplane.

On the return trip home did you remain with the bombers or did you go down?

No, I went down looking for the submarine with the B29. Yeah, it was good fun, belting

40:00 along the water. We got shot at before we went down, past a city called Waegwon and got shot at from there because we saw the flak burst alongside us.

Well just stop there for the sake of the tape.

Tape 6

00:42 **Jim you just told us before lunch of your first missions in Korea, how did it affect you to be fighting a war now after having been having training in the air force for so long for that very**

thing?

01:00 Well I told you earlier we were shocked because it happened so quickly, we went from a life of leisure and all of a sudden were in a war. And the fact is having been shot at for the very first time it made me realise that there were people on the ground that didn't like me. My first reaction was, you know, "I'll be very lucky to survive this cause the simple reason is it's for real at this stage." I used to go through

01:30 evenings of abject bloody terror, couldn't sleep. I'd be in the room on my own and actually a nervous wreck. Until you sort of get an attitude after a while that if it's inevitable, you sort of accept it. I think every one of us kept that idea and then we'd get to the stage again we think we were foolproof, it's never going to happen to us anyway, and the lucky ones get through it and the other ones don't. And least of all how does the good Lord pick which one's going to go. Three of mine

02:00 I flew with in Korea are all gone, and why them and not me?

How long did that period of worry and what you just described as abject terror last for?

Oh three months probably, probably three months because you realise when you've come back from a successful trip that you've made it once again and how long can your luck run out. So everything's all right when you're with people but when you're on your own and you start to think,

02:30 then you get to the stage again, your nerves cut in.

Were you prepared do you think as a pilot yourself and as a squadron?

No not really, oh prepared trained you mean, ready and trained absolutely but not ready to go. We were having a party the last thing, we wanted was to go and do any work, at least of all get shot at. So that was a hell of a shock to everybody and then when we lost our operations officer who'd been with us for three years and our CO who was a very popular

03:00 bloke, Lou Spence, to lose them in the first months of the war, that really shook everybody.

Graham Stroud, your operations officer, went first. Can you explain what happened back at the base on that occasion?

Well what happened was back at the base, the sad part all the people living in the married quarters used to count the aeroplanes on the way out and count them back on the way in. And this particular day one was missing so the worst particular thing was that people were trying to work out who it was. And there was a great

03:30 pool of gloom all over the place because it's only a fortnight before we were having the greatest party of all time, and all of a sudden reality hits home and Graham's no longer with us. He was the last person we thought would go because he was such a capable and competent person and careful that it really shook us all. And then to lose Lou Spence, well that was really a knockout blow that one. Thank God they got, dug up Dick Creswell and brought him back in,

04:00 because Dick had led anywhere so he was great.

What was the circumstances that Lou Spence got killed?

Well it's hard to say because I wasn't alongside him. I was in the air with him at the same time. But he dived in with his wing man over a target called Angang Ni and somewhere down the line he was hit. And see it only takes one round to hit a pilot and depending on how many people were firing at him, well he didn't recover

04:30 he just kept on diving, hit the ground. And they went in later on, an army, not army, an air force padre, and actually found the wreck and the remains, but he was obviously hit by ground fire.

What was the circumstance like, you said it knocked him, knocked the squadron around, can you tell us what happened?

Oh gloom, nobody in the bar, no light chitchat. A terrible feeling

05:00 of depression over everybody and we luckily had blokes like 'Bay' Adams who was an old wartime pilot who'd been through it before and he managed to boost us all up again and say, "That's what it's all about. Tt's for real so you've just got to face up to it." Which we did and you start to accept losses then as a way of life.

Can you just explain the setup at Iwakuni, in relation to the married quarters there?

Lots of married quarters, high quantity of married quarters,

05:30 a big, a great air force base, big air force base, everything you can have as a normal base like you'd have out at Williamtown or Fairbairn or anywhere at all. Except you're operating in normal conditions and having fun until all of a sudden you're at wartime. And the best thing they ever did was to send the dependents home, they sent all the wives and children home and that was good because that eased the depression a bit. And then within a month or so we'd packed up and we were over in Korea anyway.

How

06:00 **many of the officers were married?**

Oh 90% of them, and only a few rebellious ones like me weren't – we were having too much fun to get married.

Until you found yourselves at war?

That's right, yeah.

You mentioned that you were trained, were there any deficiencies in your training or anything that the squadron?

Yeah not enough air-to-air combat training. Not that we

06:30 needed it in Mustangs but it was brought home in the Meteors because the Meteors got chewed to ribbons. Not enough air-to-air training, I think everyone you talk to will tell you the same thing. As I mentioned 10 times before, big flying training, great fun aero club and plenty of air-to-ground stuff, that's why we were so good in Korea in air-to-ground. You know a couple of times I carried the camera, did attacks with them and it was terrific, some of the stuff are great.

07:00 But we should have had a lot more air-to-air cause when the Meteor got into combat the MiGs tore them apart. That's why we had all our losses.

You were early on in the war not facing MiGs in the air, is that right?

There weren't any MiGs, no. There was some Yaks, piston-engine Yaks but never attacked us, but they attacked the Americans, attacked a lot of the American B26s and things, but not enough to really be a threat. It was when the Chinese came in and the MiGs, the Russian MiGs came in and that's when it became a big threat and that's why we

07:30 had nothing but Meteors, and eventually the Americans took us out of the air war for that very reason. We had more losses in the first few months of the Meteor campaign than we had all through the Mustang era.

Are there any other things that had become a bit rusty in the time of this great time you'd been having in Japan?

No we weren't rusty, we were trained, one of the best trained squadrons you'd ever get, the 77 Squadron. We'd all been together a long time,

08:00 had the respect of the commander and all the troops respected him, training was very high level, and I told you we won the Far East Gunnery Competition, so our standards were very high. But the one thing you did ask about was absolute lack of air-to-air training – we didn't do any. Cause they were going through a phase they didn't think there wouldn't be any more of that sort of thing. See the Brits were building aeroplanes without guns, everything was going to be magic missiles from hereon in, well it didn't work. Well the Americans did the same, they built the Phantom with no gun

08:30 at all, they had to go back and re-fit the thing. And when they re-fitted that's when they started to get all the kills in Vietnam.

Early on in the war there was an incident of what is now termed 'friendly fire' on an American train, what do you know about that?

Friendly fire on an American train?

I think 77 Squadron got in trouble for shooting us some Americans on the ground?

No, we got into trouble, didn't get into trouble but we shot up the

09:00 British Gloucester Regiment. The Gloucesters were up in an area which we were told was a target area and 77 Squadron attacked them.

When did that happen?

Oh 1950 but I don't know when.

And what was the circumstances there, can you lead us through it?

When you go out on a close attack mission sometimes you've got a forward air controller, a little aeroplane that directs you where it is. And other time the front-line troops lay down fluorescent panels where they are and the guy in the aeroplane

09:30 will say to you, "There's a target, the enemy are 50 metres to the north of those fluorescent panels," or the area so-and-so, or, "That area over there is cleared." So we were called in and said to do this and that areas there, and we checked twice, the CO was leading, Lou Spence, said, "The area's clear. Attack." So we attacked and we all of a sudden got called off, called off , friendlies, friendlies. And what had happened the Gloucesters had moved forward and the forward air controllers

10:00 hadn't worked out where the front line was. The front line was still, well they thought it was and the

Gloucester had moved forward, and that's just one of those things. I mean we were coming back one day in the afternoon in four Mustangs, and you can't get anything more identifiable than four Mustangs and all of a sudden an American flight of F80s came round the corner. My number two said to me, "Hey, they're attacking!" I said, "Don't worry, they're F80s." And as soon as I said that all of a sudden I heard this break, we broke, and an American voice said, "Oh, sorry Aussies,"

10:30 cause they thought we were the action and had a go at us. But that happens in wartime, it can happen any time and the Glousters was an unfortunate incident, but there it was. But I don't know about the train one, we didn't see many trains in Korea. Saw a lot of animals pulling vehicles along, it was hard to make yourself shoot them but if you didn't shoot them they'd get through. And when you would shoot the ground they'd all blow up, including the Korean peasant dressed in their white robes and their big black hats on.

11:00 Very hard to shoot those but every now and again they'd make a target there and every one you'd hit would go boom, cause their all carrying explosives under their robes. They'd infiltrate behind the American front line then blow everybody up.

In the very early days of that war, what were your targets?

People, tanks, trucks, moving troops, in that order. When the big push was on, in the early part of,

11:30 or the later part of 1950 when the Chinese came right down to the Pusan perimeter. We flew six missions one day of all support straight against troops, holding troops back. And one of the most horrific things I can ever recall in my life was actually firing on these things and the river was actually running red, the river was turning red from the number of bodies we were shooting in the river. But for the fact that we kept these people back, they would have overrun all the retreating Americans

12:00 and South Koreans. But for our power they would have lost the war a lot earlier, that kept them there. But this was an awful day because all we fired at was troops.

Can you take us through one of those early operations? I mean this was, before that there would have been a few operations before the Pusan perimeter or was that early?

Oh no, everything happened before. But see what happened was when the Chinese came in everything moved so quickly,

12:30 they took us from where we were right up to the border, right up to the North Korean border, and within two weeks we were down within a little radius, 100 mile around Pusan.

At that time you mentioned you were flying six operations a day?

Hmm.

Can you take us through one of those from the start to the finish if you like, how did it unfold from I guess as far back as the briefing?

Normal briefing every morning for what the operation was for that day. A thing called a frag order comes in

13:00 and tells you what the targets going to be, the targets then allocated to the various squadrons around the place. We were flying out of Taegu with the Americans. We'd fly, we'd have two Australians two Americans, three Americans one Australian, three Australians one American, whatever made up 4. And we were given all these targets. You'd eat at a field kitchen, get in the aeroplane get airborne, contact the forward air controller. He would identify where the target was, you'd have to identify where the target was,

13:30 he'd confirm it and if it was friendly troops and they had panels down, no problem. If it was friendly troops and they put smoke up, they put coloured smoke up, no problem. If there was nothing like that it was a problem because you'd have to identify where they were and then what you'd do you'd target the opportunity. Whatever would move or wouldn't move, or whatever the forward air controller would call in, he'd say that's the target, we'd fire on that. If we had bombs, it was usually a bridge or vehicles

14:00 together or tanks under a orchard, something like this, and that was straight conventional. With rockets it was the same because you once you knew where tanks were. But when it's with troops and people moving we'd drop napalm quite often across the top where they were, which would burn right across the top and anyone moving then your number three and four behind you would start to strafe, and then when you identified where all the troops were then you'd strafe everything until you were out of ammunition. Then you'd bore back as quick

14:30 as you could to Taegu, out into a taxi rank, big taxi rank at the end, while you were there they were all going along rearming, refuelling, and the next four that were ready away they'd go. And by the time you'd had a cup of coffee and looked around your four would be up again, in you'd go and away you go and you'd do the same thing. And you do that till first light till last light. It was very hard work in the early days. See Taegu for example was an airfield about three or four kilometres from a walled city, old walled city,

15:00 very historic old city, and the North Koreans owned that and every night at night fall the North Koreans

would attack Taegu and take the airfield and everything would be gone, everything would be erased, the whole thing. The next morning our first mission from Japan would be to secure the airfield, so we'd be attacking, strafing and rocketing all around the airfield and gradually force them back bit by bit by bit until it gave time for the South Korean troops and the American troops to get in to take the airfield again.

15:30 So they'd put a perimeter around it and we'd operate there again all day and the C54s and things would fly in tents and seats and food and stuff and fuel and all the ammunition and they'd do that all day long and build us up, build us up again. Now we'd be able to fly to last light, after last light if they could hold they'd hold, if they couldn't hold they'd have to retreat and once again the North Koreans would come through and knock everything off and we'd start the thing again. So the first couple of months of the war

16:00 we were doing that all the time.

Were you still flying from Iwakuni at this stage?

Yes first month, first two months all from Iwakuni, but we'd go into Taegu as soon as we could land and we'd operate from there. Then we went from Taegu across to the one on the coast, the name escapes me but we operated from there for quite a while. Then up to Hamhung right on the border and then back down to Pusan, and from Pusan we were equipped with Meteors

16:30 and went into Meteors then.

What happened in the interim after Lou Spence died and before Dick Creswell arrived?

Nothing. 'Bay' Adams took over, 'Bay' took over the squadron just… We just operated as exactly though nothing had happened, except we were all really shocked about loosing Lou. We didn't think we would, cause Lou would have gone on to be top in the air force, the way he was.

And what influence

17:00 **did Dick Creswell have on the squadron when he arrived?**

Oh kicked the morale back up again, I'm the leader and he leads in the front, which he always did, went on the first couple of missions, started to lead and away he went from there and the squadron never looked back. He took us up to Hamhung and did all the things you're supposed to do as a leader. And did wonderfully well, that's why our reputation stayed right from the time we got Meteors. And he was still there when we got Meteors and the loss

17:30 rate from the Meteor was so bad that that's when the Americans took us out of the war. And he insisted we go back in again on close support stuff and the Meteor was ideal for that, it was built like a Leyland truck and could take a lot of punishment. So we maintained our reputation pretty well but that bad period in the middle.

We'll come back to that in due course, I just want to deal with the early part on Mustangs at the moment. You mentioned forward air controllers,

18:00 **who were they and what were they flying?**

Flying things, little things like our Wirraways, Harvards, pilot in the front and usually an army officer either South Korean or American in the back who were trained in air reconnaissance and tactic reconnaissance on the ground. And sometimes they had a little tiny bird dog aeroplane, little Piper Cubs, they'd fly.

18:30 And some of them were equipped, the Harvards were equipped to fire rockets, they had smoke rockets on so what they would do they would identify a target and fire the smoke rockets in. And occasionally they got hit and knocked out pretty badly themselves. But they were invaluable because they could take all the thinking out of where the target actually was, and you could use it to the best effect. Quite often when you'd been at a target you had both ammunition and expended and you'd be flying home and you'd hear a voice say, "This is Bird Dog so-and-so any aeroplane in the area

19:00 I've got a target so-and-so." So you'd contact him and he'd take you across and put you on that target and you could use your ammunition on him. But they were brave men, very brave men.

You called them Bird Dog so-and-so, what were their call signs you use?

Bird Dogs, they were called Bird Dogs.

What were…?

Well actually in Korea they were called Mosquitos, they were Mosquito so-and-so, Mosquito so-and-so, which meant, in Vietnam they called them Bird Dogs, in Korea they were called Mosquitos.

19:30 And little Mosquitos' flights were all people that volunteered, they were unarmed, completely unarmed and they were just flying around over the front line all the time.

What radio call signs did you use yourselves?

Drop kick, drop kick, we were the ones that dropped in. We had Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta all the way through.

That identified four planes in a…?

Identified the leader,

20:00 drop kick, see for example my call was Drop Kick Nan, N and I'd be Drop Kick Nan 2, Nan 3, Nan 4, you know, who was leading, and the three that was with you wouldn't know what the names were but they'd know. And you get to identify some of the Mosquitos because quite often you'd get airborne and the guy would say, "Mosquito so-and-so," and you'd say, "Hi, oh you're back again," and so on, we'd talk to each other that way.

How did you link up

20:30 **with the Americans again, can you explain that for us?**

What do you mean link up with them, what do you mean?

Well you mentioned you were flying in formations with them?

On Taegu, when close support is absolutely essential every aeroplane that lands gets priority. They'd put a big long taxi line, what they used to call a taxi rank, and each aeroplane landed they'd get in line. Now if an American one was late or it was unserviceable the next one would move up, so you might wind up with three Americans and one Australian, or you might wind up with three Australians and one American

21:00 or two of each, but as long as you flew out in flights of four . We were all operating together and the idea was to get as much ammunition on the targets in the shortest space of time that you could, and this was a good way to do it.

I want to get a chronology cause I'm a little bit confused about what happened when. These flights from Taegu happened while you were still at Iwakuni, captured the airfield and went from Taegu?

Yep.

What happened after that, I mean after the

21:30 **Inch'on landings and the push back, how did your operations change?**

We went across to the, I still can't think of the name of the airfield on the coast, we were only there for a little while, P'ohang, we were over at P'ohang for a short while, based. Then we moved from P'ohang up to Hamhung and we were only there for about six weeks and we moved back to Pusan.

And all this time you were operating with the Americans in the same way?

Oh yeah, yeah all the time, all went together, cause what they wanted was

22:00 aeroplane numbers and that's the way to do it.

During that time when you were flying on the Pusan perimeter were there any particularly dangerous or scary moments for you?

Every one of them because ground fire was severe. As I say the day when we were shooting and the river was red, I mean every day you were facing all sorts of hostile fire, because you were in the worst part of the war. You were down near the ground in the area where

22:30 everybody's got anything fires at you, and we had aeroplanes hit every day, practically. But you had to do it otherwise the Chinese would have progressed all the way down the perimeter. The same thing when the Americans were leaving the reservoir up in the Chong Chong River, but for the air force there and the aeroplanes they would have been completely annihilated. But from daylight to dark we'd attack the enemy on each side of the valley while the

23:00 marines were coming down the middle of the valley. As soon as nigh time would fall they would decimate them, first mission every morning at first light was to knock out all the enemy along the side, and that saved a whole lot of them. I'll never forget a American colonel said to me, he said, "Hey, gees, I wouldn't be one of you guys for anything. I watch what you guys do. I wouldn't be one of you for anything," and I said, "I'll tell you what, I wouldn't be one of you because you stay there. I come home have a shower, have a beer, have a meal and go to bed and you're still sitting where you were the night before."

23:30 So it's all relative. But we appreciated the fact that we were keeping them going, and that's why we went to Hamhung, that's the reason we were up there.

This particular day you've mentioned a couple of times with this river was running red, can you take us through that operation? I mean, what happened that day?

Normal operation.

Well I mean for the archive a normal operation was one thing…?

I just talked you through an operation what actually happens, this time we were airborne and the target's so-and-so

24:00 on that corner of a road, a road coming down through here, that road crosses a river, each side were trees full of troops, full of troops everywhere, moving everywhere in the place. The target from the thing was target anything moving north of the river is a target, anything north of the river is a target. So every one of us who came in, not just me, I mean everyone over the day, dozen of aeroplanes attacking the same sort of targets. And when, particularly afternoon with this, my three and me we got

24:30 to the stage where they actually moved down right to the river bank and we were targeting anything that moved and we were firing into the river bank and then a whole bunch started to push across with track vehicles, only small track vehicles, and we started to fire at those. And we fired and fired and fired and we must have hit so many people because the next flight came in and started again. I was back an hour and a half later, back again. The second time we'd come back the river had actually turned red, the river had run red.

25:00 And we were firing at the same, and they never crossed the river, we kept them back all the time and that's all that stopped us, the continual fire in that area down that road. But the number of bodies were building up and the blood was going in the river and the river was turning red and that's a thing I've got in the back of my mind forever. Not good stuff but that stopped them coming.

How high were you flying in on these attacks?

50 feet, or lower depending what you want.

25:30 Depending where you came down and hit somebody. That's why I say it's the most dangerous. If you look at the Korean countryside and see where we operated from, some of the films I'll show you where people are down in the valleys, it's stuff that's not made for long life.

What were your losses like at this time?

Very light, we were very good, we did very well in 77 Squadron. The only thing was all the pilots who'd been together for all that length of time beforehand,

26:00 apart from our CO and ops officer, which was frightening, we lost them, we didn't lose another one of our people, all we lost were replacements, just about every replacement was shot down by ground fire. And must be a lesson there somewhere.

Was that a lesson that was much talked about at the time?

Yeah a lot, inexperience, don't go where you shouldn't go. You see something that looks like a

26:30 target and it's really not, it's a flak trap, don't attack it. Things that we'd learnt the hard way but these guys learnt it the hard way too, they got hacked down pretty quickly. See the first place we ever lost up there was a brand new replacement, only been there about a month, Billy Harrop, the first one to go.

Was there a division within the messes back at the base between the reinforcements and the men who'd been there for a while?

No great rapport,

27:00 oh terrific, yeah these just replacement pilots coming in. Because they knew a tour of operation was 50 missions in those days and you could repeat 50 if you wanted to, if they'd let you and we knew they'd have to have replacements so these were the first replacements. But we didn't lose any of the previous replacements who'd been with us for about a year, we didn't lose any of those either.

Who did you fly with?

27:30 **Everyone and anyone?**

Everybody, everyone flew together, I was a flight leader so I had always was up the front all the time, but you flew with everybody. Except when you flew with the CO and the ops officer you flew on his wing. When Lou Spence went in I was number three, I was way up there over there and he went in down there.

What would the formations be, I mean you're flying in groups of four , is that correct?

Finger 4, finger 4

28:00 that's what a finger four formation is, fly that way 1, 2, 3, 4, number three is the deputy leader.

Are there any moves you had to commonly pull off in a finger four formation?

No, all practice, we'd done it second sight, you could do it in your sleep, you've trained so many times that way you could do it no problem.

28:30 **Well what are the common attacks that you would do, would you dive into a target, would you?**

Hmm roll on your back, find the target, roll on your back, put the sight on the target, roll round the sight and just keep going down till you got the right range. When you got the right range pull the trigger. The same thing applies to guns or bombs, just to us just a standard attack. The only thing is you never

29:00 never fly straight and level for very long, always fly with skid or slip or something to allow the bullets to pass you. If you fly straight and level they'll eventually hit you. If you always skid, now when you pull out of a target, as soon as you pull out don't come out straight pull out skidding sideways. You quite often you'll see skidding sideways the bullets go past you.

How tight are those formations? How close do you fly to each other?

Oh not when you're in tactical battle formation like that, you're

29:30 a hundred yards, 100 metres apart, but close formation you fly wingtip to wingtip. There's three aeroplanes together there on that picture.

What was your closest call during this incredibly tiring time?

Don't recall one, sometimes you wouldn't even know you were hit till you got back on the ground again and the Ground staff would tell

30:00 you how many holes you had in you. But I was pretty lucky I guess I didn't have any real close call.

What sort of damage would you find then when you were reporting back?

Oh quite often a chunk out of your wing or tail plane as big as a dinner plate, from 25 mm stuff. Many, many times small holes, 303 and 50 calibre stuff, you'd find five or six holes in your tail plane.

30:30 Any one of them could of hit you. We had a good friend of ours named Alan Frost who was in an attack, he leant forward to do something and came back and there was a bullet hole in the side of his windscreen and out the other side behind his head. If he had have leant forward it would have been right through his head, that's the only damage he had was a hole that side and a hole that side. But that's how close you are each time. That's why poor old Lou Spence must have got one in the head. And whenever you get on the ground everybody that's got a gun fires

31:00 at you there's a chance that somebody might hit something eventually.

How aware are you of all that fire around you when you're coming in to attack?

Not, ground attack you're not, the only time you're aware if it's actually bursting flack and you see it. And low level stuff doesn't burst, it's all ballistic stuff, and the upper air they fire the thing up and the shells exploded to make all the shrapnel and stuff.

31:30 **Just ignore that?**

She can get it.

What do you hear when you're up there in the air?

Nothing except if you're flying like you are in the B29s you can actually hear the ack-ack [anti-aircraft] explode, you can hear vroom vroom, but any other ground fire you don't hear anything at all. And even sometimes if you're hit you don't hear anything at all.

I keep coming back

32:00 **to this but it's a incredibly powerful image the way you describe it shooting soldiers on the ground, would you see the effects of your own fire going into troops from your 50 foot, 30 foot up?**

Well something turns the water red. See a lot of our people, not a lot but some of our people couldn't pull the trigger, some people just couldn't pull the trigger. And I know several that we'd attack and not pull the trigger. See one particular day we had a tank bottled up

32:30 and the tank crew jumped out and the forward air controller, the Mosquito said, "They're in that copse of trees, that's the target." And I said to the number 3, "Okay I'll go round again whack that in," to the number three. And he went down and he pulled off and I said, "Did you hit the target?" and he said, "No still there, still there." And I said, "Well I'll come back in again now." And I had a go and went whack and the Mosquito, said, "Yes, now two of them have left, they've gone across to so-and-so." I said, "Okay, you take this one."

33:00 He never fired the trigger, never fired the bullets, couldn't make himself fire at a person. Which is understandable, we'd been living a different life to that. When they first told us about the Koreans with their big long white robes and their hats on and saying everything is a moving target including the ox-drawn vehicles, it's hard to shoot a bloody ox walking the road. But when you realise and we were briefed that they were going through the front line and blowing up the troops back...

33:30 They said anyone on that road's a target. And several guys couldn't pull the trigger, couldn't pull the trigger. One guy particularly, funny fellow, he could pull the trigger, he had great fun, he was a good shot, he'd blow them up and you'd see them go boom, boom. But see there's nothing nice, war's nasty stuff, nothing nice about it at all. Either they did it to us or we did it to them.

What happened to these blokes that couldn't pull the trigger?

34:00 Nothing.

Was it your job as a flight leader understanding this had happened to report it to anyone or…?

No, no, nothing to do with anybody. If it happened too often and it affected their capability well you'd do something, but not when you've been through it yourself and you know what it is. They'll get over it, they'll either get killed or get over it one of the two.

34:30 **Was that a reaction you had yourself at first?**

Once or twice initially, on a bridge. On a particular bridge one day I saw a bunch of people on a bridge and I didn't fire until they got off the bridge, and then I dropped a bomb and blew the bloody bridge up. I probably got them all anyway but I didn't the first time. It's hard to make yourself shoot people, when you know they're people.

It's also a closer form of combat than most

35:00 **air force people are used to?**

Yeah ground attack, close support's the nastiest type of combat in the air.

How quickly do you think you hardened then towards the people you were firing against?

The first day at Hamhung I got shot at and thought, "These bastards don't like me and they're trying to shoot me too." I didn't mind them shooting the American B29s but I didn't want them having any part of me. That made me realise that day, "I'm being facetious."

35:30 But that day I thought, "This really is war and they're shooting at me and if I don't get them they'll get me and vice versa." Several times I've been frightened out of my bloody wits over a target with a big burst behind me or in front of me. But you, you don't actually harden but you accept it.

Was it too much for anyone, did anyone have to…?

Yep several, the day Lou Spence went in

36:00 his number two never flew again.

Who was he?

I don't want to tell ya.

What was the situation?

Just came back and said he's not going to fly any more. He was sent home within 24 hours under the heading LMF, lack of moral fibre. That was a bit of a lesson to us all also and then a lot of us who would like to do that

36:30 weren't game to do it. It can happen.

Were there others later on with the reinforcements you spoke of or…?

I don't personally know of anybody I was real close associated with but we know there are another couple within 77 Squadron who were sent home for the same reason.

What does LMF mean to you?

37:00 Means that you don't have enough courage to carry out the tasks that you were required to do, you lack the mental determination to carry it out, for whatever reason I don't know, but that's what it is.

You spoke before of people not shooting at targets and how understandable that was. Is it understandable to lack that courage,

37:30 **do you think?**

In some, make up of some people, not natural to go round shooting people and some people just can't ever get themselves to do it and they think they can until the chips are down and it really happens and they just can't do it. I think you'll find it happens in every service, all through. Whereas others are just the reverse they can do it without any problem at all.

What was announced to the squadron on the occasion

38:00 **that this bloke was sent home the first time?**

That he was sent home from LMF, lack of moral fibre, he's gone within 24 hours. The CO got up and

said, “This is the reason he won’t be back,” or our deputy CO, cause our CO was dead, “He’s gone.” 24 hours later he was back in Australia. And where he went from there I don’t know, but he has to live with himself for the rest of his life, up to him. It’s a hell of a penalty to have to pay, but it’s

38:30 better than being dead, I suppose.

All right we’ll just stop there for a second because the camera’s just about to run out.

Tape 7

00:41 **Just for my sake if we could talk through what happened after Lou Spence died, in respect to CO of the squadron?**

The first thing we had was ‘Bay’ Adams took over being the senior flight commander

01:00 and the ops officer. He took over as temporary CO and he briefed us that war’s hell and that’s what it’s going to be, and we lost the CO unfortunately and it could be anybody, and the mission for the next day is so-and-so, in virtually those words. And the next day we kept on going just like we did before, nothing changed and then Dick arrived and Dick had to do a couple of rides, he did a couple of rides as a wingman himself to have a look and then took over and went like the clappers

01:30 from there, no problem. Morale was back up pretty high, and we started to lose a couple of other people. We lost Gordon Harvey, which was also hell of a blow because Gordon was a very senior one of our originals. He was shot down up over Hamhung, not Hamhung, Pyongyang, and that was a shock to everybody losing Gordon, he was our first POW. But the squadron operated quite normally and I couldn’t think of a better bloke for the job than Dick Creswell to come in and do it.

Did

02:00 **Dick recognise you from…?**

Oh yes.

Saving you from that?

Oh yes indeed, yeah.

He bring that up at all?

Yeah several times, told me he hoped I’d improved. See I did one thing one night another guy and I got a fire hose and stuck through the window of his bedroom in Williamtown and turned the fire hose on, so he had no trouble remembering who I was. As a matter of fact we discussed that last week. I had lunch with him last week.

So

02:30 **just this fellow Steeg,**

Seege.

Was he CO of the squadron?

Hmm.

What was the circumstances with him and Dick Creswell?

He was pulled out and sent home, so Creswell took the squadron over.

So he was actually there before Creswell did?

Yeah.

Was it the intention that he would remain CO?

Oh I presume so.

03:00 **Never mind, it’s just outside.**

Yeah he was going to be CO and it’s not spoken about but I think the main reason he was sent home was because he wouldn’t fly, cause he had a hell of a good war record – he’d flown in the desert, he’d flown in New Guinea, but I think they expected to much of him.

03:30 **What was he like as a character and man?**

Different entirely to Lou Spence.

So I presume. I mean morale in the squadron at this point in time were a bit lost given that

you haven't got stability at the top?

Yeah a bit off for the first time.

What did Dick to do basically take control?

He lead, he lead from the front, got up and said, "That's what were going to do, that's the way you do it."

04:00 And away he went as he's always done and the squadron perked up no end. No good guy.

And most of the fellows followed?

Oh absolutely, all followed no problems. As I say he leads from the front, he gets out the front and does it and everyone, some people will say, "Go that way and tell me what happened," but he doesn't. He says, "This is the way it's going to be." Had a lot of respect

04:30 from all his young pilots.

Now earlier we'd been discussing the luxuries in Japan the accommodation, the lifestyle. Korea you mentioned earlier changed all that. You had a story about moving into the tents, what were the circumstances there?

Well we had nothing but the Americans used to, when they'd take the airfield again they'd bring in little

05:00 two-man tents and put up so if we could stay the night we'd stay the night. And all they had was a two-man tent, nothing else, so we found it a good idea. When we made it a bit more secure so that they weren't taking the airfield every night we said, "Well we'd better take…" So we took a blanket each and put it in the back of the canopy of the Mustang and took it over so that if we stayed overnight we had a blanket. And luckily it was warm so we didn't have any problem except for the bloody mosquitoes of course. But

05:30 it meant that every morning we could get up and be fed, and then do our… The idea was to get aeroplanes on target at first light. So we all took these blankets and after a while we thought, "This is a pretty good idea," so we used to carry them with us. And this particular time we left them there cause we thought we'd be back that day. So that night we left them again and that night, oh just about on dusk, the bloody bugle blew and said, "Everybody out! We're under attack!" So we all leapt in and took off and landed

06:00 back at Iwakuni again, Americans all went down south to Pusan, and the gooks took over the whole airfield again that night. And the next morning everything had gone, so the bloody equipment officer back at Iwakuni wanted to charge us all for the cost of one blanket because we'd taken it and hadn't returned it. You can imagine how popular he was round the place. He was the same fellow that we had a mid-air collision in Japan between 'Bay' Adams and

06:30 Blue Thornton, and 'Bay' had to bale out and Blue was ejecting the canopy and about to bale out and found he could still fly it. So he managed to fly it and landed it back, this same fellow wanted to charge him for the cost of the canopy cause he brought the aeroplane back without it. So with people like that you didn't need enemies on the bloody ground. But we did it again next time, went over again, took blankets again. Then one day the Americans bought in some little wooden plank

07:00 stretchers and left them there, we could use those at night-time. But it was just a matter of walking around and finding one empty and get into it and sleep the night, and they fed us and looked after us and brought all the stuff for us. We had one old DC Dakota that was flying from Japan backwards and forwards every day, backwards everyday brining over rockets and things for us. But life was pretty primitive after living the way did it was a bit primitive.

So during any of the nights

07:30 **that you were actually sleeping there did you have to evacuate?**

Well no, but at Taegu, yeah, a couple of nights, couple of times had to evacuate you out, not sleeping. We held them, they knew that if they held it at a certain time at night there was no way they were going to get there to take the airfield at night so we were safe to stay the night. But several times late in the afternoon when the South Koreans weren't holding we had to get out, cause there's a good chance they would take us. And one day we were over at P'ohang

08:00 we moved over to P'ohang and a great old mate of mine, Stormy Field, was there and he said, "Jesus, look at the bloody shells landing over there," and I said, "Yes." And the fellow said, called around and said, "There will be an evacuation expected in 30 minutes. Everybody to their aeroplane and ready to go." And Stormy said, "Hey, me bloody laundry's down in the P'ohang town," which is down the foot of the airfield, we were on a hill and there's the big laundry building. And while were watching two shells hit

08:30 the laundry building and blew it up and we said, "Don't worry about your laundry now, it's all gone." So we all got in the aeroplanes and evacuated. But that happened all the time when you're so close to the front line. The same thing up in Hamhung we had to get out of Hamhung within practically an hours notice cause everybody had to go there. And one guy we left behind because he couldn't get his

aeroplane started and he eventually walked out with the army.

09:00 We saw him about three weeks later after we got back. And amazing story about Hamhung way up there north mile from anywhere at all out of nowhere came a Salvation Army man, with a big tin of tea on his bag and a big bag of biscuits. We had single-man tents within a 50 metre radius of the aeroplane, we used to live in, and they used to bring your food down for you and all that sort of thing. And along the line came this Salvo with a cup of tea and a biscuit, where he came from Christ only knows,

09:30 and he eventually was there when we evacuated and he eventually turned up back at Pusan about two months later. I have the greatest admiration for those Salvos.

Any other stories about the Salvos?

Oh it's just one off the top of my head, absolutely tremendous fellow. I can't think of another one at the moment, maybe one will come.

What did you think of the other chaplains?

Oh we didn't have much to do with them. I think a lot of chaplains…

10:00 I think very highly of chaplains but we didn't have a lot to do with them, but this one sticks in my mind. I mean of all places to be, he was the only one, he was the only denomination anywhere within miles and there he was passing out his tea and buns and I thought, "Good on him." The same thing happened on the Kokoda Trail, you know. There was still, way up the top of Kokoda there was Salvos up there. They are great people.

What were the South Koreans like? You've talked about the Japanese, but what were the South Korean people like?

Oh different people, they

10:30 were very nice hospitable people, they thought very highly of us, they still do to this day. As a matter of fact the recent, not the recent, two ago Korean ambassador here was a lieutenant in the Korean army and he was the ground controller on the ground talking to me the day Lou Spence went in. There's a coincidence for you, went to dinner one night over to his place and we all started to talk and it all came out that he was the actual lieutenant on the ground doing the ground controlling.

11:00 That's amazing after million of Japanese guys flying over Sydney and then meeting this guy here again. The worlds a very small place, isn't it?

Did you meet the civilians, the women and…?

Oh no, we were fighting the war. There was no social life in Korea, you either flew or you went to bed and that's all. We did nothing else, I mean you couldn't do anything at all.

You were flying sort of 7 days a week?

Hmm

11:30 yeah, yeah I got in one month I got 76 operational hours one month.

Was there a ceiling on the amount of hours?

No, if the job's there to be done you just do it.

So how long, actually we might just pause there. Now you received a couple of awards in Korea?

Hmm.

12:00 **Could you talk me through each of those and what they were for?**

No, I've got no idea what they were for, just came out of the blue. One day they rang me up and said, "You've got a DFC." I said, "Thanks very much. What for?" And they said, "So-and-so-and-so," and I said, "Oh well, maybe." And later on I got an Air Medal and they said that was for so-and-so. I knew what that was for, that was for doing 20 missions or something. Then at this stage there will be no Australian awards given at all.

12:30 And the Americans said, "This is ridiculous," so they Americans started to give us some and that embarrassed our government and they decided to give us some to. There were no Australian awards given prior to the Americans. And then shortly after that I got a Mentioned in Despatches for a particular job, that was knocking a bridge out. Years after when I was in the headquarters and I looked through the records and things and found the thing I found that the target they give me the DFC one for was actually the dates were wrong by three days, so

13:00 where it came from God only knows. But it was all to do with knocking out transport and stuff up in the air, I think it was to do with. See I knocked out the first tank in Korea from the Australian side, the first tank was knocked out cause they were terribly hard to hit those T34 tanks. And I just fluked this one this particular day, I think it was for that. I think they were trying to cross a bridge and we knocked the

thing out and stopped the bridge and stopped the advance, and I think that's what it was but they had their dates wrong. But

13:30 there was no presentation, citation or anything at all, just out of the blue. A year or so later when we were at Williamtown, the end of '51 or so, the American ambassador came up and pinned them on us up there. That's the first time we actually had them.

Lets just look at a few of those things. Firstly, the knocking out of the tank. Did you drop a bomb? How did you take it out?

Actually what we did we were with Gordon Harvey and we'd, these two tanks came down the road and they were going to where the bridge

14:00 was and we thought, "If they got across the bridge, they're gone." So Gordon went and put some rocket in front of the first tank and he turned off and started to go down the side of the bank. The second one went up to the bridge and started to go and I got behind him, and on the back of the T34 tank they've got a radiator and they've got one louvered door that folds north and south, another louvered door that folds east and west. And when they're both closed it's almost impossible to get anything in to hit them at all. Anywhere else you hit them with anything at all, it

14:30 won't attack. So when I got down this one had the east and west door open and I could see it on the first run, so I fired two rockets. One rocket hit in front of him on the ground, one rocket hit him on the side, didn't make any difference cause they're armoured. And I thought all I had left was 50 calibres so I went down the back and I aimed right at that radiator thing and I put a real good burst right where it was there, quickly went around again and did it the second time and run up over him. Also I saw smoke coming out of the back of it like this, so I went round for the third run and on

15:00 the third run it went boom. So obviously some of my rounds had got in through the louvered radiator and hit something inside and boomed it. And at that stage he turned towards the bridge and he blocked the bridge, blocked the bridge so it worked out. The other one got away, the other one kept going down the road, with Gordon in hot pursuit after him chasing him. Yeah that's what that was for.

How do you, when you come back to base tell everyone you've got a kill,

15:30 **was it filmed or…?**

Oh you do a full intelligent briefing. As soon as you get out of the aeroplane you take the film out, take it over, give it to the intelligence officer, he sits down, he's got a big form, and he interrogates you like you're doing me now, word by word, and he takes it down as soon as it comes out of your mouth. Next day you go back and if you've thought of anything at all that you've missed in the excitement you can clear up some points, actual directions and headings and things like that. It's all pretty authentic.

16:00 **And when you get a kill do you put that on the side of the plane?**

Oh that's old, that stuff, that's air war stuff. If you knock down one in air war put one of the side of the aeroplane. My good friend Nobby Noble, who's dead now, he blew up one of these ox carts along the side of the road so we got somebody to draw a ox and a cart on the side of the aeroplane for him. He was highly pissed off about that.

16:30 **Did you do anything to personalise your plane?**

Oh yeah, we had our names on some of them, used to put our names on. So I had a little gun port, little gun covers I had them painted red, white and blue like the spinner on the thing, you could write a name on the side of them. And I flew that aeroplane of mine, 757, the one I flew, the one that the engine change was oh for a long time, it was known as my aeroplane, and that's the picture of it there, the one I showed you.

17:00 And that had a bit of a personal touch because I had two little Japanese boys used to polish it for me, it was a highly polished thing, it became a personal thing. And that's why when Graham Stroud went in it was that aeroplane. Bit of a shock to me. Fate I guess – not your turn.

Did you have any, or did any of the other pilots have any sort of superstitions

17:30 **and try and doing anything just before takeoffs and missions?**

Ah I really don't think so, I really don't think so. I think a lot of that stuff is wartime myth. It's come up since World War II. Lot of blokes they still have lucky charms and things like this and they do things but you can personally attach to an aeroplane, you do get a personal attachment to an aeroplane and it feels different to you and it sort of, I always think it flies different when you're in it too.

18:00 I had one pet Mirage, 48340, and everyone said it was peculiar but I thought it was magnificent and they used to all give me a hard time about it.

Now coming back to the awards and the Australian government not willing, initially, to give any out, what was their reasoning behind that?

Oh I've got no idea, Michael [interviewer], I couldn't even think of it, but I think it was quite wrong the fact they didn't,

18:30 and then they did then they did another silly thing. When they started to get some British awards they gave too many to too many people too quickly and cut out the American awards. So we've got a situation where some people have got some American awards and no British, some have got British and no American, and some have got nothing, and it's quite stupid and it's been a real sore spot for a long time. We do some silly thing like that. For example, in Vietnam

19:00 when we first took the Caribous up we had the Caribous with the new round decal, or the kangaroo on the side but the RAF ones on the wings still because they hadn't decided what to do with the wings. So everybody up there, all the Americans thought they were British aeroplanes being flown by Australian crews, instead of Australia getting the credit for being the first ones in. Now I was able to fix that cause I was in the headquarters but it's quite stupid. And the same thing in Korea I mean why not give the people

19:30 the decoration they deserve when their doing the job they deserve, but they didn't. Typical bureaucracy.

So I mean this bureaucracy you talk about, is this political bureaucracy or sort of the higher elements of the air force?

I think it is a political bureaucracy. I think they don't want to admit first of all there's a war on, that the thing they didn't want it to be on and like they react to Vietnam, they bought people home with indecent haste and then spat

20:00 at them in the bloody street and things like that. And then a year or two later decided to have a homecoming, that's all hypocrisy. None of us in Vietnam were ever, that was a good thing. I mean the same thing in Korea. I mean why should some people have no decorations at all? Some have got both and some have got neither, or some have got one of each.

So what was sort of the fellows' views in respect of the Americans and their willingness to hand out awards?

Oh, we think it's well worth… They've got no worse than we do, they're based on the same

20:30 same for the same reason. They give an Air Medal for a certain number of missions flown, and you can get a bar for another certain number of missions flown, and every now and then they get the DFC for something and they get a DSO [Distinguished Service Order] for something – it's no different to us. And we used to always laugh at one time because they used to give them out and we didn't, and then of course we went over and gave them out. And nowadays everybody gets a medal around the place. There's more medals floating around now than you can poke a stick at. I don't think you can

21:00 criticise the Americans at all for anything like that. At least they had the guts to come out and recognise people were doing something.

Now we spoke earlier on about how the Australians or 77 Squadron, really, were the only ones with Mustangs and could take on ground forces, and yet you just touched on the Americans later brining in, I think you said the national…?

National guard.

The national guard?

Their national guard, because they were still flying Mustangs in the States. They hadn't been given jets yet so they grabbed all those and

21:30 brought them over.

So what was 77 Squadron's relationship with the national guard once they arrived?

Oh great, that's the people we were flying with when I say we were operating together out of Taegu and all those sort of places, they were terrific. Cause we had great rapport with the Americans while they were in Japan with Mustangs and they were slowly being re-equipped with F80s. So when the guard came with all their Mustangs we were back in business again, all flying together. They were good squadron, good guys and they carried the brunt of the thing

22:00 for a long time.

So how many squadrons did they have over there?

I think, off the top of my head I think about 8, I think I can't remember but I think about 8. They were based all over the place.

Did you guys in 77 Squadron have any sort of relationship with some of the Australian ground forces there?

Only when we were close enough to meet them, but we were usually operating somewhere where they weren't. They were in the brunt of it, up right up the front all the time.

22:30 We supported them an awful lot, we had a lot of ground support with them but we didn't have much contact on the ground. Had liaison officers, the army liaison officer would come and visit occasionally,

but we didn't sort of get together very often.

When did you begin to notice a change within the Korean War from massive movement and troop movements?

When the first, when the Pusan

23:00 perimeter was at its worst, when they started the tour from there, from then on in the force that had built up again then the thing started to go the other way, slowly, slowly go back. Once you held the advance, the advance was so rapid and so unexpected when the Chinese came in that that's when we had a lot of heroic stuff like Kap'yong and all those sort of things. The war became stagnant and we didn't actually move either way

23:30 for quite a while, but then there was a change. And then you had things like the Inch'on landing and all these sort of things, that made a hell of a difference and when we eventually got back right up to Seoul again and we went into, what's the base outside Seoul? Kimpo, we took and moved into Kimpo with the Americans. From then on the war was always north of the river then, from then on up.

So you actually

24:00 **moved in there with the Americans at Kimpo?**

I didn't. I'd gone. But the first Meteors went in, Meteors when Dick Creswell took them in the first ones went into there.

Okay. When did you notice I guess the enemy air force – the Chinese, North Koreans – start to build up and start to give you and the Americans problems?

When the first bunch of Yaks started to take on the B26s and things it was not a threat at all.

24:30 Once the Chinese started to move south, the big push south and the MiGs came in, this would be October, November '50, that's when it started to get dangerous cause that's when the started to shoot people down and they very rapidly got a couple of Sabre squadrons in and they started to have the first big fights with the MiGs. And from thereon in it became a big fighting air war, and sort of from '51 on became a real air war, a bigger air

25:00 war than a close… See we'd had a ground war, close support war up till then but from then on it became completely air war. It got to the stage where I think the American score was three to one or whatever it was, but we'd lost a lot of Meteors at that stage of the game.

So in respect to your flying did you guys ever come under attack from the enemy MiGs?

Only a couple of Yak 29s over Waegwon. I told you we were with

25:30 the B29 escorting and a couple of them had a go and the B29 fired back and they didn't come near us again. That's the only one we ever saw of them.

So you didn't see any of the MiGs come?

No, I was home by that stage.

Now did you return home before the Meteors?

Yep, I came home at the end of '50, just as the Meteors started to come in and convert. They all did a dive back home,

26:00 base down here at Fairbairn and I was teaching up Williamtown. We were teaching tactics and things like that.

Okay.

I came down to 3 Squadron and 3 Squadron became the conversion squadron for Korea. The kids were coming off course, doing a Mustang conversion, doing tactical training here and off to Korea.

You mentioned earlier that the Meteors got pretty much hammered by the MiGs over there?

Very much so.

Can you just share with us why what the difference was,

26:30 **or the advantage was?**

It wouldn't go as fast, as high and it couldn't turn as much as the MiG, all the things that are good about an upper air battle the Meteor didn't have. Any MiGs that we shot down in the Meteor was just sheer luck. Bill Simons will tell you he turned one way and a MiG happened to be in front of him and he pulled the trigger, one of those things. It's like the Wirraway that shot down the Zero in World War II,

27:00 it's the unluckiest Zero in the world. He popped out of the cloud in front of a Wirraway and John Archer pulled the trigger. But no, the Meteor was not made for upper air firing at all. It was made to chase buzz

bombs in World War II, it was made to chase the bombs and it would do that, it would go up and either fire at it, or get alongside and tip them, but it was not made for fighting and we found out the very hard way.

So share with me, I guess, the circumstances

27:30 **of receiving the orders to head home and the trip home?**

Oh well just that I'd done 53 or 54 missions and I didn't get the choice. They just said, "You're posted. We want some expert training at Williamtown and you're it." And several of us came home, me and, oh, I can't remember the names, several of the originals came home at the one time and replacements came in. People who'd been with us before

28:00 like Fred Barnes and Ken Macleod, they came back the second time. They'd gone home before the Korean War started, they were only home a couple of months and were back again. But we didn't have any choice, we were just told we had to come home.

So how did you get home from Korea?

On a Qantas Lancastrian down to three nights of debauchery at Manila then down at Darwin, overnight in Darwin and back down to Sydney.

28:30 And then captured by customs in Sydney and interrogated why I had all this equipment with me and I said well I'd been living in bloody Japan for the last four years and accumulated a lot of stuff. And they weren't at all concerned I'd been in the war, they were just concerned about the fact that I was trying to bring my skis home and things like that. That was all right, no problem, made the press for a little bit but that was all.

Now in a sense you finally got to action in Korea. What was your mum and dad's

29:00 **response when you came home?**

Oh, they were delighted. The thing is they were very supportive. The thing is once they realised when I'd come back from Canada and I'd gone up to New Guinea and I was back here again, they knew there was no point trying to do anything about it at all because all it would do was create trouble for me. So they just shut back and kept their fingers crossed. And of course they were horrified when the Korean War started because I'd been telling them how great things were in Japan. But then when I made a couple of headlines down here at that stage they were quite pleased about all that,

29:30 thought it was great, they used to get all thrilled about that sort of stuff. When I came home they were very, very supportive, it was great, life was good. The air force still hadn't found out yet that I was under age.

How had they been in contact with you, letter or…?

Yeah letters, letters and you could… The Lancastrians did a Japan run three days a week and they could, anybody that was up there in Korea could get a letter or parcel put on the Lancastrian

30:00 as a special delivery up there, so we stayed in touch pretty well.

So you arrived back in Australia and you were posted I guess to?

Up here, the 3 Squadron to be head of, do the conversions and I was attached to Williamtown to teach tactics at Williamtown.

Okay, so what sort of things were you teaching tactics in respect of the Korean War or general?

Yeah because we already knew about the Korean War. Teaching things like the communication, the radio call signs

30:30 how you talk to Mosquitos, what Mosquitos were, we didn't have any idea down here, how to talk to them, what they'd say. So we'd brief everybody on the ground this then we'd go up and practise it, we'd have one mob doing this and one mob doing that. And the actual firing part was routine, they did it anyway, but we were teaching the tactics, how it was done. How'd you'd fly, how'd you get together, where you'd go, how you'd operate with a Mosquito. How sometimes you would let him lead you in, you'd fly slowly back along

31:00 and let him fly you in, get the right direction and come past him and start firing so that you could be firing before the ground gun could fire at him, things like that, things that we didn't know here, we could teach that.

During your time was there also, we've touched on call signs but codes and…?

Calls and code signs and numbers which we hadn't used down here.

Could you just touch on me what those calls and code signs were?

Well the calls are… See each area in Korea had a name given to it,

31:30 now where Lou Spence went in was called the antidote area, we'll call it that, so you'd call up and say, "Mosquito antidote," so you knew that it was a Mosquito aeroplane flying in that area. And if your frag order said that you had a target in that area, that's who you'd contact, Mosquito antidote, so you knew exactly where to go to. When he'd copy you you'd say, "This is Drop Kick Nan with 3. I've got 50 calibres, rockets and high explosive." And he's say, "Okay we've got targets priority for you, priority 1, priority 2…

32:00 We'll look for smoke over so-and-so. No smoke. I'll identify the target for you." So away he'd go and he'd fire a rocket and he'd say, "Target identified okay. Priority one, fire this." Then he'd give a report what you'd hit, or hadn't hit and you'd run together that way. Then he'd come up and say, "Don't go down that side of the valley there, very heavy ground. Fire that side of the valley, don't turn right, turn left," and you'd work very closely with them. But you had to know what the call signs were,

32:30 what the things were, what they were talking about because we hadn't had any experience in Australia about that.

Would the North Korean, or the enemy for that matter, the Chinese, try and disrupt your radio signals at all?

Well it never happened, I never had any interference that way, but I do believe that when they operated out of Kimpo. They were trying to flood the radar, the radar returns. We had radars on a couple of islands and things which were homing places and they used to try and do that, but not in my day.

33:00 **Just also with the armaments that you had, so the 50 calibre, the rockets, the bombs, was there anything else?**

Napalm.

Napalm?

Napalm tanks.

Could you talk me through when you would actually used one thing over another?

When the control would tell you. Napalm was good for people in trenches and things. 50 calibre good against anything, rockets against moving armoured vehicles or buildings, and bombs against anything –

33:30 if you could put them close enough they'd be good against anything. And the Mosquito would tell you what to fire at.

Now while you were back at Williamtown with the tactics, were you also selecting fellows that could and should go to Korea?

No, they were all selected and just sent into 3 Squadron and we'd fly with them here. They'd go through the flying here up to Williamtown do a conversion and tactics and up to Korea.

This conversion was onto Mustangs?

Mustangs, yeah.

34:00 **So were you giving them any sort of air-to-air?**

No, all air-to-ground stuff, and then of course it changed because the Meteors came in in Korea and everything was done in Korea then.

And what happened to your role then, once that finished?

I came back to 3 Squadron, just came a squadron pilot in 3 Squadron and flew here for four or five months, and then I got caught in that deadfall training from then on in and I was an

34:30 instructor for the next 115 years. 1951, '52, '53… '57, flying instruction and then '58 to the States on F100s.

So the flying instruction was that back with the Tiger Moths?

Started in Tiger Moths in Archerfield, Jesus, I flew 2,000-

35:00 odd hours in Tiger Moths, flew every course in the air force from about number 8 course to about number 23 course. And you get a brand new bunch of people in who'd never seen an aeroplane and they'd say, "Here are your students," and you'd say, "Okay." And you'd fly with them five or six times a day. We had six students each, five or six times a day five half days a week. You go up to the stage where they were ready to go solo and then you'd lose them, they'd all go down to the training school. What you would do,

35:30 you would flight grade what you thought their capability was, whether to be a pilot or a navigator. And most frustrating form of training because you did nothing but train and got no result for it ever. If you were at the training school at Uranquinty or anywhere you get them solo then send them solo, then watch them develop and build them up. Not us, we were in the flight grading mob. I did that for four years but it kept me in the air and it kept me flying. A lot of people had ground jobs. Kept me flying all

the

36:00 time.

So you never thought of getting out of the air force in that point in time?

No, wanted to fly and I still love to fly. I'd fly every day if I could.

Any accidents during this time?

Not real ones, a few minors but nothing big.

Such as?

Student pilots holding off too high and me not quick enough to stop you hitting the ground and blowing tyres and things like that.

36:30 But nothing very serious. I've been very fortunate in that regard at all, never really had an accident of any sort. Oh had Mirage, lost a couple of Mirages but nothing serious.

So where were you sort of hoping your career would go at this point in time?

My career in my opinion was to fly and I'd been commissioned in Korea so I was now commissioned and I never really thought about anything else.

37:00 I just thought I'd keep flying – it was great. While I kept flying life was good and I never thought about getting promoted or anything at all it just happened out of the blue. I was at CFS, Central Flying School, I was flying everything they had in the base, all the aeroplanes they had it was great, and you'd fly five and six types in the one day down there. And that's where you teach instructors to be instructors and out of the blue came this posting to America, said, "Wants someone who is a fighter pilot qualified to fly F100s.

37:30 You're qualified in the Sabre, you're off to America and we've just promoted you to squadron leader." And that was quite a shock and surprise to me so away I went and the next 2½ years was fantastic. They just lucked out on the time because we went from F100s to 104s being the first ones.

Just coming back again in your career, when was the first time you actually started to fly jet aircraft?

Vampires in

38:00 1953, '52–53 I think. I can't remember. But I came down from Archerfield in my trusty Tiger Moth on the way to Tocumwal to swap it for a new one. And on the way though, Williamtown, all my old friends were there and Ross Glossop, who I'd been with years before was there and he said, "You're still flying these bloody things?" and I said, "Yeah," and he said, we still had Mustangs up at Archerfield

38:30 with the CF [Central Flying School] squadrons, I used to fly the Mustang a bit. He said, "Oh you want to fly the bloody Vampire," and I said, "Oh well, I'll never get close." He said, "Oh don't worry. You got time?" and I said, "I've got time." He said, "Come on, we'll check out the Vampire." So I parked the Tiger Moth over there, went down and had lunch with him went down to the Vampire. He showed me how to start it and said, "Come back in 40 minutes." So away I went, went hurtling up around Williamtown having the bloody time of my life in this aeroplane with no propeller for the first time. Came back

39:00 and landed and that was it.

Was it that different from what you'd been flying Mustangs, obviously Tiger Moths it was?

Entirely different, but everything else flies the same, the only difference is the engine controls are different, different engine. See you've got a jet engine instead of a piston engine. You've got no mix to control or anything like that, all you've got is your throttle to go fast or go slow, that's the only difference. Then well a year after that I was posted from Archerfield to do a conversion course down here and I came to Williamtown and

39:30 did a complete conversion on jets and I did the first fighter combat instructors course, and when I'd finished the fighter combat instructors course I was pretty good on jets then. Then I did a conversion onto the Sabre, onto the Meteor and I became CO of 75 Squadron with Meteors. That's why I filmed that aerobatic team and flew with those for a long time. Then I did a conversion onto the Sabre and flew Sabres until

40:00 I got posted to CFS, they wanted bloody instructor again and they wanted an instructor to fly Meteors at CFS. They posted me to CFS. But luckily I was only there for a year when the American posting came out, so I got out of it, I didn't have to go back instructing any more.

We'll just pause there.

Tape 8

00:42 **We'll pick up where we were in a moment but I just want to go back to Korea, if I may, because I mean that is the brief of our archive, is the war archive, and I want to sort of deal with the war in as much detail as we can. There's a couple of things I wanted to ask about.**

01:00 **One of them, it's been said of Korea that the greatest enemy was the weather. Was that the case and how did it influence the operation of your…?**

Well bad weather affects operation. If the weather's bad and you can't fly. The army were getting beaten, so we were very conscious of the weather and we used to fly in weather which was quite doubtful at times just to try and support the army. Cause there's no doubt whatever that that's what happened. And I mentioned to you before that the famous

01:30 Chong Chong reservoir evacuation, they would have all been dead but for the air force. And the same with the big push down south, we had to stop them, so the weather was a terrific factor. And summer time wasn't bad because the weather was pretty good but winter time it's a lousy place, it's a horrible bloody place, Korea, and towards the end of the year, October, November, December weather was pretty crook. And I'd been with Lou Spence, 12 of us down a blind valley lead down in the cloud and flew down a blind valley and then

02:00 nothing ahead of us, and Lou was such a good guy he managed to get us all turned round. How the hell he did I don't know, but I know I'd been from about number 7 in the formation I was now somewhere about number 2, cause I'd turned around quickly enough, and got us out. But the thing was it was a dangerous place to fly with the terrain and that, and add bad weather and it was quite hazardous.

What was the worst weather you had to fly in?

Blowing snow, blowing snow clouds, heavy

02:30 rain storm, low clouds over mountains, so that the clouds are there, the valleys are clear but the mountains are in the clouds. And that's not nice stuff.

How would ice and snow affect the aircraft?

Oh well it doesn't affect it very much unless enough to get on and maintain a hold on it, but most fighter aeroplanes are going too fast for that anyway. That's back in the days of slow moving transport

03:00 that snow and ice builds up on the wings and changes the plan form of the wing and the lift characteristics. But doesn't affect fighters very much except you can't see, you're going too fast and you can't see.

What about the weather on the ground, what was that like?

Well same as any weather when it's raining it's wet and you can't see. If the cloud's too low you can't see, visibility's a big thing. And towards the evening the weather would get very, very bad you couldn't identify anything

03:30 on the ground anyway to shoot at. You had to be very cautious and be aware of the fact that you didn't stick your neck out too far to try and achieve what the aim was. But you had to fly anyway otherwise the army were getting pounded.

How cold was it up inside your aircraft?

Not inside the aeroplane, the aeroplane is airconditioned, no problem. The Mustang's not airconditioned but at least

04:00 it's closed, you can turn the blowing air off and you can get hot air in so it's quite comfortable. All the jet aeroplanes were airconditioned and you could set whatever temperature you want.

What were you wearing up there on missions in Korea?

Oh, typical, nothing… The air force hadn't supplied you with any materials because you were coming home. We had no flying suits, we had no boots we were flying in army jungle green shorts and pants we'd borrowed from the army. And then when we could we'd swap something with the Americans for an American

04:30 flying suit and we were the greatest ragtag mob you've ever seen. I'll show you a photo in a minute of four of us in flying and then four different rigs cause they didn't, see they said we were coming home and in typical fashion they cut off all the supplies, so we didn't have anything, so we had to borrow everything. And thank God for the Americans, once again they supported us 100%.

When the winter came on were you given new suits?

All American, nothing from Australia, all American.

05:00 **And what were they?**

Oh the same thing we had in Canada: big boots, big heavy boots, wool-lined caps, parkas, heated gloves, heated flying suits, the whole thing.

What sort of precautions were taken for going down in water when you were flying from Japan?

None.

There was no life vest or…?

You sit on a dinghy in your aeroplane, aeroplane's got a dinghy in it and

05:30 if we were over water long enough we'd wear a Mae West, but we were never over water long enough to do that. And the trip from Japan to Korea was only in the first month of the war anyway, the rest of the time we were flying in Korea in land. Most of the time it was too bloody hot anyway so you didn't wear the Mae West, and towards the end of the year it was cold you'd wear everything you possibly could.

When you did move over to Korea and when the winter came on, what were your living conditions like on the bases there?

Tents, same thing, tents,

06:00 tents with a wooden floor and a burning brazier in the middle. That's all, nothing spectacular.

Was the cold a problem when you were on the ground?

Yeah, cold and miserable, but we used to call it frozen Ch'osan, Ch'osan is the name, we used to call it frozen Ch'osan, not a nice place.

How did the ground crew get on in those conditions?

With great difficulty, got the greatest admiration for them, how

06:30 they could manage to maintain those aeroplanes when your skin would stick to the skin I don't know. But they'd often have to take their glove off to do something or other and they'd get frostbite and stuff, did a wonderful, wonderful job.

Were there hangars or…?

No hangars, everything out in the open. They'd put up canvas hangars, canvas would take the front half of an aeroplane and they'd work in there out of the wind but that was all, no permanent buildings.

07:00 **How was the ground crew organised on 77 Squadron? Did they work on the same aeroplanes or did you have the same ground crew?**

No, all the ground crew worked on everything but individual people had individual aeroplane to look after themselves. An engine fitter would look after those two aeroplanes' engines, for example, but everybody helped everybody all the time.

Was there a special relationship between the engine

07:30 **fitter for your own aeroplane?**

Yes very close, very close relationship, great rapport between the pilots and the ground staff. Some of the best I've seen.

What was your own engine fitter like? Do you remember him?

Yeah, remember him well. He was a highly educated fellow who'd elected to become an engine fitter, was a corporal

08:00 and had ambitions to be a warrant officer. That's all he wanted to be, a warrant officer. A terrific worker, he'd work day in and day out. He used to take complete pride in his work and a great guy all around. He's no longer with us, he died a few years ago.

Who would be the first person you saw when you came in, back to base?

08:30 However was on duty on the duty crew who were going to do the refueling they'd meet the aeroplane and the first person you'd really see would be the intelligence officer, you'd go in and report straight to him and he'd get the details of all the mission which you'd flown. Then you'd go back and just see the rest of the fellows and tell everybody what happened.

If you were having a problem with the aeroplane who would you report that to?

09:00 As soon as you landed you get a book and write it in a book, and that's the duty crew, the fellow in charge of the duty crew would be an NCO a sergeant or a flight sergeant would be in charge of that duty crew at the time and you'd write what was wrong with it there and they'd have a look at it that day.

In the course of the war, what were the most common problems you had with the Mustangs

you were flying?

No, can't answer that question, impossible question to answer. Probably the biggest problem is getting holes in them from bullets

09:30 but the actual maintenance was superb, our maintenance was wonderful and I don't think we ever had a problem. Oh we had a couple of problems Billy Harrop, the reason Billy Harrop went in cause his engine actually lost all its oil and he had to force land in between the islands. But no sort of thing you can put your finger on that was trouble all the way through. The Rolls Royce Merlin was a fantastic engine, it would run without any coolant. You could lose all the coolant out of it and it would run and run till it was

10:00 red hot, and as long as you didn't touch anything, if you left everything exactly as it was, it would run. As soon as you moved any control or touched it it would seize, and that's happened a couple of times to people, they got back and, nearly an hour or more with the engine, no oil, no glycol, saved a few lives because it's such a reliable engine. But I can't recall anything that caused trouble maintenance wise, we had the greatest

10:30 confidence in our aeroplanes.

We were talking about conditions in tents and braziers, what about food? What were you being fed at that time?

Whatever the Americans gave us, whatever the Americans ate we had, nothing else. Got nothing from Australia at all. The American chow lines in the morning would start to cook and they were great, you could go and get eggs how you wanted them cooked, they'd have cereals and all sorts of bread and toast

11:00 and waffles and hot cakes and things you could eat, much as you like. The American attitude is, "Take whatever you want, but eat all you take?" They had this thing about wastage they were all keen on. And we thought it was absolutely luxurious, far better than we'd ever had before. And they could do that right in the front line, which was very good indeed.

Was there ill will in the squadron towards the way you'd been treated by the Australian government?

No, no ill will, we just accepted it was a way of life as far as we were concerned, that's the way

11:30 we always operated. We never had anything so we just operated the best we could. We used to swap things, we used to swap slouch hats for flying suits and all that sort of thing.

What was a popular thing to get for the Americans?

Slouch hats and those big flying boots, big black flying boots which were bloody useless up there anyway, and we'd swap them for a couple of good things. I swapped my for a Colt 45 a short stem bayonet and

12:00 a brand new American flying suit.

What were you playing to use the 45 and the bayonet for?

Self defence, shoot anything or stab anything that got remotely close to me if I had to. We all carried arms anyway, but Australia we all had 38s in bloody canvas holsters, looked like they came out of the ark, where the 45 was beaut, it was low hung and a little holster.

12:30 I got the two butt pieces taken into a Japanese bloke and he made me two ivory ones, two white ivory ones, it looked terrific.

What were you told to do if you were shot down?

Evade. You were given 10 gold sovereigns, two maps, an Australian map with the words in Korean: you are an Australian. A United Nations map with the words: you were United Nations. Map

13:00 and that's all and told to evade as long as you could. Use the gold sovereigns to buy your way out, any way at all, that's why they gave you gold sovereigns and just try and get anything you could. As I say, these were well before the days long before the helicopters were available. They became available later but we couldn't get Gordon Harvey out because we had no helicopters available and he was on the ground and he was captured by the North Koreans. But the idea was just to escape

13:30 and evade as best you could.

What did you hear about capture by the North Koreans and what would happen to you?

Well we hadn't had any, we hadn't had anyone captured. Gordon Harvey was our first POW. All that came later on, and if you talk to the people of the Meteor days, you've talked to Bill Collins, for example, they'll tell you how it was in the Meteor days cause they knew, they were briefed all the time. And you should talk to Ron Guthrie, he was shot, he just wrote a book recently, Ron Guthrie, he was shot down in the Meteor,

14:00 he was the highest Meteor injection we've ever had and he's a fascinating bloke to talk to. He just wrote

a book called something in North Korea.

Are there any other stories that stand out in your mind from the operations you flew in Korea. I mean you flew 50 before you went home?

54.

54.

14:30 No, I mean all I can really remember this stage of the game is the sheer routine and the demands, the fact of having to fly all the time every day continually. And going to places which were very, very heavily defended and find when you got there there was nothing there except dummy aeroplanes and things like the airfield at Sinmak, which is way up north of Pyongyang,

15:00 and find that there were aeroplanes everywhere. But when we got there they were all dummies, and we were all getting shot at for no reason, that used to bloody annoy me a bit. But in general it was just a war, the way the war was forced upon us and we just did our everyday job as we could. There's nothing more outstanding than being shot at every day, that gets your attention. But I think I've mentioned all the things I did before

15:30 that, the worst one was the Pusan perimeter one, around the river, that sticks in my mind very vividly.

How did that work rate, that incredible work rate affect people on the squadron?

Not at all, they did well, didn't have any apparent effect at all. See this is long before we ever knew about stress and things like that. We didn't know about all that sort of stuff so we didn't have any. It's only when you know about it you have it. So it worked pretty good, we used to work hard and play

16:00 hard. Whenever we get time off and go back to Japan for a couple of days we'd have, cause ourselves more damage in those two days than we would the whole month we were at the war. So morale was high and we all expected we'd live forever so it didn't affect us at all.

You've just said it annoyed you getting shot at, was that the, is that just a mild way of putting it?

Well it is, but it also makes you realise that there are people out there trying to get you,

16:30 so it makes you very aware of where you are and you get a bit smart as you can. As I mentioned before, you don't ever fly straight and level. If you do, always fly with a slip, which is something you're always taught against when you learn to fly. But you use it to your advantage later on cause an aeroplane slipping sideways and he's aiming at it, the bullets are going to go where it used to be, and that saved a lot of lives. And that's the sort of thing we'd teach when we came back here to Australia.

The two days off in Japan, what was the routine there? How

17:00 **often would you get them?**

No routine, just whenever it could happen. Every now and again they give a chance, give you a couple of days off and if there's an aeroplane going back with a spare on it the CO would say, "Come back in a couple of days." So that's what you did, go over there and luxuriate in a real hot shower for a while, then go and get in the Japanese bath and sit there and soak a while and drink 400 beers and then go and look up one of your old girls, and say I was in town, if she's still there. But this, by this stage she would have had another American

17:30 somewhere anyway, so there was obviously a little bit of altercations now and again. But just normal R&R stuff. And it was a great relief, you'd sort of live and be normal for a couple of days and back on the aeroplane and back again and back into it again.

Was there a particular club or location you went to to drink your beers?

No, there's nowhere to go. Well there was on the base, they had the 77 Club was on the base. It was a canteen put out by the

18:00 Brits originally called the Malcolm Club and the Australians took it over and there was a club there. There was the sergeants' mess was there all the time, which was good, and the officers had the officers' mess. Iwakuni was quite a nice town, quite a lot of good spots in Iwakuni you could go to. Some nice bars and things along the Kintai Bridge where you could go. But as… See we'd lived there for four or five years anyway so we knew it very well. It was just like going home for the weekend.

Had the place changed since the days of the early

18:30 **BCOF?**

No, not much, not much. It changed a lot when the Americans came in. When the Americans came in they came into Iwakuni pretty much in full force after we went to Kimpo. We still had our part there but they changed the values a lot, once again overpaid for resources and did too much of everything really and the prices went up and the services went

19:00 down, that was a bit obvious.

By services you mean cleanliness, moral standards?

No, no services in the shops and café and things. Before they'd do it and like to do it, but now they'd want money for it, that's all. And they knew the Americans had money and the Americans give money, that's why they do it.

You had a mess, a wet mess on base in Iwakuni, what about in the bases in Korea?

Yeah, all wet, used to have booze, all the booze

19:30 you could drink. But of course you get smart, you don't get too boozed because the simple reason you can't fly real hung over, you can when it's peacetime but when people are shooting at you you can't fly hung over. So you limit yourself what you drink and when you drink it. And when you're not flying you have as much as you possibly can because it's a great forgetful period, you can switch everything off for 24 hours practically.

Is that a way of dealing with stress?

20:00 Yeah, I don't know what stress is but if that was stress, that's the way of dealing with whatever you had. I'm quite serious. There's no such stress in those days, no-one had ever heard of stress. See the World War I diggers in Gallipoli never had any stress, we didn't have any. We only have stress now if you're working in a hot office and the windows are not quite up and the airconditioner's about two degrees off. So you get stressed and you can go and complain and get a day off and get some more money, so everybody gets a bit of stress these days. I'm a real cynic on stress.

20:30 **The World War I diggers had shell shock, for example?**

Of course they did.

Was there an equivalent in Korea?

Absolutely, Jesus in Korea we were operating… That's why I'm deaf in the right ear. We were operating at a place in P'ohang where there's an artillery barrage right outside, within a hundred metres, and when they go off your bloody head would go off. And I'm deaf in the right ear for that reason. And you can understand shell shock, if you're in there being pummelled, pummelled, pummelked, that's shell shock. But

21:00 different thing entirely, entirely.

Later on that was then labelled post-traumatic stress disorder in Vietnam, was there that in Korea?

Oh could have been. No, never heard of it, never heard of it.

Was there anyone that went troppo [crazy] or wimped out or went crazy or any words you had for it?

No, only Vietnam people did that, none of the Koreans did. A lot of World War II people went troppo after being in the jungle for so long time,

21:30 and the sort of fighting they were doing you can understand why. But there was nothing that I know of of Korea.

Any health problems?

Not really, no more than normal. There were rumours about getting all sorts of queer diseases but we never got any. Things were maintained pretty well.

You mentioned before that part of the

22:00 **reason you ended up back in Australia training Mustang people for Korea was that the reinforcements weren't up to scratch?**

No, they were up to scratch, they just needed more of them. We were losing them because once I came home then they started getting into the Meteor war and they started lose pilots rapidly. See we lost over 40 pilots out of one squadron, and one squadron's got 28 pilots total, so that's a big. big loss rate. If you look at the history of this Korean conflict it's got a higher loss rate per squadron than

22:30 any war ever fought. But it's called the forgotten war, that's the reason, because everybody forgot about it. That's why I mentioned to Mike before I've got no medals, they wanted to forget about it. But the loss rate was horrific and what they were trying to do was get more people up there, so you had to train them and we trained them to go up there and replace the people that had been lost.

I thought you said to me before that the loss rate was mainly among the people that came up to replace others?

No, no, in our early days in the Mustangs the biggest loss rate we had in our Mustang in the early days

were

23:00 the replacements. Nearly all the original guys that had been there for a couple of years survived, with the exception of the CO and the ops officer. But of the ones we lost, we lost nearly all the replacement people.

So was there a problem with training those replacements?

None at all, just unlucky and not as experienced, that was it. See we'd flown together for three or four years and we all knew each other so well and we were all highly qualified in what we were doing. These kids were

23:30 pretty new and they were learning rapidly but not rapid enough to survive. We didn't lose all of them but we lost a lot of them. Don Ellis, Billy Harrop, Ken Royal, Geoff Stevens, they're all new replacements, all lost. But that wasn't the trend of standards, that was just… War is war.

With that loss rate, how do you feel when you coming up towards the end of your 50?

Exactly the way

24:00 I felt when I went on me first, exactly. I was absolutely impending invulnerable. No way in the world they were ever going to get me, and we all felt exactly the same way. And you've got to adapt that attitude otherwise you're going to not survive. It can happen to everybody else but it never happens to you, and that's the way you get through day by day.

What attitude did you adopt towards that your last mission? Was that a special one or a dangerous one?

No, no, just

24:30 happen to be the day that the CO said, "That's it, you're finished. You going home on the…" whatever date it was. "So that's the last time you're on the flying program." And I flew a couple of times after that in Iwakuni, round the place before I came home, but that was the last mission I did.

How did you end up with 54 rather than 50 exactly?

I just elected to fly, that was all, a couple I wanted to do so I did them.

25:00 One particular one we'd been trying to knock out a depot for quite a while and I wanted to have one more go at that. And the 54th was bringing an aeroplane back to Iwakuni for overhaul and I took off and put a load on and I did a strike on the way out, did a strike first then took it home. There was no heroic stuff, just that was it. It was only purely numbers.

Where was the depot that you wanted to knock out?

Oh I can't recall the name of the place now, it was near

25:30 Taejon, it was a sort of a cluster of buildings at the base of a cliff with a lot of trees around it. And there'd been several attempts to bomb it and hadn't hit it, several attempts to rocket it and no apparent affect. And I had one go before and I thought, "I've got some stuff on and there's nothing much around us, very little ground fire, I'll go up and do a couple of real copybook runs on it," with the number two I had. Up we went and we did

26:00 and we lobbed a couple of bombs right in the middle of it and it turns out there was nothing, only trucks and things in there, but it could have been something good, originally. But that was my last trip. I dropped them went back to Iwakuni and landed and started to pack up my loot to come home.

Was there any celebration?

Hmm had a big party, my very good friend, Les Reading, pulled his pay and provided all the

26:30 necessities and he bought me a geisha girl and two sleeping girls as a farewell present. The geisha girl does all the serving and the sleeping girls do all the sleeping, or keep you awake, and that was my final night in Japan.

Were you sad about leaving Japan?

Yeah very, very sad, I was, well I'd still be a single man in Japan but for the Korean War.

Was it just the sex? What was good about

27:00 **Japan?**

Oh, greatest sex in the world, the only women in the world. I'd better not tell you this. Can you think…

You can tell us whatever you like.

I won't tell ya. They've got the greatest attitude towards sex. The idea is that the man is right and the man must be pleased, our job is to please the man, and they do everything possible to please the man.

With no thought of anything in return whereas Occidental people are

27:30 brought up to try and please the female, Orientals aren't. So Occidentals were great at trying to please the female, which they thought was fantastic, and cause you were trying to please them they would then doubly try and please you because that was their job. And after a couple of nights of trying to please each other you weren't good for much at all from then on in for a long time after.

Were there other things about Japan that you were going to miss?

The gardens, loved the gardens. I've got one in the backyard, Japanese gardens are fantastic,

28:00 Japanese horticulture is magnificent. The Japanese architecture is wonderful the Japanese lifestyle, family lifestyle is wonderful. I liked their attitude there, they're polite, they look after their elders, the children are always well dressed and polite, they share. A lot of the nice things in life they do, we've done our best to ruin them, to change them. But the thing is the basic Japanese are still very nice people. Except I think if you had the situation

28:30 when again they would go the other way they did before because they're not like us, they don't think the way we think.

You got posted back to Australia, it was out of your control, but had you wanted to go on another tour in Korea what would you have had to have done?

Oh I could have applied later on, in another year, but I had no choice because I'd been made a, then made a flying instructor. I was down at Central Flying School. I'd been sent up to Archerfield to train. There was no way they were going to post me back to Korea again.

29:00 **Did you find that it was a forgotten war when you came back to Australia?**

Yeah, absolutely.

In what ways?

No-one knew about it, little bit in the paper, and the only people that knew were close friends and associates and family. But no-one else knew anything about it, there was non of the hoo-ha you got from Vietnam veterans.

Did you feel short changed by that? How did that make you feel?

No, we just thought that was the norm. See what made the Vietnam one so bad was that they did everything wrong

29:30 when they came home and then two years later tried to redress it, so brought it up and made a big thing of it. Whereas the Korean War's a bit like the World War I. The World War I diggers came home, got settled on soldiers' blocks and that was the end of it, never saw another word. And Korea was the same. It's only in the last five or 10 years that anything's come out about the Korean War, since they started the monument down here and things like that. But we didn't know any different, we just accepted that as the way things were.

The Korean War never really ended,

30:00 **an armistice was signed, I mean the 38th parallel is still there, how does that make you feel now having…?**

No difference at all, we did what we were suppose to do and we stopped the invasion of South Korea, what the aim was and we achieved it. It's a pity that the government interfered with MacArthur, otherwise I think we would never had a Cold War if we had have kept going. My opinion, we should have kept going and stopped all that crap right up in the top of the Manchurian border, but as it was,

30:30 as we always do, we turned the other cheek and we get a kick in the backside. Look at the USS Cole and the USS Pueblo and the blow up on the Lebanon, everywhere around the places and we turn the other cheek, what happens? And now we've got the first president in 50 years that's had enough guts to do anything at all and they're desperately trying to get rid of him now. So human nature's a very funny thing.

They say that part of the reason that MacArthur was pulled out was to do with his desire to use

31:00 **nuclear weapons?**

No, no. He said he would if he had to, nothing to do with his desire to. He said he had them and if he needed to he would, and I think he thought in his mind the only way he was going to fight the Chinese was with nuclear weapons. I think that's what probably he had behind him more. But they were all too scared to do anything like that, too scared of public opinion and with result, as you say, we wind up with a complete stalemate. But we did achieve what we wanted to achieve, we stopped the North Korean invading the South Korea and now you've got this awful basket case in

31:30 North Korea still and South Korea is prospering and going on. Who's to tell one day it could happen all

over again?

We are going back to your personal life story. You got sent to the States, Australia was very much by this time leaning towards America as it's, as far as it's defence was concerned?

No, I didn't think so. I think that the fact was that we realistically

32:00 realised that the Britain wasn't going to do it any more. See we got the biggest shock of our life when the Brits decided to let Singapore go. And I don't think we were actually leaning towards America at all, I think we realised that it was inevitable that if anyone was going to help us it had to be America, there was no-one else. Plus the fact that we were in SEATO [South East Asian Treaty Organisation], and that was the organisation we had here, so that's why we were that way. I think we were leaning towards them but the thing is I think we were getting the best we could out of them.

That was the reality of the situation, I guess?

32:30 Hmm.

What did you have to learn from an exchange with Americans? What…?

I had to fly some of the best aeroplanes in the world, learn technologies we never had before. I've been to 90-odd thousand feet, I've been to 2½ times the speed of sound, I've flown both the oceans. I've learnt something you'd never learn in a lifetime in the Australian air force. And you can bring all that information back for the next generation, which I did. I was the first one to ever do in-flight refuelling, and fly the ocean with

33:00 in-flight refuelling. The purpose of exchange is to get an exchange of ideas and technologies, so the Americans didn't learn much, very much, coming out here but they got a terrific amount of personal satisfaction coming out here, working with Australians. And it also gave Australia terrific cred [credibility], cause they went home telling stories that people didn't know about Australia, which was good. In turn we got more than we ever bargained for. Lifestyle was good, good living standards, most friendliest people on earth

33:30 in America. The whole things was great, just like winning the lottery getting that exchange post, particularly for a bloody clapped-out flying instructor to get it all of a sudden. That was the biggest one of all time.

Why do you consider yourself a clapped-out flying instructor?

Cause I'd been flying all the time. I'd just done five or seven years on bloody instruction and I thought, "That's the end of me. I'm going to be here for the rest of my life." But luckily I'd kept flying all the time. See other people had had ground jobs and I avoided all the ground jobs and said I'd keep flying,

34:00 and that's the reason I got the job, cause I was current and flying all the time. The best thing I ever did was to stay flying and I flew right up to the time I left the air force. I was still flying when I left the air force. But the exchange program was excellent, it really was excellent, we got a terrific amount out of it.

Tell us about the F104 Star Fighter and how you got to fly this aeroplane?

It was F100s. An F100 was the first true supersonic

34:30 jet fighter, level flight jet fighter, because it had an afterburner. And the squadron I was in I'd been with them for 8 months flying F100s and they were selected to get the first Star Fighter, and because I was the operations officer I was the second guy in the squadron after the CO to go and pick the first two up. And did exactly the same that we did here in the days of the Vampire. They put you in and told you start it and bring it back when you're finished with it, cause there's no two place one. So we just went round and flew them

35:00 and it was quite fantastic aeroplane. The first couple of trips you had to hang on because it goes like… It's called the missile of the man and it goes like cut cat [very fast] when you put the afterburner on. And when you rotate on takeoff you can pull the nose through about 65 degrees and it accelerates vertically, which is quite dramatic. And when you're at 25,000 feet you look back over your shoulder and the airfield's still down below you, right where you were there. And that was the thrill

35:30 a minute for a while. And then we went through all the normal training procedures with it and went through the jet runs and the high speed runs and things and then flew them all round the world. Took them over to Spain, had a period in Spain, flew the Atlantic, did three refuels on the way over and four on the way back. Did a lot of long-range stuff, did one particular mission 11 hours and 40 minutes, no George [automatic pilot], no nothing, just hand flying all the way. The biggest problem there was

36:00 trying to get something to eat and trying to have a pee [urinate] after 11 hours and 40 minutes, not good. But we got caught in the weather on the way back cause the Atlantic and the eastern seaboard of America was socked in so we diverted over to Oklahoma City and that was socked in and got diverted down to Big Springs and that was socked in. So I said, "Listen, where's a place where's there's no bloody cloud?" and the bloke said, "Oh, the base at Big Springs, Texas, is open." I said, "I'll take that."

36:30 So we did another refuel and got there in 11 hours and 40 minutes. We could hardly straighten up, we

got out of the cockpit we could barely straighten up, that was a long trip, four refuels. But great fun, whole new technology, first ones that had radar, had a radar screen with a, you get a target on it with a circle and there'd be a break in the circle, you'd turn towards the break and when the circle became full you could guarantee the target was in the middle, you couldn't see him but he was in the middle. And you keep on flying, flying and then eventually

37:00 pop you there he'd be, and that was all new stuff to us.

What, when you're saying refuelling, this is mid-air refuelling?

Yeah, mid air.

When did that first come in, when did you first experience using that?

Come in where, Chris [interviewer]?

Sorry?

Come in where. You said when did it first come in?

Well when... It wasn't something that happened in Korea, for example?

Oh no, well they first had mid-air refuelling in 1928 in Britain. They used

37:30 to run a hose from one aeroplane down to another aeroplane and they'd go along and refuel, and they'd keep going, kept going and they all built in refuellers. And then America really took on first of all, they realised that the way you could extend an operation mission was to refuel. Not to refuel in the air, what you'd do you'd take off with no fuel and a huge, huge load of ammunition and get airborne and refuel

38:00 so that the top of your climb you'd be full of fuel so you could extend for a long, long time, way out, drop a big load that you normally couldn't drop, and on the way back, refuel on the way back so you come back and land. And that happened in Vietnam all the time, when I was the base commander at Ubon, they'd get out of Ubon, refuel way up to Hanoi do their mission, come back and refuel on the way in and then come back and land down at Ubon again. And part of our job was to protect the tankers around the top of Ubon.

38:30 **So by 1958 when you were flying Star Fighter, had that technology been perfected?**

Yeah, yeah it was great.

What would happen to run a refuel?

What to refuel? Well there are two methods but I'll just chose the one we used to use mainly. But the two main ones are probe and drogue, a drogue on a hose with a big drogue on the end of it, like a big funnel and you've got a probe like your arm with a knob on it on the end at the end of the aeroplane

39:00 and the idea is to fly that knob into that circle. And when you do it's got a cam over each side, you run over the cam, when the cam locks over it turns the fuel on in there and the fuel runs down into your tanks. The other way is the way they fly F111s and things. They've got a receptacle on the aeroplane, they fly up behind the aeroplane and you've got a flying boom, an operator flies the boom above you and gets lined up with your receptacle and goes, and shots a probe into you and then he refuels you from

39:30 there. That's easier from the pilot's point of view but it's not as good as the other one from a tactical point of view cause you've got to stay exactly with the aeroplane like this, the other way you've got a little bit of manoeuvrability. So what you do is you, well I'll tell you about over an ocean first, you fly out to a point of no return, so before you get to the point of no return you come back 20 minutes and that's where you've got to start taking fuel, cause you've got 20 minutes to get fuel on. And the tankers sit out and do a big racetrack,

40:00 and the idea is if you can get the tankers coming towards you because if you get the tankers coming towards you and they start turning if you can hook on there you get the full length of the race track for fuel, you can fall off the other end full of fuel. So what you do is as you're coming towards them they give you a voice steer, you make a transmit, they give you a voice steer and say, "Steer so-and-so towards me." And you eventually get to the stage where you make eye contact. Then you get from the tankers and you find there's always a spare tanker for the number of aeroplanes you've got,

40:30 there's always a spare couple of hoses, so each tanker has a hose on each wing and a hose on the tail. The hose on the tail is very hard to hook up onto cause you've got all the slip stream, coming all the time, the wings are pretty simple. So what you do if you've got six aeroplanes, you usually fly in 6's, you've got six aeroplanes you've got four tankers, so you take, ones a spare. So you've got three tankers and you come round and two of you take a tanker each and the idea is to hook up on each side of the two tankers. And what you have to do is you stabilise behind the tanker, fly formation on him

41:00 and gradually close and close and fly formation on the drogue and this is not bad on nice calm day, but at night and in cloud it's very, very difficult cause it's doing this. So what you have to do is stable like that and when you're already about ready to go you then accelerate into it and hit it. You've got to hit it enough at about a five or ten knot overtake speed so that you put a kink in the hose and that will come back and it's refuelling. Sounds easy, but it's not

41:30 easy at all. But once you're hooked in, the theoretical thing is you're all hooked in, six of you on six, and they'll carry you and at the end they'll throw you off, which is great. If, for example, one of the hoses won't work you can always take the boom one, and you can get on again, it's not as easy. If the whole lot fail, if one tanker doesn't work you've got a spare tanker. So you always refuel within a 20 minute time so that if you don't get any fuel…

Tape 9

00:47 **Tell me the story of the anecdotes of refuelling?**

Well were on the way to Okinawa and we were up north of Wake Island and were just coming onto our tankers

01:00 and the tanker came up and said, "Look, we've got an emergency we've got three navy A3Js," which were the Vigilante, "and they're short of fuel and they've got to get into Wake," or something. "Have you got time for tank?" And I said, "Well we've got 35, 40 minutes." I said, "If they can be here in the next 15 minutes we'll be right." And he said, "Okay." And we found the tankers and we flew up here, six of us watching the tankers and round the corner came these three Vigilantes. We had four tankers and one aeroplane each, took one of those and away they sort of

01:30 come. And they got halfway through and the guy on the left-handed side said, "I've just lost starboard engine, I'm going to keep going," and the other boss said, "Keep going, keep going." Number two bloke, who was the leader, said, "I'm plugged in." He's taking fuel, which is great. The other bloke said, "I've just lost starboard engine over here, keep going." He said, "No, I'm plugged in on one, I'll restart," The other guy said, "I'm still on one, haven't got there." And he said, "Oh shit!"

02:00 And he's lost the port and he's about, oh, I suppose 200 metres short of the tanker. And he called up, "Mayday, mayday, lost both engines over so-and-so." Up came Wake Island and said, "Received Mayday the duck but is airborne so-and-so-and-so this is your position." And they said to the guy in the aeroplane, "We understand you're so-and-so, what is your intention?" And this guy came back and said, "I've got no power. I'm 20,000 feet

02:30 over the Pacific Ocean, I'm going down at the rate of 8,000 feet a minute and you mean I've got a f….. choice?" And the guy came back and said, "Yeah, well we understand that. We'll have the duck but there for you in 20 minutes or so." Anyway, they went down and all banged out and got picked up, we heard later, and picked up and taken back. But I've never forgotten that, "What is your intention?"

03:00 They thanked us later on, they got an official thing and thanked us for allowing the tankers, cause we've got the tanker too. The other two came off and we caught on them and went on our way, which was great, but this poor mob was still in the water when we left. But that old duckbut [amphibious craft] was a great thing, the ones they had out there. They used to come alongside and pick you up.

You said there were a couple of funny stories refuelling, what's another one that comes to mind?

03:30 I mentioned to you that it's very difficult to refuel at night cause you've got a light on your probe and the light shines through a cone of about 40 degrees, like a little headlight. And as you come to the tanker you can see it's got a fluorescent ring around the drogue, you'll find at night-time when the weathers rough it's going up and down, and all you see is it going through it like this. And what you've got to do is estimate where it's going to be and when you coming down have a stab at it. And quite often you make

04:00 four or five stabs and miss, quite often you go through the spokes of the side and tangle up sort of thing. And this is very serious if you've got no time. If you've got plenty of time you can go back. This particular night we had one fellow trying to go and he's stabbing and stabbing and eventually he went whack too hard and it put a big bend in the hose, which whipped back and whipped his probe out of this wing. And it was still in the drogue and the whole

04:30 probe took part of his wing and went up and went whack, whack and hit him on the canopy and broke his canopy. Now he's sitting about four or five nautical miles of Santa Barbara in a pitch-black night with a great hole in his wing with fuel out and the canopy gone and the tanker waving in front of him. And he said, "I think I might have a problem." I said, "You're dead right you've got a problem." So the other two of us aborted and got each side of him

05:00 and started coming back with him on the way through and about, oh I suppose 50 or 60 miles short of the coast he actually ran out of fuel, the fuel was draining overboard and he had no choice. So we took him down to 5,000 feet, pitch black, pitch black, by this time we had the duck but and the lifeboat aeroplane airborne and 5,000 feet he ejected. And we took two fixes, one off Santa Catalina Island and one off something else, had a pretty good fix where he was

05:30 and he hit the water and got into his dinghy. He was only in his dinghy about 20 minutes and the old big searchlight found him, found him in the water and picked him up and brought him back to shore again –

quite remarkable stuff. But I've seen those things do everything. I've seen the hose come over the drogue wrap round it and wrap itself around the wing, and the drogue beating itself on the bottom of the aeroplane, things like this. I saw one guy once in a F100, the F100 had a

06:00 peto tube right in the very front of the intake, the probes up there and the peto tube's down here, and this guy was a bit rough coming in and he made a stab and went off to one side and he actually stuck the peto tube into the drogue, which opened the valve and he got raw fuel ran down into his engine and it went kaboom, and he had as much flame coming out the front as he had out the back. It looked like a flying Roman candle and he panicked and went off it, and the engine went out and he stopped and he was all right again. But he was too shook up

06:30 to go and get any more fuel so he had to go back home again. Oh the stories like that all the time, cause it's not in your normal way to hit something in the air, you don't want to do it. You spend all your life learning to fly formation and you don't want to hit it. You don't mind flying formation on it, but the last minute you've actually got to whack it to lock it in, you don't want to do that. That's when you've really got to be mentally on top of things so you can do it.

Do you remember the first time that you tried to refuel?

Oh yes indeed,

07:00 oh yeah, never forget it. I reckon it's the greatest achievement I ever made in my life. I couldn't believe I'd done it. I was on a KC137 and, no, a KC97 the old Strata Cruiser, and I had 7 stabs, 7 goes, and the instructor was up watching and he said, "Okay, last time," and I said, "Shit, this is it!" and I went straight in. Last time straight in the middle and from then on it was easy, quite incredible, from then on it was no problem. And the

07:30 wonderful thing you go out in the training area and you see people stabbing away trying to get in, you take the same four guys, or five guys out in the middle of bloody Atlantic Ocean when their choice is either to take fuel or fall in the water, they all come floating down to the thing and go blop, no trouble, incredible, just to pop it in. And as I say, if you can pick up the tanker on the outboard run of the racetrack you've got it made because you've got 20 or 30 minutes to fix the fuel to the top of your thing.

08:00 But we did a lot of aeroplane flights from Sacramento to Honolulu, and Honolulu is the remotest place on earth so you'd have to refuel there and then we'd refuel over Wake or over Midway into Okinawa, and we were bringing replacement aeroplanes out for Vietnam at that stage. Great experience, great experience, you asked me earlier about what I learnt in America, that's one of the things I learnt in America cause nobody out here had done any of that.

08:30 **And I take it even when you came back to Australia?**

No, I wrote a big paper on it and they said, "Oh, that sounds interesting," but nobody ever did anything. Until we bought the F18s and Dave Evans was the Chief of Air Staff and a great bloke and he said, "Look, we'll fly them home," and everyone said, "Oh, couldn't do that." But he did, terrific job, flew them direct from the States to here, but hardly made the headlines, hardly even made a noise. I bet half the Australians don't even know it ever happened.

09:00 And that was a great effort. They were airborne for 15 hours or something.

And we bought a tanker then, too?

No, we've always had 707s. We bought a bloody bladder and stuck in the back of one of them and said that's our tanker, cause we still know we can borrow from the Americans.

You mentioned or touched on you were delivering planes to Vietnam, I take it this was obviously before Australia's involvement there?

Oh yeah,

09:30 yeah, I got into trouble for being in Okinawa cause I'd been over from Okinawa to Ubon a couple of times, and I got into trouble in Okinawa once cause the local ambassador or the bloody rep [representative] or whatever he was, found out I was there and I shouldn't have been there cause we had nothing to do with Vietnam, and it would indicate that Australia was participating and if they had have found me. So they made me go back to the States again straight away, I got sent back on a Herc [Hercules]. Didn't

10:00 matter I'd done 8 trips anyway, so it didn't matter.

So what were you flying over in those 8 trips?

F100s in the early days, in the '60s, F100s.

And they were for the Americans or South Vietnamese to fly?

The Americans, yeah.

And what was the role, simply just to fly them over?

Yeah, purely ferry, just fly them over. Our squadron had the job to fly them over.

10:30 The squadron had a commitment, we were on call all the time, and our call was within four hours we could be airborne for anywhere in the world. And what would happen, you'd be at home at night-time and there'd be a knock on your window or something, and you'd get up and the duty officer would say, "Okay, are going to deploy." So I get up and say to Pat, "Bye, bye," pick up my bag, which was always packed, take it down, get briefed. Within an hour, hour and a half I'd be airborne, have no idea where we were going

11:00 and land somewhere, usually on the east coast somewhere or up at Limestone, Maine, somewhere up there, and then Pat wouldn't hear from me four or five days, wouldn't have any idea where I was, but they knew the squadron had gone somewhere. And that's what we did to Okinawa was the same way. I left George at three one morning and a week later I called her from Okinawa and couldn't tell her I was at Okinawa, but they put her through the net and they rang her from San Francisco and said, "He's okay. He's in Okinawa." And that's

11:30 how we got onto the job in the first place.

Okay, now I understand that in America at one stage your next door neighbour was Chuck Jaeger?

Yes, we used to be in what they call Wherry housing. Wherry housing is like cluster housing, like townhouses here. Some have got a common wall, there's usually four of them. And we had two high prize neighbours, one was Chuck Jaeger, who was the CO of Number 1 Squadron, which was the F100 squadron. And the

12:00 other guy was Sandy Vandenberg who was, later became Chief of Staff of the USAF [United States Air Force], he was just round the corner. And we lived with them for a while, old Chuck was a good friend of mine.

What was he like as a character?

Ah bit rough and ready, he'd call a spade a bloody spade, I'll tell you. And he wasn't that popular, actually, because he was a bit abrupt. But a bloody good aviator and he ran a very good squadron. And we used to have a call sign,

12:30 when you'd come into land you'd call up with four aeroplanes and you'd call up to the tower and say, "Tower, this is boxcar," ours was boxcar, "This is boxcar one with four aeroplanes on initial," initial means you're running in. And old Chuck would come round the corner and say, "So-and-so, this is falcon tear on initial with four of the fighters," every time and used to take the mickey out of everybody, we all knew him for that. But he's good operator, he got the runs on the board.

13:00 **You mentioned that he wasn't popular, I presume with the higher command?**

No.

But what about amongst the…?

Amongst the airman he was. Amongst he's troops he was, oh yeah, very much so with his troops. But he wasn't very popular with the brass, that's why he never really got promoted.

And the astronaut program I take it?

Well he was, should have been right in the middle of all that.

Part of the problem, obviously, is

13:30 **not being too popular?**

Hmm, not with the brass. Well it's typical of most places. People don't like success, they're a bit… The brass shy away from successful people cause they think in the back of their mind it reflects a bit away from them, and they tend to do that. All air force, all services are the same. We call it the tall poppy out here, you know the tall poppy syndrome. But

14:00 he should have got a lot further than he did. Same with Dick Creswell. Dick Creswell's the same. Dick should have been made way above what he was, but he was too successful.

Just coming back to your flights over to Vietnam in the early days with the Americans, what did you see in Vietnam at the time?

We had a base not very far from us called Takhli and they were flying F105s over there and a bunch

14:30 of Americans and I knew, we'd been in the States together, so we used to go over there and swap various things back and forwards, so I got a couple of rides in them in their 105s and that was an interesting situation.

Share with me that, would you?

Well I knew there was a shooting war on there because one day we did a raid on a place called Vinh,

which is on the east coast of Vietnam, and there was a big radar set up on one end of it and a power station,

15:00 and the idea was to attack that. And we were carrying CBUs, which are cluster bomb units, and these drop out a whole lot of little bombs, fantastic for that sort of thing. And 16 aeroplanes in flights of four went through this target at about 300 feet doing about 360 knots and 11 of us got hit. And that made you realise that there was something nasty down there. So I got back and landed that day and said, "Thank you very much for a great experience and I won't be back. I'm going back to where I came from."

15:30 I went back and took over Ubon again, but I did a couple of rides out of Ubon in the F4s and the Phantoms to with the Americans, the 8th Fighter Wing was at Ubon and I got a couple of rides there with them which was also good fun.

So on this particular when you're flying the 105s, was it?

105s yeah.

How did you actually get involved in that?

The CO was a mate of mine from, we'd been in the States together and he was the CO, he'd been in one of the squadrons in America at George where I was, and he was the CO of

16:00 here and I brought him over to Ubon for a party. We had a dinning-in night and wined and dined him and went back and saw him a couple of times and I said, "I want a ride in your aeroplane." And he said, "I'm doing a mission on so-and-so. You can come." He said, "I won't need the bloke in the back seat." He said, "You can handle that." I said, "Okay, I'll go with ya." Biggest mistake I ever made in my life. I shouldn't have gone. Frightened the living Christ out of me. He got shot down shortly after.

So how did it compare, obviously, with your

16:30 **experience in Korea?**

Oh different, entirely different, different technology, airborne, refuel, onto a airborne radar, take your intercept point, give your heading to steer, tell you how far to go, how close you are, call out the points where the heaviest flak is and the rest is up to you and you're, and use the navigator and the GPS [Global Positioning System] to get over the target. All

17:00 you've really got is the bloke in the back seat pushes the button, all works that way. But there's still guys on the ground going like this to you. You still get shot at, and that's the most dangerous part. The low level stuff's the most dangerous part because… See in Vietnam they had rifles, they had a piece of wire with a circle on one end of it with a cross in the middle of it and a loop this end. They used to put the loop over the rifle barrel so that the wire came out to the circle, and when they saw an aeroplane coming they would look up and they would put the rifle

17:30 on the aeroplane and look where the circle was and then move it to where the circle was and pull the trigger, cause that's where the aeroplane would go. And you multiply that by a couple of thousand blokes on the ground, that's a lot of ammunition up there and you're flying through that all the time. And it only takes one to hit you and you're gone. I always think back to Lou Spence in Korea. That's what got him – one round. That's why I should have had more sense than to do it in the first place.

18:00 I'm a slow learner.

So flying on this particular sortie there was a lot of concussion, or actual hits upon the plane?

No, nothing at all. Just we didn't know anything at all, except a couple of times we got hit, but we didn't know that 11 of the 16 got hit, nearly all down the back of course. The first ones don't get it, it's the ones down the back.

Now given that you being an Australian, shouldn't have been there in the first place?

No, absolutely not.

18:30 **Did anyone in Australia know?**

No, no, haven't told them either, all hell would have broken loose because we weren't allowed out of Ubon, we weren't allowed to cross the border. We could fly round Ubon, we used to escort them up as far as the border, used to call the tankers up as far as the border, have air-to-air combat with the Phantoms on the way back to train them, to teach them, which was great, but we were never allowed to cross the border cause hell would have broke loose if they knew we did it.

19:00 Like a lot of our ground staff used to cross the border and go into Cambodia and keep the heads down in Cambodia, so they wouldn't cross the boarder into Thailand. No-one ever knew we were down there at all.

So when you returned to Australia?

From where?

From America, from the exchange?

Yeah, I came back to Williamtown, took over the training squadron at Williamtown and ran the

19:30 Sabre conversion people, the school of converting people onto Sabres. Ran that for a while and then became the CO of 76 Squadron with Sabres and flew with them for I suppose 14 months or so, anyway up to '62, then I got posted down to do the staff college at Fairbairn, which is one year course at Fairbairn.

20:00 And you've got to do that before you get any further promotion, you've got to do it. And I was squadron leader still so I did the staff college.

So coming back to Australia, I mean really would have been quite a downer in respect to flying Sabres after…?

Oh yeah, well flying 104s, coming back here cause I was the bloody king of the heap of Williamtown I'll tell you, they all wanted to come along and touch me because I'd been Mach II and 90 grand, it's really coming back to basics again.

20:30 But the Sabre, our Sabre's a lovely aeroplane, one of the best Sabres made, and that was good fun. I enjoyed that, the flying was good. I always like my job, always like the flying job and this was a very good one.

Just in respect to flying Mach II, can you just me through that and how it was different to normal flying?

Well it's an interesting question, it's no different at all. When you're flying, telling you earlier before, when you're flying unless you've got reference to the ground or reference to the ground you've got no idea that you're flying fast at

21:00 all, now all Mach II is it means the aeroplane's got more thrust available so you can go along faster. And all that happens is the instruments keep reading and reading and you get up to speeds, once the instrument gets to 600 it doesn't work any further, it becomes then Mach, Mach number then. And about 1.5, 1.7 and when it get to Mach, and all the way .7, .8, and when it gets to Mach I what will happen it will flicker and then reverse a bit, just for a

21:30 second and then as you go through the sound barrier it will hop back up again and starts reading 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and that's all, from then on there's nothing. From then on you can go right up to 2.12 and nothing happens at all, just indication of speed. And you've got no reference against what's on the ground, so you don't really know you're going that fast. But what you do, you're laying a hell of a sonic boom on the ground behind you as you go along it and using up fuel at the rate you can't afford because you can watch the fuel gauges going down while you're using it. But

22:00 the, one of the troubles in the F104s was it had the intakes in the engines used to get too hot, and if you went too fast they'd start, the metal would start to melt. And the leading edges of the aeroplane is knife sharp, the wings of a 104 are solid piece of mill metal, solid, and it's got holes drilled through it for fuel and hydraulics and stuff but the front edge is like a table knife – sharp. And on the

22:30 ground it has covers on them so that the ground crew won't hurt themselves, but when you're in the air and the whole wing is painted with an anti-corrosive heatproof paint and it's good up to about 2.1 so we were limited, the aeroplane was limited to 2.08. But everyone worth a damn would try and get them as fast as they could go. So this day the whole thing, I think one guy got to 2.12 or something and I thought I'd beat him. So what used to happen, a red light would come on to indicate that the intakes were getting

23:00 hot but I knew you had a bit over when that came on. So what I did I took my glove off and hung it over the red light so I couldn't see it and kept going. I got to 2.21 and no problem, came back and landed again. And I was all full of myself till I got out of the bloody aeroplane and the old crew chief said, "Look at the bloody aeroplane!" And all the paint had been burnt back, oh, I'd say 10 cm from the leading edge, it all burnt and rolled back.

23:30 And that's why the aeroplane was a bit unstable while I was flying cause the airflow was breaking up by this paint. And I had a 'Please explain about that', I can tell you, cause that wasn't a good thing. But I still had the record. I still think I've got it to this day cause no-one ever went faster.

So during that time in America were you sort of under Australian air force law or American?

No, no, all American. I was just attached to an American squadron. The commander of the squadron was my direct boss, the

24:00 base commander was his old boss. The only thing legally I was under the embassy in Washington for legalities and stuff, but everything else was American. Eat, slept, drank, did the whole thing with them. The only silly part over there was I wasn't cleared for nuclear weapon timing and stuff. We'd be going out to do a mission with a nuclear weapon on and I would know everything except what the timers were, cause they wouldn't tell me what it was. So what would happen, the boys in the squadron would do the thing and walk out the aeroplane,

24:30 the guy would say, “You ready?” and he’d say, “5, 6, 4,” and I’d write it on my hand, get in the aeroplane and then go and do the trip, 5, 6, 4. We got through it that way no problem at all, typical bloody stupidity but that’s the way it operates over there.

So do I understand correctly? You did actually drop nuclear weaponry?

Yeah, not real ones but simulated, toss bombing

25:00 and over the shoulder is good fun where you go vertical and through the top of the thing release it, and it goes up with you like that and it reverses and comes back down that way again, and that’s pretty accurate. Toss bombing, you pull the aeroplane up to a certain speed and a certain G level and you release it about there and it flies like that, and that’s good for low level stuff. The over shoulder was much better. Quite often, over the shoulder, what you’d do, you’d pull up and do a complete loop and when you got to there you drop the bomb off and just

25:30 keep on going, when you got to there you’d roll out and keep going that way. And that’s the best way to escape because by the time it hits the ground and goes off you’re on the way out again. And low level, did a lot of low level stuff where you, where you get low level and skip it into target and things. Just part of the way they operated.

Were these sort of all new tactics that the Australian air force wasn’t…?

All new to me. We had no idea what they were out here. The Americans were developing all this while I was there cause the 104’s brand new and the

26:00 Australians had no idea of that sort of thing.

So when you returned to Australia and were flying the Sabres and other sorts of things, did you start training and teaching these manoeuvres?

No, no, not like that cause we had nothing to do it with, no weapons. Trained a lot of other stuff, a lot of operational things I learnt that I could teach them, which I did. But nothing with nuclear and stuff cause they had no idea what it was all about.

Was there anything that you were

26:30 **you were able to teach the Americans from your experience in Korea and Australian air force?**

Yeah, how to fly proper formation, how to make proper formation changes. How to brief properly, how to get up and tell people what you’re going to do properly and make sure you’re done, things like that cause they weren’t very good. Americans are very much by the book people, it’s all written by the book and you don’t dare diverge from that. And I think the reason being is there are so many of them, it’s so big that if everyone did their own thing it would be bloody chaos. Whereas out here were trained

27:00 to sort of think for yourself. See over in America you’ve got to fly on a bloke’s wing as a wingman for a certain number of hours. As soon as you hit the magic number of hours you become the leader. Now how in the name of Christ can you become the leader if you’ve never lead? So what we do in Australia, we fly on the wing for a while and every time you do that the leader says, “Okay, your turn,” so you go and fly on him and correct him and things, and eventually you get to a stage where you good enough to be a leader so okay you can lead.

27:30 In American they don’t do that. And I got there and said, “This is bloody ridiculous! You’ve got a guy that’s never led and he now leads somebody! How can he do it?” So I was able to change their thinking in that regard and I think they eventually re-wrote the manual on that, which is a good thing. So there’s something to be gathered from both sides that way.

Just looking at the diverse range of aircraft you flew, particularly in those years everything from the Tiger Moth right the way through,

28:00 **I mean really was it that hard, or that easy to change from one plane to the next plane?**

No, the basics of flying in every aeroplanes exactly the same, exactly the same now as it was 50 years ago. The only differences are the engine control and the way that the time is compressed because of the speed of the aeroplane. Everything else flies exactly the same, if you push the stick forward the bloody nose goes down, exactly like everything else, or as we say the world comes up, push the

28:30 stick forward the world comes up. But you can fly, if you can fly one you can fly them all. Our Wirraway was one of the best trainers there was ever made, because once you could fly a Wirraway properly, cause it had about ever vice known to man in it, once you could fly that properly you could probably fly anything, which is good.

Okay. Now Vietnam is coming for Australia’s involvement, you visited there a few times with the Americans. How did you actually get involved in Australia’s effort there?

Oh, I didn’t

29:00 at all apart from doing support work from Butterworth, as I told you, in the Dakota. Going over to Ton San Nhut and over to, oh the other base, I’ve forgotten the other base name, used to go over there and take stuff in and take stuff out for them. And just when they were operating Canberras over there,

purely support. The only decorations I got from Vietnam are the Vietnam Support Medal, that's the only one. No operations at all, apart from my time with the Americans, no operations at all in Vietnam. Cause I was the

29:30 base commander at Ubon and see I had the Mirage squadron down at Butterworth so we weren't allowed with the Mirages into Vietnam because of the French embargo, that stopped us going into Vietnam. Otherwise the Mirage would have been in Vietnam.

They were Australian-owned planes?

Owned and built.

I'm slightly lost as to why the French

30:00 **could put an embargo on?**

Well a certain few pieces of them are still French, and the French were very sensitive about being kicked out of Vietnam years before, the old battle of Dien Bien Phu and all that sort of stuff and they just put and embargo, there'll be no operations in Vietnam and if we did they would not supply the things we needed. So politically once again, political bureaucracy said, "There will be no operation in Vietnam," so our whole generation of fighter pilots saw no action.

30:30 That's why they put the cameras up there.

In respect of this, the early days, were you expecting to actually fly in Vietnam?

Absolutely. We were hoping we would, that's why we were in Butterworth, highly trained. I was CO of 75 Squadron, I took the first Mirages up, that mob up to Malaysia, and we were all hoping to go. We thought this will be it, and never could. That's why a lot of my pilots volunteered to become forward air controllers and went to Vietnam and did forward air controlling.

31:00 **So share with me when you're receiving the news that you were told that we weren't going to be involved in respect to the Mirages?**

I never received any news. It was just, it just never happened. We fully expected that's what we'd do, we'd be there for it and we were amazed when they said the Canberras are going to go. Cause the Canberras have got no sort of self defence and with result the Canberras in Vietnam were never put anywhere near an active area. They did good bombing jobs

31:30 and stuff but in pretty safe areas because they knew very well they couldn't control much in the Canberra. But the Mirages could have done a good job there.

And you think it was disappointing, the fact that the Mirages…?

Yeah. very much. As I say, a whole generation of fighter pilots lost a complete war. We won't have another war like that again so that one was gone. But we were disappointed, we were all very disappointed.

So your role

32:00 **there, did you also oversee transport planes going into Vietnam?**

No we, yeah we owned them at Butterworth and they used to go over and support them at Vietnam. I can't think of the name of the bloody base we were at, it's amazing. I'm talking about too much stuff. The base we were on was up from Ton San Nhut, which is at Saigon, the next base up… Doesn't matter. We used to take them in and take stuff over, back and forward just like they did in Korea, the same thing, backwards and forwards to them all the time.

32:30 And I used to go over A) for the experience and B) to see how the troops were doing over there, and C) to get a bit of a brief on what was happing round the place, and we did that several times which was interesting. Shot at a couple of times on final approach to Ton San Nhut and one very calm air traffic controller said, "Your landing on runway three is over to the north. On final, please keep to the right-hand side of the runway. There's quite

33:00 heavy ground fire on the left." Shit! The runway's only 50 feet wide! But they had a whole bunch of these bloody gooks firing at you from the ground.

They didn't try and clear them out at all?

Oh they did, but they'd come back all the time. They never cleared them out in, what, 10 years of war. But quite often an aeroplane would get hit on final, quite often.

Anyone

33:30 **ever injured?**

Oh we had several Americans actually went in, a couple of times Americans went in on final.

Now how had I guess Vietnam changed or evolved since you were there busting planes in with

the US [United States of America]?

No different that what I could see, exactly the same as before. Operations were still the same, we had a very good reputation where we were in Vietnam and

34:00 the Americans thought the world of us, they were very pleased to have us there. But it was the most frustrating bloody war, I mean it could have been won and solved ages before, politically once again they never ever cut the Kuming Railway line, never ever did, for political reasons. They never knocked out the complete power supply to the north, they never ever mined Haiphong Harbour, Haiphong Harbour was full of bloody British ships, British, Romanian,

34:30 Albanian, all these Monrovian bloody ships taking stuff in. All you had to do was drop coke [Coca Cola] bottles in the water and they'd think they were mines and they'd stop, but they never ever did. So it was a horrible political war, there's a great book called The Vain War by General Westmoreland, and he reckons if he had have been give a fair go he would have knocked the war over in a couple of months, but we were never allowed. See we used to take off, with the Americans, we'd fly past an airfield which was a forbidden target and you watch the dust trails of the MiGs taking off, cause you weren't allowed to attack it.

35:00 And on the way home with the Phantoms, these are the MiGs trying to shoot the Phantoms down, and that's stupid politics, that's the way the war was lost. If they don't keep politics out of bloody Iraq, that's the way Iraq's going to be lost. That's what's happening now. We're starting to get the same sort of feel, they're all starting to run for cover. Anyway, not my favourite place in Vietnam or favourite

35:30 subject.

Just ask you a few more questions on your not so favourite subject. What was the feeling, though, amongst the men given they can't fly the…?

Oh anti, absolute anti, and I admire the American guts. I mean if it had have been a bunch of Australians we'd have had the first strike in history, in the armed services. But the Americans were doing it day after day and losing aeroplanes day after day. And see you couldn't attack a target in some places in North Vietnam

36:00 unless you got approval that went all the way back to Washington. By the time the approval had come through the target had gone, and they'd attack something but there's no point attacking cause there's nothing there. And of course the Viet Cong and that knew that, they knew the way they'd operate and they'd have forbidden areas where you couldn't attack, and of course they'd use those all the time. No.

And what supplies were coming through you through to Vietnam?

The which?

What supplies were you taking

36:30 **up to Vietnam?**

Oh we were taking up things that couldn't be repaired in the field, instruments couldn't be repaired, engine controls couldn't be repaired. Stuff they needed in bulk that they couldn't get up there, certain oils and lubricants that they couldn't get there, we'd take all that stuff up to them. It was a continual… When there's a squadron operating field there's a continual need for this sort of thing, and we only had a couple of Dakotas we used to fly them up regularly backwards and forwards. Go across

37:00 Thailand, round the corner and up into there.

And Vietnam…?

Vung Tau, Vung Tau's the place. That's where we were based.

I mean, Vung Tau, can you share with me sort of the layout there and what you saw?

Big base, one runway running north, east, south, west, most of the camp was on the side of a hill, with the ocean behind you over on that side there, quite a good beach to go to. Big American base

37:30 so you had everything you could think of, big American's officer's club, big PX [Post Exchange – American canteen unit], all sorts of stuff and pretty good living on the base. Never under attack from anybody cause the army were all around it, pretty good living and their job was to do Canberra bombing runs from there, they'd do pattern bombing with the Canberras.

And what stories were you hearing about some of the sorties that the fellows were on?

None, very few, none I can really tell you about. It was

38:00 sort of, peculiar thing there's hardly anything written about it, you may notice hardly anything written about it either. I think personally I think the whole government was embarrassed about the fact. I don't think they were annoyed the fact that we couldn't take the Mirages in and they were a bit embarrassed because there were Canberras and that was it. The fellows there did a hell of a good job but there's no, nothing I can think of that I can even remotely tell you about. I think one fellow got shot down and

38:30 I think he got hit by a missile but that's all I can think of. Once again another forgotten one.

We might stop there and change tapes.

Tape 10

00:40 **One thing that I wanted to pick up before we go onto to finish your career is the issue of your age. You'd spent most of your early air force career two years older than you were, when did that officially get corrected and what was that circumstances there?**

01:00 In 1963 or '64, or '65, I can't think, somewhere around there, they decided for the very first time to give aircrew flying insurance. We'd never had any insurance up till then and they decided to give the aircrew insurance. So we all applied, everyone applied and the first thing I know we get the AMP [Australian Mutual Provident] company came back and there was a tilt saying tilt, tilt,

01:30 Group Captain Flemming, says born in 1924, actually born in 1926. Oh so the fellow who was working in personnel rang me up and said, "What's all this about?" and I said, "Oh Jesus, popped up after 20-odd years," and he said, "Oh." He said, "Well you'd better write about it and say it's an error, otherwise they won't give you insurance and they're going to question it." So I wrote a note saying, "I'm sorry to be an administrative nuisance but I did apply

02:00 under age and so forth," and gave a little bit, and put it in. And they went through and said, "Okay," and the AMP okayed it but the file got through to the chief of personnel and he was a crotchety old fellow from pre-war and he said, "This is dreadful, this is dreadful. We can't have this. We'll make an example of this fellow." And the fellow said, "Well you can't make an example of him." Well anyway to cut a long story short the commander in here, a bloke named Fred Rovey, who's now passed away, he said,

02:30 "Well I've got to hear this." He said, "You'll have to come and be charged." So I was charged with fraudulent enlistment and under the regulations, because I was a group captain I was entitled to a court martial. So I got marched in before him, me and an escort, and he said, "This is the charge." He said, "You're entitled to a court martial or," he said, "you can take my punishment." And I said, "Well I'll take the punishment." He said, "First of all," he said, "what have

03:00 you got to say with the charge?" I said, "Well it must be right cause I'm here." And he said, "Hmm, what is your correct age?" and I said, "Well I was born in December 1926." He said, "Hmm, very, very serious fraudulent enlistment." He said, "You will accept my punishment?" "Yes." He said, "All right, you are hereby admonished and don't you ever do that again," and he wrote it off. Now once you've been charged and punished you can't be charged again. So that got back to the chief of personnel

03:30 and he nearly had apoplexy, he went round the corner, "Ahhhh!" But what happened was he couldn't do anything about it. So then they had to go back and re-run all the records again, which they did, and updated my correct age, which made me then two years ahead of all my contemporaries at the same period of time, which meant the DFRB [Defence Force Retirements Benefits] board had to pay me two years more retired pay money at the end of the period of time. But I picked up then in '65 my right age and I went through from thereon in.

04:00 And I was promoted very rapidly then from then on in. But that's how it happened.

Its an interesting story, could never have happened I suppose and you'd still be living two years older than you are?

Exactly, never happened, I would never had told anybody and just retired normally. But that's why I resigned early cause I would have had another three or four years to serve and I didn't want to do that.

After Butterworth you

04:30 **were involved with the Integrated Air Defence System, the Five Nations Integrated Air Defence System?**

Oh, long while after. That was my last job in the service.

That was your last job, any interesting jobs that happened in the 10 years between those two?

Where are we were back?

It's between '68 and '78 I guess, the '70s.

No, boring '68 to '74, boring in Melbourne as the head of administration in support command.

05:00 '73, '74 I was the officer commanding, I was promoted to air commodore and I was made officer commanding Williamtown and that was great because it meant I'd been at Williamtown then every rank right through from flight sergeant right through to air commodore. And the saddest part was leaving Williamtown in '75 because it means I could never go back ever again. 75 I got sent to London to do the Royal College of Defence Studies, which was fantastic, for a whole year. I came back in '76 and '77 I

took over as the head of the

05:30 new fighter replacement division, and the idea was to find a replacement for the Mirage and I flew some exotic aeroplanes, went right round the world had all sorts of great fun. And towards the end of ’77 I had the air force leading very heavily towards the F15. What was even worse I had the minister, Jim Killen, who was a terrific man,

06:00 and wonderful minister, Minister of Defence, very heavily towards the F15. The powers that be said, “This is not the way it should be. We don’t want this. We want to do our own thing.” So they made me an offer I couldn’t refuse. They said, “We’re going to send you up to Malaysia. We’re going to promote you to air vice marshal, send you to Malaysia and run the air defence system.” So debated very heavily whether I’d take that on and go or stick to my guns and fight the F15. I thought, “Oh, stuff it. After 35 years, I’ll go

06:30 and have some fun.” So I went over and took over the head of the Five Nation Air Defence System, and that was the next five years was fantastic. I lived the life of the white rhage and did all sorts of good things and back here they went through the political who ha and they, they had a new aeroplane coming out the F18N which was a hybrid and something else was coming out and then they decided the F18A, FAAF was a multi

07:00 capable aeroplane that could do everything, which is rubbish because the pilot can’t do everything, but they reckon the aeroplane could, and they decided to buy that. So by this stage I’d been up in Malaysia until ’82, I’d been there for nearly five years and they said, “Were going to buy the F thing.” And I got offered a back door thing through the Chief of Defence Force, said, “Look, were going to make you the chief,” and I said, “No you’re not because I don’t believe in F18s and I’ve

07:30 got to spend the next three or four years of my life rubbing my head against the wall for something I don’t believe in.” I said, “I’m going to resign.” He said, “Well you can’t resign because were in a very difficult position because we’ve got you air marked to be the chief.” I said, “I’m out.” So that’s when they went and got Dave Evans, who’d just about reach retiring age, wonderful guy, and put him in as chief, which is terrific, and I got out, which is great. I had a lot of fun. I bought a couple of aeroplanes and formed little airline and used to go and deliver newspapers and all that sort of stuff. Then I got head hunted for the War Memorial and I had

08:00 five wonderful years at the War Memorial. So that’s the whole period to there. But actually my air force career finished virtually 40 years after I joined in ’42, finished then.

Apart from obviously the political side of your job that it had become a bit tiresome at that stage, did you have any regrets?

What, the air force hadn’t been tiresome?

I was referring to this conflict between the F15 and the F18,

08:30 **the F18 and the F15, the politics surrounding that?**

Yeah, that’s always tiresome cause you’re fighting public servants all the time, and then the air force, or the three services that do all the work, and then the public service make the decision and it’s always a problem. And I wasn’t looking forward to being stuck in an office any longer anyway cause I’ve always been out in the field. That was a bit tiresome but I had no regrets getting out. If we had have kept the F15, or bought the F15, I would have still been in. I would have stayed

09:00 in right till the end of it, but with the F18 was to me a waste of time. And I still to this day don’t think it did anything like the job the F18 would have done, or could have done.

Moving on then to your position at the War Memorial, can you tell us a bit more about that?

Well I was head hunted for it, took it over. I went and did several courses on museology, part time, so when the

09:30 job came up I was interviewed, they’d been round the world and I think they had 18 on the list and they knocked the 18 down to 7, then they knocked the 7 down to 5, then they knocked the five down to three and the last interviews I got it. I think probably it’s the best job I’ve ever had, apart from flying, I like flying but apart from flying. It had such a lot going for it,

10:00 it’s unique in the world, it’s truly Australia’s history in there. There was so much needed doing to it, there was so much needed to build it back up again and I was full time 24 hours a day 7 days a week and I loved every minute of it. Actually I would have worked there for nothing I enjoyed it so much. The only thing I had trouble again, me I suppose was I couldn’t stand the politicking, terrific amount of politicking behind the scenes. A lot of the public servants who work

10:30 in there would do anything to get on, they’d kill their mother to get on, they are self-serving and stab you in the back if you’re not careful. I didn’t know that I hadn’t been brought up this way and I had great trouble with people on the council. The council were a group of people who were appointed by the government to run the War Memorial. And the chairman of the council is a, usually retired senior officer and this was Admiral Synott, who was probably one of the best soldiers in the land. And he

11:00 and I got on famously and we were running the place but we'd object to thing that were being pushed in. What happened was unbeknown to us, what was his name the head of, Sir William Keys, the head of the RSL [Returned and Services League] who's on the council, he was not appointed on the council, he was on there because of his position, head of the RSL. He lobbied to get the War Memorial taken from the Department of Arts and Heritage

11:30 into Department of Veterans' Affairs without us knowing. And both I and Admiral Sinet were dead against it for the simple reason is when you're fighting for funds, instead of fighting against the National Library and the National Gallery and the other heritage organisations, you're fighting against repatriations hospitals and widows' pensions and bloody War Service Homes and things, and that was anti to us. So we were not for that at all and we let it be known we weren't for it all

12:00 and things were not happy there at all. And because we went under Veterans' Affairs the Minister for Veterans' Affairs was Arthur Gietzelt who was known as anti-service anyway, completely anti-service on his previous record. And they set up a campaign, he and a lot of the public servants in the War Memorial to get rid of us. And they wanted to have a gallery of the Aboriginal struggle against the British

12:30 aggressors, which I wouldn't have a bar of – it was nothing to do with that. They wanted to have a StaliNgrad Corner, our gallant Russian comrades and all this sort of stuff, so we agreed to disagree. So they went to a lot of witch hunting around the place and they went into a whole bunch of enquiries and they eventually had five enquiries into my administration of the War Memorial and on the five enquiries couldn't find anything at all. So on the fifth one

13:00 they made up a phoney thing that I'd given a false information to one of the tribunals about something or other, which I had corrected the next day, which I had corrected and written in the next day but they brought it up and said that's missed out. They couldn't prove misbehaviour so they proved that this was not according to so-and-so and so-and-so and they… And I'm the only head of a statutory authority ever dismissed by the government. And they did it on a Friday afternoon

13:30 while the governor-general was away and he didn't know until he came back on the Monday, and by that time I'd been gone. But I had five years of great time and it was just bad, bad politics, that's all it was, and nothing I could do about it. I had all sorts of legal advice and a fellow in Melbourne who's a QC [Queen's Counsel], Charles Francis and his friend up in Brisbane was… I mentioned his name before, the Minister of Defence…

14:00 **Killen?**

Jim. He said, "Look, we can take these people on and we'll beat them but the trouble is," he said, "they'll wait right till the door of the court and they'll make a settlement out of court." He said, "It's going to cost you a million dollars and you can't afford it." He said, "I know how hard it is for you so accept it." So I did. I just accepted it and so there it was.

Putting aside that exit from the job, what input did you have into the War Memorial during your time as director?

Building program, complete new building program, reorganise

14:30 every one of the galleries that hadn't been touched for years, built the facility at Mitchell, built the new building alongside the War Memorial. Had a complete reunion of every surviving Gallipoli veteran there at the whole time, both airlines flew them there for free, had accommodation for them for free, reorganised completely the way the Anzac Day ceremonies were run, too many things to mention. Started

15:00 out, outsource program of education to schools, started a roving exhibition programme from the War Memorial, increased the population, visit population from half a million to a million. Operated on less budget than they'd operated on for years, all sorts of things. Things were very very good.

Why in your opinion as a war veteran, as a former Director of the War Memorial, is it important for Australia to have a strong institution like it?

Yes, because it is

15:30 the only one of its kind in the world which is a memorial to the war dead, and there's 110,000 names on the wall in there and each one deserves recognition and this is a wonderful way to do it. And not only the names are there but artefacts they'd used. Everything in there in the War Memorial is a personal thing and there's nothing else anywhere like it. Every country in the world would love one and were the only one to do it and I hope they don't ruin it by starting to charge admission and making it a museum.

What does the Anzac tradition

16:00 **mean to you?**

It meant that it's the first time to me that I realised that a bunch of country boys could respond in a patriotic way to a country asking for their help and go and do it and do it extremely well. And it built up this spirit of togetherness, helping each other, being part of a seed from a very, very little small base where we were practically nobody at all to a become world known and world renowned. And that has

lasted, that tradition has lasted all the years

16:30 and it's been with us through all our sporting achievements and everything we've ever had ever since, it's always there. And that's where it first started from.

How did your experiences in the Second World War and Korea fit into that tradition, do you think?

I couldn't think how it fit in at all except the people in World War II did an equally good job as they did. Nothing like the first World War, but equally good job. The same in Korea, did equally good job. I think

17:00 the young people of today of the same age group would do exactly the same thing if called upon to do it. But I think they had more support in those days from their government and there was less politics involved, and it was a patriotic thing that people responded for the love of their country and thought, "We'll look after it," and, "We'll do it." But I still think young people would do it today if they had a chance. But right now we're politically motivated in most things we do. It must be very hard for a young person to make a right decision, which way he's going to go.

What

17:30 **are your feelings about war in general?**

I think war is inevitable when diplomacy fails. Diplomacy is done by politicians and diplomats who talk big, act big, go on big and when they fail, war is a result. At the end of war the generals who had to fight the war get blamed for the war, not the diplomats who made it. There's a wonderful sign over the War

18:00 Memorial in Toronto in Canada and it says 'Peace is the dream of the wise, but war is the history of man'. I think that applies the way things are now. Diplomatic failure, war is inevitable, and that's what's going on now. We've seen what's happened round the world. I mean there's a good result and the world press now are doing their best to get rid of Blair, Bush and Howard at all costs, not even thinking what the alternative could

18:30 be, but that's the way things work. No-one wants the military between war except if there's a major emergency and they want them, and when the war's on they all want them and most times they're not there, as we've found with every war we've had. We've been down to practically nothing till the war starts then the people build up again. It's successful, it's over – they want to get rid of them again.

When you look back today at the wars you were involved in, specifically

19:00 **Korea that you were most involved in on the front-line basis, what, how do you feel about that experience today?**

I think for me it was a great character-building experience for me. I'm pleased I had to do it. I don't think that if I knew what I know now and I was in the same frame of mind now and I knew the way governments worked I would be as eager

19:30 or as keen to go and do it again. I would have misgivings. For example, I would not recommend to anybody to go and join the air force now, whereas before I thought it was the greatest thing ever, but I've changed my mind completely on all that sort of thing. And I think all wars are a colossal waste of time unless you're fighting the way that Caesar did, go in and win, go in and win the bloody thing and get rid of it, then it's over. But this business of

20:00 fighting each other and killing hundreds and thousands for political nonsense is complete waste of time. So, in hindsight Korea was a waste of time, Vietnam was a waste of time. I'm not sure if Iraq will be a waste of time. I think it will be an improvement on the world standard. World War II was a national calamity and we'll never see World War I or World War II again, ever. But what we'll always see are these dreadful sort of people who are fanatics

20:30 will try and take something on, and war may result but never at the scale… As I mentioned to you earlier, I think nuclear weapons stopped major conflict for ever because the results of nuclear weapons and biological weapons are too horrible to even contemplate. Nobody would be game to do it. It may happen by default somewhere at some stage of the game, but then I think it will be curtailed because world opinion will stop it.

How did your experience in Korea change you as a person?

21:00 Made me much more tolerant, made me realise much easier how human we all are, how very short space of time we have, how you have very little control over what fate has in store for you. I always ask the question, "Why was he shot down off my wing and not me?" All in all I think it made me a better person, it made me realise that

21:30 if there is a conflict like that and it has to be done, you have to do something about it. You can't go and look the other way and walk away from it cause it's going to turn around and come back and bite you. All in all I think it was probably the most character-building experience in my whole life was that particular stage.

At any time since then were you traumatised by what you saw and experienced there?

I've never been traumatised, except the only one that sticks in my mind always is the red

22:00 river. And whenever anyone mentions anything that's the first thing that comes to mind is the red river in Korea. But I don't have any misgivings of the fact that I caused part of it. I just know I was there. I wish I hadn't have been there. I wish I hadn't of been part of it. But it was there, it happened, it caused… We were successful in what we did but that sticks in my mind all the time. They were just human people like everybody else doing a job as they were told to do.

Have you ever dreamt about it?

22:30 No, don't dream.

Well moving on to this archive which, like the War Memorial, is a repository of war information, why is it important to talk to us today for you?

Because I think the future generation need to know, and unless we tell the story they will never know, it will just disappear. Korea was a classic example. Korea's a forgotten war. How many people know, as I mentioned to you earlier, that every city in Australia was flown over by

23:00 a Japanese aircraft within three months of Pear Harbour? Nobody. How many people know that Darwin was bombed 47 times over 14 months? Nobody. How many people know that we lost 43 pilots in Korea? Nobody. The number of people that have told me I should write my memoirs down, and they're quite right, I should, but the fact is unless this sort of thing comes up it will be lost forever. That's why when I was at the War Memorial I had the Gallipoli veterans for the long weekend. The most rewarding thing you can ever imaging is to talk to those people for that period. For the first time in years

23:30 they opened up, all in camera, the whole lot of them; absolutely terrific. So I think your job is very, very important to put all this sort of stuff down.

How can remembering all that and keeping it for future generations help us in the future, do you think?

Cause I hope you won't make the same mistakes that we all made, that's the whole thing. See, everything we've talked about in war and everything is a result of a diplomatic failure, and people like me were in a position to have to go and do something about it. Now I hope the thing is that something will come out of one of these things and they'll say,

24:00 "Well, we couldn't do that cause we did that before, and that shouldn't have happened before." It's just little things, like if you're going to send a bloke in to do something you should give him a bloody uniform to go and do it with, you shouldn't make him go and borrow a pair of pants and a shirt off the army, for example. And that sticks in my craw a little bit to this day. And before you go, remind me to show you this picture. I'll get it for you.

Just a second.

Yeah, I'll get it for you later.

Well just one last question before we finish. This archive's being kept for the future, for 50 or 100 years' time someone

24:30 **will be watching this. Is there anything you might want to say to them?**

In 50, 100 years' time?

Any last words for a future watcher of this?

What I would say to them is I hope if they're listening to it, that this is all history and they haven't experienced anything like anything we've talked about in that 100 years. We hope that common sense will come between now and then, and people will get to the stage where they can actually live together, and this is historic information for history's

25:00 sake and not just a recap of what's happened over the next 100 years. That's my wish for them.

Well I hope that's true. Thank you very much for speaking to us today, Jim. It's been a real pleasure.

My pleasure.

INTERVIEW ENDS

Tape 11

NB. This transcript is of an interview filmed for the television series, Australians at War in 1999-2000. It was incorporated into the Archive in 2008.

00:33 **Tape begins with memorabilia.**

01:00 **(Memorabilia)**

01:30 **(Memorabilia)**

02:00 **(Memorabilia)**

02:30 **(Memorabilia)**

03:00 **(Memorabilia)**

03:30 **(Memorabilia)**

04:00 **(Memorabilia)**

04:30 **(Memorabilia)**

05:00 **(Memorabilia)**

05:30 **(Memorabilia)**

06:00 **(Memorabilia)**

06:30 **(Memorabilia)**

07:00 **(Memorabilia)**

07:30 **(Memorabilia)**

08:00 **(Memorabilia)**

08:30 **(Memorabilia)**

09:00 **(Memorabilia)**

09:30 **(Memorabilia)**

10:00 **(Memorabilia)**

10:30 **(Memorabilia)**

11:01 **So James tell us about, set up the scene and what it was like, and when you first went to Japan and the devastation that you witnessed?**

Well I was fortunate enough to go to Japan with the occupation force in 1947. I'd been up in New Guinea and Darwin and I got up there on a very,

11:30 very nice afternoon. I remember we'd just moved from …

Well I went to Japan with the occupation force…

I went to Japan with the occupation force after being in Darwin and New Guinea. I had applied to go and be part of the occupation force.

12:00 We arrived in Bufu on a nice warm summer's day, right on the edge of the Inland Sea. Beautiful green, brown mountainous countryside, so different to Australia and greeted by a bunch of our friends who were there, had already been there. There were three Mustang squadrons and a Dakota detachment at Bufu and up at Irakuni just around the other side of the bay there was a New Zealand squadron and a RAF [Royal Air Force] squadron of Spitfires flown by Indians strangely enough,

12:30 Indian Sikhs. And shortly after we'd been there for a while at Bufu, we actually moved to Irakuni and that became the home base for 77 Squadron and the wing, 81 Wing. 77 Squadron was one of three squadrons in the wing and we were there for some years doing the normal occupation duties which are just policing the area, looking after coastal patrols for customs, smugglers, and all the various things you do in that part of the world. On our first trip we

13:00 went to have a look at Hiroshima because Hiroshima at that stage had become world headlines after the nuclear weapon went off there and I have never ever seen any such devastation in all my life. It looked like the Simpson Desert with a few building stubs left. And in the centre of the town there was a pagoda like building which today is the Peace Memorial, and the interesting thing was that you could look from one side of Hiroshima to the other and not see a standing building of any sort, and it was completely flat. And what

13:30 intrigued me were the people. Now if it had have been us and the occupiers arrived, they would have a vastly different reception to what we got, because you couldn't tell from the people they had any animosity at all, which was a bit surprising to us being young and sort of that way and expecting the worst, but it was just the reverse. When the Emperor said, "The war is finished and you will co-operate with the troops." well they did and they were tremendous people. I mean we couldn't fault them.

14:00 Well we'd been in Japan for a few years and the word came out that we were going to be pulled out and go home and the word got around that the 23rd June 1950 would be the last day we were going to fly. So that week they started to put the aeroplanes into mothballs and we all sort of put things together and said, "Okay we'll start to help pack up."

14:30 start to pack up, very reluctantly so I might add because Japan in the occupation days for a single man was absolute paradise. You can imagine that everything being done for you, having your own room, your own room servants, own waitresses in the mess, very, very cheap prices. For example in those days for ten shillings, which is the equivalent of a dollar, we would get a thousand yen. It's a little bit different nowadays where you get about eighty three to one of our dollars. So with the result for example in our sergeants' mess

15:00 we had continual free beer because the simple reason is somebody would put a thousand yen note on the counter and the beer was only about eighty five sen a bottle, so less than one yen a bottle so no-one ever paid any money. You'd just walk in and ask for what you want and it was served to you. And interesting for younger people is there was a shortage of bottles in Japan and you needed to have something to mix with drinks and things, lemonade and stuff like this but there was no way of knowing what it was because the bottles were all old,

15:30 pre-used beer bottles, so they christened the whole lot 'lolly water'. So you'd have a gin and lolly water or whiskey and lolly water or just lolly water and you wouldn't know until you opened the bottle what it was, what colour. It would come out either pink or green or blue or any thing of that nature. And it was quite funny of a night time to watch people drinking blue drinks and green drinks and things like this. But we had such an amount of money stored up we thought, 'Well look, we'd better do something with this.' and the CO [commanding officer] of the base at that stage said, "Well, we should have a bit of a farewell to go." So the sergeants who are usually

16:00 noted for their wonderful mess parties jumped in first and said, "Look, we'll organise it." And because we had the different ranks we said, "Well we'll have it in the sergeants' mess and everybody from sergeant and above can come to it and the airmen will, we'll have one in the airmen's club for them." which we did. So the sergeants' mess one we plotted it and planned it and we planned a shipwreck party and the idea was that everyone would come dressed as they were the moment they were told to abandon ship. Well you can let your imagination run wild

16:30 and see what came out. All sorts of things came out. So on the night of the 30th of June, which was just a week later, all aeroplanes were in bed, we hadn't flown and we decided we'd start this party on. Well Ray Trabucher [?] and I were both dressed as pirates standing, we'd built a ship in front of the mess, a pseudo ship with a boarding platform to go up to it and then a plank you had to walk off, jump about two feet down into the mess entrance and

17:00 a lot of the ladies were, cause as you remember in those days we had the dependents living on the base with us, the wife and children of the, a lot of the people and they were a bit apprehensive so what we had, I had a water pistol and Ray had a little bucket full of scotch and we'd fill the water pistol up with scotch and everyone had to open their mouth and I'd squirt a little drop of scotch in first which gave them courage to jump off the end of the gangplank into the, to walk the plank into the mess. And that got the party away to a heck of a good start because by the time they, all the guests had arrived they were

17:30 in good shape and talking to each other. The whole mess had been cleared out completely of furniture. It was four bare walls. It was a great big, big building and they had rubber dinghies on the floor to sit on. They had tropical islands built. They had a big brig [prison] down the back with two armed guards on it and there was free everything. They had an enormous spread of food and the drinks flowed. There was a full place, a twenty piece Japanese band playing full time and the place

18:00 got into a heck of a go, just a big fancy dress ball really, but no ball. We were having a ball but the thing was there wasn't that sort of dancing. And if you did anything wrong, if you sort of smiled too loudly or laughed too quickly or did anything at all you were put in the brig and to get out of the brig you had to have two more squirts of scotch from the water pistol and with the result people were getting arrested and happier and happier as the night went on. Well the whole place had this most magnificent feeling. We were saying goodbye to people. We had been there together for a

18:30 long time and the party went right through the night. At about half past four in the morning the band please asked, could they go home because they were going to sleep at the thing and we said yes they could, but we said they'd have to come back and they said well we'll have to pay and we said we'll pay. So we whipped around then and got enough money to pay for the band that morning and they went home about five o'clock. About half past nine they came back again and started to play again and all, everyone was still there, the only one who went home was

19:00 Lou Spence, Wing Commander Lou Spence and his wife, being the CO, it was normally the custom for

the CO to leave because he felt he put a bit of a dampener on things so he and his wife went home very early, about three thirty in the morning and they went before this and we kept on going. So we stayed there and pressed on and pressed on and the band's playing and we're dancing and they'd serve another enormous breakfast again to keep us going and Ray was the duty officer. You always had somebody on duty and they said, "You're wanted on the telephone." And he went into the office

19:30 and the phone rang and there's a voice on the phone said, "This is Tzuki [?] Operations, are you the duty officer?" he said, "Yes." He said, "Well, North Korea just invaded South and 5th Air Force have been called into action and I think you'll be wanted." And Ray said, "Don't be bloody silly, we know Tzuki, we know who you are." you know, we used to fly with the Americans down there. "Don't be ridiculous, we're having a party here, don't waste my time!" and hung up and walked out. Well of course the people down at 5th Air Force were almost having a heart attack because they needed to tell us so they rang back and this

20:00 time Ray got the phone, they said, "Look it's for real, please tell somebody!" So Ray went out and told our Ops [operations] officer and he immediately told the CO who was just getting ready to go on holiday and had to, or he did unpack and came back. He came over to the mess and said, "What is it?" and they said, "Well, we think you're on call because the 5th Air Force have just been told that they're going to support South Korea." and he said, "All right, well okay, stop." So all music stopped, everything stopped, and he got all the pilots

20:30 in the squadron and everyone was there, every one of us of all ranks and took us into the billiard room and he explained that this, all of a sudden we weren't going to go home but we're going to go to war instead which was a bit of a shock for a bunch of us because we'd had a wonderful existence up till then. Now the wonderful thing was that from that day, almost immediately, even though we'd been up all night, people were sober again, practically straightaway and by four in the afternoon all the pilots were down with the maintenance people in the hangar starting to de-inhibit the

21:00 aeroplanes. And a tremendous job the airmen did because within five days they had de-inhibited every aeroplane and they were all serviceable again and we were flying again and test flying, towards the end of that week. And the Friday just before the 30th June, the Friday Lou Spence was flying with a bunch of us and he got called back to take a message and they said, "Right, here's your first FRAG order." which is the operations order to go to war, "And you'll be flying tomorrow." So that,

21:30 we were into the war and the weather was terrible. The weekend weather was terrible and the first, our mission was completely cancelled because you couldn't get out of Japan and we flew our first mission on the 2nd July 1950 and we were the first in, apart from the Americans who had flown that same afternoon or the day before.

22:00 We were partying on, it was in full swing, the band was playing and it was about half past ten in the morning and we were having a great time thinking what we'll do for the rest of the day and the phone came for the duty officer and the duty officer was Ray Trabucher and he went in and answered the phone. A voice from, on the phone said, "This is the operations officer at Tzuki Air Base and North Korea

22:30 have just invaded South Korea and 5th Air Force will be committed and you may be called." And Ray, and of course being fairly happy from the whole night session said, "Don't be ridiculous!" he said, "You know we're having a party up here and it's too late to pull these practical jokes we're all going home, the aeroplanes are all packed up." and hung up on him. Well it caused a lot of consternation in 5th Air Force headquarters because they were trying to let our CO know that we may be going to war. So the phone rang back and eventually they got Ray to

23:00 answer it again and the fellow said, "Listen it's for real, they have invaded South Korea and 5th Air Force are committed and we think that you will be committed also!" So with that Ray contacted Graham Strout, who by the way was the first pilot we lost in Korea, he was our ops officer and he got onto the CO who was getting ready to go on holiday and he very reluctantly said, "Look I'll come back to the mess." He thought we were kidding and he came back to the mess and when they explained what it was he called all the pilots

23:30 from the festivities into the billiard room and sat round and briefed us and said that we would be involved and that we would not be going home and that we would be ready to fly and we had to get the aeroplanes uninhibited and all of us, all the air crew were down that same afternoon, they sobered up immediately which sounds strange but they did and helped the maintenance people de-inhibit the aeroplanes and then from that next week on by the 30th we'd actually been flying aeroplanes again, test flying them.

24:00 On the Friday, the week before the 30th, yeah the 30th, the CO was flying and he got a call, "Please return immediately we've got a message for you." When he got back there it was General Strackameyer from headquarters, Far East Air Forces saying, "77 Squadron is committed and your first FRAG order was in, you'll be flying tomorrow to escort some aeroplanes into South Korea." Unfortunately, well unfortunately but the weather was bad, very, very bad, raining and horrible and this stuff so we didn't fly

24:30 on that day but on the morning of the 2nd just before dawn was our first flight. We went from Irakuni across to Korea for the very first time. The most marvellous thing was the way that the airmen had got

together and completely de-inhibited all the aeroplanes that had been packed ready to go home in that short space of time. I give them the greatest credit for what they did up there. They were terrific.

Just talk about your first mission.

25:00 Well I was on that first mission of the war and just before we crossed the north coast of Japan to go across the straits to Korea I had a very, very severe engine problem so I went back. I had to go back, very reluctantly had to go back and land again and they did the flight as a three. They went over and escorted an American aeroplane going in to somewhere, I can't think where and didn't see much activity at all and then

25:30 all returned back. By the time they'd landed the next mission was ready to go and I was on the next mission on the same day and this was a real eye opener for a young fellow from the bush like I was because we took six aeroplanes from Irakuni and we flew across the north coast of Japan almost to the Korean coast and we escorted with twelve B29s, who had come up from Guam which is a long haul from Guam through Okinawa and up. And we were their escort and

26:00 they were going up to bomb an airfield at Hamhung, which is right up on the North Korean/Russian border, not too far south of Vladivostok if you look at the map, way, way up north, way up behind the line. So six sort of half terrified fighter pilots were flying with these twelve enormous which we thought B29s and we flew with them right up the coast all the way through and the most amazing thing was that we were flying

26:30 two on each side of them and one high behind them and we were weaving to stay with them and whenever we turned towards them every single gun in every B29, there were an awful lot of them, would point at us because they was the way they were, turned towards them was enemy and the minute we turned back again we'd turn back and the guns would come off us again. It was quite a lesson. When we got to the airfield at Hamhung it was a big strip, big strip. A normal airfield, big buildings

27:00 and the first time we really saw flak, the very first time I'd ever seen it and it was amazing. The sky was full of little white cotton balls and little brown cotton balls and bigger black cotton balls everywhere, all through the B29 formation and the thing that intrigued me was that they didn't vary one inch from their heading. They kept on going straight across like that and of course we were flying with it also and it dawned on me that this stuff could hurt you because every one of the little puffs

27:30 was an exploding shell and of the B29s, eight of them were hit. Eight of them were hit in that actual raid and we watched them bomb and they did that famous pattern bombing the Americans do and the bombs dropped just inside the airfield fence, walked all the way down the runway and stopped just inside the airfield fence and didn't touch a single building, which I thought was quite fantastic. And we turned a big wide arc turn to the left back over the water again

28:00 and half way down the coast we flew across the big city of Waywan and once again the flak was incredible stuff. It came up and that's where we saw some Yaks for the first time, the Yaks were the piston driven aeroplanes the North Koreans had, but they were over there and they didn't come near us. They saw us and they buzzed off which was good. Shortly down the coast we heard a report that a submarine had been sighted just off the coast about twelve miles and they wanted someone to go and have a look at it.

28:30 So the B29 captain said well he, oh the leader not the captain, the leader of the lead aeroplane said he would do it and could he take a couple of Mustangs with him. So we, two of us, old Brick Bradford and I latched on with him and we went down and we were flying at about a thousand feet over the ocean about ten miles off the Korean coast which really got my attention because I thought you know, we really shouldn't be here. Anyway we didn't see any submarine, they'd gone whatever it was and we climbed back up again. They headed off back to Okinawa

29:00 and they said, the thing I remember, "Well thank you Aussie, we felt a lot better with you being here." And I've never forgotten that sort of statement. So they went of course and we went back to Irakuni and we landed, we'd been airborne for six hours and ten minutes which is a long time in a Mustang.

Just tell me about how you felt in a personal way to see so many of your comrades, your pilot friends get killed? Take me through it,

29:30 **tell a story cause I'm not using my question.**

It's unusual because when you're in a situation where you're actually in combat and being shot at you don't think it can ever happen to you. You've just got a built in thing that you switch that off, it can't happen to you and when you lose a guy with you like we lost Billy Harrop, who was with us, the first one of the new kids, by the way, strangely enough, of the original pilots who had been there

30:00 flying together for a couple of years we only lost one. Of all the replacements we lost them all. It's amazing but just luck. I often sit back and think you know, 'Why am I here and the two people or three people I had on my wing are not?' I'll never understand why. But the feeling you get is it can't happen to you, bad luck for them but you've got to switch it off because if you don't switch it off you wouldn't go and do it again. And I can remember some nights being in the mess and before you sort of depart,

30:30 being in my room alone and sitting on the side of the bed and getting some doubts, fear and thinking,

‘My God, I can’t do that again tomorrow.’ but then you’d say you’ve got to, you get off it and go and have a few beers with the boys in the thing and get on and do it again and it becomes quite normal and you build in this sort of fatalism. It happens to everybody, ‘it won’t happen to me’ and that’s the way I think most of us get through it and that’s why you don’t hear many people talk about it much after you’ve come home because you don’t want to sort of experience

31:00 it again so you don’t want to recall it and that’s my attitude towards it.

Tell me how you cope with that?

I coped with it because the simple reason that those who did it didn’t do it in vain.

31:30 They knew why they were there. They knew what we were trying to achieve and we achieved it very well. We mourn for them very much indeed, that’s why you’ll find there’s a tremendous turn out still on Anzac Day and you look at the faces of the people there, you can see each one of them is remembering something and I can remember the people as distinctly as it was yesterday. They sat alongside me and the next day they’re gone. While the war was on you’ve just got to overcome it. After the war

32:00 you get periods of sadness and grief and all you really can do is try and maintain the standards that they died for and whenever you get a chance to do it publicly to remember them you do it and that’s why I would never miss a reunion or an Anzac Day parade or anything like this at all because it’s for those guys who can’t be there, just how lucky we are to be here. A friend of mine the other day he said, “Listen, stop complaining about your golf, you’re on the right side of the grass.”

32:30 And that really got it home to me and I think that’s what we do. We sort of, we’ll never ever forget them but life has to go on.

Tape 12

00:45 The thing about flying in Japan and Korea that was so different to Australia because Australia being very flat …

Can you just focus on Korea?

01:00 The flying in Korea was certainly different. Very, very mountainous, a mountainous spine down the middle of Korea with a couple of major rivers that run through and very, very difficult to sort of do the type of work we were doing. In the first three months of the war the only thing that stopped the North Korean advance was air power.

01:30 The army really were having a bad time on the ground and but for air power they could not have survived. And to try and do close support which is really in front of the front line in the mountainous terrain, diving into blind valleys and trying to get back out again each time and that really made you a believer because it’s not easy at all. And of course don’t forget in those days the aeroplanes had no navigation aids at all. All we had was a compass, nothing else so

02:00 you had to do all your navigation flying just by eyeball and map reading. Map read where you were and you try and map read over mountainous terrain like that, every mountain looks the same. Now if you weren’t careful you’d find that you’d be diving low over the enemy lines instead of your own and the first thing you knew about that was people were shooting at you so that got your attention pretty quickly. Shortly after that because it was such a horrible place to be the army and the air force got together and they produced these

02:30 four D controllers, flying Harvards, aeroplanes, and things and Piper Cubs with an army controller in the back with a grid map and he identified very accurately where our own troops were and they would fire a couple of smoke rockets down. So as we were getting ready to go they’d say, “Watch my smoke.” the red smoke would start to appear up and we knew that they were at least a hundred and fifty yards in front of the American or British or Australian front line so we could operate there, the rest were all enemy from there on in.

03:00 But it was fairly hair raising stuff and if you look at some of the film they’ve got up in the War Memorial, the actual close air support with Mustangs you will really get down there amongst the weeds and with mountains towering above you either side and you tack in bad weather and cloud and things like this and it’s not conducive to sort of survival but it was certainly different and we all did pretty well. You see we didn’t have a great loss rate until we got Meteors and when they got Meteors against the MIGs well

03:30 of course that was a different story entirely.

Talk to me about the cold.

Well, in the latter part of 1950 we were moved from a place we were at called Pohang, we were moved up to a place called Yongpo which was the same Hamhung airfield that I had escorted the B29s to some three or four months before. At this stage

04:00 we’d pushed them back so far that it was in friendly territory and we were there to help the marines

who were up on the Indian reservoir, and at that stage the Chinese came into the war and there was an enormous demand for close air support so they moved us up to Hamhung and I've never been in such a desolate, frozen, cold place in my life. And because in the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] we had no decent equipment, we had no winter clothing, we didn't have any flying suits. We used to borrow

04:30 all we had from the Americans and a lot of times people were flying in army shirts and jungle green pants and things. When we got there we had to have wet, cold weather gear so we operated alongside aeroplanes. Now what we had was a two man tent about fifty steps from your aeroplane, which you slept in and a latrine bucket and they would bring food along the line because you were on call continually. Because as these poor

05:00 marines were coming down the valley they were getting decimated by the Chinese who were on each side of the valley in the hills firing down at them. And the only thing that kept them down was the fact that the close air support aeroplanes, the Australians, the Americans, the navy were all flying full time close support keeping these Chinese heads down and we could do it until it got dark and as soon as it became the last light, I've never been quite so frustrated because you could see the flashes of the Chinese firing

05:30 and we couldn't see what to fire at and we'd have to come home and they would decimate them during the night and then the next morning at first light we'd be in there again. But we were so close to being overrun that we were only allowed within about a hundred yards of our aeroplane and we'd sleep in the little tent and get up and the thing that always sticks in my mind and I've got the greatest respect for the Salvation Army, way up in the top end of Korea, in Frozen Chozen, we used to call it along the line, came this Salvation

06:00 Army man with a big tin on his back full of tea and a big bag full of buns and went to everyone, all the ground staff and said, "Do you want a cup of tea digger?" you know. How he got there and how he ever got out I'll never know because when the Chinese were about to overrun us, we all evacuated. We got our aeroplanes and went whacking back down south and the two fellows we left behind and the Salvation Army fellow they went out with the marines when they went out. And as I say I have the great admiration for them because of all places

06:30 and of all things to see it, it was quite inspiring really. And the interesting thing was we were sitting in there one night around a little fire around the tents and we all said, "Look, you know, I wouldn't be with those marines for anything." A week or so later we were down at Pohang again where we were and the marine colonel came down to thank our CO for his support and he said to the pilots, "You know there's one thing about you fellows, I wouldn't be in the air force for anything at all, watching what you fellows were doing." So it's all very relevant isn't it?

07:00 **And last thing?**

The operations in the early days of the Korean War were a little bit demanding because we got to the stage where it was all air power against manpower on the ground. The army were being pushed back tremendously. You may remember in the first six weeks of the war we got right back to a little corner of South Korea, that's what we were in and all that was stopping them coming further were the aeroplanes and close air

07:30 support. And to go to a place where you could see literally hundreds of troops about to cross a river, and that was a target, you'd be surprised how many people couldn't pull the trigger. It really quite intrigued me because the simple reason is you had to, you had to. If you didn't they would take over the whole rest of the place. So when you do four or five sorties a day and all you do is attack people crossing streams and crossing roads and things and I've

08:00 been in the situation where the river has run red and that really sort of sticks in my mind to this day. But the poor Korean people of course, the South Koreans were ahead of this. They were being pushed along ahead of it and you could tell most of them were, the elders had long, white robes on and tall, conical, black hats and surrounded by all sorts of other people and they had a lot of carts pulled by either two buffaloes or the odd horse

08:30 here and there and the word would come out that anything moving on the roads was a target. Now a lot of us had great difficulty with this because the simple reason, who wants to shoot a horse and a cart? But when you find that a couple of times you did and it blows up and makes an enormous hole in the ground you realise that they're not refugees at all, they're the North Koreans dressed up to infiltrate, therefore they become a target and one of the most difficult things I've ever done was to, with some other people, we had to strafe a road one day with

09:00 these white dressed people. We were sure they were refugees but the actual figures were blowing up because what they were doing, they were holding and hiding ammunition and explosives under their robes and getting through the army checkpoints and then coming behind and blowing up from behind. So the thing is they became a target for us too, but I often wonder how many poor unsuspecting civilians who were pushed ahead of us suffered the same fate through no fault of their own. But strangely enough the Korean people to this day think that

09:30 the Australians are the greatest for what we did and all we did was try and stop a stem of, a horde of people who would have taken over the whole country.

INTERVIEW ENDS