Australians at War Film Archive

Keith Campbell - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:35 **Mr Campbell can I ask you to give me a summary of your eighty years?**

Yes. I was born in Waverley in Sydney, 11th December 1922 then we moved over to Milsons Point into a house there opposed St Aloysius College. The bridge was being built at the time, it wasn't too noisy but it was the middle of the Depression and

01:00 most of the houses around us were empty. Gas light was still on in all the houses and the main street out to Admiralty House was lit by gas, it was called Campbell Street then by the way, they changed it because of the association with Kings Cross. Spent quite a happy childhood there. Mainly swimming or something in the harbour, mucking about. Went to Milsons Point Public School

01:30 then to North Sydney Boys' High School. My friends and I were all interested in aeroplanes, model aeroplanes and bushwalking. We were Rover Scouts. We spent more time planning bush walks than we did on good works as Rover Scouts, but I think we did more for our own good. We were always whizzing off to the Blue Mountains, camping and walking. It was only six shillings return to the Blue Mountains for

02:00 an excursion, so it wasn't very dear to go there. I only went as far as Third Year, Intermediate Certificate, couldn't afford to go any longer and for a year I was unemployed, although I helped my father he was a carpenter. My mother and father, sorry, my mother was a tailoress and my father was a carpenter and after my mother married she was just a housewife – I'm sorry, not 'just' a housewife – and

02:30 she had three children, two of whom were my brother and sister. My sister is about five years younger than I am and my brother about ten years younger. Both bigger and brighter than me, however my mother was determined I shouldn't be a tradesman so she made me sit for a Public Service exam. I passed this and went into the Public Services as an accounts clerk, junior accounts clerk, with the

03:00 Department of Labour Industry. I hated that of course, but of course it was marvellous for bushwalking because I didn't do any work and I was very fit. Then the war started of course, 1939, and the Battle of Britain and all that sort of thing. All of us were terribly interested in aircraft, but we'd never done anything except make little aeroplanes. Incidentally I saw Kingsford Smith's [Charles Kingsford Smith, famous aviator] plane before he took off at Neutral Bay just before the war. I'm sorry, yes, just before the war.

03:30 Then I thought I'd join the air force I was seventeen at the time, so I went along and they said, "You're too young, but you can join the reserve." So I joined the reserve and they gave me a badge and I had to go to night school and anyway a funny thing happened. The AMP [Australian Mutual Provident] Society used to come on payday, in those days you got paid by cash over the counter, in fact my accounts branch used to make them up, it was a horrible

04:00 job. He was trying to get me to have life insurance, so I thought this is an idea, I'll have some life insurance I have a fair chance of not having any life so I may as well. So he got out the paper and we signed up and he saw this badge and he said, "What's that?" I said, "That's the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] Reserve." He said, "Oh we don't want you blokes, you only last twenty hours," and I thought, "Thanks very much." Anyway, so then I'd reached eighteen

04:30 and I wasn't actually called up, I enlisted and went along and got enlisted immediately to Bradfield Park initial training where they taught you how to march and that sort of rubbish then to Narrandera Elementary Flying Training School in Tiger Moths. As soon as I finished that, back to Bradfield Park and off in the middle dead of night no marches off to war or anything. They put us on board the Mariposa, a

05:00 United States ship. We went on a cruise of the Pacific. First of all Fiji, Pago Pago, Hawaii, the Yanks of course weren't in the war at the time, but they made us very welcome, in fact they even offered to let us fly one of their Curtis Tomahawks then they realised, of course, it wasn't the right thing. This was November 1941 and Pearl Harbour was next month. So we just got out of Pearl Harbour in time. We arrived in

05:30 US and then up to Vancouver and then right across Canada to Camp Borden big air force army training, there I did my service flying training on Yales, North American Yales and Harvards, passed out and got my wings. Across to England, Bournemouth holding camp, went on leave once to the Squire of Windermere, very nice

06:00 had some scheme for entertaining troops from overseas. Then I went to Wales where I met my wife, she wasn't my wife then. I was nineteen and she was sixteen. She was with her sister and they'd been evacuated there from London because of the bombing. Then I went back to Bournemouth and a bloke came along, a senior RAF [Royal Air Force] man he said, "We went some volunteers for our unit. The best airplanes that we've got, lots of action, who wants to be in it?" So I put up my

06:30 hand and bingo that was it. Within a few days I was posted, not to this OTU Operational Training Unit, but to a navigation school, Squiresgate 3 School of General Navigation Spent two or three weeks there, a month, actually two months, passed out of that as a navigator and up to the OTU where I first of all saw the marvellous planes that I was supposed to be

07:00 going to fly, Spitfires, blue Spitfires. I noticed first of all they had no guns and I said, "What about this? Where are the guns?" and he said, "Oh we don't have them." I said, "Oh that's very nice." I thought, "They do on the squadron." We learnt how to fly the plane which was very easy an easy plane to fly and how to photography, which is very difficult because the Spitfire is not a very good plane for photographing. Once you'd learnt to do it of course you could I used it as a camera and had to turn the plane upside

07:30 almost. And then on to the squadron. That would be late 1942 I joined the squadron 1942, I just turned twenty. Then I flew with the squadron through 1943, through 1944 up to about I was a sergeant, then a flight sergeant, and I became a warrant office which is the best rank you could possibly be.

08:00 A warrant officer is absolutely the best rank you can, I won't say what they say about warrant officers, but they are the best. You see sergeant-major on the film, you know, and the CO [commanding officer] says to the sergeant-major, "What do you think sergeant-major?" Well that's a warrant officer. About, toward the end of 1944 the CO called me up he says, "You got your commission." I said, "Oh thanks very much."

08:30 That was that. On rest, I went on rest just before the invasion. Now I shouldn't say this, but I wandered down to the operations room, all the rest of the flight had gone off on ops [operations] and one of them said to me, "We've got a flight for you." I said, "I'm not flying, I'm on ops," "Oh it's not over enemy territory it's over England." I said, "What is it?" He said, "It's the invasion fleet at Solent. They want an up-to-date map at

09:00 six thousand feet." I said, "No trouble at all." I'd been out with the blokes the night before, I'd never drank or smoked when I was flying and I had drank the night before.

Mr Campbell I might interrupt you. We might come back and talk about that in detail. Can I just ask you to finish telling me what happened briefly towards the end of the war and what happened to you after the war?

Yeah okay. I'm glad you stopped me there, I hadn't finished the war.

09:30 Okay. I went on rest. After the war I did a bit of what they call rural reconstruction. We used to fly down rivers and things and roads and we could do a survey of a whole river in a few hours to see which bridges had been blown up and that was terribly boring. Then I got married that was a big

10:00 thing. I better say this right, 25th, actually it was the summer solstice middle of summer in England, 25th June 1945 I got married. I got that right. Then I was repatriated to Australia, discharged, I was HO, what they call Hostilities Only – for the war, don't want people after that.

10:30 Then I wanted, thought I'd be a forester. Went up to the Forestry Commission and they said, "We only want professional foresters now, you've got to go to university." I thought, "Oh no." I only got to third year in high school. So I had to go back and do either a Matriculation or a Leaving Certificate. They had this all organised, I did a Leaving Certificate at the technical college.

11:00 I did all right, I also got a cadetship from the Forestry Commission and then I went to university. What the usual thing was you went to the university first and then you went to the forestry school after. I went to the university and then forestry. In the meantime I built a caravan, a motor caravan because we had nowhere to live as you had to go to Canberra, we lived with my parents in Sydney, a house there was four pounds a week

11:30 which was about all I was getting. So I built this caravan, bought an army truck and built it. I've got a picture of it there. Went down to Canberra, two years pretty tough on my wife because in forestry you don't get any vacations. You go away to work, which was good because they paid you, but you didn't get any vacations. My wife had to stay in Canberra and it snowed, it snowed both years we were there. Then I was posted up to the north coast

12:00 as a civil cultural research officer for a couple of years, Kyogle was my base. Then down to Batemans Bay as Management Plans Forester. Then back to Sydney, Sydney Head Office. Then they said, "How

would you like to have a go at a specialist thing?" I said, "All right." They wanted a field officer in our division of wood technology. They said, "You've got to go back to university to be an entomologist." So I thought, "This is a piece of cake," you see.

12:30 They paid, they gave me the time off. It's was only part time, two days a week actually, for a couple of years. So I qualified as an forester entomologist. I was with them for about, until 1970 roughly. I had a couple of nervous breakdowns in the meantime which wasn't very nice. In 1964, actually, I was an invited speaker

13:00 at the University of, State University of Pennsylvania in Pennsylvania. That means they paid my fare over and also my expenses while I was there. I took my wife, so that was very nice. I had to read a paper of course while I was there. Actually I wrote the paper while I was in hospital. They didn't know that. I've got the thing there that they put into a book.

13:30 Then I was retired on account of ill health in 1970. They couldn't stand me otherwise, I was a bit too much. They were very nice to me, I won't say anything about them.

I might just take you back to your childhood in Sydney. You mentioned that your father was a carpenter. Can you explain some the work he did?

14:00 Yes well when I began to realise what he did do I was about ten years old I suspect, this is the middle of the Depression. He would be away for quite a long while, he was working out in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation area, of course it was a big developments there and they were building things there. Then he came back and then things began to brighten up when he was more at home. He worked for the 2GB and 2UE [Sydney] radio stations building things

14:30 for them. He built a studio for one of them. They belonged to the Theosophical Society, they held the license. The Union Club, he did odd jobs, if he had a chance he'd build a house. In fact he built up in Willoughby and was hoping to sell it. The whole double brick house with copper everywhere, gutters, twelve hundred pounds, he couldn't sell it. So my mother said, "Good, we're moving in"

15:00 that was the first time she'd had a house, she'd always had been living in rented accommodation. So that's when we went to Willoughby. He would have liked me to be a carpenter of course or a builder if you like, they call them builders nowadays. Of course everything is brick veneer these days, in those days, this is a fibro with wood, it was a double brick, everything was double brick in those days and everything's

15:30 solid and the carpenter did the rooves and all the other things, doors and interior fittings. I liked it because he did all sorts of things, sometimes if they wanted him to paper, in fact I remember him papering the whatever they call him, CEO [chief executive officer] now, office of 2GB, we were using a wall paper that was so expensive that I wasn't allowed to touch it, it was so expensive. It was beautiful stuff. He did that

16:00 for them. Of course he was a solider in the First World War, fought on the Austrian front, very rare. Nobody knows about that. They helped the Italians against the Austrians. Anyway, he used to have dreadful headaches and while I was away at the war he didn't tell me of course, he had several dreadful strokes and when I came back he was in a bad way.

16:30 I saw very little of him really, he was an enormous man with a hat on he'd touch the door, now my young brother is almost as tall as the sister is taller than I am. I'm the runt of the family, I'm the Depression baby.

Can I ask you, did you have a wireless at home?

The first wireless I saw my father brought home a chassis,

17:00 no nothing, just valves and everything like this. We said, "What is that?" He said, "It's a wireless." By this time, this is about the mid, early 1930's we had electricity by then, I forgot about that. One power point in the whole house with a red light, very dangerous. He built a cabinet for it of course and we had the wireless.

17:30 That wireless, which was valve wireless, my son mucked about with it when we moved up here in 1954 and it still worked. I've got a valve wireless out there that I bought in 1951 and it still works. I don't whether the transistors still work in forty or fifty years time, they might. Of course little peanut valves, it's just over there, switch it on, it'll go, peanut valves in

18:00 that one. Of course the radios we had in the planes were valves, small, in fact I had a VHF [very high frequency] just like every yachtsman has nowadays. It's all we had a VHF.

What sort of things did you listen to on the wireless at home?

All the soapies. There was one wonderful one, The Honourable

18:30 something Chiswellberry and his Japanese Manservant, Frank Wasanabi. At the time, of course, we thought of the Japanese as people making cheap junk, you could buy all sort of Japanese stuff that wasn't terribly good. Everybody believed they couldn't make things, whereas they jolly well could. They had the best aeroplane in the Pacific. They knew ships and all that sort of thing. Very much

underestimated the Japanese.

19:00 The first bicycle I had was a Japanese bicycle, it cost three pounds ten [shillings]. That was nearly a man's wages, that would be the equivalent to four hundred and sixty dollars I expect nowadays, quite a good bike I expect. Perfect. For three pounds ten I thought that was pretty cheap then. As I say it was nearly a man's wages three pounds ten a week, it was a basic wage. That bike, I broke a bit of it of course, but that bike went right through

19:30 and I know my friend who was a soldier came back from the war and he bought it off my mother because he didn't think that I'd need it any more, I didn't either. I had a bike in England. In fact everybody had a bike in England. It was the main form of transport, no motor cars. Ask me another question, I'm running out.

You mentioned that there was a perception that the Japanese weren't very technically proficient.

That's correct.

In the mid-1930s what did you make of the politics in Europe? What did you know about Hitler [Adolph Hitler, Chancellor of Germany]?

20:00 As a matter of fact I knew a lot about Hitler because I'd read Mein Kampf [a book written by Hitler; My Struggle] and I belonged to the Municipal Library which was in the Queen Victoria Buildings and I used to go and walk across the bridge up there, a couple of us did it every fortnight we'd get our books, and I saw this in gothic print Mein Kampf. Of course my grandfather was a German.

20:30 The other grandfather is Scottish of course. Leidel is my mother's maiden name and I thought, it was in English of course I couldn't speak a word of German, and I read this and I thought, "This bloke's, you know, he's got a bit of an idea." Hitler thought the world of the British. The British Empire, Hitler was quite a brave

21:00 soldier in his time. He had the Iron Cross. In fact you never saw any decoration on Hitler's uniform except this little Iron Cross, that's all he had. No of these ruddy things all over the place, ribbons. What he wanted was to team up with England, earmarked the German Army, the British Navy and rule the world. Trouble was he got in with the bad gang, the Nazis.

21:30 When I arrived in England in 1942, of course France and Britain had been badly beaten on the Continent and they'd got away at Dunkirk only the men, everything else was finished. They had no equipment. In fact the only people who were armed in England was the 6th Division, the Australians who were going to the Middle East. The Germans were massed across the border, Operation Sea Lion,

22:00 they said they were going to invade England. Well they'd done the first bit, it was the Battle of Britain, the Battle of Britain was so close that it made no difference, the Luftwaffe couldn't go on any further. They were both teetering on, they stopped fighting and started to bomb London. So the RAF was in tact, it wasn't in tact, but recovered. The Luftwaffe [German Air Force], they should have kept on fighting the RAF, they would have won the war. They didn't

22:30 Now Hitler could have invaded England quite easily at that time. Then I arrived and of course that made all the difference. I thought, "We've lost the war." Here's the Germans amassed across the Channel my squadron at the time was recognising that they had thousands and thousands of barges waiting to bring the German Army across. The navy couldn't have done anything across the shallow channel they've got there. Then all of a sudden,

23:00 "Bingo," everybody said, he attacked Russia. He had no intention of invading England it was just a feint, everybody, if he hadn't attacked Russia, he would have lost a lot of men but England was the lynch pin America didn't want to be in it, no, no, no. In fact Kennedy's dad [later United States President, John F Kennedy] was the ambassador in Britain and he was saying, "Don't come and help England because the Americans always come in on the winning side."

23:30 **What was the feeling in the squadron at the time when he shifted to the Eastern Front? Was there a level of surprise?**

To us it made no difference. We just, our job was to we were the eyes of the whole thing, the tip of the sword. In 1942 Bomber Command,

24:00 they lost a lot of men but they didn't do much. Then Harris, Air Office and Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshall Harris took over. He built, they got big four engine bombers, first of all the Stirling, then Halifax then the Lancaster. They started to bomb at night. They made the mistake of bombing

24:30 in the day time, the Germans knew all about this when their bombers came over to bomb London they had hoards of fighters and the British had to fight the bombers. The British had no bombers, they had fighters so they had to fight and try and get the bombers, fighters are nothing, you've got to get the bombers because they drop the bombs. Bomber Command became more and more powerful. Our job was to do any sort of reconnaissance at all, if you wanted to, say, a field, say, in Austria

25:00 you want a photograph of that field in Austria we'd put a man there and we'd get it and he'd get back,

we hoped. It was important enough we were to get it under any circumstances whatsoever. Bomber Commander was, of course our top priority, damage assessment. That was our main job for Bomber Command. Bomber Command would be bombing once or twice a week. We had two squadrons of

25:30 Spitfires, twenty planes twenty pilots nominally of course there was always someone on leave and we also, when the Mosquitoes came in we got Mosquitoes as well. They were much better than the Spitfire for reconnaissance. The Spitfire was nippier and it was the archetypal plane for a PR [photographic reconnaissance]. In fact Americans flew Spitfires for PR

26:00 the brought across their planes but they were no good. They went on to the, they flew British Spitfires too, when they came in in 1943, middle of 1943.

Before we talk in detail about those operations I just want to go back to your childhood. How old were you when you read Mein Kampf?

I must have been about thirteen because I was allowed in the adult

26:30 section of the library and up to twelve you'd go to the children's section and when you were over that you went to the adult, about thirteen I expect. I was very impressed by him, I mean nothing about the politics, just this man talking about what he would do if he was, and of course he did. They mucked things up in

27:00 the first world war, they crushed Germany and it was a hell of a mess. The Nazis would never have got going unless Germany was in a hell of a mess. They were in such a mess that anything was good. He regarded them, anybody except the British and that included the British Empire, when he talked about the British he meant the Empire. The Americans

27:30 a lot of you know, the Russians, Serbs goodness knows what, Africa he'd never heard of. I mean they had a colony or two of course they had their colonies taken off them in the First World War, so he wanted to get them back. He made very, very big overtures to Britain. On our

28:00 unit we had two of the sons of Lord Douglas Hamilton, (UNCLEAR). Now Lord Douglas Hamilton, you've heard of [Rudolph] Hess have you? Hess was 2 IC [Second in Command] Germany, Hitler's mate. Now he flew from Germany across the North Sea, across Lord Douglas Hamilton, bailed out over Douglas Hamilton's place

28:30 at night, I'm navigator, impossible piece of navigation without the absolute help, he must have had the help of the Luftwaffe, he must have he couldn't have done it. He just the left plane go, he just bailed out. Anyone would bail. Landed, our gamekeeper came up and said, "Hey, hey what are you doing here?" He said, "I'm Hess." "Oh yeah? What are you doing on our property?" He said, "I'm 2 IC Germany." And he said, "Oh yeah, a lot of people

29:00 say that." Of course Hamilton, "What am I going to do about this?" This is my version, because the Hamiltons were friendly with the Germans, you see, that's why he'd come to see him. He had five sons, or four sons in the RAF so at the time he wasn't pro-German then. So he thought, "What are we going to do with this man?" So he sent him down to London and of course,

29:30 "What are we going to do with this bloke?" He's mad, you see. He wasn't mad, they never let him go. They let all the other people go from that prison; he was kept until he died. He came across to make peace, a genuine offer, "We'll stop the war, we won't invade if you'll come in with us." Of course by this time Churchill [Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Britain] was in power, there was quite a lot of pro-Germans in the British top, but Churchill was in power

30:00 and he hated the Nazis. Of course, I wasn't in it for the politics, I was in it for the war. I had no politics, I didn't hate the Germans, my grandfather was a German, but they were the enemy and I was a soldier.

30:30 In fact, I can't imagine that I did it. I can't imagine it. I mean me now wouldn't do it, I know too much about it, but I was a youngster, nineteen, fit, trained up to the eyebrows, absolutely fit and pretty scared too,

31:00 but fit. Look around and obviously the people there were still alive, they weren't shot down, I didn't see the guys that were shot down. Only saw the blokes there and they looked all right to me, occasionally one would go missing. This caper of flying in an unarmed aircraft over enemy territory, thousands of miles. With our Spitfires instead of having guns they had petrol tanks in the wings, sixteen hundred mile range.

31:30 We could go way past Berlin, whether you could get back again was another matter. It was quite crazy, but after a while, the Luftwaffe used to object to this violently and they used to shoot at you occasionally. It was a job, I volunteered.

32:00 Never volunteer, they say never volunteer because once you volunteered you've had it. You can't say, "I don't want to do it." They'd say, "You volunteered." They never said that to me, I never received an order all the time I was with my unit, never. They never said, "Do this," or, "Do that," they just said, "Here's your target. It's up to you, mate. Get back." I said, "But what about a

32:30 gun or two?" He said, "If we give you a gun you'll get into trouble. Your job is to get to the target, take

the photographs and come back. Until you get back to here it's all for nothing. You don't go out there to drop bombs or fire or shoot people down, you've got to get to the target, get the photograph and get back." Very nice really.

When you read Mein Kampf did you discuss that with your family or…?

No. No. Just read it

33:00 like a book. It was quite, it was just a man's account of what he thought he would do. I'd read lots of books, in fact I used to read about two books a week, as you see I still read a lot. I'll read anything virtually unless I chuck it away if I don't like it. No I thought this bloke, I didn't think that he was crazy, but I thought he was a

33:30 visionary. I'd read the bible too, not right through, but a good deal of it I belonged to a bible class when I was young. A lot of things said in that too good and bad. Oh no I thought, I still think he is a remarkable man, I think that he went very wrong but I can think of a lot of other people that have done worse.

34:00 Who are a lot, who would do worse if they could.

How did the Depression affect your family?

We were pretty lucky really. My father could always, being a skilled tradesman, he always had some sort of work and we were always able to pay the rent. All around us, as I say, the houses were empty but my mother could always get the rent.

34:30 When the electricity came on, rent cost two [shillings] and sixpence more a week because we had electricity. The gas was rather nice actually, because we had both gas and electricity. I had a room up the back of the house and I had gas I could have a Bunsen burner and it's a wonder I didn't set the house on fire. I was very interested in chemistry and physics and flying, not in the actual technical side.

35:00 I read all these magazines, flying aces, I knew more about the First World War than I knew about anything else, I read the books. All about the marvellous things that they did and knew about, I was going to be a fighter pilot you see. Which was probably good for me in the end because I knew what other fighter pilots might be doing when they were having a go at me. I was able to counter some of their nasty things they were going to do.

35:30 Hitler was quite a remarkable character. The fact that he wrote this book, nobody took any notice of him. I mean it was all right for me not to take any notice. You see before the war they had all these youth camps, everybody could go there and they had hiking and all the sorts of things I was doing as a Scout. Hitler learnt from this, he thought this scouting idea was marvellous, they had the Hitler Youth and

36:00 he model it on the Scouts and of course they were quiet a different thing. The Scouts used to talk about the King and the flag and there wasn't anything to it, in fact I knew what the flag was and how it was made up but I never was brainwashed into it. But of course they were. A lot of their young men, young boys then, became their young men and became their soldiers and their pilots and their Luftwaffe. Their Luftwaffe was very, very good indeed.

36:30 They had the Spanish War we kept out of the war and the pool old Spaniards had to do what they could. The Condor Squadron, the German Squad they learnt their trade, so when they came to attack Britain they had the RAF were professionals but they were only professionals they'd never been in a war, some of them had I mean the top officers had, most of them hadn't,

37:00 but the Germans had been in a war they knew all about what it was all about. They were very good. As I say, see Goering [Hermann Goering, head of the Luftwaffe – German air force] was, you've heard of Von Richthofen [Manfred von Richthofen, World War One fighter pilot], their Red Baron, all that sort of thing, Goering was his 2 I-C in fact after Von Richtofen was shot down Goering took over the squadron. He was a, everything was going nicely and I don't know how

37:30 he got in with this gang, the Nazis, of course they buttered him up and he was probably, he went a bit made I expect. Nobody but a madman would have allowed to be done what was done in Germany. We knew, that was known about all right, but nobody wanted to do much about it, In fact England was fighting for its

38:00 life, there was nothing, until 1942 was the turning point that was when Bomber Command started to bomb Germany and the Germans started to realise that Britain wasn't beaten, and of course they were fighting in Russia and they did the same mistake as Napoleon [Napoleon Bonaparte, French solider and later, emperor], they attacked right up through Russia, got to Moscow as far as Hornsby to Sydney,

38:30 that close, then the winter, terrible. No roads, everything got jammed up, the only thing moving was little Volkswagens and motorbikes, no tanks and they got bogged down. The Russians, everything was mucked up. Joseph Stalin [leader of Russia] was as mad as a snake too, but still, of course I know these things afterwards I didn't know them at the time. All I knew was that Hitler was bogged down or rather the

39:00 was bogged down in Russia and was getting marvellous victories and capturing thousands of prisoners and doing this and doing that and we were jammed in the Middle East. The Middle East looked good as you saw with Rommel [Erwin Rommel, German Field Marshal]. They damned near won there too. See they were very, what I couldn't understand about the Germans is how they did it. A little country about as big as New South Wales and Queensland,

39:30 how did they do it? Just by will, men, men count, not machines, all the time. That's how the Battle of Britain was won, it was men that won that battle not machines. Stakes of aircrafts. The British weren't short of aircraft they were short of men. They had the RAF and the volunteer reserve and they took on

40:00 the Luftwaffe and it was just about evens and then the RAF didn't have any reserves, they were getting blokes like me as reserve we could fly, but we didn't know how to fight with an aircraft. So they were getting worn out. The Germans were doing all the right things, they were bombing the aircraft, the airfields, shooting down, shooting down. Attrition

40:30 was terrific the British were shooting down, nothing like they said, but they were shooting down too many and when a German was shot down he was over England, when a Briton was shot down, if he was alive, they'd get him back maybe he wasn't too badly damaged, patch him up and send him up again. Eventually, see when you're fighting a war you can afford to lose so many people. Bomber Command they reckoned if they lost less than ten per cent,

41:00 one man in ten, they could stand it, start to lose more than that and of course you keep on losing people even though you can replace them with people who aren't so experienced, finally you run out. In the end you've got all inexperience, not quite, not so many experienced, they realised that, Goering realised that, pulled back and bombed London, let the RAF build up

41:30 teach some of these new blokes how to do, when they came back it was different. Luftwaffe was losing all their good pilots too. All these Condor blokes they couldn't replace. Adolph Galland he was a German fighter pilot, some squadron leader, and Goering came to visit him, I've got his book there, and he said,

42:00 "What's wrong with you blokes?"

Tape 2

00:32 **Mr Campbell, I just wanted to concentrate on your childhood and talk about how you used to pass the time as a kid?**

Jeffery Street is just up from the harbour, in fact that where the big vehicular ferries used to come into and go across before the Harbour Bridge was. We spent a lot of time in the water there. In fact I learnt to swim there, nobody taught me

01:00 to swim. Where the big ferries came into the wharf they'd put their propellers on and there'd be a huge turmoil and that would wash up onto a beach. Kids would jump into this and get washed up onto the beach. That's how I learnt to swim. Of course everyone swam the Australian crawl anyway, it was the natural crawl. There were lots of sharks around there but nobody gotten bitten. The dog fell in the water we were terrified, sharks ate dogs. Never

01:30 thought about them eating people. All the big houses around Kirribilli, none of this high rise, big estates there was the PFA, Primary Farmers Association, they had a big store there which was burnt down, this was a big playground, nobody objected to us kids playing in all these places. In fact I used to play in the grounds of Admiralty House. If the gardener saw us they chased us off, but they never did anything to us. We used to slide down the beautiful glaze

02:00 on their path with bits of tins, they didn't like that it used to wear out the grass. We used to build canoes out of galvanised iron, we got a piece of eight foot, bash it out flat, corrugated iron, fill up all the holes and bend up the ends and put a stick across, just like the Aborigines did with bark, and we'd go out on the harbour in that. In fact somebody gave us, in the end, a lovely canoe but around the harbour were oysters everywhere. This is

02:30 1930 water was pretty yucky even then, but clean you could see down through it. Mostly just debris that was in it. Beautiful canoe and it was made of canvass unfortunately, and of course it got torn on the oysters. Then after that model aeroplanes were the thing, and all of us built model aeroplanes, most of them didn't fly, but some of them did.

03:00 Then bushwalking that was a great thing. I was in the Cubs but I was never in the Scouts, I was in the Rovers, I don't know why I missed out on the Scouts, just lost interest probably. I joined the Rovers, only about in the whole of Milsons Point there wouldn't have been ten young fellows of the age of twelve to sixteen.

03:30 Of course there was Aloysius College but they didn't live there, they came to, they wore straw boaters it was very posh. We used to feel very sorry for them having to wear these straw boaters.

Where would you go bushwalking?

Mostly in the mountains. Strangely enough although all this around Sydney I found this after, Kuringai Chase and that, we used to always go to the Blue Mountains.

04:00 Cheap six shillings return and we'd try and pick up a long-weekend if we could, in Australia there are quite a few long weekends as you know. Minimal, if you get a rucksack [backpack], otherwise just a pair of boots, hardly ever took a tent, a bit of a tarp, food we'd carefully work out what we had to eat a menu and that sort of thing, because you had to carry everything. Once you got off

04:30 the blue mountain top you were into valleys and it was very rough going. We got more and more expert, I don't think we ever looked at anything, we went walking. A pity really. We used to try and do about twenty miles a day, walking. We'd work out, we'd walk from here to there and back and the only thing you saw was the track in front of you, if you didn't you'd fall over. When you

05:00 stopped of course you'd look around. The best walk I ever did was just before I joined up with a friend of mine. We took Katoomba, you took a service car out to Jenolan Caves they didn't have buses then, we walked from there right out to Kanangra Walls, camped there, down through Cowmung, out to the silver mine, the Colong Caves were the main thing,

05:30 and we spent a couple of days there exploring the caves with a bit of string and candle. They were undamaged then, this is 1937. Then we walked right along the Burragorang Valley out through to Picton and caught the train to Sydney. Of course that's under Lake Burragorang now. We had a lot of fun. We walked down the Grose several times, go off from Blackheath down into the Blue Gum and down through the Grose to Emu Plains, done that a couple of times.

06:00 Climbed up from the Blue Gum up to the, it was Mount King George then, up to it's now Mount Banks climbed up that and it took longer than we thought and had to spend the night on top of Mount Banks. We got down in the morning. It was a great deal of fun that. Major fit.

With the model aeroplanes that you were making, where would you get them?

Sometimes you get plans,

06:30 you buy the balsa, that was very light wood, and cut it out and make them. Or you'd buy a kit which would have all the materials, you'd put it together and stick it up. Those never flew, they were usually scale models which looked like the original plane but they didn't have the power or an engine all you had was a rubber band inside. The best ones were quite simple things were the stick models, with just a stick, the wings, the tail, the rubber motor and they flew.

07:00 There were some very nice commercial things called 'frogs' and they were rather expensive and you could buy them but they cost a couple of pounds each, beyond our capability. I used to get sixpence a week then as pocket money. After I was working I got six shillings a week. When I started I got a pound a week, I was paid a pound a week and I got six shillings and the rest went to my mother for my keep.

07:30 Six shillings, I didn't know what to do with it. Then of course gas models that's one powered by little motor were coming in, but they were too expensive. Of course then I joined the air force and had real aeroplanes then so I wasn't worried.

You mentioned Smithy's [Charles Kingsford Smith's] plane? What was the story there?

His Lockheed Vega. He couldn't pay the fees at Kingsford-Smith

08:00 Aerodrome, Mascot whatever you like to call it, so they wouldn't let him take off from Mascot. This is on his last flight when he and CPT Ulm went out into the Pacific and never returned. He had his plane down at Neutral Bay Park, now you couldn't take off there are trees there. He had it there, it was all metal, long winged two seater Lockheed Vega and for sixpence you could touch this thing. Children were free actually,

08:30 but to get money to buy petrol probably. He took off and that was the end of him. Never heard of him again. That was quite a thrill, that was the first metal aeroplane I'd ever seen. Most of the others were the older aeroplanes, like a Tiger Moth was fabric and wood, hickory and things like that. I'd never seen a metal

09:00 aircraft until I left Australia, the first one I saw was at Hawaii and Hickam Field Army Air Corps and they had Curtis Tomahawks, in fact they were even going to let one of us fly them until they realised they weren't in the war. There would have been hell to play. They were very nice to us, it was a darn shame really. We'd exchanged badges and things and addresses and wrote

09:30 to them, but they must have all been killed in the Japanese attack. We never heard from them again. It was great fun flying model aeroplanes. Model aeroplanes always fly into trees, invariably I found. If there was a tree there it'd fly into it. It was great fun.

What was it that appealed to you about flying?

Well not particularly

10:00 flying, it was the war. Reading the magazines, flying aces and all this sort of thing, fantastic. I had no

idea about what it would be like, of course, not the faintest. Flying a plane is not very difficult, in fact I think I went solo in six hours. Many people went solo in six hours.

10:30 That's not unusual. That's the difference between flying and being able to fly. I probably didn't have a hundred hours when I got to England. I could fly, and I and all my mates were probably the biggest menaces you ever saw there. There's a saying, "Old pilots, bold pilots, but no old bold pilots," and that's

11:00 true. I'm an old pilot. I was bold for a while, I saw a lot of people killed.

Can I just go back to where you went to school?

Milsons Point Public School, it was called Milsons Point Superior Public School. I don't know why but that's what it had over the front of the door. Of course Milsons Point was virtually destroyed

11:30 by the bridge, I mean they just wrecked the suburb. So it was quite a big school, with very few students, probably still had the same number of teachers. I enjoyed school, I thought it was marvellous I don't remember anything nasty about school at all. That's why it must have been good because I just remember it being nice. I was ready to go to high school at eleven,

12:00 started at five years, six years is eleven, and the headmaster there said to my mother, "He's too young, can't you…?" She said, "We can't afford it." He said, "Yes you know better, if he goes to high school at eleven he'd be too young." So I had a double year, but of course then I was pretty well up I'd had two years of the sixth class, went to high school, that was pretty good too. I didn't have any bother with high school, in fact I like it except Latin.

12:30 I appreciated having learnt Latin afterwards especially in the scientific field.

Whereabouts were you at high school?

North Sydney Boys', it was the only boys high school on the North Shore, that's except for the private schools like Shore and the posh ones, Riverview and that sort of thing. Intermediate high school, don't know why I went to high school, I expect because I was fairly good academically,

13:00 if you were only going as far as intermediate then you went to work, if you wanted to go to university you went to high school and went five years, like now you either matriculated or you got your Leaving Certificate and went into law or medicine or whatever you wanted to go into, science. But after the third year, mother said, "Can't afford any more; you'll have to get a job." It was very hard to get a job then and all my contemporaries were the

13:30 same. It was more simple for a boy like I or them to get a job because of the low pay, they could get us for a pound a week. In fact there were thousands of young men, never had a job went into the army never having had a job. I know that, I was working for the Department of Labour and Industry and they had

14:00 what they called the Subsidised Training Scheme. The idea was they'd get hold of a bunch of employers who would take on a man for a pound a week and they would then subsidise him up to the living wage, three pounds ten. Now he would then, the employer would be obliged to teach him a trade, and as he got more experienced the government paid less and the employer paid more until the end, say four years, he was a tradesman.

14:30 Very good scheme. It was one of my jobs, I had to rush up to the counter and say, "Yes sir, what can I do for you, sir?" These poor chaps would come in, but a lot of them went and joined the army of course before they finished their scheme. But it was a very good scheme and I reckon they could have done it again, could do it again. See nowadays everybody wants to go to the university, nobody wants to be a technician.

15:00 **What other work did you do in that public service job?**

I was a clerk and I had my only little, I was an accounts clerk, I was going to be an accountant, I hated that, I hated the thought. I had two jobs, when these men were going to look for work or going to the employer they didn't give them money, because they'd go to the pub and spend it, they gave them tickets, they were worth money but you could only spend them on transport and stamps.

15:30 Now the had these labour exchanges all over the state and my job was to dole out these tickets in probably ten pound lots, or whatever they asked for, and also stamps. I had over a thousand pounds worth of each of these. I had two thousand pounds and I was earning about thirty shillings a week. They trusted me. I could've driven around on the trams

16:00 and trains for years with what I had there. Of course I didn't take it seriously, I'd get a requisition in and I'd send them out. Anyway, one of the accountants said to me, "The auditors are coming next week you'd better get your accounts into order." I said, "What's an auditor?" He said, "He's coming to look at your books." I said, "Oh." He said, "You'd better make sure that if you sent out too much you'll have to put in." I thought,

16:30 "Put it in at thirty shillings a week!" I went through it and I was ten pounds short on stamps. The stamps were worthless because they were perforated and they were still that much money. I went up,

“Look I’m ten pounds short.” “Oh you must have sent somebody ten pounds too much,” a sheet of stamps. “Write to all the exchanges and ask them if they’ve got too many stamps.” So I did and one sent me back.

17:00 Then I went through my stuff again and I found I wasn’t short, I had the right amount. So I ten pounds too much. I went up, “I’ve got ten pounds too much. What do I do?” He said, “That’s just as bad.” He said, “Put them on your desk somewhere.” The auditors want it; we used to spend hours looking for a halfpenny to get the thing right. These accountants, oh God.

17:30 They made sure, they made me there were three examinations to get to the top of the public service at that time, Regulation 116, 119, 122. If you had those three you could be Under Secretary to the Minister, the boss of the department. Very few ever got to the 122 because it was rather tough. I got the 116 no trouble, they gave me the 119 before the war, I didn’t go back to the public service.

18:00 I was in the public service still, but I was a forester. So it didn’t count.

Those men coming in to get those stamps, did they tell you stories about how the Depression was impacting on them?

Not at all. They just came in and they wanted a job. I didn’t deal with them of course I was just the front man and I was, “I’ll get one of my superiors to come out.” I’d get out the file that was about all. He’d taken this and we’ve got this, this and this

18:30 could you go to that and they’d probably take anything at all. Then they’d go, “I’ve issued so many stamps to them,” and they’d go off and if the employer and they hit it off then the thing would go ahead. Every shop and business had to be registered, still has I suspect, and money used to come in. They had a cashier and they’d have thousands

19:00 and thousands of pounds. He gave me a hundred pound note said, “Go down to the bank and get this changed.” Gave me a bit of paper of what he wanted. A hundred pound note, I’d never seen a hundred pound note before. That was sixty weeks work and I’m holding this note. Went down to the bank just across the road and the teller says, “Oh yes, how are you?”

19:30 pulled out a roll of hundred pound notes and clipped it on. Still dazed when I got back, hundred pound note equivalent to what now? Five hundred dollars I suspect, a thousand dollars I’m sorry.

Were you aware at that stage of how difficult the Depression was for many people?

Not really. Didn’t have a clue.

20:00 It was just accepted. All these empty houses were great fun because if you could break into one and look around and that sort of thing, not that we did that very much because there was nothing in them anyway, but they were available. I main income was collecting bottles, everybody had a billy cart, they could make one, and the were great fun you could go down hills and go

20:30 around scouring the neighbourhood for anything you could sell or get money for bottles, bottles were money. Beer bottles was a halfpenny, if we could find a pint whiskey it was worth threepence, a quart was worth sixpence, that’s a week’s wages for me, a week’s pocket money I mean. So every bottle, actually it was very dangerous because the bottles in those days if you broke them you’d cut your feet. Everybody

21:00 went barefooted, not because they didn’t have shoes, because they preferred to. My mother used to go mad, had the shoes to go to school in and I’d take them off when I got there. Anything at all, in fact I still collect everything. There used to be men come around – of course threepences were valuable bottles – you had to go to the pub

21:30 with them, you’d have to sit outside the pub and wait for a nice looking bloke would come along and take the bottle and get you the threepence or sixpence. They mostly did, I never got rooked by it, not that I found many of them either. Of course fruit was free virtually, stacks of fruit trees around. The fruit fly didn’t come in until about the mid 1930s people used to have fruit trees never picked the fruit and if we pinched it they never worried.

22:00 We knew where all the fruit trees were and all these big estates, we knew about macadamia nuts long before they were commercially available just because they were nuts. People had macadamia nut trees growing in the back yard as an ornamental tree, a pretty tree. Awful things to break of course. We used to go swimming, catch fish if you could, fishing that was another pastime.

22:30 Never caught many fish, and yet there were some people who were gifted in that way, I’d be fishing for hours and some people would just catch a fish, just like that, every time almost. They just knew how to do it. Of course that punt was a marvellous play thing, really, even after it stopped working because after the bridge was built of course it stopped working. We never interfered with the bridge, I mean we never tried to get in there,

23:00 of course they had a big fence around it, we could have got in easily, we were a bit scared actually in case we were seen.

Could you tell me about the punt before the bridge was built?

The main road came down a beautiful curve, a big concrete road, still there of course beside that big swathe of green, you know the ventilator along there, that came out to two big finger wharves, three

23:30 actually and the two punts would be operating. We called them punts, they were vehicular ferries and there'd be one coming in and one going out. They'd come in and let the front down and they'd take big lorries, quite big lorries would go on, lots of cars, I don't know what the toll was, probably two shillings I don't know. Then they'd go over to Milsons Point and the same thing would happen there.

24:00 All day long and during the night they were only doing it infrequently. I saw my first hijack there. When they were going out of the ferry the big lorries weren't like modern lorries with huge engines they'd go up very, very slowly up this big slope. One of our mobs [group] was a bit of a doer, an Arnott's biscuit truck went past, going up the road it was only doing about two miles an hour

24:30 chugging up this road. He hopped in the back and throwing out packets of biscuits, little devil. We used to hang on to the backs of these trucks and go for a ride. It was the first time I saw a hijack. I won't say his name. None of us were game to do it, he probably did it to show how clever he was, he didn't do it more than once, that was the only time I saw him do it. We spent a lot of time around that,

25:00 there was a nice sandy beach beside it too which was kept very clean by the wash of the ferry coming in all the time. Now one time I went down there and there were a lot of men with sieves under the wharf, money, the Depression you see. People had dropped their change and of course the planks had big gaps, fallen down. I don't know how much money they got but they were there for a fair while.

25:30 We would never have thought of that and anyway we didn't have a sieve to do it. Every now and again you'd hear them shout, they'd found a sixpence or a two bob. I caught a poor little octopus, a big octopus, once I speared the thing. There was a chap on the wharf up above and he says, "I'll give you two bob for that," I raced up, he took it off the spear and turned it inside out as they do. Never saw another octopus after

26:00 that. Poor old octopus. All around there, all that front, it was a built up front except one part was natural, that's where ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation] used to be. They may be there still, that's in Kirribilli, just down from Kirribilli House. There's Admiralty House and Kirribilli House just behind it, that's where old Howard [John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia] is boarding at the moment.

26:30 **What are your memories of the bridge being built and you mentioned that Milsons Point was badly affected?**

Yes well they actually just razed the ground, practically. That great swathe where the bridge is was all houses. More than half the suburb.

Do you remember that happening, the bulldozer?

No, I was about,

27:00 I was a baby anyway. I don't remember that, I'd be a toddler. Of course the bridge didn't appear for quite a few years, I mean they were doing all kinds of things behind that fence and then suddenly the things came out of that and the pylons went up. I walked across it when it opened in 1932, but it was just there all the time getting more and more and more.

27:30 **What are you memories of walking across it when it opened?**

It was marvellous. At the first they didn't have any guardrails in the walkways and a number of people jumped over to suicide, in fact they did afterwards too. It was very thrilling because you got up on the side and looked over and the water straight below. They didn't have, you weren't allowed to walk over the arch then,

28:00 unfortunately, that would have been a thrill. I've been up in the towers of course. Every fortnight at least we used to walk over there to the Queen Victoria Buildings where the library, the Municipal Library. There was a water driven lift, a hydraulic lift. Most of the lifts in Sydney worked by water, hydraulic at that stage. Big pumping station, not electric but water.

28:30 The one in the Queen Victoria Building was very smooth, you pulled a rope and opened a valve and just like a thing that lifts up the cars. Only about two or three stories. A big open cavernous building then, half used, the library was, well there were very libraries then, that was the Municipal Library. I suspect that we were in the Municipality of Sydney. Quite a good library. I know I read every

29:00 book which had the name 'island' in it, and my ambition was wrecked on an deserted island. I don't know how I was going to get wrecked because I never went on a ship. My canoes never got anywhere near an island. I always used to always carry a pouch with me with seeds of corn, wheat and various other things and I always carried a knife. I read Robinson Crusoe and all

29:30 these other, everything with an 'island' in it and get as much information on a desert island as I could. Lucky I wasn't in the army I might have got a nasty shock about desert islands, what they were really like. Closest I got was Pago Pago. It was rather funny. They let us off the boat when we were gong to America at Fiji, they wouldn't let us go ashore at Pago Pago

30:00 I don't know why, maybe they thought they wouldn't get us back with all those dusky maidens [slang for lady with dark skin] or something. I don't think they'd have been that much of a temptation, everyone wanted to go to Canada. They let us off at Hawaii or Oahu as it is. I think we spent two days, New Zealand first they let us off there, Fiji let us off there, Pago Pago didn't let us off there, let us off at Hawaii

30:30 for two days, this is a cruise ship, we were going for a cruise. Beautiful ship, the Mariposa.

We might talk about that journey a bit later on. You mentioned that when the bridge was opened you walked across. Were you there on the day it was officially opened?

I was there, but I didn't see the ribbon get cut. I was in the background. There was a great to do about that wasn't there,

31:00 poor old Mr Lang [Premier of New South Wales, Jack Lang] and De Groot [Captain Francis De Groot]. There was a great mass waiting to go of course, great thrill.

What was that day like? What was the ceremony? What could you see?

We couldn't see anything except they had a dais and of course the actual thing took place down on the roadway of the bridge, the end of the bridge

31:30 we they were back somewhere, there's a great kafuffle [scuffle] went off and everybody thought, "Well," you know, but they wouldn't let us go you see because this bloke had ridden up on his horse and slashed the ribbon. They had to join it together so the poor old bloke could cut it with his scissors. That all came out afterwards we didn't know that of course. The crowd surged on and off we went. I think my mother, my father carried my young brother, he was small enough, on his shoulders across,

32:00 as they went across. It was rather funny, when I went away I could carry my brother, I went away in 1941 when I got back he was bigger than I was. Still only a lad.

You mentioned the empty houses that were around, what had happened to those families?

32:30 Couldn't afford the rent. In fact the place where we were there was a terrace of three houses, two storey and big cellar had big coppers [large pots used for boiling clothes] in those days and you had to feed them with wood, toilet right down the end of the backyard, because before that they used to have 'night cart men' [toilet waste was collected by night cart men] and they had lanes and

33:00 when they put the sewer on that's where the toilet was. In fact it's still there, it's 28 Jeffrey Street, and I believe it's going for about one and half million dollars. It's right opposite St Aloysius, about two hundred yards from Milsons Point station, a hundred yards from the wharf, Jeffrey Street. When I went to work, I used to catch the boat from Jeffrey Street across to Circular Quay,

33:30 lovely, beautiful way to go to work across the harbour and back again. The best part of the day, going to wok and I'd walk up from there to, the Labour Industry was in Martin Place. Anyway while I was working there, of course, the war started in 1939, and of course all the young men started to enlist and they said,

34:00 "Would you like to be the Minister's Secretary?" And I said, "There's a lady up there, she's the secretary." "That's right, she does all the work but you've got to have a man there." I said, "Right." "Only for an hour a day while you do the mail." Anyway I went up and of course this young lady, I don't know how old she was, she was older than me and she knew what was what all right. She accepted this business that

34:30 she couldn't be in charge, she did all the work. Anyway I was there for was to sort the mail and open it, rubbish and then she dealt with the mail I didn't do anything. One morning I came in and there was a Financier, called Walcott Forbes, and he was doing what these blokes are doing now, and all these other blokes.

35:00 I came in and I said to the lady, "Where's the Minister?" because he was always very punctual, he was there at half past eight before we got there. She said, "He's dead." I said, "He's dead?" She said, "He fell out the window." The parapet on the window was six feet wide you couldn't possibly fall, you'd have to walk over this and jump. I didn't say anything and she said, "Yes, I know."

35:30 I said ,"Poor chap." She said, "Apparently he got mixed up with Walcott Forbes." So he committed suicide.

Who was the minister?

I forgot, I'd have to look it up in a history book, it would've been 1940. They terminated my services after that, they probably thought I'd be indiscreet. Another

36:00 thing, it's rather funny. They had a big coal strike during the start of the war and they wanted a junior clerk to do some clerical work and they sent me down to the Loans Department. I had a beautiful big room and big table and the Coal Distribution, I was the clerk and they had a secretary, he was a man this time.

36:30 I used to get in all the figures on the coal production, I'd put them in and the secretary would take this up and all these big wads would come up and they'd decide where the coal was going to be distributed. Anyway the poor chap got the flu and I'm there by myself. "I can't get another secretary, you'll have to do it." So I said, "What do I do?" "Just the same as usual, just do it." I made up the schedule, when they

37:00 all come, "Where's the secretary?" I said, "I'm sorry." "It doesn't matter. Give us the stuff." And they got it and they burst out laughing, I said, "What's wrong?" "You've got the coal at 4,000 tons. That couldn't be. 50 tons is more like it." I said, "The total's all right." They said, "It's all right; we're only joking." I'd put the wrong thing against the wrong, I didn't know a colliery or coal, all I knew was coal was black and that's all. I was good at figures, but

37:30 just not putting them in the right column. That was rather good.

Were there many strikes at the beginning of the war?

Only that one that I know of. I don't know why that was on probably over the wages, the wages were very low. Of course that was the only they could get any justice I suppose by striking. It didn't last very long, it lasted about a fortnight because that's all I was there. It wasn't a total strike, they were still producing some coal otherwise I wouldn't have had

38:00 these figures of how many tonnes to put down, but it wasn't at full production, probably threatening to cut the coal right off if they didn't, and they must have settled it. One thing was rather funny, not funny really, but there was a referendum on conscription. The Conservative Government wanted to bring in Conscription

38:30 and I was eighteen and you didn't get the vote until you were twenty one then, if you were in the service you got the vote. I would say that all our people voted absolutely 'no'. There was no conscription except of course the militia. Now the militia, what we used to call the Chockos, chocolate soldiers, were young fellows who did their, there were the regulars,

39:00 anyway, these young blokes were only meant to be the defence of Australia, internal defence. When the Japs [Japanese] came and landed in New Guinea they sent these young fellows up to Kokoda on the Kokoda Trail. Fortunately they had good officers and they were pretty, they were young they were tough, the Japs were not good jungle fighters, there's all sorts of baloney about the Japs being good jungle fighters, it's all baloney.

39:30 There was only one sort of good jungle fighter in the world at the time and that was the Australians.

Why did most people in the services vote 'no' against conscription?

We were volunteers we didn't see why anyone should go, if you wanted to go you could volunteer. Shouldn't be forced. That's what we're up against with old Howard, Menzies [Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia] in the Vietnam War, don't ask me too much about that. It's always been an Australian tradition to be a volunteer

40:00 that's why we've got such a good army.

Do you remember when war broke out and what you were doing that day?

Not really. Heavens above, probably flying a model aeroplane or something. It was far away. You see Germany didn't declare war on England, England declared war on Germany.

40:30 Don't think it meant very much at that stage. We were all a long way away you know. Thirteen thousand miles away. Shortly after I was very annoyed actually. I enjoyed bush walking and doing that sort of thing, I didn't like the job much but it gave me a lot of time,

41:00 I could plan my next walk while I was working as well. But when the war came I knew that sooner or later I was going to be in it. I couldn't think of a good excuse to stay out of it. Terrible adventure. To get my hands on one of those aeroplanes, I read about them you see, once the Battle of Britain, Dunkirk was a

41:30 terrible low, we thought that Britain and France were going to walk all over Germany, and of course other things happened, absolute reverse. We couldn't believe it. Dunkirk, wasn't a miracle, Hitler let them go.

Tape 3

00:33 **Mr Campbell you were talking on the tape before about volunteering can you explain to me what your reasons were for volunteering for the RAAF?**

One to get my hands on one of those aircraft, those Spitfires or Hurricanes, two the adventure, terrible adventure, eighteen absolutely

01:00 clueless, pretty clueless now but I was absolutely clueless then and I've always been for the underdog, I reckon England was in real, was, we were losing. I was sorry for the Germans when they were losing too. Silly isn't it?

01:30 I was pleased that they were losing of course, but I was sorry for them. That was the main thing, the adventure, the most horrific adventure. I mean free travel, especially in the Mariposa I went across first class, they even put three of us in a two berth cabin, I'd never been on a ship, a cruise liner.

02:00 Went to these places, Fiji, exotic places and Hawaii and wondering around and seeing all the American stuff. Absolutely unprepared, dreadful really. They should have known but they didn't.

02:30 Then of course the second one I got fed up waiting around Bournemouth waiting to be, I knew that eventually that I'd be okay, but at the time they were building up squadrons you can't just get ten planes and ten pilots and say, "Off you go." The administration everything, cooks, everybody, might be a hundred men that you've got to get together to put ten men in the air, so it takes a long while even forty, our courses come along with twenty people

03:00 all the organisation. When the chap came along and wanted volunteers I presumed that things would act fast and they did act fast, very fast after that. I didn't have the faintest clue what his unit was except it was going to have the best aircraft, which was quite true and there was going to be plenty of action which was quite true. That was I knew about it. Of course when I got to the squadron eventually I found out he was quite right.

03:30 We did have the best aircraft. I did 95 operations and I flew 86 different aircraft, I scarcely ever flew the same aircraft again, once I'd flown the aircraft I never saw it again.

What did your parents think about you joining the RAAF?

I don't think they thought much about it. I don't think they liked it. I just came home and said, "I'm going to enlist," and my father said, "Oh,

04:00 do you know what its all about?" I said, "No." What could he do? They were patriotic I suspect. I never really thought, eighteen, people now think, I haven't got a clue how old you are, think about what you were like when you were eighteen.

04:30 I hadn't got a clue. It was going to be wonderful, I was a bit apprehensive of course because I'd read those books too, but not me.

When you were eighteen, what sort of a pilot did you want to be?

Oh fighter pilot, there was only one sort, you know the Battle of Britain, I was going to be an ace. Of course all the books and things that you read about they were always

05:00 fighter pilots and aces and shot down people right, left and centre, and never got hurt and if they did they always got out of it miraculously. When I got to the reality of it, might not happen that way, but it didn't, I can't imagine why. Crazy. That's what I say, I know a lot more

05:30 now, it's a saying, 'Never volunteer', even if it's just peeling potatoes, be told to do it then you're not your responsibility you see. If you're told to do something, once you've volunteered it's your responsibility. As I say nobody ever gave an order, just, "That's the target, that's the plane."

Had you see many newsreels of the war when you enlisted?

06:00 Thrilling. Oh yes everyone was winning, especially us, they never showed the ones of the losing, except Dunkirk and that was a triumph you see, but it wasn't really. Of course they got the blokes back, it was a marvellous thing. As I say it was by courtesy of Herr Hitler that they were allowed to do it. I mean there were enormous air battles going on overhead

06:30 and the British rear guard were fighting, thought they were stopping the Germans but they were just shooting them down of course. If the Panzers [German tanks] had come in on the beaches they'd have blocked them out completely. Oh yes I saw the Battle of Britain about the British shooting down sixteen planes in a day and they shot down forty two. In actuality, I've read the books since

07:00 and I know about Bomber Command and what the casualties were then, but during the time never heard anything about casualties. I know that Bomber Command lost two thousand four hundred bombers in 1943, never heard anything about that except when one C-in-C [Commander-in-Chief] told me one night that he'd lost a hundred out of six hundred. Never, only for propaganda you never heard about it. The gallant ones

07:30 going out and going out, plenty more, Empire Air Training Scheme, they fed them in by the thousands, marvellous, in fact that was what overcame the Luftwaffe, the Luftwaffe didn't have that kind of scheme. We had rest after you'd done so many ops you went on rest, the Germans didn't they just kept flying their men until they died, and they did, just wore them out. Of course they also had Russia in their hair. That's really it

08:00 the adventure. Very frightening at times. Like heading yourself on the head with a hammer, nice when

you stop. There you are. Awful isn't it?

What happened immediately after you enlisted?

They sent us to this Bradfield Park, where there are several high rise buildings now, a CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific Industry Research Organisation] research station out there too, and

08:30 taught us how to march and do all sorts of funny things. Taught us a bit of navigation, maths and said, "Now discipline in the air force discipline is from within, we don't impose discipline. Discipline is from within." Terrific psychology isn't it? We're not going to tell you what to do, how you behave

09:00 is up to you. When you're eighteen you believe it.

So how did you behave?

As well as I could. As well as I could get away with. I was never terribly naughty. If I could get off and do something I would do it, but I always came back to the fold,

09:30 I never thought of deserting or refusing a job, never said, "I won't do it," or if they said, "That's it," I did it regardless. "England expects."

In those early days at Bradfield Park, how much was practical and how much was classroom?

The marching was, you've got to have some sort of parade, occasionally they have parade. The air

10:00 force are terrible at parade because they don't know how to do it. We had to know how to turn around and march about and drill instructions. They taught us a bit of maths and navigation, that was quite useful. We weren't there for very long, only for about three or four weeks and then off to Elementary Flying Training School, which was very good indeed of course. I had excellent instructors, as far as I know they were excellent for me. I was a very good boy

10:30 I did what I was told and tried to do the right thing. Wasn't very good at it I didn't think, but apparently I was good enough because they wanted to get rid of us as quickly as possible. I mean a Tiger Moth is a lovely little aeroplane easy to fly, very hard to fly properly, there's a lot of difference. Like driving a motorcar, you drive a motor car properly and observe all the dangers and what not, that's different.

11:00 If you can fly a Tiger Moth properly, you're pretty right, other planes won't be more difficult, in fact a lot easier. First thing of course you had to go solo, that's fly the plane by yourself, most people, I did mine in about six hours flying, most of them did around six, seven, eight hours and then of course you did cross country, doing the aerobatics and how to get out of a spin and all the things you're supposed to on aeroplanes. That's it, that's all they can teach you. You

11:30 can fly a plane. Absolute menace now, because you can fly it straight into a Church steeple or you can fly it properly and a lot of people did fly them into Church steeples too. So they sent us off to Service Flying Training, some stayed in Australia, but most went to Canada to advance. We flew a metal aircraft which

12:00 almost like a fighter except it didn't have guns and it wasn't as fast and nothing was quite as good, but it had everything a fighter would have. Of course you weren't finished there. Did you want to ask me anything more about that?

Yes. Was the Tiger Moth the first aircraft you went up in?

Yes.

Can you describe how that felt?

Oh fantastic. Frightening and fantastic at the same time, to suddenly

12:30 find that you're in the air and fortunately there's another bloke there, the actual man in charge of the plane sits in the front and the, no sorry the instructor sits in the front and the pilot sits in the back. You hope that the bloke has got control of this thing because you obviously know nothing at all. Slowly and surely he introduces you to the control and you get up a couple of thousand feet so if anything happens you can get,

13:00 and he slowly lets you fly the plane around for a couple of hours like that, doing various things until you become accustomed to what this things all about. Of course once you get the feel of a plane you're part of it, you can fly. You mightn't be able to fly very well but you've got the feel of it. The plane and you are one, those controls mean something.

13:30 You've got a few instruments up there that's a bit more difficult you've got to learn them too. Until you get the actual feel the instructor wouldn't dare let you go up by yourself of course, but he can tell that too. Once he gets you going he'll take his hands and feet off the controls and let you do it, all the while if you do anything wrong to go back quickly. I was an instructor later on myself and I know this too, you can tell when a person is actually flying a plane

14:00 or not got the feel. It's not very hard to fly a plane, in fact these modern aircraft are a piece of cake. No more harder than a, there's more to flying a plane than guiding it around the sky. Landing is much

easier with a tricycle undercarriage, all our aeroplanes landed like that, very hard. The Americans were much more advanced they had tricycles undercarriages so you came down which was a much better idea.

So can you describe what it was like when you first had to land a plane on your own?

14:30 Very frightening because you knew you could do it, because you'd done it with that bloke with you, but he wasn't there and if you made a mistake you knew to go around again and do it again. That was the big thing. That's again, if you know enough to go around again, have another go don't try and force it, that's when you crash. Always have

15:00 another go.

How long had you been in training before you actually flew solo?

Six hours. That's a long while. You think of driving around in a motor car for six hours, and you're under instruction, not just being told that you didn't do that right you do this. Ten hours was considered quite

15:30 reasonable. In fact if you went to an instructor now they'd probably make you do ten hours, to be sure, because they have more instruments in a modern aircraft you've got to do all that, and also the business of landing in an airfield. We had a great big open paddock. In fact to see twenty air craft at dinner time all converging on this strip. No airfield control at all, all landing. Never had any crashes, don't know why,

16:00 not crashes, but just coming together, all coming home at once, all painted yellow, of course, so they were easy to see. Seemed like a lot flies coming in. Self-preservation; they weren't going to hurt one another. It's a great thrill and that's the thrill, flying to me now is

16:30 I mean I like going in a big aeroplane, like looking out the window but I wouldn't like the effort of flying the great damn thing at the front, I think that is worth every penny he's getting that pilot up there. If he can take it off and land it safely and in between then okay.

What were you told about where you were going when you left Sydney?

Nothing.

17:00 In case of course something happened and we weren't concerned we knew we were going to Canada, but it's a big place Canada. We didn't know we were going to Camp Borden until we arrived into Canada and it's just off Toronto. We went right across by train, marvellous actually. CPR Canadian Pacific Railways, went from Vancouver to Toronto. We knew nothing about anything really. The trains had double-glazing in the windows

17:30 because of the cold and we were trying to open these damned windows, in fact one of us smashed one and then were was more glass, then we realised it was double glazing. The first time many of us had seen snow. First time I'd ever seen snow. It started to snow as we went across Canada, eased off as we went to Toronto, Niagara Falls is just near there.

18:00 They took us around Toronto a bit, but then it started to snow and I never saw Canada really, except snow. Snow, snow, ice, snow. Very cold, cold, cold. In fact we arrived there with Australian winter gear on, overcoats and things and might as well had nothing. Canadians soon found out of course and they equipped us with coats, they coats with blanket stuff inside and proper

18:30 boots, proper caps you pull down over your ears, it was about minus ten. It was all right the planes were heated of course. They had to keep, the planes were kept in warm hangars and they put a big blanket over the front of them and blew hot air into the engine before they started to start it. Freezing cold. If your motorcar, when we arrived the course before us was leaving and they had an old car, when I say an old car it wasn't that old,

19:00 probably only a couple of years old. They sold it to us for five pounds at the time. We knew nothing about motorcars and cold weather. We drove it into the pictures, went to the pictures and came out several hours, couldn't start that car and it never started again. It was frozen solid. The snowplough pushed it down the side street and when we left Canada, met some people, "You can have that." They

19:30 wrote to us and said, "The car was all right once we got it out and got it thawed." A lot of ice Canada. A lovely place though. There was a chap there and just like Father Christmas, red cheeks, and his job he used to go out on, there was a big lake there the ice was about ten feet thick, you could drive over it on a motor car. He cut blocks of ice out and he had a big barn, straw lined,

20:00 and he'd store it for the summertime and sell it to people for their ice chests. That was his job. Cut it in the winter, sell it in the winter. Of course before the war we used to have an ice chest, there were no refrigerators or very few. There were refrigerating plants which made ice, but there were no household refrigerators or very few.

How difficult did the climate conditions make flying?

20:30 Well apart from starting an aircraft up, snow we weren't used to snow. Australia has a very good record for crashes, except for light aircraft, light aircraft they can fly but they can't fly, there's a lot more to

flying a plane than flying plane. We weren't used to that snow.

21:00 When it snowed and you're flying along you can't see anything, just snow. So you've got to fly on instruments, that was very frightening. I had a crash taking off, it used to snow and it would be about that thick and they'd bring out these huge rollers on a tractor like a thousand gallon tank, for water I suspect, and they'd roll this stuff down flat and it would come to about that thick. Then the sun would

21:30 come out and sometimes some would be softer than others and it would melt. You'd have a pool and it would melt right down. You might have a pool that deep. Now the control tower was supposed to make sure that this is marked these things off, anyway three of us were taking off together and my undercarriage fell into one of these and went straight up and the propeller came down onto the ground.

22:00 I wasn't hurt at all except I was hanging, of course you're all strapped in and in a parachute and I'm hanging. The only time I got hurt was when I hit the button, hit my face on the instrument panel. My aircraft was a bit of a mess, the propeller anyway. It wasn't my fault fortunately, it was the control tower's fault. I didn't feel too happy about it. They were some of the hazards, but apart from that.

22:30 That was my first crash, that was a mild crash, I was only doing forty or fifty miles an hour when it happened and of course the plane just went straight up, vertical, propeller still going, but it stopped pretty quick. I thought I was going to get scrubbed [killed], but I wasn't. They were anxious to get us across to England as quickly as they could too. If you

23:00 could fly and of course that was Service Flying Training, and that was flying a metal aircraft like a fighter. If I was going to be a fighter pilot, when I got to the Advance Flying and other planes like a Spitfire, then you'd go to an OTU where you actually flew the plane, it might be your plane, which you were going to fly,

23:30 equipped with canons and the whole shebang [all the equipment].

So what aircraft were you flying in training in Canada?

Yale, North American Yales. Now the Yale was a less, didn't have a retractable undercarriage, didn't have a variable pitch propeller, it was slightly less sophisticated than the Harvard. After the Universities Harvard and Yale I suspect. The Harvard had everything. It had

24:00 retractable undercarriage, hydraulic flaps, variable pitch propeller, the whole thing a Spitfire would have, but wasn't as sophisticated nor as fas or anything as a Spitfire, it was way down the line. It was a very nice aircraft. Had several vices which you had to watch out for.

What were they?

If you stalled it when you were coming in, it had a tendency to turn over on its back, which is very unpleasant,

24:30 but you knew about that. When you're coming in to land just before you hit the ground you're in a state of stall, that means the aircraft is going to fall down like that, that's the ideal, if you do it properly only a few inches off the ground and there you are. If you are twenty feet off the ground you've made a mistake and the plane would fall like that, tend to fall over on its wing and fall upside down. Of course you should never do that and I never saw it done.

25:00 I was told it could. So you'd make damned sure you didn't do it. Now a Spitfire wouldn't. You'd come and be a hundred feet above the ground, if you stalled it would just come down straight, of course you'd wreck the undercarriage. Spitfire had no vices, none. It's amazing, tell you about that later.

Were you asked in Canada to nominate for a particular command?

No. You didn't know until you got to England and what

25:30 you'd be doing. They'd came around asking for volunteers, another bloke might come around, "Why don't you come to my squadron? I'm doing so-and-so." I don't know how they did it, I was completely innocent, here I was, "Take me." "Take me to your squadron" kind of thing. All of them were I

26:00 wasn't just the only one, they were all sitting there, you know. Of course we knew that Operation Sea Lion was on, the Germans were massing across the Channel. Always anxious to get, actually what they did they sent us to various army units, whether it was for morale or to give us some idea and I went to the Welsh Fusiliers, that was an

26:30 Infantry Battalion, I went to the Guards, which are tanks, rode around in a tank and shot off guns, couldn't hit anything, they thought it was a great joke if I was going to be a fighter pilot I couldn't hit the tank. I went to a Commando Training School, that was marvellous. Learnt how to kill people and lots of things, had to blow up a tank with my bare hands and all sort of, that was wonderful.

27:00 **Might talk about that a bit later. Just wanted to go back to that trip from Sydney up to Canada. Can you tell me about the first place you stopped?**

New Zealand. We got off at New Zealand, three of us were mates and we wondered around, nothing

much to do. Too young to be interested in the girls probably, they also weren't interested in us I don't know.

27:30 What we were trying to do was pinch a policeman's helmet. They had those English helmets, the New Zealanders had these helmets. We were following this poor old policeman around and he turned around to us and said, "What are you doing?" We said, "We're trying to get your helmet" and he said, "All right." End of that.

28:00 He knew we were just some kids. We didn't do anything really, we looked around. A nice place New Zealand but what could we do? We were equipped to be tourists

What were you being paid at this stage?

More than I was at work. I was

28:30 a Leading Aircraftsman at that stage, LAC, and I had a white thing in my cap which meant I was air crew, poor old ground staff didn't like that very much because the white meant that we were, but that was a sock to us. About I think nine shillings a day, three guineas a week three pounds three a week. That's

29:00 more than I was getting, I was getting two pounds a week at work, three pounds three a week in the air force. Leading Aircraftsmen. After I got my wings I was a sergeant and after that I had no idea what I was getting paid quite truthfully, paid into a bank account I didn't get paid, before that I got paid. No I really don't know what I, see the thing

29:30 is you're clothed, fed, good lodgings anything else, I expect I could have spent all my money, I must have spent it. They used to take, used to keep a certain amount called Deferred Pay out of your so if you got back you'd have some money. I used to make my mother an allowance of five shillings a day, so I must have been making a fair bit. I really have no idea what I was

30:00 from after that. That was enough for me to think about three guineas, after that it was too much, too much money. I had nothing to spend it on really.

Did you take any personal items with you on that trip?

Very little. I don't think anything. Oh sorry, sleeping bag. When I went bushwalking you had to have a sleeping bag of course and they were very expensive so I made one,

30:30 my mother made it really, and it was silk and stuffed with feathers and down and I took that with me. I don't know whether I brought it back or whether it was worn out by then. I took it to France. Didn't really need it in England except up in Scotland it was terribly cold place. Snow up there too

31:00 and then it melts, it's horrible. That's the only thing, my sleeping bag. Everything else I had, they gave me a wrist watch as a send off present from work and I had that pinched at Narrandera, I was stupid I had no idea, I hung it up in the ablutions, washing up place they call ablutions, hung it up there in front of me, washed, I didn't shave until I was,

31:30 I don't think, until I was on the squadron, I was a boy a smooth faced boy. Anyway of course somebody nicked it. Who it was I don't know. I bought in Canada a little old pocket watch for twelve and six and I kept that all through the war that really was mine, that was my personal gear. I was issued with the most beautiful wristwatch

32:00 when I was a navigator, when you qualify as a navigator you get a bubble sextant, beautiful sextant and a navigational wrist watch. I had to hand the damned thing in when I got back. Could have kept the sextant , don't know why I didn't.

What can you do with a navigational wristwatch?

It's very accurate. Had to be wound every four hours, supposedly, they said that to us

32:30 and everybody said, "You reckon I'm going to get up at four o'clock in the morning to wind my watch?" and they said, "No. Listen to the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] for the time signals." See when you are doing astronavigation by the stars or the sun, the second arc is a mile, so if you're wrist watch is out by one second you're out by one mile. So you must have an accurate watch. Of course if you set it by the BBC on the time signal,

33:00 it's not going to be more than a second out in a few hours when you fly. Some of the big aircraft, the nav [navigation] school I went to they were training people to fly things like Sunderland Flying Boats or Liberators and they'd be up fourteen or fifteen hours and of course they could listen to the BBC, listen to radio if they wanted to and get the time signal to set it on. I don't know why I was trained in navigation to that extent.

33:30 There was no way I was navigating in a Spitfire, no way at all, purely what we call Dead Reckoning, DR, if you're not right you're dead.

Can you explain why it's impossible to navigate on a Spitfire?

It’s not impossible, I did it all the time. It’s not possible to do any proper navigation. Our navigation was done with a watch, compass and a map and that’s it.

34:00 That’s what I did when I was with Tiger Moths. I knew how to do all the other things and I could have gone in the Sunderlands, navigated the Sunderlands. It’s just you’ve got all your to do to fly the plane. Dead Reckoning first of all from where you are and where you want to go to, you’ve got to know the

34:30 wind, you’ve got to rely on your met people to tell you what the wind is. If they’re wrong, you’re in real trouble. You’re only going to be up for four or five hours, so quite often, eighty per cent of the time they’re going to be correct, twenty per cent of the time you might be in real trouble. If you know the wind, you can calculate, you’ve got to know how to do this, if you want to fly from here to there and you’re coming from there you’ve got to fly into the wind.

35:00 You’re plane will be pointing that way, so you’ve got to calculate that course, you’ve got to travel along this track. Now you’ve got a map, you’ve got to be able to read a map absolutely to know where you are on the ground, we’d be flying up twenty thousand feet up, four or five miles up. The thing is laid out on the map, it doesn’t look anything like the map you’ve got of course, it’s real ground and the map’s a representation. So you’re along the track

35:30 you mark off and you fly along. It’s all up here. If you’re wrong, the wind is wrong, and it’s cloud covered and you don’t see the ground at all, it means you’ve got no reference, you’re in real trouble.

So what do you do?

If you’re lucky

36:00 and your radio happens to be working, when you get back to where you think you are you call up and see if you are and quite often you’re not. Maybe you’re right over the Atlantic and you’re heading for North America. That’s it. Just got to be able to do it. It happened a few times. They didn’t send us out in weather which was too bad because you couldn’t take any photographs, had to be reasonably good. Sometimes they did,

36:30 Bomber Command wanted photographs we would go out willy-nilly, then it got bad. Sometimes it was ten tenths cloud right up the Russian front and you couldn’t see a thing. Fortunately for me the little radio, the vhf radio did work otherwise I would have gone off to America probably, somewhere out in the Atlantic. I’ll tell you about that later.

When you left Sydney what sort of a farewell did you have with your family?

37:00 None. Took us in the dead of night. We were, they’d invested a lot of money in us, we went by night and when we knew there guards on the perimeter fence we weren’t allowed out. Took us down in buses and put us on the ship, off and that was it.

37:30 **So how did your parents know that you’d gone?**

Don’t know. Not until I told them, until I wrote a letter. Canada or New Zealand, it would have been censored of course. I don’t know. This censorship business.

38:00 They used to have the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth in Sydney Harbour with the troops on and I don’t know how they could conceal them going out. They took us down in the night, we didn’t know what the ship was until we got aboard, once we got aboard it was all over the place even the notepad had Mariposa on it.

38:30 It was a lovely ship. It was the last trip it made and after that of course was Pearl Harbour and they weren’t doing trips across the Pacific any longer then.

The night that you left, did you know that you were leaving that night?

No. I knew when they were putting us on the bus. There were submarines out there they thought,

39:00 there were too, but there was an American ship. They were being naughty really, we were being put aboard as civilians you see. That’s against the Geneva Convention, if a submarine had sunk that ship it would have been quite in order. That was right.

39:30 We are strange and naughty people. I never thought of it actually. I just thought it was a lovely ship and we were having a nice trip across to Canada.

Can you tell me about your mates?

Which ones as a boy or in the air force?

You mentioned when you stopped in New Zealand there was a group of three of you?

They were all about my age, one was a redheaded bloke, small, only about five foot two

40:00 and the other one was a tall, lanky blokes. The redheaded fellow was a very good pilot. In fact he was quite naughty. I know he often used to land his Tiger Moth where he shouldn’t, friends he must have

had some, and come back. I know he had marks on the plane sometimes from pebbles that he'd stirred up landing on a road or something. The other one was a very dour sort of bloke. They kept

40:30 him in Canada because he was an instructor. The other one who was quite stupid, shows you how silly they were, he was very good pilot, I think they may have wanted him back as an instructor in Australia because he was a very good pilot, they said his legs were too short. Now I now for a fact that you could, the rudder bar or pedals you could adjust them about that much, just by winding them around. So that was quite false. He was a very good pilot.

41:00 I think they wanted him back as an instructor too. Too good to send onto a squadron. Very likely. We just sort of took what they said, what could you do. That was the excuse they gave, I reckon they wanted him back as an instructor.

When you say too good for a squadron, is that because the likelihood of dying?

Oh well yes. Twenty

41:30 hours is probably a good effort. Bomber Squadron, Bomber Tour was first of all was twenty ops [operations], then it was twenty five, of course they were losing men and they couldn't replace them and then it was thirty, it was then stopped at thirty. Of all the aircrew who were on ops in Bomber Command, fifty per cent were killed, not casualties, killed.

42:00 Casualties means wounded.

Tape 4

00:31 **Mr Campbell could you tell me after you left New Zealand where the journey across to Canada took you next?**

We went to Pago Pago, as I say they wouldn't let us off the ship. I don't know why, it was an American, of course Pago Pago is part of Samoa and perhaps that's why they thought being American they didn't want all these Australian airmen rushing around the place.

01:00 We were only there for a couple of hours, they probably thought if they let us go we might get across on the island and wouldn't be able to get us back again. I don't think they would have had any trouble, everybody is too keen to go. After that we went to, oh we went to Fiji first did I say that. We went to Fiji first, they let us off there and we wandered around and quite interesting and lots of Indian people

01:30 there as there still are. We didn't have much money to spend there. Had all sorts of clothing to sell, I think I might have bought a grass skirt or something there which I sent back to Australia. I think my sister threw it away. Then we went of course

02:00 to Oahu, that's the island in Hawaii. Had to look that up that I forgot how to spell it. There's Hickam Field which is the Army Air Corps and the US [United States] Air Force was part of the Army Air Corps in those days, it was only later in the war that they became the air force. There was Pearl Harbour, which was the naval place, you hear about Pearl Harbour

02:30 but Hickam Field got shot up just the same. All very nice. It was a Sunday and they took us up the mess. We were Leading Aircraftsmen with white things across our hat, they treated us, the pilots there gave us a fly past as we came into the harbour on the Mariposa they flew past, six of their aircraft. Showed us over everything, they didn't show us the British radar they had there, but

03:00 it did pick up the Japanese coming in, but they didn't interpret it was a Sunday. They were very, let us sit in the aircraft, we had a lovely time. Then we went back to the ship and off to, what's the name of the harbour, it was in America, of course being an American ship we went into American harbour and then we had to go up by train to Vancouver. Forget the name

03:30 of the harbour. I have been back to Oahu at a much later date, in 1964.

What were your thoughts when you heard that Pearl Harbour had happened?

Very sorry actually because I'd met all these young blokes, these young pilots who were very nice to us. They weren't more than about a year or possibly weren't as old as some of us or about the same age. Of course they were quite envious

04:00 of us, we were going to the war and they were stuck on this island. They were on our side all right, there's no doubt about it, long before they entered the war. They would have willingly changed places with us. We changed badges and things like that and mementos, names and addresses and I wrote to one of the chaps that I knew, but we never heard anything from, I think they were all shot up.

04:30 They had their planes in long rows and it would have been a piece of cake to come along and blow them all to bits. Of course in peacetime they haven't got a clue, they really haven't got a clue. They thought that the Japanese coming in were their own planes. They had the latest British radar there, but it was

Sunday. The radar blokes told them they were coming in

05:00 but they…

How long were you in Canada for?

Got there December left in March, the whole winter, left from Halifax. Rather funny, after we got our wings we of course they got us to get across as quickly as possible and we were waiting for embarkation and I developed

05:30 a rash, a heat rash. The Canadians kept their places eighty degrees Fahrenheit. We'd walk into our hut and we'd turn the temperature down to sixty or seventy and they'd turn it up to eighty and of course broke the thermostat after a while. Eighty degrees, I had a heat rash. Anyway of course I went in to see, and "wham" straight into an isolation hospital. After a while I was in the isolation ward and they didn't keep that at eighty degrees of

06:00 course that was normal temperature. I found out it was not just, it was isolation, there was VD [venereal disease] and everything else in there I said, "Oh" and they said, "No, no we've got to make sure." Anyway when I got out I said, "I expect I get some leave now." And they said, "But you haven't been sick." It turned out, my chaps had all gone on a convoy and they went up around Iceland

06:30 to avoid the submarines of course, and I got on to a ship and there were just two ships, two destroyers and we went straight across the Atlantic and I arrived there a day after they'd left, they left a week ahead of me. So I crossed the Atlantic no trouble at all it was a beaut, straight ship. There were some generals aboard my ship, I didn't see them. They weren't taking any chances.

Was there a ceremony when you received your wings?

07:00 Oh yes a slight ceremony. They had a parade and people got out and gave each one their wings. Quite a big thrill, a thrill for us because that was the epitome of our training to get your wings. Well as I said before, we were terribly dangerous by then, terribly dangerous, we could fly, you didn't know I could fly.

07:30 The number of people that flew into things, especially if they knew somebody in the village or somebody and they'd go to show off and be looking around to see 'boom'. Yeah.

Was this is England?

Everywhere. Just like in a motorcar, nineteen to twenty four the most, technically very good,

08:00 but not a clue. Really. It's true. Technically young fellows and ladies driving cars technically better than these old so-and-sos, the old so-and-sos have done all that, they've made all those mistakes and got away with it. It's true.

How many accidents were there in training?

08:30 On my course very few actually. It was probably snowing and we were scared stiff. The casualty rate on training was very high. I don't know actual figures, but very high. Strangely enough they wouldn't let women be in the air force, although they were in everything else and they did everything else. The Air Transport Auxiliary in England

09:00 were composed of both men and women pilots and they flew planes from factories to squadrons and doing all sorts of, their accident rate was virtually nil. They weren't young, they weren't bold. That's true. There were quite a few women pilots flew, they'd fly all sort of aircraft wouldn't matter what they were. They were qualified

09:30 of course. They'd been flying a while, but of course they weren't adventurous, which I expect to be a better word than clueless, adventurous. I was in my hut, we were in our flight hut and had a post up top for the electricity wires to come in and a bloke shot us up and he was in a Thunderbolt and he came so low that the propeller going around it actually

10:00 clipped that post, that's how low he was. He didn't hit the hut itself. The propeller was probably about that long from the tip to plane and if it was that far off, he was probably doing four or five hundred miles an hour 'vroom'. Got away with it. If his propeller had actually

10:30 hit that thing it would have been the end of him, but the propeller went past. The hut bulged down like that as he went past, the shock wave.

Whereabouts was this?

Benson that was on my own drome [aerodrome], he knew one of the fellas there, a fighter pilot. We were frightened of fighter pilots. If you

11:00 weren't frightened of fighter pilots you wouldn't last long.

Why were you frightened of them?

They'd shoot you down. If they were Germans they'd certainly try. If it was ours you weren't too sure. Have you heard of IFF? Identification Friend or Foe. We didn't have Identification Friend or Foe, too

heavy

11:30 so they took it out. So whenever we came on the radar we came on as a bandit, enemy aircraft. Well enemy aircraft are usually intercepted and so we used to regard any aircraft as an enemy, any aircraft. I never let an aircraft get within a couple of miles of me if I could avoid it. If they did, bad luck as far as I was concerned. If fighter pilots knew you were friendly they wouldn't shoot you down, but if they were

12:00 told to shoot you down they'd shoot you down all right. It happened to one of our aircraft. One of our Mosquitos was shot down one night. Night flyer said, "Shoot him down," and they shot him down.

Whereabouts was this?

At the end of the runway. What happened the Germans got very canny about us going over in daytime, especially marshalling yards were they were

12:30 doing their railway, very good at railways the Germans. So they did it at night. What about if we did some night photography, couldn't do it in a Spitfire so Mosquito went over with a big flash, dropped the flash took photographs. Marvellous. This fellow, two sergeant pilots and navigator, they did the job and came back, there was a raid on London, a German raid, so they saw

13:00 this going on so they flew around London, our aerodrome was north west of London and the Germans quite often would put in what they called an intruder. They'd go on with a raid and do a small raid and one or two intruders would go and fly around shooting things up, being nasty. Of course our night fighters would take off and try and intercept them. Our Mosquitos going around London, of course the radar hit

13:30 him, this plane's coming around, bandit no IFF you see, coming around and then got a Mosquito Night Fighter on to him and he's following him and the chap in the Night Fighter says to control, "This chap's a Mosquito I know it's a Mosquito" and they said, our drome put on the landing lights

14:00 and he was just about to come in to land and they said, "I can't take the chance, shoot him down." If he'd been an intruder he could have bombed our aerodrome and that would have been great business, put us out of action for a week. So they shot him down.

Was he killed?

Both of them were. Yeah. Both burnt to death. That was, they just couldn't take the chance. No IFF.

14:30 Very bad muck up because they should have known, but of course PR absolutely out of control, we were never under control. We were never under control you see. We were just like a bomber, go out, but a bomber would have IFF you see. Of course they didn't know that he was past this radar that was on and then this aircraft came back around back to our aerodrome

15:00 and then, if he'd been given the chance and been wrong and this chap had bombed the aerodrome it would have been far worse. He would have caused far more casualties than, darn shame though. We were most upset about it.

I might just take you back to when you first arrived in England. What happened?

15:30 Got off the ship, and they took us straight to Bournemouth and we stayed at a very nice water hotel. The rest of the hotels were still occupied by people, there's the beach. The trouble was it was winter time so the beaches aren't very marvellous, they're pebbly beaches, gravel stuff, you've probably seen them. I think all the Channel beaches are like that, I don't know.

16:00 So we didn't think much of Bournemouth. It was nice front, but it was all wired off of course, that's right you weren't allowed on the beach, anti-tank and God knows what, there was no access to the beach at all and I think they'd cut the pier in half so nobody could land a ship and stand troops aboard. It was a quite nice town, it's a very posh town, one of their summer resort towns.

16:30 I didn't spend a great deal of time there, because I had a couple of weeks leave and then I went on these army excursions to stay with the army. Then I came back and I volunteered and I was off to Navigation School and I was onto the squadron.

Where did you go on leave?

One to the Squire of Windermere, you know Lake Windermere, well this chap owned most

17:00 of the land on the eastern side of Windermere. He invited, they had this Lady somebody or other who organised these thing I forget her name. It was a young Canadian bloke and I were supposed to turn up to this place for a fortnight. He didn't' turn up so I was there by myself. He had a very nice young daughter about fourteen or fifteen and a nanny,

17:30 guarding her. We used to go out boating on the lake, it was very nice indeed. There were three nurses staying at a cottage on the estate too, they were on leave. He was in the Home Guard, the Squire, a very nice place. What struck me about it, he had boxes of cigarettes, I didn't smoke, he said to me,

18:00 “Help yourself.” I noticed that they were all monogrammed with his coat of arms, his cigarettes. Pity I didn’t smoke. Another thing, they had servants a butler and a couple of maids, we’d been primed about this thing if you stay anywhere they’ve got servants and I did leave a tip, I thought I’d better leave a tip, old butler, I had

18:30 a pound note, “I’d like you to accept this.” He said, “Oh sir I couldn’t, no please, it was an honour to serve you.” Nice old boy, he was about sixty too.

When you finished leave was it officer training you went to?

The second leave was when I met my wife. I went to a place called , Betws-y-Coed in Wales, a beautiful place, where they get the slate

19:00 and shale. She was there with her sister and they’d been evacuated from London because of the bombing. They were there with their aunt. They still went to school, although her sister who was older more my age she was a blue stocking, she was at Cambridge. She was one of the first English girls who went to Cambridge. She got a

19:30 scholarship there. Blue stocking. She was more my age, she wasn’t interested in me. She was about a year younger than me. Her sister, Nancy that’s my wife, we went walking, all of us went walking around places like this,

20:00 a bridge and a creek or river runs through and the shale mines, slate all the slate that comes out to Australia comes out of there. Good walking country if you’re a mountain goat. It was very pleasant. I went back there again once, that was after I was on the squadron. I used to go down to their place, they lived in New Maldon

20:30 that’s in between Wimbledon and Epsom, you know those two places, that’s near Maldon. Her brother was in the RAF and he was a navigator on Sterlings, he was shot down and killed in 1942.

After you were there you went to officer training?

21:00 No, I didn’t go to officer training until I was on rest actually. I wasn’t an officer, when I joined the squadron I was a sergeant and when I became more famous I was a flight-sergeant and then I became a warrant officer and I didn’t get a commission until about a few months before I went on rest in 1944.

21:30 I was an NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] most of the time.

So you went to navigational school was it?

Yes

Could you tell me about that?

There all sorts of people went to this navigational school, squadron leaders, flight lieutenant, Dutchmen, the Dutch air force. The idea for training a pilot to be a navigator is on the big aircraft you have one navigator, you might have two

22:00 or three pilots, because you’re in the air fourteen or fifteen hours in a Sunderland Flying Boat, you’d be over the sea looking for submarines on patrol, or in a Liberator, you might have a crew of eleven men. The navigator after about four or five hours his eyes are popping out of his head. His keeping the plots, he’s doing the hard work, he’s got to know where the plane is all the time otherwise they can’t go back, can’t get back over the sea, they

22:30 don’t know where they are. The pilots also have to be navigators so they can relieve him, he can go and have a rest for a couple of hours and they keep the plot going while he’s doing, and anything else that happens. Anyway these chaps had been ordinary pilots and they wanted to be, Australia had two squadrons they had Number 1 and Number 10 Squadron, they were both Flying Boat Squadrons, very famous squadrons.

23:00 There were about twenty or thirty of us and I couldn’t, I really didn’t know what on earth I was going to be doing with these fellows because most of these chaps were much older than what I was and much higher rank, although they were all pilots together, it was nothing to them whether I was a sergeant or not. We paired off, in fact I had an English lieutenant as my pair and

23:30 we were both navigators. They had old Avro Ansons and a plane called a Botha, a torpedo bomber which was taken out of service because it was no good, flew all right but it wasn’t useful. We used to fly in these things and practice, of course the poor old pilot up the front hoping to God we knew how to get back.

24:00 Of course we had to take shots with these bubble sextants, ordinary sextant s you’ve got the horizon if on a ship, in a plane you’re up so they have a big bubble in them and you use this bubble like in a spirit level and you can also wind them up and they take a shot, twenty in two minutes, and you get the star or the sun whatever you’re shooting on and you’re taking altitude angle between that and the horizon, fix on

24:30 switch it on and hold it and hope, the plane has to be flying dead straight and level while this is happening. Of course it's hurtling forward at 200 miles an hour or more and after you did this, there was a way to work it out and work out position lines and you can tell where you are. That's the theory anyway. We had to do it also on the, we had to hand in a book the twenty shots we'd taken of various places on the ground. So you'd see people out on the pier with sextants

25:00 when there was a bit of sunlight trying to take shots, or at night taking shots of the stars. It was quite good. We had a great big table which was the sea and bits of land around it and they'd put on various ships and of course we'd be the plane and you had to take bearings on these ships and write up your log and goodness knows what and you had to learn how to do creeping lines ahead

25:30 and how to keep station on the ship doing twenty knots and you doing two hundred, that means you are doing two hundred miles an hour and he's doing twenty and you have to be there all the time, by doing various zigzags. It was very interesting but I couldn't see quite what I was going to be at this thing.

Whereabouts was this?

St Anne's. Lovely name, just south of Blackpool. Number 3 School of General Reconnaissance. It was rather funny, the last thing the piece de resistance

26:00 we were going to do one at night, we were going to do a real op [operation], everyone was going to be on this. We were going to fly out across the Irish Sea to Ireland, of course not do anything to Ireland, Ireland was neutral it was all lit up you could see when you got there, Northern Ireland wasn't, it was dark, everything else was blacked out. This night this pilot he'd invited a friend along, I was supposed to be his navigator and I was supposed to sit beside him you see. Anyway he had this friend and I had to take

26:30 sites along, and had to crawl up between their legs to take sites. Anyway that was all right, but I was bit upset. At various times you had to send back signals, they had what they called a 'psycho'. I thought, "Very good – a psycho." We had two things to put in this, one was the practice psycho and one was the war psycho, you

27:00 weren't supposed to use the war psycho, just the practice psycho. Every now and again you'd send back a weather report you'd see and look out and the wireless operator would tap out this weather report back to base. Just like as though you were going over Germany or over the sea anywhere. I got my, wrote it up, pass it up to the pilot and he was supposed to okay it and sign and you'd put it into the psycho and give it to

27:30 the operator and he'd send it back. Anyway all this is okay and all of a sudden all hell breaks loose. So-and-so go, enemy aircraft, after a while, they must have set up Night Fighters, it was clear. When we got back, "Want to see you." "What for?" "Oh that signal that you sent." "Yes, what was wrong with it?"

28:00 "Can't understand it." What I'd done I'd put in the war psycho instead of the, it was all in red lights and it was dark and I'm a bit upset and sweating, put in the war psycho and started off, it should have started off OP, Operation Practice and I'd start off EA, Enemy Aircraft, then this garbled message

28:30 about position. Naturally the balloon went up. They weren't very worried they just wanted to know what happened. I passed. They gave me my sextant and my beautiful wristwatch and had to be wound every four hours.

Could you explain what a sextant is?

Sextant is an instrument for measuring

29:00 the angle between the horizon and any other object, if it's the sun or a star, it just measures that angle. If you haven't got the horizon like in an aircraft they substituted the horizon for a big spirit level, a big bubble, and that was your arbitrary horizon. You'd do the same thing. Then by a system of mathematics

29:30 you can work out your position on the, either get a position line and get a position, just like these GPS [global positioning system] does now for you, but it does it for you on satellite that you need millions of dollars worth of satellites to do it. I've got sextant in there if you'd like to have a look at one.

I might a bit later. How different was it for you being an Australian dealing with the northern sky?

30:00 Much easier. That's why the northern navigators were so good. All you've to do is take a shot on a north star to give you your latitude straight away. Centuries ago they found that out, the longitude is the trouble. So that didn't bother us. All you need for longitude is an accurate watch, and one set on Greenwich, I've got one set up on Greenwich.

30:30 The GPS does that for you. You've probably seen people wearing two watches, one is probably on Greenwich Mean Time and ones on local time. The difference between them is your longitude. You know longitude and latitude, that's why old Captain Cook was such a good navigator, he had a good watch, or rather a good clock.

When you mentioned that you were in the plane and had to crawl up, could you explain where

the navigator was situated in the inside of a plane and how you operated?

31:00 With the navigator, with a small bomber the pilot and navigator would sit side-by-side. With a big thing like a Sunderland or something you'd have two pilots and the navigator would be back here with his special table or in a big bomber too he'd have a special place, special table with all

31:30 his gear, parallel rules and his books and light and everything, as comfortable as possible, probably a specially nice chair too, if possible. That's right it's horrible, he's in this thing, he's not a gunner and he's not flying the plane, he's responsible for the whole thing. In fact they usually had a very comfortable chair because he's got to sit there all the time.

32:00 With the Spitfire you were the lot, you were the navigator, the pilot everything, you had to navigate. You couldn't use any of these sophisticated instruments, what we did have was a Dalton computer [early mechanical hand held computer] a little, which enabled you to solve this triangle of velocities with the wind, I pointed out the wind blowing across, the whole wind is moving you that way so you've got to fly into the wind to go straight, so you've got to solve that before you, we

32:30 used to do all this before we took off. If it was wrong and it was very wrong you couldn't do much about it. If it was slightly wrong you could correct it by your own observation or using the Dalton, the computer was a mechanical computer it just had a very simple thing, you could have it on your knee and you could have a calculation on your knee. That didn't come until 1942 too.

33:00 **What could the computer calculate?**

It was only really a, triangles of velocities, okay. This is the track you want, the wind is blowing in that direction, this is the course you have to steer to make good this track, that wind now is the triangle of velocities. That's the track, that's the wind and this is the course you have to steer,

33:30 that's what you have to solve all the time no matter what you're doing you must solve that triangle. You could do that on your little, you've got to know the speed that you're going this way and you've got to know the speed of the wind and this gives you the speed of the course to fly. You could do this on this, I should've kept it one of those things. It was a big advance to have one, and be able to do a calculation there because

34:00 **So you would put in the speed of the wind and the speed you were travelling and that would calculate**

Your course. Yes. It wouldn't actually calculate, you'd have to calculate it but you could read it off. We used to do all this on the ground. You'd use your calculator on the ground and you'd write it on a logbook, "Here to Leipzig so-and-so, course so-and-so, so many minutes,

34:30 Leipzig to so-and-so course so-and-so, so many minutes." That's what you would fly, you would hope. If that wind was wrong, you had to correct it as you go along, if you can't see the ground you can't correct it. Had to do that all the time. Of course you got quite good at it, you got to know, Europe's as big as Australia, roughly, and you got to know quite a lot of places

35:00 after a while. The more you knew the better it was of course. Map reading was fairly difficult, I'll show you a few maps later and it's not like Australia, it's not just a few towns, it's towns and rivers and all over he place, cities, forests, mountains, God knows what. I mean Australia is virtually an open book. They still fly in to bits

35:30 there.

Once you left Navigational School where did you go from there?

That was to my OTU then. Now the OTU was at Fraserborough, that was a sardine fishing village actually, right, it's the next bump in Scotland, the top is Cape Roth and you go down and next is Fraserborough. That's a very important place for oil and they still fish for sardines there,

36:00 you can still buy sardines in the supermarket from Fraserborough. Our aerodrome was there and we flew from there in Spitfires ex-squadron Spitfires, worn out Spitfires, there was nothing wrong with them they just weren't up to squadron standards. All our squadron aircraft were absolutely perfect, they tried anyway. We had these and they were fitted with cameras the

36:30 same exactly the same, but they leaked a bit of oil occasionally.

Why were they blue?

Camouflage, sky blue. You couldn't see a PR Spitfire against the sky more than a couple of miles away, but from above of course the blue against the ground, you never let a fighter get above you.

37:00 Very good camouflage. We used to fly from there, right down to the tip of England, up over the top of the Orkney's and Shetland's and over the sea, to practice of course the Spitfire was nothing to fly a piece of cake to fly. Anybody could

37:30 fly one, I suspect they could. Much easier to fly than a Tiger Moth.

Why is that?

Don’t know. Except the noise, they make a hell of a noise and power. Well they’re a pilot’s aircraft if I can put it that way. They have no vices, for instances now the most dangerous thing in a plane is to get into a spin,

38:00 that means your plane stalls and your plane goes out falling, it’s just falling, turning around at the same time, horrible business. More pilots killed by spin in the First World War than anything until somebody worked out how to do it. What you do is put on opposite rudder and put the engine on and dive and you get speed back and you come out of the stall. With a Spitfire you get up to ten thousand feet and try to put it into a spin and it won’t.

38:30 You stall it and it just falls. Put hard rudder on and it goes very reluctantly into a spin, you just let the thing go and it comes out. If you come in to land and you make a mistake and you’re ten feet up and you stall, it doesn’t do that on one wing and fall down, it falls down straight, it might break the undercarriage but you still survive.

39:00 Two most dangerous things you can do Spitfires are forgiving, not many aircraft do that. I don’t know I haven’t flown the others. You can also, it can out turn anything in the European sky, steep turn. That’s why the Luftwaffe knew that too, “Don’t dogfight

39:30 with a Spitfire,” because the Spitfire will always beat you in a dogfight, it always turns steeper. They could dive much better than we could, you don’t dive after a Messerschmitt or a Focke-Wulf [German aircraft], you don’t do it and you don’t dive away from them, they can do it much better. Just these little things. The Spitfire is very and almost flew itself except at altitudes but that wasn’t the planes’ fault. They were a very nice plane. Awfully noisy of

40:00 course, two thousand horse power belting up there and exhaust ports came right past your ears, wear a helmet of course. Very nice plane. I think everybody who’s flown on a Spitfire would say that. They weren’t better they were just nicer.

You mentioned taking photographs, what were you using to take photographs?

Either twenty four inch or thirty six inch

40:30 focal length, you had the engine, the main tank which is bullet proof not bullet proof but self sealing, the cockpit, oxygen bottles, radio, then these two huge cameras about that high, pointed slightly inwards, lenses about that round, five hundred full plate negatives in each camera, a thousand negatives.

41:00 A piece of optical glass in the bottom of the cockpit. You’d have the fuselage and a bit of space behind, practically a projectile, a solid mass of stuff, a bit of hold in the back. The cameras were automatic, the interval you wanted a sixty per cent overlap for stereoscopic effect. You could set, according to your air speed,

41:30 you could set how often the thing turned over to the next negative. Both of them would be at the same time of course. They’d overlap in the middle because they were slightly pointed inwards, if you’ve got a coverage on the ground of say that much, a mile wide, you’d pan out about a half a mile deep. If you wanted to leave the camera on, and take a

42:00 thing about a mile wide and two hundred miles

Tape 5

00:32 **Mr Campbell could you explain when and how you first found out about the Photo Reconnaissance Unit?**

Practically when I arrived at the OTU. I had no idea before that.

What were you told about the unit and its operations?

Nothing. Not until I got there.

01:00 **So did they ask you to volunteer?**

No. They just said anybody, there was a whole mob of us, “Any volunteers?” and of course the first person who put up his hand they probably grabbed him, it was me. I don’t think anybody else volunteered actually.

Can you please explain what that unit was; its origins were?

01:30 Yes. It’s rather weird. Its origin was an Australian who had a small airline flying into Europe and he was trying to sell the Germans films, some special photographic film. Got to know them quite well, Germans I mean, knew Goering and a few others and they knew him, this is before the war of course. Very keen

photographer himself and he used to take shots

02:00 out the side of the aircraft, he had friends in the RAF and showed them these photos and they said, “Ooh would you do something for us. He said, “All right.” He was an entrepreneur, was a Queenslander by the way, name was Sydney Cotton. A bit of a pirate actually, an entrepreneur. So the Chief of Air Intelligence

02:30 fitted him out with two aircraft, paid for by the British and French governments, he was a spy. A Lockheed, twin aircraft, metal aircraft and he went in and the cameras were fitted and he took photographs of all sorts of things, what they wanted. Highly illegal. He was a spy. The Germans knew they were going to invade Poland

03:00 and friendly with him, “It’d be a good idea if you got out of here before. I don’t think the British take much a liking to this and you might get into trouble.” So he did. Got back to England and they said, “Well, war’s on now, we’ve declared war on Germany, they invade Poland. What about doing

03:30 the thing again?” He said, “No good with these aircraft, they’d get shot down straight away.” The RAF was supplying at this time personnel and help and everything. There’s an English officer and he’d written a paper, they wrote papers they always do in government, saying, “This is all very well doing this in peacetime and spying, but if we have to do this in wartime

04:00 there’s no good trying to do this we’ll have to do this, we’ll have to do something that can slip through enemy lines.” They took him seriously and said, “Right, what do you want?” This is before the Battle of Britain. He said, “I’d like a couple of Spitfires.” This is the time when they were short. They gave him a couple of Spitfires, they tore guns out of them and tore everything out of them and put extra tanks in.

04:30 Then of course, I’m sorry I’m wrong this was before the war was actually lost I mean, they went across to the continent, as Number 2 Camouflage Unit. Why they call them that I don’t know. They flew over Germany and various places and of course didn’t have to fly across the Channel and sea any more, they were flying from France. Of course when the debacle came and

05:00 France was defeated they came back to England. Then he was a very good organiser and he knew what he was doing, this is Sydney Cotton this is. Of course then they started to formalise the thing, make a squadron and of course he came up against the brass [officials]. He didn’t get on with people like that, he was used to doing things his own way, slowly friction built

05:30 up and of course the RAF took over and he was slowly eased out. It didn’t worry him much, I suspect he was upset about losing his unit, then it became Number 1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit, PRU. That was taken over by Boothman. He won the Schneider Trophy for England in 1937 I think. The Schneider Trophy was between Italy, Germany and England flying

06:00 float planes very fast and England won it three times and they kept the Schneider and the prototype of the Spitfire was the Schneider Super Marine Float plane almost like a Spitfire with floats. Then of course Super Marine developed the Spitfire, Mitchell I think was the designer. There they are with their two Spitfires to start with. They moved to Benson and

06:30 the place where they stayed. Then they formed two squadrons, 45 and 41. They had one in reserve and that’s how it all started out. I came along in 1942. A long while after all that happened. Actually he was still on the station when I arrived, Cotton. Now none of the people there said anything nasty about, he was very well regarded, but as I say he couldn’t get on with the brass.

07:00 He was a do-it-yourself man, he was an entrepreneur. Didn’t fit in with the regulations or anything like that so they, he quite a big career after that. He got into all sorts of trouble, always came out. He invented a flying suit for people, call the Sidcot Flying Suit, he was quiet a man.

07:30 **Can you explain what the flying suit was?**

It was a very nice overall lined, for warmth, very nice easy to use suit. Before that they didn’t have any formal suit. His was, in fact I had one but I used it on a motorbike, instead of a plane, we didn’t use it, we didn’t fly in it. We didn’t actually wear any flying suit at all. The plane was heated, unless it was very, very cold,

08:00 of course we wore woollen boots and silver-lined underwear. Normally it was warm enough, I just wore that, that’s battle dress.

How was the plane heated?

From the engine, just like a car, two thousand horse power generates a lot of heat. Two big radiators under the wings, and of course at very high altitudes it might get minus sixty five Celsius

08:30 and then the heating wouldn’t be enough, and you’d get frozen and pretty cold. That didn’t happen very often.

What was it about the Spitfire that was suited to photographic reconnaissance?

Nothing really, except that it was moveable and fast. If you got into trouble there was a fair chance that

you'd get out of it, a fair chance and if you were lucky a good chance.

09:00 **Can you describe to me exactly what the camera s looked like and where they were situated in the Spitfire?**

The engine was in front naturally, then there was the self-sealing main tank seventy eight gallons then there was the cockpit about this big, you'd just fit in that, the plane was only a little plane, forty foot wing span. Behind that your oxygen bottle,

09:30 enough for six hours, you'd breath oxygen all the time. Then the cameras which were situated vertically and slightly tilted inwards and then we used two different sorts and one for ordinary reconnaissance, and the big ones for damage assessment were thirty six, I'll show you some photographs later, very high definition. They took five hundred full plate negatives each.

10:00 Everything was set by the ground people before you went for the weather and the time of day and all those sorts of things, exposure. The only thing you could regulate is how fast you turned the cameras on, one two second intervals because you wanted to get a sixty per cent overlap. If you were flying at say thirty thousand it'd be slightly slower than if you were flying at twenty thousand and so on, forty thousand and

10:30 so on. Unless you were going very fast or trying to go very fast because of flak or something, you could put it down to one second that mean that they'd be taking an exposure every second – tick, tick, tick. Other than that. They were especially heated too, they never failed because of being too cold. They were always properly heated. Sometimes the cockpit was much colder than they were.

Did the ground crew have specialist skills in photography?

11:00 Our ground crew were fantastic. I don't know whether they were chosen especially, but they were very good, I can attest to that because I flew eight six different Spitfires on operations and I never ever had anything wrong with any of them. Can you imagine taking eighty six Holdens or Fords and not

11:30 finding anything wrong with them all the time you were, of course they were Rolls Royce, Derby. Not Packards, they were Rolls Royce Derby and English made. They were everything. Now the way they do things in the RAF, and probably RAAF too I didn't have much experience with the RAAF, you've got a schedule for the plane. Everything that's done to that plane is entered and the man, the

12:00 technician whatever he does he signs for it as he does it. The man in charge, the flight-sergeant who is in charge of all the technicians, checks what he's done and signs against that, everything that's done he signs for twice and checked. When you take the plane, the flight-sergeant comes over and hands you the schedule and you can, all the men are around there, you can question any of them about this, "What did you do this for?"

12:30 you hope you never would and you make sure that it's been signed and counter-signed then you sign the bottom that you've seen it. The aircraft is then yours. Not the RAF's any more, your responsibility until you come back and land it again it's your plane. That's how it was done. As I say the service was fantastic. Every twenty five hours of flying hours it's inspected, every fifty,

13:00 every seventy five, a hundred, a hundred and fifty at a hundred and fifty they practically take the thing apart and put it together again. That's general practice anyway but out people I can't speak more than that and of course every day whether it flew or not had to have an inspection apart from the other things that had to be done. Also we had big workshops, if an aircraft got to a hundred and fifty hours, if it wasn't

13:30 done by the local crew, they're busy doing everything, it'd go into workshops and be pulled apart and taken, and if anything was slightly faulty, out. Don't know where they went, but of course any new plane that came into the factory, they'd look at it and it would have some slight modification, they may have found that his nut had come loose so they had to put a different nut, every other aircraft there had to have that nut put on it.

14:00 Modification. Sometimes there'd be six modifications every aircraft had to be modified. That was, there wasn't anything ever and they were quite complicated, the electrical system of course, the radio, the cameras, the air frame itself, the whole business, the engine, the tyres, the hydraulics, flaps, flying gear.

14:30 Everything all had to be okay. All this would appear on the schedule that it had been checked. Of course I've done things too that had to be fixed and that wasn't because of the ground staff. The maintenance was fantastic, and as I say, they said, "You'll fly the best," and they were the best they could and they did the best. They were all different probably but I didn't notice any difference.

15:00 I never saw the aircraft before I flew it. It would be ready, parachute in it, I'd come from the navigation place after I'd been briefed and the airplane would be there ready, it'd been run up warm and I'd walk out slowly so I wouldn't get a sweat up and freeze when I got up there and get into the plane, be handed my gear, strapped in, helmet on, none of this rushing out scramble like a fighter pilot and then take

15:30 off. Just like that.

You mentioned all those different facets of the aircraft, how many different men would there be required to work on those different sections?

I'd say at least three, because they'd be on watches like the navy like the running of a ship. So there'd always have to be at least one technician who was on

16:00 an eight hour, I don't know what their shifts were, I mean this is, I flew the darn thing, that was their job and they delivered it up to me as perfect as they possibly could. I'll just show you a photograph.

There was about at Benson there were roughly two thousand people.

16:30 There were navigators, twenty Mosquito pilots and navigators, that's sixty aircrew, two thousand people. They did other things besides look after us as well, the thing was we were the weapon that they were firing. So roughly two thousand to sixty. Of course

17:00 all of those weren't in my squadron, there were workshop backups and everything like that. Even cooks, photography people, interpreters, people who developed. Say there were ten, fifteen ops out there and there might be a couple of thousand full plate negatives to develop, they all had to be developed, then they had to be interpreted and then they went to Intelligence after they came from us. So there was a lot of people,

17:30 I was just the operative tool at the end, I sort of did it after they did things with it. I pressed the button as they say. There were an awful lot of people I never even saw. There were an awful lot of WAAF [Women's Auxiliary Air Force], they did everything from driving, clerks, cooks

18:00 everything, except as I say they weren't allowed to be pilots. This was of course, they are now, they weren't then. A man's world you see.

How did the camera equipment impact on the weight and flight control of the aircraft?

None at all. It was all carefully worked out, you wouldn't even know, they didn't weigh that much they were aluminium

18:30 I never picked one up although I could find out how much one would weigh. They didn't seem to have any trouble, they used to take them out of the aircraft and put them back in just a man or a bloke helping him around the corners. The depth of the fuselage behind the man was from there to the floor and the camera would take up most of that, we had a hatch of course and they had this optical glass thing at the bottom. They'd just lower the thing in and put it into its fittings.

19:00 Probably weighed sixty or seventy pounds, or something like that, I don't know I never lifted one. I've seen one man could lift one without a terrible effort, so couldn't have weighed, sixty pounds is a fair effort, must have weighed less than that. They're practically all holes, the lenses and the tube and the magazine was about as big as that, five hundred

19:30 full plate negatives.

What modifications were made to the Spitfire in terms of weapons?

None. Everything was taken out of it. In fact by the time I got there the planes were made specially for us and they never had any guns in them. It was more or less as the plane was designed and the internal tanks in the wings, a fighter would two or four

20:00 canon, eight machine guns and ammunition all in the wings, hydraulically operated. That went out of course and that was enormous weight far more than all the petrol we put in the wings, there was seventy odd gallons in each wing, two hundred and eighty pounds and a couple of machine guns would weigh more than that with all the ammunition. A whole one weighed about three tonnes all up.

20:30 I would say a fighter fully armed would weigh a good deal more than that, of course it got rid of a lot of that very quickly, but would weigh more than that. The terrific power of course. I don't really know, ours had a Merlin engine the ones I flew mostly. We had a different engine right towards the end of the war. All name after birds, some sort of bird.

How important was the speed of your aircraft in your missions?

21:00 Not really, speed, everybody likes to have a fast aeroplane, but its all relative. The other blokes got a plane that if it's as fast as yours it doesn't really matter. We cruised at three hundred and twenty miles an hour, or I cruised at three hundred and twenty miles an hour, not sure if anybody else did. That was the best economical speed that I could go at. I could get eight miles to the gallon at that.

21:30 Sixteen hundred miles on the fuel, two hundred and seventeen gallons. It could be useful if you were in a tight spot and you could make a run for it. Say you were close to the coast and you reckoned you could get across the sea and you could open her up, speed might be important then. You saw the other fellow in time of course. Not important as far as I was concerned ever, manoeuvrability and

22:00 how many miles you get to the gallon, like a car.

When you first realised that the weapons had been removed from the Spitfire how did you feel

about flying this sort of plane into enemy territory?

Well a bit apprehensive to say the least. I looked around and all these blokes are still alive.

22:30 I suspect it must be able to be done. As I say I never thought about the ones that hadn't, the ones that were there, were there, the ones that were gone, were gone. Until I actually met enemy aircraft , I didn't really know what I would do, except try and get them into a dogfight, that's the defensive. If I could

23:00 get them into a dogfight I could probably out manoeuvre them, I might providing they weren't too keen or I hadn't met the top German Ace who was determined to get a Blue Spitfire. I did say it, "Couldn't we just have one gun?" They said, "No you'll get into trouble, go looking for trouble." Quite right too.

23:30 I mean the thing was we were to avoid getting into trouble if we could avoid it. Sometimes you can't and it's too bad. There are ways of avoiding even if the other fellow is trying to get into a fight you can avoid it, it was a bit hard, but there are ways. Of course I found out after a while how to do it otherwise I wouldn't be here. I would have liked a gun, because sometimes I was in a position where I could have

24:00 shot them down you see and I couldn't. I got myself into that position just had to let them go. They didn't know that. I always acted as if I was a fighter, as if I had guns. If an enemy fighter is coming for you and you act like a fighter he treats you like a fighter,

24:30 he can't afford not to. Especially the Germans who were great believers in secret weapons. They knew what a Blue Spitfire was, they knew they had no guns but if a Blue Spitfire starts acting like a fighter, well he might be one of those blokes who has a secret weapon. If you let him get you into this position, then bang and you've had it. You don't get a second chance.

25:00 **Were you trained to assume that fighting position if you got into trouble?**

No. Just my naturally aggressive nature. I say this, there are three things you never run away from. Savage dog, policemen and an enemy fighter, you encourage them, if you stand up to them, you run away from a policeman he'll shoot you, he's entitled to

25:30 by law. A savage dog will chase you same with a fighter, they're trained to, they're trained to shoot people down. That's all they are there for. They're probably very well trained and the better they are the better because they'll do the things according to the, there are certain tactics that you adopt, fighter pilots do certain things and they don't do certain things.

26:00 The things they don't do, let another bloke get into a position to shoot them down. If they do, they break away, if they don't they're done, they got shot down. It's no go being shot down. All these aces they know that, they pick people who are stupid and shoot them down, always or accidental. Murder, all air fighting is, you've got to catch a person by surprise.

26:30 It's very easy to intercept somebody perhaps, but if he knows you're going to intercept him it's very hard and you could sneak up on somebody in the dark and bang them on the back of the head, but if they know you're going to do it, you're likely to get kicked in the stomach before you get them. I always adopted that and it works. I did it the first time I was intercepted and I always did it afterwards because it does work. You've got to be a very brave man

27:00 when you've got the drop on him to let you have it. Mad man I should say.

Can you describe for me then that first time you were intercepted and what you did and how you got out of it?

Yes. I was doing a DA [damage assessment] of the western side of the Ruhr that's a big industrial place a place called Wuppertal-Bahmen, Wuppertal is on one side of the railway line and Bahmen is on the other. It's a piece of cake, it was easy

27:30 I just flew up and down a couple of times and I felt the aeroplane lurch, 'boom boom' flak [anti-aircraft guns], they were shooting at me, but they were a long way away. If there's, when they're shooting at you, black smoke they're a long way away. When you see the red flash it's close, you've got to get out of the way quickly or the next time you're gone. They weren't doing this they were just firing. So I thought, "I'll do one more run and I'll go home.

28:00 I don't like this." So I turn around, and then I realise why they were doing it, see the Luftwaffe, the flak that's anti-aircraft and the aircraft are controlled by the Luftwaffe and in our show the army control the flak and the air force controlled us. Going home I could see these two black dots and I thought, "Oh no" and they're going that and I'm going that way, we were approaching one another at great speed.

28:30 I thought, "What the heck am I going to do now?" They were Focke-Wulf, beautiful they were painted black, absolutely black, with gold spinners that were getting bigger and bigger. I thought, "Oh what am I going to do now?" I wasn't going to run away from them because they were going back into Germany. I thought, "Right oh," kept right on and more or less a collision course.

29:00 Straight ahead, somebody had to give way and I wasn't going to. There were two of them, there's always two fighters, Tail and Charlie, they always go in twos. As soon as they went past I turned around

into a very steep turn and so did they and this is the dogfight, around. I thought, “Here we are, what do I do now? What

29:30 on earth can I do now?” And slowly and slowly, probably only did two or three turns, I find I’m here and they’re here, now this is, another ten seconds and it’s a classical if I fire my canon they fly into my bullets and that’s the end of them. They know that. They just disappeared, dived, they knew I couldn’t follow.

30:00 They didn’t know I wasn’t a fighter, they weren’t going to take a chance. I’d beaten them in the turn. Then I went home thinking, “I hope it worked.” It does work. See there were other ways of doing things too. See fighter don’t fly around the sky looking for, they’d never find you, they’d never see you for a start. There’s a man down on the ground called the controller and there’s radar

30:30 and they knew every time we went over the Germans knew exactly where we were, how fast we were flying, how high we were and what we were and sometimes even knew your name, if they were lucky. If they reckoned that you were worth picking up, there wouldn’t be only one reconnaissance plane out there, there might ten, fifteen all over Germany, France, somewhere. If they reckon this bloke is worth picking up they alert the fighters

31:00 and say, “Right take off.” They take off, now he’d have to work out, you’re flying along here, at some point about fifty miles ahead where he’s fighters are going to meet you, maybe he’s coming from behind trying to chase you, might be only two or three miles faster, if they’re two or three miles faster and they’re ten miles behind you it will take five hours to catch you. So they do this, just like shooting at a moving bird you fire

31:30 ahead, that’s why he’s going to shoot his fellows up to meet you. Well when we went over, we’d take off, you know the contrail you see in the sky, the white cloud, that happens just below the stratosphere, it moves up and down summer and winter, it’s round about anywhere between twenty five and forty five thousand feet. We’d fly up, find out this contrail layer and we’d come down a thousand feet.

32:00 Anybody who came up above us is going to make contrail, now we had no radar just your eyes, we had blisters in our canopy with mirrors, not to see behind us but to see that we weren’t making contrail or we’d give ourselves away. So okay, they’re coming up, they’ll come up to altitude whatever it happens to be, roughly you’re up here and they probably come up higher because they want to dive on you and also they can see you

32:30 from above. As soon as they do that they make a big white plume. “Okay I’m being intercepted. They can’t see me, the fellow down here can see me,” after that there’s a cat and mouse. You could chase course and the fellow on the ground is cursing working out his triangle of velocities again to catch you fifty miles away. Fighters can’t see anything.

33:00 All they are doing is obeying the instructions. Eventually if he’s good and you haven’t done the right thing within a couple of miles they’ll see you, but if you do the right thing keep changing course and all these nasty things they just give up, “To hell with him I’ll try somebody else.” It’s not cost effective. You could only do that under certain circumstances of course. They’d scarcely ever

33:30 intercept us going into a target, but coming back it’d been up to two or three hours, you’re fed up, you’ve got mountain sickness and all sorts of nasty things. At altitude, people who climb Everest they’d stage themselves up, we’d just go up there in half an hour we’d be at thirty or forty thousand feet, get mountain sickness, can’t breathe, hypoxia, only getting about a third of the oxygen

34:00 and you’ve got breathe shallow, pure oxygen all the time for six hours and the plane won’t fly properly. It’s not the plane it’s you. You’ve heard of gremlins? Well we invented gremlins and gremlins is just a way of saying, “I don’t know what’s wrong, something’s happening to the plane.” You just

34:30 about forty per cent efficient at thirty thousand feet. No pressure cabins like in the airliner, just raw. In there just as if I’m sitting now, but you’re eight miles up. So is the fighters and they’ve been throwing up, he’d been up there for three or four hours and you’re used to it, well not used to it, but you know what it’s all about. So all those things mitigated against the fighter, you hope.

35:00 Although the Germans were more technically advanced they had some very nice aeroplanes, they didn’t use them, I don’t know why? They had an Errado with a pressure cabin twin engine, too advanced, they could have done a lot of things. All they had to do really was catch you on the way back and just chase you. Make you

35:30 open the throttle. Cruising at forty gallons an hour, forty two gallons an hour, flat out one hundred gallons an hour. You’re coming back and you’ve only got a hundred and ten gallons left. Plenty of time to get home at ordinary cruising, you open up for half an hour and you’ve got no petrol. Never seemed to work it out, fortunately. It’s amazing isn’t it?

36:00 I used to think about it. So even though you had that speed, you’ve heard the expression, “Through the gate?” On the big long throttle, there was wire seal, copper wire with a lead seal on it. Full throttle was up to the wire seal, if you wanted the utmost you went right through the gate, that was everything the engine could give you.

36:30 One of the chaps said, “How long can you run one of these Merlin’s flat out through the gate?” and they said, “How much petrol have you got?” Of course after that the engine would be no good. Well it might be but it would have to be taken down. They didn’t think of it thank goodness. Of course quite often, say you went to Berlin, twelve hundred

37:00 miles return, a full cover would take you twenty minutes to half an hour, twenty five gallons of petrol. You’d be right on the edge of getting back again if you did that. All they’d have to do is chase you for half an hour and you’d have to land, you’d have to come down whether you land or not. It didn’t matter to them, if they ran out of fuel they’d just go down and refuel. We’d have to go back to England to get any more

37:30 fuel. A lot of things like that. Of course the more awkward you were for them to get the more often they’d leave you alone. They knew all right. They’d know that you were on to them, put it that way by just the way you were flying and altering course. “This bloke’s no use chasing. Try somebody else.”

38:00 If you could do it often enough. There was a lot of luck too. A lot of luck. Got to be at the wrong place at the wrong time and it would be bad. You’ve always got to try and be somewhere else if something nasty is going to be happening. I know that sounds stupid, but if you could be somewhere else when it happens you don’t get hurt. To have an aircraft,

38:30 I’d never thought, it never crossed my mind, that the aircraft would go wrong. Never even thought of it. That’s how, if I think of what could happen, people could just think maybe not do that or do this, and I’ve done it myself and turned off the fuel and the engine’s stopped. Things like that.

39:00 Paying attention, looking over, isn’t that interesting. It won’t start again too, not until you come down very, very low. That’s nothing wrong with the plane, that’s just stupidity or flying when slightly inebriated, only once never again.

39:30 The ground crew were fantastic. I don’t know how because they used to work very long hours. Of course as far as, apart from action, we were treated very well indeed, permanent station, brick buildings, two storey, centrally heated,

40:00 had my own room, not a very palatial, had a chair, a bed and a cupboard and my own room, could shut and lock the door if I liked. That was most of the others too, I was a warrant officer. We didn’t have enough people we had a special block of our own, bombproof shelter and everything. It was quite nice. It was

40:30 rather peculiar because the difference between we’d just been sitting here and suddenly to be confronting enemy fighters it’s all in a couple of hours and then back again. Everybody the same. Most everybody

41:00 most of the people in the station just did their jobs, walk around. At the time it didn’t worry me. I just think it’s crazy. One of the things was you’re absolutely on your own, as soon as you took those wheels off the ground, you’re alone.

41:30 You were given the target, you were given the aircraft, you worked out your own navigation and then after that as soon as you crossed out of the English coast, nobody could help you, nobody. I’m sorry, you could always call for assistance if you were lost or something and they might help you if they could. It’s still up to you, all they could do was talk to you. They couldn’t reach out and help, they couldn’t send out

Tape 6

00:35 **Just wanted to ask you how long you were at the OTU for?**

About six weeks.

Whereabouts was that?

Fraserborough, in Scotland, the second lump that goes out we were on the tip there, nice little village. Tell you a funny story there. The locals drink whiskey with a beer chaser,

01:00 they drink a whiskey and then they have a pint of beer. Anyway I was in this pub, I didn’t drink very much I was only nineteen, they said, they knew I was an Australian I was in uniform, “What’s your name?” I said, “Campbell.” There was a deadly hush. I realised just over the way was Glen Coe just where the Campbells were supposed to have slaughtered all the MacDonalds. They didn’t actually – it was the English troops. We got blamed for it.

01:30 This chap says, ”Oh it’s all right, he’s an Australian.” It was all right after that. That was hundreds of years ago and they still remembered, if you were a Campbell, you don’t say it. It was a nice little village though.

Your unit, whereabouts was it that you were actually based when you were doing

reconnaissance?

02:00 Benson. That's a little town nearby called, what is it? It's a very famous place around there, I know Henry VIII went up there and gave a new altar to the local church, Wallingford. Have you ever heard of Wallingford? Well Wallingford was a market town so posh when the railway come through

02:30 the didn't want one of those smelly things they wouldn't let the railway go through the town. So if you wanted to go to London you had to go to a little place called Halt, near Benson, and flag the train down. Couldn't just go into town or Epping sort of thing. Near Wallingford, it's about forty miles north west of London, permanent station. It's on line the road and near

03:00 the Thames. We used to go swimming in the Thames, freezing cold, mostly sitting on the grass getting warm. It was bombed once early during the war, they didn't hit the station but they blew the top off the pub, the bottom part was still, they had a big tarpaulin over the top, but the bar was still opened. That was just outside. Very nice there. Right in the middle of fields

03:30 now of course it's being built up, it's only forty miles from London. In fact you could walk off our aerodrome into the countryside. Where our flight was, was a farm with geese, in fact if you went out the gate the geese would go for you, like in Rome, in the old days about the geese saving Rome from the Vandals, or whatever it was and villages. It was quite nice country.

04:00 **Was Benson just for you reconnaissance missions, or were there other pilots based there?**

Practically nothing except there were others, we were the operational, we were Number 1 PRU, that was operational, there weren't that many people really, forty Spitfires and ten Mosquitos, that's what we had. The way they worked it, my squadron was in action

04:30 every day of the war went out. That's not to say that every pilot is in action every day. They did two flights, A and B of course, A flight, B flight. A flight would be in action, B flight would be in readiness and the next day B flight would be in action and A flight would be in readiness. That doesn't mean to say that everyone on the flight would fly. They would have a number of targets given to them by the whoever,

05:00 I don't know and the flight commander would read off the targets and he would have his list of pilots, and you went to the bottom of the roster and went up again. In the summertime that was very quick because there was plenty of flying time. Just read off the targets 'Leipzig DA, so-and-so. Aerodrome so-and-so, so-and-so'. You'd just pick up the slip of paper and walk in the operations room and there'd be an Intelligence officer and you'd be briefed as to

05:30 what they wanted. They'd take all your personal gear except for photos that were taken in civvies [civilian clothes] so that if you were shot down and you were lucky enough to survive the local resistance might be able to help you. They could get you a passport but they couldn't get you a photograph in civvies easily. Lots of money, colossal sum of money, I don't know what it was if it was in a sealed envelope, if it was opened you had to make up what, it was in

06:00 Reich marks mostly, we had all sorts of escape gear and you could unscrew with compasses in, and all sorts of things. Silk maps of Europe which you'd use as a scarf, you hoped that if you were shot down you wouldn't be shot down into Holland which was a compromise, but Belgium and France weren't too bad. Germany of course was hopeless, that's if you survived.

06:30 I've got a bit off the subject there.

That's okay. I wanted to ask you, your first flight on one of these missions, can you explain in as much detail what you were told and what happened?

I was just told, "So-and-so, this is your op." We called them 'operations' you see. Very proper, the RAF. They don't go in for 'missions' or 'raids'; it's 'operational sorties'.

07:00 "This is your sortie, go and be briefed." There were a number of airfields in France actually, and of course I was very apprehensive, A I wanted to be successful and B what would it be like? Anyway I took off and flew into France. Did my navigation of course. There was lots of cloud about, and every cloud I saw an enemy fighter behind,

07:30 I worked myself up into a good ol' stew [got very worried]. Got lost, I think I got one airfield, came back. Nobody took the slightest notice, "All right." Quite normal. If they'd told me off I probably would have had it, but no the squadron leader said.

08:00 **Could you explain when you were up the in the air on your first mission, how you were actually trying to look for what you had to photograph?**

Well I'd worked out my navigation and I had my map and I had them all marked, that's my first target so I'd try to find that. Of course I'm looking at that and then I wonder if there's an enemy fighter and so I turn around, and then of course missed the target. Of course once you're lost on a map,

08:30 I wasn't actually lost, I just didn't know where I was, same thing and your confidence gone and to map read once you've lost your confidence is absolutely hopeless. I flew around, flew around for a while until

I thought, “I’d better go back now.” As I say they knew what was going to happen, they knew I’d be like that.

09:00 That’s what they call buck fever isn’t it? You go out to shoot your first deer and you can’t shoot the target. After that I was all right. I just took I knew there weren’t fighters behind every cloud the next time, anyway there were no clouds. I did it according to normal, I went up and found the contrail [condensation trail] and did all the right things, didn’t meet any enemy fighters, didn’t see any

09:30 enemy fighters and came back, got my target. “Good show. Go to the bottom of the list.”

Could you explain how you’d take a photograph of a target from the air?

As I said the Spitfire was a very bad plane, very long nose then the wings and you can’t stand down at all, they’re a fighter, interceptor fighter, you know, another plane very good

10:00 for that, very manoeuvrable. So say the target is your foot, way back here I’ve got to line up on it, I turn the plane up on its side I come along until I’m there and then I fly straight over, straight down the middle. After a while you get quite good at it and you know just how far you are away and when to switch the cameras on and all those sort of things. For a while, you do that at the OTU too, they’d never let you out of the OTU unless you could do it

10:30 reasonably well they know you’ll get better. Of course you wouldn’t just do it one run, if you thought that you’d miss on the first one it might take two or three runs or maybe half a dozen if you thought you were that bad. If it’s a big target you’d have to do half a dozen or more, ten runs over the target before you got there. The more you do it, like anything else, and if you’re keen enough the better you get. I got quite good after a while.

11:00 I could fly up and go ‘bong bong’ and fly away without even going back to see if I got it. I practically always get it, if I was unsure I’d go back and do it again. If it was important, of course they were all important. Some of them were just pin points in a field. They’d say, “The corner of this field, it’s three miles from the village of so-and-so.” You’d never ask them why because it was probably something to do with

11:30 either resistance or spies or something and you didn’t want to know. All you wanted to do was get the target. Of course the thing to do would be find the village first and then fly back and do it that way, not try and find the tiny little field and all those sort of things. Big towns weren’t hard to find. Big cities were pretty easy. It was quite good really. If it was one main big target, if a dam had been bombed, say Berlin had been bombed Berlin would be your

12:00 target, get to Berlin come back. They might give you five airfields, they might be going to send a bombing raid out and want to know how many aircraft are on that airfield and so they might give you five or six airfields to do and you’d have to, they’d be fairly hard to find, small, but airfields are not hard to see. Unless they’re camouflaged. Flying

12:30 bomb sites, that was very hard, the Germans were very good at camouflaging and what we’d do then is they’d give us a big strip of country, say twenty miles long by five miles wide and we’d do a mosaic and fly down and come back, horribly boring, very accurate flying and you’d come back and they’d give all these photographs to half a dozen and they’d look at them in minutely trying to find something they could see.

13:00 They’d go to a lot of trouble. A lot of ops though, just hop over in to France and fly up and down for a while and back again. The Luftwaffe usually wouldn’t be after us, too close to England. They didn’t want to stir up the British would send over fighters to them then and there’d be a, they knew they

13:30 wanted to get bombers. Reconnaissance work, they’d get us if they could but we weren’t that important to them unless of course they thought by doing a target the bombs would come back then they weren’t very happy, they’d try and pick you off then. They knew though that if they shot down one, another would come and another and another, until they got the target.

You’re sitting at the controls of a plane, and then you’re flying over a target and you need to take a photograph, how do you do it?

14:00 Before you come up to the target, you set your patrol, the only thing you can do is set the number of photographs per second, or per minute, you’re doing two hundred and twenty and you’re at thirty thousand feet so you set it at every three seconds, you come back in and you switch your cameras on before you do all this funny business, and then come back straight. Now you can see down behind you quite well in the Spitfire there’s no wing

14:30 as soon as you’ve passed over the target you can switch over your camera and turn around and come back over again, if you’re doing a mosaic over the target, or come a criss-cross, of course these things might be several miles long at three hundred miles an hour. You don’t do any steep turns. As I say it’s quite easy to see the target after you’ve been there, it’s very hard in the first place. Usually

15:00 if it was as big city, this is what was peculiar they’d seldom ever fire at you unless you hung around for too long. One because the Germans were very, very good if they were going to fire anti-aircraft the

civilian population had to be in shelters, very meticulous, it takes a while. So if you can get in before they've got them and go away you're not like to attract flak,

15:30 unless it's an important target, then they don't care of course. Bayer, the people who make pills and things they've a Leverkusen in between Cologne and Dusseldorf, very nasty target, very heavily protected, in fact it was never bombed and the Yanks said they were going to bomb it and

16:00 they went in, we got a message back which we interpreted as "Send reconnaissance aircraft," so I wasn't due to go the chap in front of me he went and he came back a couple of hours later. I said, "How did you get on?" He said, "No, absolutely impossible. The flak was so thick I would have been shot down." I was next on the list and the

16:30 squadron leader said, "Do you wanted to have a go at it?" And I said, "No, not particularly." And he said, "Bomber Command, the Yanks bombers they really want it covered." So I said, "All right." So I knew what to expect, this poor chap hadn't until he got there and I thought, "How on earth am I going to get over this place?" So I flew in at

17:00 about thirty thousand and before I got about ten miles away and I started a very long dive, God knows what speed I was doing when I crossed over probably just under six hundred miles an hour I suspect, a thousand kilometres, and I had my cameras switched on to one second and I wasn't going to get sixty per cent overlap, I was across the target and gone. They didn't even open up, but they did afterwards.

17:30 The flak was there just black, I wasn't there I was miles away. Anyway when I got back, I said, "They'll be no good, the photographs. I was going too fast." He said, "Oh yeah, have a look." He showed me the photographs, all over these things were big conical holes, of course, there was no stereo. I said, "Look at the bomb craters." He said, "They're not bomb craters." I said, "What are they?" He said, "They're piles of

18:00 raw materials, cones of raw materials." But to the unaided eye, the unexperienced eye – which is me – they weren't stereoscopic. He said, "No, no bomb ever near them." I said, "What happened to the Americans?" He said, "They didn't hit them."

What was that target?

Leverkusen, Bayer, you know Bayer.

What were they making?

18:30 One thing they were making was Zyklon B. Do you know what Zyklon B is? It's what they used to kill people in the gas chambers. Zyklon B is a fly spray and it had a funny smell and they wanted to take the smell out of this and so the three leading chemical companies in Germany, Bayer was one of them. That's what Zyklon

19:00 Bayer, B is there trademark, so they made the gas that was used in the gas chambers in the death camps. They never bombed it. Poor old Cologne and Dusseldorf. Funnily enough they didn't hit the Cathedral in Dusseldorf, still standing all around it an absolute shambles. Weird isn't it. They didn't try either, I mean

19:30 they didn't mean to do that, just by chance. Leverkusen was terrible, it was very important, I mean all sorts of things a chemical company makes, all sorts of explosives, everything in the war. Without a chemical company modern civilisation would virtually collapse. Insecticides, all sorts

20:00 of additives for things, dyes, pharmaceuticals, fly sprays.

When you flew over a target and you've set the camera and you take the photograph, how do you know that you've been successful?

Not until you get back, except experience. If you see the target under your tail and the camera's been working

20:30 there's nothing much else you can do. You know you've passed over and you know the camera has been going nobody ever complained. That's true, they never complained, they never said, "You didn't get the target" and often, not often, but sometimes I didn't get it for various reasons, incompetence or fright or

21:00 being shooed off at the wrong time, or getting a burst of flak. Mostly we got the target, mostly. You were expected to, they expected us, "You were trained, why didn't you do it?" They didn't say that, you did your best.

So you flew back to base, what then happened?

Well land,

21:30 taxi over to your dispersal, we had our flight hut and all our planes were dispersed, not in neat rows because if we were attacked they couldn't be all shot up in one go, they just pegged down out on the grass to cyclone proof ties. The photographer would race out with a car, lift the lid off take the magazines off the cameras and tear off to the laboratory and then the processors

22:00 would process them and they'd be cut up into their neat photographs. They were given to the first interpreters, you've probably heard the tale, you may not have it's a long while ago, of the lady who saw the first rocket in Germany. This young lady was an interpreter and she saw these photographs with the

22:30 funny planes with no propellers and funny burn marks at the back, obviously jets. They were too. My squadron took the photographs, we didn't get a mention, we weren't supposed to mention us either. We were a special unit. Of course the Germans knew all about us. Then they went to what they called World Intelligence, which was at Meadman Abbey have

23:00 you heard of the Hellfire Club? You have. Well Meadman Abbey was where they used to get their hi jinx, well that was World Intelligence and that was where they were intensively looked at, they might have twenty interpreters looking at that particular shot. Of course if it was a bomb damage assessment, they'd be assessed and Bomber Command would be told if you hit the target or you didn't hit the target, why didn't you hit the target and so on. That's what we did, we supplied the raw

23:30 intelligence on the spot intelligence. Never thought about it being intelligence, it was just photographs as far as I was concerned. They could do all sorts of things with those photographs, some of them you get a big factory and there'd be a hole in the roof, interpreters could tell by the size of the hole what size bomb went through into the factory and virtually what sort of damage would be underneath without seeing, lifting the roof off and looking underneath. Things like that.

24:00 To be it would just be a hole in the roof. Wouldn't be able to tell. Of course they'd done that by looking at places in London and other places where there was a lot of damage. That would be roughly a sortie from go to whoa [start to finish]. As far as I was concerned I went back put my head down and tried to get the noise of the Merlin out of my ears. After a couple of hours it would go away and become a normal person again.

24:30 **You said that there was a processing laboratory. Did you go in there and see?**

We could. We didn't often. I had been in once. We were just a ruddy nuisance, because you'd distract all the, they were usually mostly WAAF you see, they'd all say, "Who's this bloke?" I don't know what they said, they'd stop and the bloke in charge would say, "Go, they're important, you're disturbing the work."

25:00 We always got to see the photographs after they'd been processed. In fact they were always put out for us to see and then we knew whether we'd actually got the targets or not. That was the only time, they also gave us a sheet that the interpreters printed, with the marks on them roughly where your photographs were, just a few of them to show you where you were. You could tell if you missed out completely or you got a good shot or not. That was

25:30 important because that was for your benefit, you could interpret anything from it of course or very little, it just looked like an awful mess sometimes. Whether you got the actual target was up to you. Of course the more you did it, the more expert you became. The biggest job was getting to the thing, getting to the actual target. Photography wasn't very hard, of course you weren't, you had a fair coverage

26:00 of miles, so you didn't have be that terribly accurate as long as you go the target in the middle of it. If you were doing a big target and you were trying to get your runs so they overlapped on the sides or crossed over that way. The navigation was the hardest, because if you didn't navigate, I've been lost, absolutely completely lost.

26:30 I didn't think I was going to get back either.

Could you tell me when that was?

The most alarming one, Bomber Command, they were going to destroy Berlin if they could. This was in the winter of 1943, 1944 December 1943, January 1944 and they bombed Berlin I think about four or five times.

27:00 Of course every time they bombed it they'd want a reconnaissance. The weather was shocking. The clouds ten tenths complete cover from England right across to the Russian Front, Europe completely cloud covered. Any holes, snowing underneath it, it was all snow. Once you went up through the clouds it was a beautiful day, it's always sunny above the clouds, twenty thirty thousand feet it's always sunny. Shocking weather. This time

27:30 I'd done one trip before and got back all right. This time the met [meteorology] said that there was going to be a front going through and it was going to be clear at the target. This is three hour ahead, didn't say what it was going to be like coming back of course. So I took off and flew, and flew and flew.

28:00 Got to the ETA, estimated time of arrival, Berlin. Now Berlin. Berlin's a big city, bigger far bigger than Sydney even then, not a place you could miss. Cloud everywhere. I could see right across to the Russian Front, I'm at forty thousand feet. There were holes here and there and I'd go over them and look in that hole, snow.

28:30 I began to realise if I stuck around any longer I'd be running out of fuel. So I thought, "I'll go home." So I turned around and flew for another couple of hours, still cloud see nothing. There was a hole in the cloud I flew over and it was Dusseldorf. Marvellous. The only trouble was I was one hundred and fifty

miles south off track where I should have been, one hundred and fifty miles off south,

29:00 like being when I think I'm at Newcastle I'm at Wollongong. Of course I've only got twenty gallons of fuel left. So I knew then that the met had given me the wrong wind, they didn't know, which is quite common. Nobody flew at those altitudes in those days, it was a jet stream from the north, God knows over a hundred miles an hour flying south, God knows where I'd been, I'd certainly not been to Berlin.

29:30 God knows where I'd been. I knew I was at Dusseldorf and so I turned north going up towards I should be in England in about twenty minutes or the French coast. So I flew for about twenty minutes and I thought I must be about near England now. My radio from that altitude I was about one hundred and fifty miles range, it's eight miles up forty thousand feet and

30:00 so I called a local station up, Gangplank. "Hello Gangplank, give me a vector." A course to steer, that's a vector. They gave me a vector which was almost what I was flying so I flew along a bit and I thought now "Wonder where the hell I am?" I rang them up and said, "Can I reduce altitude, can I reduce angel?" and angel is a thousand feet, "I'm at angels 41 I'm fed up and want to come down out of angel 41." They said,

30:30 "No, stay at angels 41, you're over enemy territory." I thought, "God, I'm supposed to be over England or near England." So then I said to them, "Give me a fix?" and so after a little while the radar, "You're forty miles north west of Paris," and I was

31:00 supposed to be over England. I said, "I've only got fifteen minutes' flying time left you'd better get ready to lift me out of the Channel." They said, "Don't worry." Have you ever watched Dad's Army? "Don't panic." They didn't say that, "Don't panic," but that's what they meant. They said, "We'll get you down." I said, "Oh yes, right oh." Anyway they said, "Just pretend that you're in the Link." That's a trainer we used to have,

31:30 you got inside this thing and the outside chap would tell you what to do and you tried to do it blind flying. Anyway they brought me down. If I hadn't had that radio God knows where I would have ended up.

Where did you come down?

I landed on England all right. Had these enormous dromes for crashed bombers, or rather bombers that were going to crash. Several miles long and about four or five times as wide

32:00 and if a bomber was coming back and maybe damaged or with bombs aboard if it landed at its own aerodrome it would wreck the whole show and it would bring them into these sort of dromes. They had FIDO, do you know what FIDO is? Fog intensive dispersal of, they had the flame right along the runway, they'd light this kerosene up and it would lift the fog four or five hundred feet. You'd come in to clear air. They didn't light them for me of course.

32:30 It had everything, bulldozers, hospital, ambulances all lined up. Very good. I was probably the only aircraft in the air, whether they'd have done anything, what amused me was that the Germans didn't interfere. They could have easily jammed my frequency they didn't,

33:00 or give me wrong directions because I was well in Germany when I started to talk to them, in France anyway, they didn't. I never worked out why because I wouldn't have known.

When you heard that you were still in enemy territory over the radio, what went through your mind then?

I didn't like it much. I knew that

33:30 not only was I lost but I was very short of fuel and unless I had some very good help I wasn't going to get back to England. I didn't know what the wind was you see. There was this terrific jet stream blowing from the north and although I'm cruising at three hundred I'm actually only doing two hundred miles over the ground and I'm burning a lot, lot more fuel than ordinary cruising. I probably wouldn't have got back if I hadn't had

34:00 the ground people. As a matter of fact I probably would have, but it unless I knew where to go, you see from a Spitfire it's got a very good gliding ratio ten to one and from eight miles up and could have probably glided about seventy miles without an engine at all if I could have kept my head, but of course a lot of that would have been in a cloud and I wouldn't have been able to glide in as far as I thought I could. I could have bailed out.

34:30 Then I would have landed in France anyway.

You mentioned briefly the equipment that you had for escaping, could you run through what you had?

Well we had special flying boots they were all fleece lined and they had a little pen knife, a suture and you could cut them around,

35:00 because if you go wandering around in enemy territory with flying boots on of course they'd pick you straight away if you're wearing shoes, so you cut the top off and you could also have this thing as a

comfort around your middle, zip it up around here. We had compasses, little compasses, the best ones were trouser buttons, ordinary metal trouser buttons which you sew on to your trousers when you put them together one would have a spike up it and it would be a little compass. Some were very elaborate which you unscrewed

35:30 the tunic button and inside was a compass, they knew that, that was easy. The photographs in civvies, you'd carry those. A lot of money for bribes perhaps, might be able to bribe somebody or if the resistance was helping you, then you'd help them by giving them say a thousand pounds, an enormous amount of money and one of our

36:00 chaps was shot down in Belgium and the resistance picked him up and he was back within about three weeks. They picked him up, the cycled down through France to Spain got to Gibraltar like that. He's the only one I know, but that was amazing. They did help, of course they couldn't get you back but they'd hide you or look after you. Not many to be shot down from thirty thousand feet with one of

36:30 our things, they were only a tiny little aeroplane. You're carrying a lot of fuel, if your tank's were empty they were more explosive than when they're full. If a shell hit you you'd go up. Never thought of that really except to avoid being hit, that was the main thing. They can't do much about flak, it just happens. If you see it, the whole thing was looking out

37:00 all the time, I expect I looked around once every two minutes all around the whole horizon, always into the sun, in the south in Northern Hemisphere. All our flight huts had a big poster with, "Beware of the Hun [enemy] in the sun!" A fighter if he counterattacks out of the sun because you can't see him you see. I always took it very much to heart, not that I ever saw a Hun in the sun, but I always put my finger over the sun and looked around it

37:30 to see if there was a fighter. We always called them 'the Hun'. They always called us 'the Tommys' after the First World War, just 'Tommys'. But we were nasty – we called them 'the Huns'.

What else did you have on board in terms of escaping?

Had a dinghy, a one man dinghy inflatable.

38:00 A parachute, which was strapped onto you of course, a pilot's parachute was permanent, sorry underneath a Mae West [life vest] one of those the Mae West then the parachute on top of that. Then you were strapped in, cross strapped in to the cockpit which you could release to move forward. Behind you, you had a sheet of armour plate which wasn't much good but it was there. I carried a knife, a very sharp knife

38:30 a commando knife not for fighting people, dinghies occasionally blew up, just inflated and if they inflated in the cockpit they'd press the control stick forward and there was nothing you could do about it and the engine just went…. So everybody carried a sharp knife of some sort. I carried an automatic pistol. Don't know what I was going to do with it, it was my own it wasn't the RAF's.

39:00 The RAF gave me a revolver, I didn't know what to do with this I used to keep it in the locker, I should have kept it. Certainly not the thing you carried around in an aircraft. Food, when you were being briefed there were all sorts of things that you could take. They had

39:30 plastic containers with three or four days food in it, all sorts of nice things like dried fruit, raisins, chewing gum, chocolate that sort of thing and you could have as many of those as you want. Battle dress had pockets inside you could put two or three of these in so if you were shot down of course you could lie up for a couple of days anyway and eat this stuff while you were there.

40:00 Fortunately I never needed to trial it out. You didn't have to hand that back either. What else did they have? Those were the main things. Of course the battle dress, that's the battle dress there, it's just a blouse and woollen, I've got two RAF and RAAF, sometimes I flew in an Australian battle dress and sometimes in a RAF.

40:30 In the winter time if flew in RAF because it was warmer and thicker. That hasn't been worn for sixty years.

Could you explain for the camera what the battle dress was in words?

A blouse, big wide pockets on the outside, very large pockets inside, buttoned with a fly front,

41:00 big pockets inside so that you could put your gear and stuff, or maps if wanted to. The trousers had a big inside flap, warm flap down the back they were all wool and actually we wore wool next to the skin everywhere because wool doesn't burn into you. Silk, nylon all these other things burn into you, leather

41:30 and wool don't. I used to wear long socks that come up over the knee, silk lined woollen underwear that was issue, silk because some people don't like wool they get itchy, thick sweater, then just battle dress. From the outside I was just wearing battle dress. Gloves wool, leather gauntlet over the top, nice and flexible. Wool both

42:00 warm and flexible.

Tape 7

00:35 **Could tell us about the modifications for pressurising the aircraft.**

I think it was a Mark XIII, bad name. They tried to make things better, the worse thing was the high altitude because it did affect you, mountain sickness

01:00 hypoxia, all this sort of thing, they knew about that but there wasn't much they could do. We were fit, we were supposed to be fit, we were fit, we were tested to be fit. So they tried to bring out this Mark, this new Mark. I was away on leave at the time and I came back and the squadron leader said, "We've got new aircraft, have a go." I said, "Right." When I came back he said, "What do you think of it?" I said, "Not bad, a bit different."

01:30 He said, "None of the fellows like it." I said, "Why?" and then he told me he said, "So-and-so went up the other day and the flight was cancelled and he tried to get out with his parachute on and he couldn't get out." When they'd made the double glazing of course it's about an extra inch, it made it such a narrow space, he said, "You could get out without the parachute but not out with it."

02:00 You see the idea of having a parachute is so that you can get out when you're in trouble. So I'm afraid back to the drawing board. So we never got a pressured again. We did get a thing, a vest which as you breathed in it let out and when you breathed in it pressed in. I never used that either, just young and stupid probably.

02:30 We would cope. The longest trip was six hours and you weren't at that altitude all the time, probably four hours at say forty thousand feet, that was about as much as you could stand. That's two miles higher than Everest. You're not doing anything much you're just sitting there and you don't have no physical effort, there's a lack of oxygen,

03:00 all the, about six pounds per square inch, fourteen point six here, of course all the fluids pass into the lungs and you got only a fraction of the lunch capacity. If you stop breathing for a second you start to faint, had to remember…all the time, pure oxygen, you certainly weren't getting it. Gremlins,

03:30 I didn't realise I thought it was the thin air and the aircraft was waffling around, but it was me. Ordinarily Spitfire flies itself, fingers tips no trouble, but up there something happens and you're fifty per cent efficient or less and the plane drops a wing and by the time you've noticed, "Oh," you're sort of half

04:00 drunk sort of thing. The plane's waffling along, still hurtling along at three hundred and twenty miles an hour of course, and its going, drops its nose and you go off course. In fact a bloke wrote a poem about gremlins. I don't know whether it's original or not, but that's the origin of gremlins, something weird happening that you can't explain. You get this rapture at the depths

04:30 when you come up from the nitrogen deep diving, you get a bit of that up there too. I didn't notice any rapture though. You got the bends occasionally, but very cold nitrogen coming out of the blood. Of course very little physical effort in the plane, turn a button or writing something down, not like a person diving or that sort of thing.

05:00 **You mentioned before that when you'd raised the issue of why you didn't have weapons on the Spitfires they said, "Oh you'll just get into trouble." What did that mean?**

Well they were quite right of course. You've got a lot of young blokes, there was only one married man on our squadron and he was only about twenty three, he was a Canadian.

05:30 All of us were probably under twenty two or twenty one and I'm sure if you'd given them a gun and there was any trouble about well they'd have been in it. Of course right from the start the idea was that you shouldn't want to fight your way in. The idea was to get your way in without fighting. The other idea was you had a heavily armed aircraft when you went in and you fought your way out again.

06:00 Doesn't work. You're sure to get copped, shot down. That's what the Americans did, they had these Flying Fortresses, armed to the teeth without fighter cover they weren't worth a damn, the Germans just tore them to bits. Absolutely. The RAF found that out early in the war, bombers without bomber cover, the Germans knew about it and that's why. I've seen a formation of two thousand aircraft, this is

06:30 an American formation, eight hundred bombers, twelve hundred fighters to cover them. That's what they thought of the Luftwaffe.

Where did you see that?

Going to Bremen. Actually I shouldn't have been doing this but my aircraft, something went slightly wrong with the cameras and they wouldn't let that go they had to pull the darn thing out and put it back in again. They were about a half an hour doing it,

07:00 I didn't mind, but still they were head up about it. In the meantime this huge formation was getting up, the RAF had bombed the Vickers U-Boat [Unterseeboot – German submarines] yards the night before and I was going into reconnaissance. The Americans were going in this day to sort of stir things around

a bit. Of course they weren't going to hold up two thousand aircraft for one reconnaissance aircraft. By the time I caught up with them they were well into Germany

07:30 and I had to fly through this huge formation. I was hoping nobody would fire at me because I did this all the way to show them I was a Blue Spitfire. They didn't fire. I got to Vickers about twenty minutes before, I'm cruising at about four hundred and they're cruising at two hundred, I'm going through them at two hundred miles an hour. Did my job and off across up over the Baltic while they went into bomb. That was absolutely amazing, the whole sky

08:00 was full of aircraft from about five thousand feet up to thirty thousand feet just a huge lens, bombers in the middle and fighters all around them. Before the invasions in 1944 on the operations board, five thousand aircraft, fighter aircraft on targets of opportunity, that means shooting up anything they saw. Five thousand. Anything. Anything that moved in France

08:30 or Germany, France mostly. Trains, even a bloke with a horse and cart if he wasn't luck, anything that moved, five thousand, can you imagine five thousand fighter aircraft, fortunately I was way above it. They'd be down at ground level, about five thousand feet. About by 1944 the Luftwaffe was really in trouble.

09:00 They had the RAF by night and the Yanks by day. They just couldn't cope. Even though they were technically far more advanced. See all through 1942, 1943, 1944 up to the invasion, Bomber Command had been bombing them, to counter this they had their Night Fighters who were a very highly developed Night Fighters. They had radar aboard, poor old bombers they sought the bombers.

09:30 They had to stop those four engine bombers, so everything else practically was in abeyance. They had advanced jet fighters, Emery 262, they had a Rocket Fighter 163, they had all these things. By the time the Americans came in and against them the Americans had this enormous fighter cover the Mustang which had a British engine by the way

10:00 a Rolls Royce engine made by Packard. They weren't any good until they got that Packard. They were very good aircraft. As I say the Americans used Spitfire for reconnaissances. Traditional you see. If something works, very reluctant to change it.

10:30 They had, I don't know what accepted loss they had, it wasn't my concern. I expect it was much the same as the bombers, less than say ten per cent.

Can you walk me through exactly what would happen at the start of an operation in terms of your briefing, what would happen in the navigation centre?

11:00 Yes okay. First of all, after breakfast which would be at first light we'd go down to the Ops room, that's the flight in action, and the flight commander would pick up the list of pilots and he'd also pick up his list of rostered pilots and they'd all be there or we hoped, sometimes they might not be there, they'd be in trouble. He'd read off the list, "So-and-so, there's yours." That man

11:30 would take this off, say it was me it would say, "Leipzig." Walk into the briefing room and there'd be an intelligence officer, one to each pilot or maybe one to every three pilots. He would brief then to what the target was, if it was a DA it would be a piece of cake, of course, it was the city. "How much do you want?" "These are the aiming points of course but get the whole lot if you can get it."

12:00 Funny little points all over the place, he'd explain to you, "They're down here and down here, put these on your maps." You'd put them on your map, okay, then you had to hand over all your personal gear except as I was saying about the photographs for the passports and you could have food, a large sum of money, okay that's finished the briefing. You go into the navigation room and you'd have your own computer and paper and pencils would be there and you'd get out your

12:30 map of Europe or half a dozen of them and use the ones you need and put them down and you'd draw what you were going to do, or what you'd hope you were going to do on it. You'd work out from the given met wind if it was accurate, they were pretty good about eighty per cent correct, you would work out the course for each of these and you'd write these on your log, so many minutes.

13:00 When that was complete, just ring up and there used to be, they were stationary, we'd called them breaks, shooting breaks. They'd take you over to the flight, the plane would be there all warmed up parachute in, you'd collect your flying gear, helmet, goggles, what else?

13:30 That's about all. You'd have you own personal gear and get into the plane and be strapped in and they'd give you the schedule you'd sign it. Switch on, chocks away, take off. Off you'd go. Climb to altitude. If you were going on a long trip you'd fly to a coastal aerodrome and top up your tanks full right up as far as you could get them so that you had the absolute maximum fuel.

14:00 That was very important. You'd always have your tanks full whether you were going on a long trip or a short trip because you might be able to get out of trouble by running away as I say I wouldn't run away but it's always the option of going for your life.

What was the longest reconnaissance operation you went on?

I think probably Berlin. I did Berlin eight times.

14:30 That one that I was talking about when I got lost, completely lost that was probably the longest only because I got lost. I didn't get the target I didn't get any photographs, I just got lost. I was flying around over Europe, God knows where I was flying over Europe, God knows. I was supposed to, an ETA to Berlin and I don't know where I was, I was over cloud somewhere. When I came back, to be one hundred and fifty miles

15:00 off track is an enormous amount.

Was that your most terrifying operation?

No. The most terrifying one was when I, through stupidity, I was doing flying bomb sites over France and the weather was closing in, it was getting worse and worse wether and I was mucking about. There was a little place called St Paul

15:30 little French village, and it got very thick and I was going lower and lower and lower and cloud was getting thicker. I thought, "No good," and I started to go home and they were so thick I was flying into cloud, I didn't know where I was, I knew I was going back to England. We have two sorts of instruments, one which work by gravity and one which in those days worked by gyroscopic control.

16:00 If you do too many violent manoeuvres you spin your gyros, of course we always flew on the gyros because it was much easier. I'm flying along and it's just like flying through cotton wool. We've been talking about Night Fighters which have got radar, airborne radar. I thought, "I wonder if one of those Night Fighters would pick me up in cloud, it's got radar. I started to look around in cloud.

16:30 Took my eyes off the instruments and spun my gyros and here I am in cloud, no instruments. I gathered myself together and went back into basic instruments, same as in a Tiger Moth, and got the thing level again and then I let down through the cloud and came over, and I thought, "That's not too bad, I'm not so stupid." I saw ahead of me the French coast.

17:00 I thought, "I'll go back to England." I flew across England. "Should be over there shortly," so England was and I flew in and I thought, I didn't know where I was quite, I thought, "I'll pick up," what we called the 'iron beam' was the railway line, "I'll pick up the railway line and fly up to London and skirt London and pick up where I know and go home."

17:30 Anyway I few around, I couldn't pick up a railway line, the country was wrong, everything was wrong and I couldn't match anything up. I'm flying round, I'll ask for, I rang up and they were most peculiar about it. They said, "What altitude are you? What sort of a plane are you flying?" I thought, "To hell with you," and went, "What are they doing? What's wrong?" So I flew around and looked down and I'm flying north, "I'm sure to hit somewhere I know

18:00 if I fly north." I'm only at about two or three thousand feet, the cloud is right down and my map reading at two thousand was hopeless , I'm used to twenty thousand feet. Suddenly I saw the sea, "Impossible! It can't be that!" Then a town starts to come up, I realised it that it's Cherbourg and I've been flying over the Cherbourg Peninsula.

18:30 I've come out of France there you see, gone across the bay and into Cherbourg, I've been flying around inside Cherbourg. No wonder they wouldn't talk to me. As I went into the town they opened up and started to shoot at me then. They knew I was lost, the Germans I mean, "He'll land sooner or later he's lost he doesn't know where he is." Of course as soon as I started to get away they shot at me. I shot out through thee

19:00 gate. Up to twenty thousand feet straight away. "Thanks goodness for that I can go home now," and then I saw the real coast of England coming up and then I saw two black dots, "Oh no fighter command these are English fighters they're not going to let me go." So, to surrender you put your wheels and flaps down that means I surrender.

19:30 These were two Typhoons, enormous fighters. Twice the size of a Spitfire, and they came along and their wing tips almost like this and I said, "Thanks." I had radio. "Thanks very much I'm going." They said, "No you're not. See that aerodrome down there we're going to land there come with us." They were New Zealanders actually I could tell by their accents. They could

20:00 recognise I was Australian too. Anyway they took me down, when I got down there one bloke in charge air commodore said, "What the devil have you been doing?" I said, "I was lost." "Not PR, they don't get lost do they?" Real sarcastic, I said, "Yes I was lost." He said, "All right that's a good enough excuse." He said, "Who are you anyway?" They thought that maybe

20:30 I had landed in Germany and the Germans were using my aircraft as an intruder. Anyway they rang up my aerodrome, my squadron and said "We've got a bloke here, he's dark, and he says he's an Australian, he talks like one, yes that's him right okay." "Yes you are you I think. You can go now."

21:00 I was very worried about that. When I got back to squadron, squadron leader blew up, "What the heck were you doing?" I said, "I got lost." "Oh, so long as you admit it. Anyway got you back." I said, "Got the aeroplane back too." And then anyway one of the blokes said, "Did you know that you got hit?" I said, "No."

21:30 The squadron leader was more upset about that, an accident report, got to make a full report and quadruplicate . Fortunately the canon shell had gone through just the front of the wing, in front of the tank, had only made a groove. If it hit me through the tank it would have blown the wing off. I almost got into trouble over that.

22:00 Real trouble. That was just pure stupidity you see.

Why were you worried about running into English fighters on the way home?

They didn't know who I was and I didn't have IFF, I was enemy fighter. With all this kafuffle about me flying about in Cherbourg and goodness knows what, they were going to be making sure who I was. I was

22:30 more frightened of them. There were two of them and instead of coming to me one by one they came in from both sides, and I thought, "What am I going to do about this?" I just put my wheels and flaps down. I wasn't trying to avoid them. They were supposed to be friendly, they didn't look very friendly. They were painted black too, nasty black colour, bad colour black, black aeroplanes. I met an Emery 162

23:00 it was painted black too. They liked painting their fighters black, Night Fighters of course probably. That's a rocket aeroplane, German Rocket. It was almost the end of the war too.

What happened there?

Fortunately it was so fast the plane is very fast and the plane is slightly slower it's very hard to get back to the same thing.

23:30 I was going up and photographing airfields in northern Germany and I'd just crossed across into Holland and there's this little place called Rhine and there's about three aerodromes and they wanted photographs there. I didn't realise why they wanted photographs of these aerodromes but I soon found out. Crossing over I saw this trail coming up, vertical,

24:00 marvellous, I thought it was a V-2 [German weapons used near the end of the war] rocket coming to London, they enter the stratosphere and over and down into London. The damned thing as soon as it got to my level it levelled off. I thought, "Good God." It was a Mark-XI and I'm doing about three hundred and twenty as usual and this thing circled me, it would be doing about six hundred miles an hour. Usually when two planes go

24:30 like that it takes a long while for the other one to come back. This thing went around, then I knew that it's high tail had no, it was a rocket and I thought, "Oh no 163, what am I going to do?" There was cloud then thankfully, so I whizzed down into the cloud and this thing was so fast it went past me like a rocket,

25:00 as I was standing still. You couldn't slow down, I'm doing three hundred and he's doing six. I was looking around and I'd come out of cloud and the damned thing would be up there circling. I thought they only had eight minutes duration, when they took off they dropped their undercarriage and landed on the skid. Once they turned their engine on that was it and they had to land on

25:30 a skid so they had to have a few minutes to play around, I thought if I could hold this chap off for a bit, for about five minutes, he didn't know what to do with me either. Every time I came out of clouds he'd make a pass at me, I'd just turn and he'd go whizzing past like that. I'd never seen anything so fast. The Germans had jets in 1942.

26:00 Long before we did.

Were there ever any reconnaissance over POW [prisoner of war] or concentration camps?

Oh yes. Pedeamunda, there was raid on Pedeamunda. There was a prisoner of war camp, Stalag Luft as they called them right next door. The idea was of course if you bomb this you'll hit your,

26:30 Bomber Command knew this but they still bombed it. They said, "You've got to be very accurate," a lot of the bombs fell into the stalag. I don't know about, they must have known, most of their death camps were in Eastern Germany and they weren't miliary targets and so they probably wouldn't have asked us to do it. But they could have easily.

27:00 We could cover the whole of Europe there's no doubt about that. Our Mosquitos had more range than the Spitfires. You could go, say, Berlin-Leipzig-Dresden almost to Munich for a Spitfire, the Mozzies [Mosquitos] could go right in. Of course after the invasion would go right in, the Spitfire would go right in. The Mozzies could go over, so there wasn't anywhere we couldn't cover, whether they wanted the cover I don't know.

27:30 They might have. I don't know what the Mosquitos were asked to do, they were given targets, but I didn't see what their targets were. They were complimentary, they did lost of targets. The first Mosquito we ever got, this is a good story in a way although it was tragic not to people. The first Mosquito down around Munich started to get engine trouble, band new Mosquito.

28:00 Fuel trouble probably, two sergeants, sergeant pilot, sergeant navigator. Both engines started to pack up. They thought, “If we land here it’s Germany all around, land in Switzerland if we can.” They landed in Switzerland, crash landed of course on the snow, high up and they got out their bomb to try and light a fire, a Mosquito is made of wood of course.

28:30 Banged their bomb on the wing and it burnt a hole in the wing and fell out on the snow and went out. So there they are with a brand new British Mosquito, the latest thing they’ve got, the German air attaché of course has arrived with his camera, everybody in the neighbourhood has arrived. So they want these blokes back to find out what happened to the Mosquito.

29:00 So they did some diplomatic, they let two Germans go back to Germany and they brought these two fellows back to England to find out what happened, court-martialled them. They found that they did everything properly and it was okay and they gave them different names and numbers and commissioned and they went flying again. They lost the Mosquito they had to buy the Mosquito back off the Swiss and

29:30 burn it. So that’s what happened to one of our first Mosquitoes. Poor old Mosquito they seemed to have trouble like that. It was funny, they had to try and burn it, they had this thermite bomb, burnt a hole in the wing and fell out on them.

What thoughts did you have about being taken prisoner of war?

I was determined I wasn’t going to be caught.

30:00 I used to go with stacks of food and lots of money and my pistol, 32 pistol colt it was and I knew how to do things with knives, I’d done my commando course. That’s what they call the SAS [special air service] now is Commando, I was real tough. What I would have done in real life of course is another matter. After you’ve

30:30 fallen out of and hit the ground with a parachute you’re not really in a good condition. I mean you wouldn’t be dead but you’d be…. If you were lucky enough to fall into the hands of good resistance who would look after you and get you back on your feet again you’d have a fair chance. I only knew of one, sorry this wasn’t a resistance. One of our chaps, and English chap, lovely name Crakenthorpe, little fellow with red hair, thin and

31:00 this is right at the end of the war. I was flying down, I think it was near Berchtesgaden, one of those places, suddenly it’s engine blew up an ME262 [German jet] flew away and he got out in his parachute and he landed, hurt his ankle, it’s about three o’clock in the afternoon. The Germans schools come out the same time as everywhere else, three o’clock. Of course the kids had seen this parachute come down, they’d seen this

31:30 RAF bloke hobbling along, they rush over and there’s a couple of Hitler Youth there about thirteen or fourteen with their little daggers, with ‘Blood and Honour’ on them, they were frightened to death of him of course. At that time everybody was called ‘Terrrorfleiger’ [terror flyer], Hitler’s orders to be shot on site, not all of them of course. He bailed up against a tree and

32:00 these people saying, “Terrorfleiger, terrorfleiger.” These little daggers and as I say they were terrified of him and he was terrified of them, he could see these daggers. Fortunately the village policeman rode up on his bicycle, way out I don’t think they’d ever been bombed this village. The policeman had a been a solider in the first world war and he could speak a bit of English and said, “I’m terribly sorry sir.” “Shoo,” to the kids, “Go home you little so-and-sos.” He said, “I’m afraid I’m going to have to arrest you.”

32:30 Anyway he said, “I can’t walk.” So he put him on his bicycle and wheeled him back to the police station, put him the cell, “I’ll leave the door open.” He was a celebrity. They had an English pilot. He was there, he couldn’t get away of course. I think the chap said “Will you give me your word that you won’t escape?”

33:00 and he said, “Yeah I won’t escape. I’ve got a sore ankle.” He was there until somebody was liberated, the army came up to that point and liberated him. He was flown back. He was the only other one I know that was, he was a prisoner of war he never got into a camp, he was only a local prisoner of war. Of course, there were no young men or anything, this old codger policeman and all the old

33:30 blokes around the place, women and children that’s all there were in the village. So he was very lucky. Crackenthorpe.

Can you explain to me what you were taught on your commandos course?

Everything. There was a major in charge of the course, he was called ‘the Mad Major’. I don’t know why. He seemed all right to me. When we

34:00 first arrived there were about half a dozen of us and they marched us into a trench with our head stuck out about that far. The chap in charge of us, warrant officer, said, “Now don’t duck there’s a fella up there he’s got a machine gun and he’s going to fire over your head.” He said, “He won’t hit you he’s a marksmen, he won’t hit you. Don’t duck.” Of course this chap opens up with this Bren gun and everyone of us … He said, “That’s good your reactions are good.” That was the first

34:30 test. Reactions. They do these things crawling through the mud and crawling over things, that was standard for the commandos in those days. They used live ammunition and if you were crawling along the ground and you put your hand out, these fellows were marksmen, and they'd shoot at you and miss you, this was you're not doing the right thing you see.

35:00 Then we were doing grenades of all descriptions, we were in a classroom and they were mostly warrant officers and he had an array of grenades on the desk and saying, "This is a type so-and-so grenade, Mills bomb, and if you pull the pin out and it'll go off, this one won't go off because I haven't got the fuse in, you unscrew the bottom and put the fuse in." This major walks in and he picks up one of these grenades off

35:30 the table and says, "Is this one live?" "Yes that one's live sir, be very careful." He dropped it on the floor and it goes… it's ready to go up you see. He yells out, "Get out." We all, people diving out the window and out the door, we should have known because both them just standing there. It had no fuse. He said,

36:00 "Very good that just shows you want you shouldn't do. Go ahead." We thought, "This bloke must be mad." Another thing they had, this is how to destroy a tank single handed. They had a thing called a sticky bomb, a big round bomb with a handle on it, if you stuck it on things it stuck. There was a large lump of explosive with a fuse. In Europe all the roads are lined with hedges and there's ditches of water.

36:30 A regiment of tanks comes along, you don't attack the first one you wait until the last one comes and you get up very carefully and behind this tank stick this sticky bomb on it and you dive back in the trench or the ditch. There's an awful bang and it blows the back of the tank off, in theory. It did because it had a great lump of armour plate and you did this and did blow a great big hole in it. They said, "But what happens with the other tanks?" "Oh," he said,

37:00 "They'll probably come back and shoot you." Commando you see those blokes are mad, fighting with knives and hand to hand combat, how to take on a bloke with a rifle and bayonet and all that sort of thing.

What was the purpose of sending pilots to commando courses?

This is just while we're hanging around waiting to be sent to OTUs. I think it was for morale, because these other blokes were going to

37:30 become commandos. I was the only pilot there these blokes were going to be commandos, they were really in it. Street fighting and house fighting. All the same as they do. When I see this terrorist training, that's commando training, exactly what it is they show them training and that is what the SAS do too. Only they do parachutes and drop downs and helicopters and all sorts of stupid things. Stun bombs, they had all the stuff.

38:00 Oh yeah they were very dangerous people these commandos or SAS just the same. They have much better arms than they were then. Another nasty thing, tube with a little pin in the bottom, stamp this thing into the ground and with a three point round with the end sticking out. If anybody treads on it of course it goes off and shoots them through the foot. Casualty. Much better to have

38:30 casualties, don't want to kill people. Casualties. A person gets wounded, two people have to look after him and all that. The idea of the commando if you were going in to do something the way out stick a few of these down and when you were coming out, you'd know about it you'd run around that anybody chasing after you they'd tread on one and of course there'd be a bang and they'd be under fire and they'd stop. You'd be able to get away, that was the idea.

39:00 They had all sorts of nasty little things. It was great fun though in theory nobody got hurt, really. All these chaps were marksmen they never shot anybody, but they made you frightened. You didn't put your hand out unless you were sure, because you knew that they'd fire at you. None of this blank stuff, real fire. They never told us how to not kill someone

39:30 though. Thy always told you how to kill. That was the idea. Unarmed combat is usually, you can go on and learn unarmed combat, they meant to kill the person there was no, if you were fighting with a knife there was no, once you'd subdued them you killed them, you'd

40:00 break their neck, you wouldn't say, "Right I've won." They were sent into all kinds of dreadful places these commandos.

What thoughts did you have when you were being taught to kill somebody?

I never intended to. I was just there for the ride sort of business. Theoretically, I wasn't going to be a commando.

40:30 I was going to a nice clean war, you know, never got my hands dirty, not mud and blood and that sort of thing. It was just like being in the Boy Scouts as far as I was concerned. These fellows meant it of course but I didn't. I've never killed anybody. I've never fired a gun, never had to, except I've fired a gun in a range. I've never had a gun in the air, I've had plenty fired at me, not fair.

41:00 Not fair at all. I never thought of it that way, I never thought, I knew that they were being trained to kill and I thought, "How do you know where to stop?" They never said anything about that. The idea was

not to just subdue, unless you're taking a prisoner of course, but that's a different matter.

41:30 In that sort of action they're going in very dangerous situation, it's usually kill or be killed and that was it. That's what these SAS blokes, you've seen them on the television coming around.

Tape 8

00:33 **I wanted to ask you about the maps that you had, how detailed were they?**

Well they were one and five hundred thousand that's one and a half million, not very detailed. We were flying above twenty five thousand feet that's five miles up so you couldn't have too much, in fact there was so much on them I've got some

01:00 there. They were detailed enough, a lot of them weren't accurate, some of them hadn't been revised since the Napoleonic Wars. The first war they didn't move more than a few miles of course they didn't, a lot of our photographs have been used to revise the European maps since then. They were good enough. If somebody planted a forest after the after the First World War, it wouldn't be on that map,

01:30 too bad. The towns and things were always there, the railways, roads, rivers they are the permanent, seldom got lost because of that, it was usually stupidity or weather, blame the weather mostly.

You mentioned running out of fuel, did you ever have episodes where you had problems with fuel?

Yes. Not actually with fuel but only because

02:00 of my misuse of fuel. This was when I was doing the dams, the Mohne, the Eder and the Sorpe, I didn't do the damage assessment of the dams but I did the flood damage down the river that means I started at the dams and flew down the river taking photographs. I'd done the Eder and the Mohne and I came to the Sorpe. Now they didn't hit the Sorpe, the Sorpe wasn't damaged at all, it's east of the Ruhr,

02:30 it was a big concrete dam, bomb didn't work on it if they got to it, I don't know. They got all their planes shot down so they may have been shot down. I got so interested in looking at this undamaged dam, a big concrete white thing, to change from one wing tank to another the routine was you switched on your main tank, there was no danger of any vapour lock, if you turned on one of these others ones, it was a

03:00 mechanical pump, you'd fuel up and you might get a vapour lock. Without thinking I just leaned over and turned one tank on and the other one off and immediately I got a vapour lock and the engine stopped, I'm at thirty thousand feet, east of the Ruhr and over the Sorpe dam. I thought, "This is going to be fun." I knew what I'd done immediately when the engine stopped. The engine stops, the propeller keeps turning of course. I also knew

03:30 that if I came down low I could get out of this, but I didn't know how low I'd have to go. I thought, "It's a long way home walking from here." The only way west was over the Ruhr which is not a very good place to be over. It's the most heavily defended part of Germany, all the big industrial plants. I came down lower and lower and

04:00 lower until I could see things in the street, about five thousand feet. The engine started again. Open up and …. That was it. So I got my photographs all right and I didn't tell anybody about that. That was just stupidity. Just shows you what you do without thinking.

04:30 **How soon after the Dam Busters were you out there looking at the damage?**

The next day. The damage, I've got his name in there who did the actual DA, damage assessment of the dam itself, the Eder and the Mohne, he did those. I was there and the water was tearing down the, it caused a lot of damage but they fixed

05:00 it within a couple of months. Of course if they got the Sorpe as well that would have been a different matter. The Sorpe was a big concrete, the others were dams, reinforced damns and Wallace, old Barnes Wallace, bomb skip bomb worked very well, but with the Sorpe it didn't even crack I don't think. I don't know whether they knew it was a concrete dam or not.

05:30 It didn't work. It might have just skipped over the top or maybe the planes were all shot down but it definitely wasn't damaged. When I got back the photographs had two aircraft, two fighter aircraft on them, about twenty thousand feet beneath me. Why they didn't have a go at me I do not know.

Had you seen them when you were in the air?

No.

06:00 They were right below me see. They didn't know I was there either probably. The Germans probably

though I was a Messerschmitt. No British plane with any sense at all would be anywhere near the Ruhr at five thousand feet, it was crazy. I probably disappeared off their radar up here and then down here would be different, they wouldn't pick me up at

06:30 five thousand feet anyway. I didn't wait around to find out. It was a nasty few minutes I can tell you when I came down. I didn't dive I came down and I got fairly glide and if nothing happened I didn't have too far back to the coast. I made the most of it before they caught me, right in the middle of Germany. You never know. A friend of mine, this Canadian chap I was talking about who was married, he took off and

07:00 turned off all his tanks. Somebody had turned them on for him before he got into the cockpit. He just reached down and turned everything off and suddenly his engine stopped he was only about two or three thousand feet and he came down and crash landed in the field. He was the most meticulous person. They shouldn't have turned anything on, they should have let him do it. They thought they were doing him a good turn and turned on all his tanks and he went around

07:30 and just switched them the other way around, off, off, off. The British didn't like to use electrical fuel pumps, all the cars have got them now. In those days they had mechanical pumps and they were reliable, but of course you could get a vapour lock especially at altitude. If you went through your main tank it never happened. Ninety four other times I never

08:00 made a mistake again, I can tell you, but I made that one. As I say I never mentioned it to anyone.

What is the sensation of being a plane with it's engine cut?

Very nasty. It would have been all right if it had been over England somewhere I wouldn't have worried, but over Germany I was very worried indeed. I was virtually making them a present of the plane.

08:30 If the engine hadn't started, I wouldn't have been able to bail out from that altitude, I'd have had to take it down and crash landed, and I would have tried to bring her down in one piece and I'd have delivered them up a PR plane with all the photos of the dams and myself and well if I'd got away with it. I never intended to bail out I intended to take the plane down any time if I could avoid it, unless it caught fire I'd have flown it down even in

09:00 the sea. I reckon you had more chance. They don't give you parachutes in these civil airlines do they? Not even the pilot, he's not allowed to bail out. All military aircraft have parachutes, it was very good of them, they don't want to lose their people unnecessarily, if they can avoid it.

09:30 **You mentioned earlier also that there was a time that you'd flown 'slightly inebriated' was how you put it?**

Yes. Didn't I tell you that? This was when I was going on rest, June 1944 just before the invasion. I was told, "You're on rest, no more operational flying for you."

10:00 So the chaps took me out and gave me a send off. Normally I would never drink when I was flying and I knew all about that sort of thing. But I did drink more than usual and I wondered down to the ops room that next morning with them to see them off and they'd all gone off. One of the intelligence officers said, "I've got a job here you can do for us." I said, "What's that, I'm on rest now, I can't do any ops." He said, "No it's not an op, it's over England."

10:30 He said, "It's the invasion fleet they want an up-to-date map. Planes already fitted out." He didn't ask me if I had wanted to do it, if I had said no he probably would have pressed a bit. I said, "Yes I'll do it." "It's six thousand feet and special cameras." I went down and no trouble at all, very interesting actually looking at all these ships and landing craft

11:00 there were people in them, six thousand feet is only a mile up you can see quite well. Anyway I came back to the aerodrome, came in to land and I thought, "Things seem to be going past very fast," and I looked at my air speed indicators and I'm doing a hundred and fifty miles an hour and I should have been doing about eighty. So I took off again and came out again, did much the same thing,

11:30 I did three or four passes then I realised what was wrong, my reactions were shot. So I went right back to when I was flying a Tiger Moth, I did my drill, my landing drill, and around came around and I only came it at about ninety this time. I put the thing down, let it run right to the end of the runway. Stopped the

12:00 engine, got out, sat on the grass. They came racing up at the break, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "I'm sick," no argument, "Taxi it back to the flight will you please." So they taxied back. They said, "Did you get them?" I said, "It's all right I'm sick." I didn't say I was drunk. Absolutely, I'd been flying Spitfires for nearly three years every day virtually just that once.

12:30 Don't know how anybody, you hear about people drinking and this was eight hours afterwards or more. They reckon English beer's not terribly strong. I don't know. I was perfectly all right otherwise. I could walk, but my reactions

13:00 had absolutely had it. It's not like being at altitude I can tell you at all really, but the same effect. I've

driven a car, not very far, when I'd been at a dance and gone back home to get something and gone back again, only a few miles when I was in Kyogle on a country road. Virtually the same thing but I drove about two miles an hour. That was just the same as that, but I was in this aircraft

13:30 and I was trying to land it at a hundred and fifty miles an hour, which they probably land one of these jets at, I don't know. The Spitfire undercarriage was it's only fault, you could easily smash the undercarriage, very narrow and you could spin it and tear the undercarriage off and you couldn't put the brakes on because it would tip over. You had to land it properly and that was it. The bird of the air, not of the road. You couldn't see when you were taxing the long

14:00 nose you couldn't see ahead at all, you had to taxi zigzag. Nobody was allowed to be on the perimeter track for taxing, you'd kill, one chap did kill a man that way. He was riding a bicycle and clipped him with the wing tip and killed him straight away. He should never have been there, he never saw him. In fact when we were teaching people to fly a Spitfire all we did was take them up in a

14:30 plane with a long nose so they got used to the long nose, great big engine up the front. As soon as you got them in flying position it was marvellous, look over the top. I expect the Messerschmitt was the same.

When you're taxing for take off, how can you tell when you're ready to go?

The runway is supposed to be clear. You taxi in,

15:00 you come broad side to the runway, so you look up the runway first and then you turn the plane around. As soon as you get going of course the plane comes up, the tail comes up and you're running along flat and you can see. It is just assumed that there will be nobody on the runway, so it's assumed that nobody will be on the perimeter track, that's all about it. Usually

15:30 is but of course that time in Canada, that was a hole there and it shouldn't have been there, it wasn't my fault it was control towers fault they should have said, "Don't take off." That's what happened to the Concord. Somebody left something on the runway, wasn't anything wrong with it, it ran into this bit of stuff and that was it.

When you were doing reconnaissance trips, how many men wouldn't come back?

16:00 It varied very much. Sometimes we'd go for quite a long while we'd never have a loss then we'd lose two. It depends. I know one time I came back, I'd been on an op and I was in the mess and a chap said, "Oh I thought you'd been shot down." I said, "No." We had another Campbell, a real Scotsman Jock we called him, he said, "It must have been Jock."

16:30 The other fellow shot down almost the same time was my room mate an Englishman. In the same morning. Very good controller. It was a very dangerous thing, coming back out of enemy territory you start to relax, you're below contrail height and you're relaxing down and if there's a fighter around that's when they'll catch you.

17:00 Never relax. Quite often we'd go, often it was the most inexperienced people that got shot down, that's quite easy to see because you didn't know the ropes, be unlucky meet up with a good fighter or not be looking around. Some experienced people were shot down.

What happened to your room mate?

17:30 We don't know, he just got shot down over the Channel. He was only twenty miles away from England, that's all. What was his name, I can see him, it'll come to me. He was very experienced pilot, he was next up he was going to be flight-commander actually.

18:00 I don't know the other chap, he was in the other squadron was shot down, Jock Campbell. It was of course really in terms of things it was a slight account I expect. If a bomber was shot down it was seven men. If one of our people were shot down it was just one. Although they didn't want to lose experienced men they didn't want to lose anybody,

18:30 but they were replaceable. Never ever any bother getting people to join the squadron. When I was on rest at the OTU we used to get people from all over, ex-bomber pilots often with a lot more hours than I'd got, I was teaching them, I was their instructor. We were

19:00 never short of people. We had an American, Harry Witt, he was a sergeant with us. He had an English mother and an American father and of course they never lose their nationality and when the Yanks came in in 1943 they co-opted him, but he did very well. He was a major in no time at all, because he was a most experienced man. He flew reconnaissance, that's where I was saying they brought across

19:30 Lockyer Lightning's, should have been a marvellous plane, but they weren't. They had Allison engines, no good at altitude, so they put Rolls Royce Merlins they might have been all right. They switched over to Spitfires and they flew Spitfires.

What was life like at the base at Benson?

It was just like a town. It was

20:00 two thousand people roughly, didn't have shops because you couldn't buy anything, oh it must have had some sort of store. There was a village a little town, Benson, little villages all around us. You were in this airfield, in fact they extended one of them across the main London road, they had to divert the road.

20:30 They did have a Christmas party in 1943, it was a very reasonable, they had all sorts of things. I don't know I didn't do much, I went there for the war. It seems made doesn't it?

When you had days off or time off what would you do for recreation?

I'd walk around the country.

21:00 The way they worked it, you flew for five weeks, you had a week off. That week you could not go near the flight, you could stay on the station of course, they gave you your leave pass and said, "Go away." If you wanted to go away you could with your ration book, whatever it was. Every fifth week. I can't think what I did then. It was my home of course Benson I was there for

21:30 from 1942 to 1945 the rest up in Scotland and when I went to France for a bit. So that was just like a home. I liked the country around there. There weren't many people about, it was mainly grain, it wasn't intensive farming, cows and things. You could walk for miles and never see a soul. This is only forty miles from, this is a long while ago like fifty years ago, sixty

22:00 years ago. Walk for miles, for hours and never see anyone and yet there were these little villagers and fields all over the place. It was a very nice spot actually. Right by the Thames, go swimming, if you could stand it, freezing cold. Boats, canoes things like that. I had friends of course, my best friend was

22:30 an Englishman that joined the squadron the same time as I did. He wasn't my flight, he was on the other flight. We always used to make a bit of a contest out of it to see who could get the most ops. Of course when we had to have this week off, he didn't have it off as the same time as me and if I could get an op while he was away, he'd come back and say, "How did you get on?" "I got an op." Mad really but it made it a bit interesting.

23:00 We were both sergeants to start with. He was courting the store sergeant she was a nice girl and very useful because she was in charge of the stores. They did get married after the war and had a couple of kids. I still write to him. He's got some horrible thing,

23:30 he's resistant, what do they call it? Staphylococcus aureus. He's a year old than I am so he's getting on a bit. He liked flying and when he went on rest he went flying big aircraft, transport aircraft. After the war he joined BAC [British Aircraft Corporation] and BOAC [British Overseas Airways Corporation] and he flew

24:00 everything up to the 747s [largest civilian aircraft] and then he went, when they retired in about 1960-something and he went as instructor to Singapore Airlines. Then he retired eventually after that. He liked flying.

You mentioned the WAAF girls in the processing centre, can you explain what the set up was?

It was just like a huge film laboratory, they had everything.

24:30 I don't know much about how you do it, but they had dark rooms and everything like that. Obviously we didn't walk into a dark room, we were supposed to go in their for morale to show the flag to show that we cared about the menials who do did all the hard work, which they did got their hands stained with the junk. A bit of fun.

25:00 Of course the WAAF officers used to shoo us off, we were interrupting the work. They were all very serious sometimes. The WAAF were great. As I say they practically did everything, don't know if they did any of the hard mechanical work, they did on vehicles, they drove vehicles, in fact our drivers were both WAAF.

25:30 All the clerical side, probably all the photographic, that's more considered genteel work, not mucking around with engines and dirty greasy stuff. I don't know how many there were even. They had separate quarters and separate offices, don't

26:00 know if they had any very senior officers, not that their officers seemed to be nasty or anything. This is an operational squadron, we had no parades no saluting nothing, the only one that got saluted was the commanding officer if he had his cap on he got saluted.

26:30 He used to walk around, if one of the mechanics was working on a plane and he'd get up, he'd talk to him. Boothman, he won the Schneider Trophy for England in 1937, very nice bloke. Had a son as old as I was. I was rather amused actually, being a warrant officer everybody addresses you as Mr, I was young, Mr this and Mr that,

27:00 even the CO would call you Mr. When I got my commission July, April 1944 he said, "Congratulations Keith." He said, "No more of this 'Mr' business." So I'd drop down a peg, actually a warrant officer is something in the service.

27:30 There is a saying about it but I won't repeat it. Everybody is a bit touchy about warrant officers, they're high enough in the rank to be frightened of them and if you're a above them, a commissioned officer you've got to be very respectful to warrant officer; they know much more than any commissioned officer. They're supposed to because they've been in the service. I'd only been in the service two or three years. I got the same respect as

28:00 these old blokes that had been in the service for thirty years and knew everything, and they did too. Funny though.

You mentioned that you went on rest and you went to do training for other reconnaissance pilots? When was that?

When I was on rest, this is rather, when we went on rest they tried to give you a good job on your rest you see. I was

28:30 pilot officer but I hadn't got my uniform, slightly different uniform and badges, and I hadn't got one. They said, "Go down to London and report to Number 6 Coastal Command." I went down there, into the adjutant, he said, "Hello ahh ahh." Of course I didn't have any badges of rank up, I'd taken off my warrant officer and didn't have anything. I said, "It's all right

29:00 I was a warrant officer." He said, "You're going to be our new aide de corps?" I said, "What?" "The officer commanding 6 Group, Coastal Command." I said, "I wouldn't be any good as an aide de corps. I don't anything about that sort of thing." He said "It's not bad you know, you get to go to all the cocktail parties." I thought,

29:30 "My God." He said, "You'll probably get your own flight, you'll be a flight-lieutenant before you know where you are." I said, "I'd rather be flying somewhere." He said, "Absolutely hopeless." I didn't know anything, I had no social graces whatsoever, although I knew a lot about flying PR aircrafts I knew nothing about anything really. So that's now I got on to being, then they sent me to Officer Training School.

30:00 I had plenty of time I had no duties. That was good fun too. Had to learn about the law and court marshals and I had to learn to be an officer. Most of the chaps that got commissions never went to training school because they never got any time to go to them. I went to an instructor school to become an instructor then I went to the OTU.

30:30 So I was fully fledged.

Was there a set number of sorties that you went on before you went on rest?

No. I don't know about Fighter Command I don't know how they did their's, it would have been very awkward because there wouldn't have been very much to do after the Battle of Britain until the invasion, they were training up for a big show. Bomber

31:00 Command they started off with twenty ops then rest, then they went to twenty five, then they eventually ended up at thirty. When they did thirty they went on rest. That didn't mean to say you couldn't go back on ops, you generally did. Not many got to thirty. But with us we were getting this week off every five weeks. And of course they kept a fairly, I wasn't conscious of being looked after,

31:30 I was well fed and well housed and I was quite happy, had good aircraft and everything was right and I didn't have to do anything except fly, nothing at all. When you became an officer you had to do all sorts of nasty things as an officer. As a warrant officer I did nothing. Every now

32:00 and again they'd call up your log book to have a look at it to see who you were going and probably they could tell how you were, the CO would wonder around and probably look at you and your squadron leader, actually the squadron leader had been an ordinary pilot, but when he was squadron leader he had to look after the whole squadron, the ground staff and the aircrew and everything. He very seldom flew. He could

32:30 fly but he wasn't allowed to go on ops. He was obviously kept a watch on his pilots, you know, if he thought they were cracking up he'd say so. He mightn't tell them, but he'd send them on a rest. We just kept on going, I never thought of it. I felt all right and obviously they did, eventually they'd say, "Get rid of this bloke. The invasion's coming up and

33:00 he's sure to buy it I expect. So we'll give him a rest now." So I went on rest on D-Day. Silly isn't it? As I say I'd flown to Europe ninety five times before that, but I ran out of fuel and had to come back all the time.

What were your thoughts on hearing about D-Day [Allied invasion of Europe in 1944]?

Well I knew about it of course, it was going

33:30 to come up, I didn't know the exact day, but I knew seeing I'd done the flight the previous day. I'd hoped that it would succeed, because the Germans are very formidable and I knew they were going to have a tough time. And they did.

34:00 If the Germans hadn't been fighting on the Russian Front as well they would never have been able to do it. The Americans wanted to invade in 1942 or 1943 and they would have been thrown back with terrible losses. The British didn't cross the Rhine until about February 1945, Vasal, eastern.

34:30 The Russians, we were flying four hundred miles into Berlin and the Russians were forty miles from Berlin, the Russians were in Berlin long before we ever got anywhere near it, not by air of course.

Had you done reconnaissance missions for D-Day?

Oh yes. Dozens of them. We did ports to see what was happening,

35:00 submarine pens, ports, airfields, troop concentrations. Perhaps rather amusing, I got an in-flight magazine there was a thing, "Did anybody know the whereabouts," it was me actually, "of a bloke in Belgium?" I wrote to him and said, "Yes, how did you know about me?" He says, "When I was

35:30 a boy there was a priest who had been in the Resistance told me this story." I thought, "I wonder what it was?" This is what it was. A Panzer regiment had camped or stopped near their village this priest found out about this and they'd radioed the information to England as the Resistance used to.

36:00 Of course then we'd send a reconnaissance aircraft to see what was up and it happened to be me. I said, "How did you find out?" He said, "All the photographs that you people took during the war are held at the University of England." All of them the millions of them are held there, and if you want one you buy it of course. He says, "I got in touch with them and on each photograph is the squadron number and the date

36:30 and then I got in touch with the squadron, squadron log, the date and on the log is the name of the pilot and the flight and it was you. So that's how I found you." He's a postman in Belgium, now with a family of course. So you can't get away with anything. That's only about a year ago. That's how, I didn't realise that they kept such, he even knew

37:00 who I was married to. I was still on the squadron when I was married. They even had that on the log.

Extraordinary.

It is. That's apparently quite normal practice, I didn't know that. Everything was written down you see.

37:30 **When you were doing these sorties before D-Day, did you know that this was for this particular invasion?**

Oh yes.

What were you told about what was going to happen?

All they wanted, they said, "That's the invasion fleet, we want a map of the invasion fleet, to be taken from six thousand feet from this special camera. This aircraft has been fitted with. Will you do it?" Yes you'll do it of course, they assumed I was going to do it, they asked me as matter of course.

38:00 I could have said, "No," because I was on rest you see. I didn't. I thought it would be quite interesting to see this vast armada. There were three places, Bristol, the Solent and London, they were the three places that the invasion took off from. They went to Cherbourg, Cannes, have you heard of PLUTO? Pipeline Under The Ocean? P.L.U.T.O. Mulberry Harbours?

38:30 The British actually had this enormous grill with pipe wound around it, to take the fuel to the invasion, none of this ships going in full of fuel and getting blown up, they had a bowser on the beach. Mulberry Harbour they had a huge ship which they'd run ashore and made a harbour. So the ships didn't have to off load the troops into, pretty well

39:00 planned actually. Yeah. I came back after, I came back and flew after the invasion and I was with the British Liberation Army, as they called it, 104 Wing, the British Liberation. I was flying from Coulommiers in France which is about forty miles east of Paris and that was the aerodrome they were, you've heard of Patton, General Patton [General George S Patton, American General] the American General, he got across that bridge the Germans were

39:30 about to blow up. They were supplying him by air from that aerodrome, taking off with planes and gliders and God knows what full of petrol and food and everything. If they hadn't supplied him by air the Germans would have cut him off and just sorted him. He was able to go on with his armour. He went through and all the piece in between was German, over the Rhine.

When did you join this particular unit?

40:00 When I came back from rest, I'd have to look at my log book. It's there. About January I think 1945. Went to France. As a matter of fact I had the option of having fifteen pounds or an officer's full field kit, which happened to be a portable bath, portable hand basin,

40:30 a very nice stretcher with four lots of legs, a cover things and blankets and a pillow. So I took that instead of the fifteen pounds. You could buy it yourself with fifteen pounds. That's what I took to France

with me. When we got to Coulombier we moved into a very nice house in the middle of, it's a little village Coulombier, wine growing area, and we

41:00 into the house the Luftwaffe had must moved out of. They hadn't hurt it all, everything was right. Except it was completely empty, they'd taken all the furniture, fortunately we had our stretchers. We had this big room with stretchers, four of us, we had our planes of course. Then I got the flu or something was wrong it was January

41:30 and I was in bed for the first four or five days. Miserable. I only did about three flights from there. One of them was to Berchtesgaden that's Hitler's roost , Berchtesgaden, Salzburg there's an eyrie, an eagle's nest. That was one of my ops. The thing of course the army was advancing so quickly we

42:00 were a strategic reconnaissance really that they just overran our, we couldn't keep ahead of them.

Tape 9

00:33 **You were talking about Berchtesgaden, can you explain your operation?**

Yes that was one of the ops. I don't know, see they thought that Hitler was going to marshal his forces in the south west down around Salzburg, Berchtesgaden was his eyrie, the wolf's lair, we Germans are good on wolves, bears and lions and things.

01:00 So they wanted to know what was going on around Salzburg and Berchtesgaden so that was one of my targets, I got it no trouble, nobody to worry us much. He didn't of course he went back to Berlin, unlike a lot of these bods, he went back and stood it out with the rest down in the bunker.

01:30 **Where were you when the war ended in Europe?**

I went back to Benson, I went back after I went from being a British Liberation Armies, I went back to Benson and I flew some more sorties up in northern Germany and I might have even done one to Berlin. I got lost there too. By that

02:00 time we were getting the latest Spitfire called the Griffin, very powerful the trouble is ate petrol like, I didn't like it. I liked my old warhorse Mark II. I did these flights up there and I think I did one trip to Berlin, I can easily find out. As I remember there was a Belgian pilot, I don't know why they gave us both the same targets but they did. Must have been important.

02:30 I remember I was lost, absolutely lost with this Griffin and I was searching around and I heard this Belgian, "Hey Keith you still there? You can go home now I've got the target." So I went home.

After the allied victory in Europe what were the targets?

Oh yes they did what they called reconstruction work and

03:00 we would fly down a river and of course the bridges had been blown up or smashed. We did it very quickly to survey it by land would take weeks maybe months we could do it in a day, or a road say you wanted to know if that road was trafficable, we'd fly down it and we'd have the whole thing. They'd say, "Right that needs fixing here and fixing here." It was so boring. I nearly

03:30 I used to go to sleep. There was nobody after me, flying isn't terribly thrilling you know. It's so easy. I mean it's different if you're flying a passenger aircraft, I mean you've got all those people up the back, you've got to look out. Flying yourself, unless you're, there was nobody about there was no enemy there was nobody I was just up there flying down this road or something.

04:00 I did that for a while. That was until I was repatriated, I stayed for the squadron. That's how they knew I was married, that's why they wrote it in the log they had nothing to put in. Nothing exciting, no operations.

Given that the war time experience for a pilot is quite isolating, what sort of feelings did you experience once the allies had won the war in Europe?

04:30 Let down, not let down, it was an anti-climax that's the word. I mean we won. I tell you what though, I was there watching this American colonel, watching this flight part which we put, which they put on for the Russians to impress the Russians to show them what air force was. Lots of

05:00 planes, it was impressive. This colonel said to me, "Now's the time to get stuck into those Ruskies [Russians]." I said, "What?" and I thought, "This bloke's never seen a shot in anger and talking about fighting?" If I'd thought of it I could've said, "The Russians won the war mate," but I didn't think of that.

05:30 I was so nonplussed. Of course that was the beginning of the Cold War.

How do you look back on your war time experiences?

Oh well I was proud that I did my duty, that I was did what was required of me I should say. That I got away with it, which amazed me. I never thought I'd live, never thought I would.

06:00 Never thought in a hope. I volunteered. While the war was on I was there, when it was over I was no further use to them, didn't matter what I could do, they didn't want me. The air force is composed of

06:30 permanent air force that are there, they're the corps, people who actually fly and fight are the volunteers, the hostilities only. Same as in the army. You've got a corps of permanent operationals, the main people are the civilians who joined. In Australia they're volunteers, except for Vietnam. German Army is all conscript

07:00 and they're ruddy [very] good, so it doesn't mean to say if they're conscript they're no good. Just a different idea. The German Army is probably the best, the best professional, even when they're amateurs they're professional. They learn it. They got into a mess didn't they? I was to be coming

07:30 back I felt I'd lost all that time, I mean it was necessary and it was a "just" war, if we hadn't have won it, it would have been most horrible. Think of all them people walking around in jack boots and all them Japanese saying "Hi Hero" to the Emperor and what not, it wouldn't have gone would it.

08:00 We had to win. If it hadn't been for the Russians we wouldn't have had a shadow of a light. Of course an enormous amount of supplies, party of my squadron went to Russia, the Russians made a great, in 1942 just as I was joining the squadron another Australian he's dead now, he was a Queenslander, John Dickson, he was just coming back from Russia, we sent half a flight that's five aircraft and five pilots to Murmansk and

08:30 they flew and recce-ed [reconnoitred] the Baltic for the Russians.. The Russians didn't have any reconnaissance , of course for us to we wanted reconnaissance .They formed their own after that. The Russians, they were definitely very friendly to the British, they were very, very suspicious of the Americans. Wouldn't let them land. It would have been nice for the bombers to go across to Russia and land in Russia,

09:00 and for the Americans too to land in Russia. They had negotiated and they would have let the RAF land in Russia, but they wouldn't let the Americans they didn't trust them. Just as well, true enough, neither of them trusted one another of course. I was shocked with this colonel. If it hadn't been for the Russians I wouldn't be here I'm sure.

09:30 If that Luftwaffe had been able to, see they were fighting on two fronts. The Russians got very good to you know, their tanks were the best in the world, much better than the German, not better the German tanks were so sophisticated that they had to have about umpteen men trying to fix them up all the time. Whereas the Russians were, the CT-24s were marvellous. Cruder but more effective. Their aircraft weren't as good as the…

10:00 Now another thing, you won't know. Stalin sent a telegram, a congratulations to Bomber Command saying, "Thank you for holding the Luftwaffe off our front." He knew. If the whole Luftwaffe were able to concentrate on the Russian Front that would have been the end of the Russians too.

Can you reflect then on the role of Bomber Command in the war in Europe?

It was the absolute lynch pin of the whole

10:30 war. If, now I know the Germans say and this is true that the actual industrial damage they did was not what they could've done if they had better equipment. To bomb at night on targets, pin point, is virtually impossible. But, now this is true too, now I've met Harris, talked to him,

11:00 and his policy was to kill people, kill artisans, you can fix a factory in a couple of months, but it takes years to grow up an artisan and train him and his family and house. If you can kill or injure or upset enough people you'll win the war all right.

11:30 I know that sounds horrible, that's true. That was accurate. They caused enormous damage. If you were seeing photographs of Berlin, it was just an absolute shambles. Absolute shambles. Most of their cities were an absolute shambles. Their discipline is so terrific, of course the Nazi sorted that out with Gestapo [German secret police] and that sort of thing, they knew what would happen if they didn't. Even the soldiers

12:00 in the front and when they were retreating from Russia, the Russians just overwhelmed them. They lost probably fifty Russians to every German when they were retreating, but of course the Russians had the men and the revenge, the dreadful things they did in Russia.

12:30 **While you were performing these reconnaissance operations what impact did the civilian cost have on you?**

Practically nothing. I didn't think about it. I tried especially, I was just an instrument, I was trained they gave me the means to do it, told me what to do and I did it. I knew what was going on all right, it was unavoidable.

13:00 I mean it's a, see that was the trouble with England in the First World War, most of the English top brass had been in the First World War, junior men they'd fought in the war. They didn't want a war and yet they made a stupid pact with Poland when Germany attacked Poland they couldn't get out of it, they declared war on Germany. Like declaring war on a rabbit on

13:30 a tiger, it was. They weren't prepared for war with Germany. On principle we said we were going to help you, they couldn't help Russia eight hundred miles away. They couldn't do anything. They didn't do anything, except they declared war on Germany. Then of course Germany, France was a mess. They should, I've often wondered what would have happened

14:00 if they had gone in with Hitler and had tempered his ambition. I mean he got in the hands of gangsters, there's no doubt about him. Those Nazis were they worse than gangsters. I don't think Hitler was that way to start with, but I mean he was a prisoner in his own, he had so much success. Didn't take any notice of

14:30 his general staff and did all sorts of stupid things and got away with it, up to a point. Nothing that ruins you so much as power, what do they say, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely," and it did and that's what happened to him. If we'd have been friendly with him, this is heresy isn't it? I think there were a lot of clever statesmen who would have been able to temper his

15:00 ambition. His own ambition was to make Germany great, I mean all these other gangsters I don't know what they were up to, murdering people right and left, everybody. If you were an ordinary citizen and you said the wrong thing off to the concentration camp too or murdered. Didn't have to be a Jew or a gypsy, all legal, see once you make a law see Howard is making

15:30 these laws now, once you've got a law it's legal. They made the laws, it was legal to do all these awful things to the Jews and the gypsies and people in mental hospitals and so on, it was all legal. The judges.

What was it like for you back in Australia adjusting to civilian life?

While I was studying very good, because I had an absolute

16:00 aim and I had to make a home for my wife and young son who was coming out, which I was able to do quite well. I did quite well, I found that I was quite good academically as a matter of fact, why I don't know. I was a good deal older than all my other students, there were quite a few ex-servicemen. I was about five years older than chaps coming from

16:30 school. I did very well academically as a matter of fact . When I got to Forestry School it was the same way. I was sort of pioneering we lived in this caravan, pretty tough on my wife. She was an English girl come straight from London, New Maldon, I expect she was pretty, I think she enjoyed herself a bit. She didn't use

17:00 to complain much anyway. We lived on what they called the Tourist Camp on Canberra, which was an open field that had running water, cold shower that's all. One thing it was five shillings a week and they let us stay there the whole time, two years, which was against the law actually, but they let us stay. Just outside the CSIRO actually. It's where the Botanical Gardens is now. That's where they had the caravan park, quite a big

17:30 caravan park, 21 feet long four rooms, a four wheel drive, it was on a big army truck. It wasn't bad. Much better than paying four pounds a week for a house. We could exist quite well. When I came out I was considered a bright boy so they sent me up to the far north coast which I enjoyed, as a Civil Culture [Arboriculture]

18:00 Research Forester. Civil Culture is trees, tree culture research, we were growing hoop pine which is a native pine and southern pines. It was very interesting, a lot of work a hell of a lot of work. I camped the first year out, I camped a hundred and twenty days, you can only count four nights a week that's thirty weeks a year. That wasn't very good for my wife either I suspect. It means I was away for thirty weeks out of the year. There was so much

18:30 to do and of course I had this dreadful feeling that I'd lost five years, and I had. As a civilian I'd lost five years. Gone. You see I was thirty years before I graduated from Foresters School, thirty years old. They reckon you're not much good intellectually after you're thirty.

19:00 That's what they say as a scientist. You do all your best work before you're thirty. Then of course you coast along after that on your assistance and things like that. I don't believe that, but that's what they say. Of course you're always better when you're young, like swimmers they're right until they're about eighteen. When I got out I was terribly keen, I must have

19:30 been an absolute menace. I had some very good special form in rainforest, I was very interested in rainforest I was trying to learn all the trees and things like that and work out civil culture. Absolutely impossible. Anyway, then the Commission, you're expected to do so many years in the field before you get

20:00 into the higher brackets. I was a Management Plans Forester at Bateman's Bay which is right from there to the Victorian border. That means clambering through the bush, day after day, measuring trees and you write a management plan. Very good but that meant, we'd promised her parents that she

should go back to England every so often. While we were in Canberra we had another child, a daughter.

20:30 We'd promised her parents that she'd go back. So she'd gone back to England while I was being transferred from Kyogle to Batemans Bay she was in England. I arrived in Bateman's Bay at the height of the fire season. Fires everywhere. I didn't know anything about the district and anyway fighting fires and God knows what. Those fires stopped on Christmas Day, amazing isn't it?

21:00 **You mentioned at the start of the day that you had experienced some nervous breakdowns around 1964, what connections were there to your experiences of war?**

I don't know really.

21:30 Very hard. I'm classified as a manic depressive you see. A manic depressive you get terrific highs and also you get these depressions. When you're depressed nobody notices, but if you get a terrific high people do. When you're in a high you do things you normally wouldn't do. Like I bought myself a Rolls Royce while

22:00 my wife was away in England. Not a terribly expensive Rolls Royce but a Rolls Royce nevertheless. If you turn up to work in Rolls Royce and the bloke, and the top blokes only got a Ford, you're not considered as being a you know. Anyway they tried to persuade me to go Concorde, that was the military hospital. I did go in for a while and then I went to Helen

22:30 Park and then my wife came back. I was out of that in about five minutes flat. She knows I've been mad all the time. Just burst out occasionally. Then it was 1964 was when I went to American to this invitation as a guest speaker of Pennsylvania University.

23:00 I think really the transition, I was trying to suppress all the time that fact, see Forest Commission people mostly reserved occupations they couldn't go to the war, some of them did, they probably understood me, but most of them were reserved occupation. After all I'm

23:30 quite here, I might be a bit much to take sometimes. It wasn't until 1970 that I had another breakdown and these trick-cyclists, psychiatrists decided that I had had a bad prognosis you see. So they retired me. So

24:00 then I went out on my own as a tree surgeon and I'm scientist I don't need the Forestry Commission really and I still kept on writing papers and doing work. I've never had a breakdown since. So it was partly because I am a manic depressive I don't know. I don't remember being manic depressive during the war

24:30 and if I was it was an advantage, because I did things I wasn't without fear but it certainly didn't worry me. I was frightened quite a lot of the time but I still did things. I did everything I was asked. I never said, "No, I won't do it," or, "I don't want to do it," or, "I'm sick." I could've easily. Any time

25:00 with us you had to absolutely fit, you go up to forty thousand feet and there's anything wrong with slightest wrong with you sinus, cold and you've had it. Sinuses burst. So all you've got to say is, "I've got a head cold," and into hospital. I didn't. The only time was when, I ever thought about it, was after I had this nasty experience of being lost and I said,

25:30 "I wish something had happened to my eyes and I'd get out of this." This is in December 1943. Nobody took any notice of me, just another saying. Didn't mean anything. I went on for another six months to my rest. After the war, my eyes went. I didn't know until I

26:00 went to university, I couldn't see the board. I used to sit up the front, everyone thought I was a swot, looking at the board. I got glasses. Then about ten years ago someone told me that I've got glaucoma my eyes. They say the worse thing you can do is look into the sun. I looked into the sun thousands and thousands of times. "Beware of the Hun in the sun."

26:30 Don't think it had anything to do with it, but it might have. The repat have been very good, I'm not complaining, the repat have been very good to me. If they hadn't been so good the commission would have probably wanted to hang on to me because they would have had a bad conscience. I've got a military pension and I've got super [superannuation]. I had to pay my own

27:00 superannuation right through the war because if I had a salary higher than they would have paid it but my salary was lower so I had to pay my, I've got it back. I've survived long enough to get my superannuation back.

How do you think the war changed you?

Oooh, that's a hard one.

27:30 Don't think it changed me much at all. As I say I've always been mad, in a nice sort of way. I've always taken a risk, I think

28:00 that life is taking a risk every day. That's my attitude to life. Without taking a risk I'm not alive.

Given that how do you feel about the necessity of war?

I'm against it. Absolutely. It's a waste, an absolute waste. It's just the stupidity of people not being able to, there are nasty people unfortunately.

28:30 If you could control the nasty people there would be no need to have a war. Because there are always people who want to have a war. Like President Bush [George W Bush, US President], he wants to have a war, he's had it. He wanted that war. Our Howard, these cold warriors these people that have never been in a war they don't know what it's like. I came though it unscathed, except here perhaps.

29:00 Not one canon shell through the front of the wing. I did ninety five ops over Germany. I've flown thousands and thousands of miles over enemy territory, I've had people shooting at me, chasing me and I didn't drop a bomb and I didn't fire a gun, my hands are clean. Are they? I'm just as guilty as the blokes that

29:30 dropped those bombs because I helped them. I feel it, I do feel that. My guilt, very guilty. As I say the consequences of not doing it, if I hadn't have gone I could never have lived with myself. That doesn't apply to anyone else, I'm a volunteer and if a person doesn't want to volunteer that's up to them. I wouldn't force anybody to do it.

30:00 If they're professional that's up to them. All our people in Iraq are professionals. They're doing what they want to do, that's the only way they'll ever get promotion, there's no promotion this side of the ocean. No I think it's an absolute waste, complete and utter waste of everything. It's good for the

30:30 economy. Marvellous for the economy. Look at the Yanks, their economy is based on war. They sell more armaments than anybody else in the world. Their whole economy is based on selling arms. If they don't sell arms their economy is. Selling Indonesia war planes.

31:00 Who next? Us and so on. Stir a bit up in Nicaragua, Africa . They soon wear out these arms, not like a motor car, tank costs a hundred times more than a motor car, a motor car lasts ten years if you use a tank in war it only lasts five minutes. War, good for economy,

31:30 GSP [Gross State Product]. That's what I think. Whether I'm right or wrong, probably a bit suspect.

You've talked a lot about this concept of volunteers in war. What thoughts then did you have when conscription was reintroduced in Australia?

During the Vietnam War

32:00 I was absolutely horrified and Mr Howard was for it he was in the Menzies Government and he's still for it if he could. That's the first time ever that men have been forced from this country to go to a war, they drew them out of the lotto, like the balls, young blokes it didn't matter who they were.

32:30 Didn't' matter who they were . No. It's a matter of choice. I mean if there is a war and somebody wants to go and they've got a very good reason for it, usually because idealist the Spanish War, plenty of people went to the Spanish War and they fought there and they died and didn't settle anything. Gave the Germans a good idea to try out their Condor squadron.

33:00 That horrible bloke what was his name that took over? Now the Spaniards are getting back on their feet and now of course this other business. That doing anything for the Spaniards. They lost a lot of people, mostly Spaniards and they didn't know what they were after, supposed to be Communists. In Australia here they talk about communists, Menzies tried to have the Communist Party banned.

33:30 They had a referendum, he lost because people know that the best way to get communists into power is to start repressing them, like Russia. Of course they did pretty well in Russia I suspect. Russia has never been communist as it is, it's a dictatorship, totalitarian dictatorship. It's not communist. Communism couldn't work, people aren't good enough for that.

34:00 We're not good enough for it. Australian's tried that out in Uruguay a lot of idealists went over there to this communist life, it wasn't really communist, it didn't work. People aren't like that, they're not good enough they're not angels. I think that would be one way,

34:30 see I don't think the average German wanted to go to war either, but he was a conscript, he didn't have any choice, so were the French conscripts, so were the Yanks, conscripts. I don't think the air force was, not sure. I'm sure the Russians didn't want,

35:00 the top boys once they got the thing organised and start this thing off and unless if Britain hadn't have, as I say, Hitler gave them every chance and they took it, then of course Churchill was determined he didn't like the Nazis, he was quite right I felt they're just gangsters like the mafia, just as bad, like the mob down in Melbourne at the moment are shooting one another

35:30 up. So they started off with Brown Shirts. That's why I was keen on a volunteer, because if you volunteer it's up to you. Of course you can't volunteer out because they make you swear oaths and things. You're much more free if you're a volunteer just the same.

36:00 **You talked earlier about the notion of the underdog, you also the Nazi and Gestapo as mobsters, what were your feelings generally about the German enemy?**

I had no animosity, nothing against them at all. Admired the Luftwaffe, as I say my grandfather was a German, they drove him out,

36:30 and old what's his name, Bismarck [Otto von Bismark, first German Chancellor] they've always been nasty to people the Germans always driving people out. Bismarck made Germany out of a lot of states, he got rid of the Lutherans, they went down to South Australia and started the wine industry. My grandfather was a miner, Broken Hill. Never met him. His sons, live in Ballarat, they fought in the first AIF [Australian Imperial Force],

37:00 That's only just one generation, the First World War. I have no hatred for the German people as such or the German fighters. In fact I thought, I had great admiration and possibly a bit of fear that they may be better than I am. "They are professionals, I'm only an amateur." When I came up against them, I thought, "Now

37:30 this bloke he might be a Condor squadron, and I'm only a HO, Hostilities Only, I'm learning quick." I don't think I beat any of them, I think I bluffed a lot of them or a few of them. It was bluff and a good aircraft.

38:00 Spitfire. And yet I have no desire to fly a Spitfire or any other plane really, I sometimes think I'd like to go up and then I think take off and land and fly around and I've done that thousands of time, what would I do when I got up there? So I've got a boat you see, which I can sit in and pretend to fly, sail around the world.

38:30 **When was the last time you actually flew a plane?**

1945. Not the last time I've been up in a plane. I've been up in a DC-3. I've been up in planes, but I've never flown them, I've been in a military plane. I could fly one, I think. I don't think that my reactions are so good, maybe at thirty thousand feet I'd cope. My reactions aren't as good, I'd have to

39:00 be very, very careful. Of course I was honed to a very fine edge then, I was. The training was such that they honed you up to a certain point and then it was up to you. They couldn't show you the last thing. They couldn't confront you with an armed aircraft and say, "He's going to kill you,

39:30 what are you going to do now?" You had to learn that. Everything else, the plane what it could do, how you could do it, that was it, that last bit you had to learn. That was the difference between survival and death. Took me a while to learn, I was pretty good at bluff. As I say

40:00 I used to go for it, same with a mad or bad dog I'd stand up against it, or a policeman I'd stand up to him an if he went for his gun I'd go for him then.

Tape 10

00:33 **Mr Campbell could you tell me about the jacket that you're wearing ?**

Yes this is a battle dress, and this is a warrant officer's that's the Royal insignia, the Crown, the Lion and the Unicorn, that's the actual rank badge. Eagle's on the top there.

And across the breast pocket?

01:00 That's a Distinguished Flying Cross that's the 1939–1945 star, that the Aircrew Europe Star, France and Germany Star, that' the thing on there, that's defence medal, there's a lot more, and that's Mention in Dispatches. Actually in the war I would have only had 1939–1943 star

01:30 of course the RAF are rather English, very economic, at the end of the war they made it 1945. This one as you see is all worn out, that's a shooting line business – the more worn out your ribbons the more action you've seen.

What was the Mention in Dispatches?

For the, I didn't tell you that did I? In August I forget the actual date

02:00 1943 Bomber Command bombed Berlin with six hundred bombers and I happened to be the reconnaissance bloke who did the job. I went there and went I got there the city was still in flames, the smoke was so thick the photographs that I took weren't much good. Anyway I came back and as usual I laid down my head and tried to get the noise of the engine out and some chap come in and said, "Get up, the chief wants to see you."

02:30 He says, "Air Officer Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris wants to see you." That's the Air Officer of Bomber Command. So anyway put on your best blue, that's the uniform, this isn't best blue this is battle dress and so off we went to High Wickham which is headquarters of Bomber

Command. We go into the bunker, huge bunker with lots and lots of people, I was a flight sergeant then.

03:00 The squadron leader took me down and their they are all lined up with the photographs on a big table and he said, “Got your photographs, flight sergeant?” “Yeah, they’re no good are they?” He said, “Can’t see much but there’s a lot of smoke,” and I said, “Yes.” I could see that smoke three hundred miles away up to forty one thousand feet when I crossed the Dutch coast I could see the column of smoke, just like an atom bomb.

03:30 Anyway, I thought, “What the hell does he want to see me for? Is he going to send me back to Berlin tomorrow?” He said, “All right gentlemen, I want a word with the flight sergeant.” I thought, “Good God.” So we went into his office, which was this glassed-off part of the bunker. He said, “What do you think of the raid?” I said, “Pretty good. We hit something.”

04:00 I was wondering what on earth he wanted. He said, “Would you like a cup of tea?” I knew I was right then, if an Englishman offers you a cup of tea you’re right. “Yes, I’d like a cup of tea.” “Biscuits?” “Yes,” – I’m really in with the biscuits. He said, “Look, I lost a hundred bombers last night.” I said, “Yes, I expect that’s why they didn’t have a go at me.”

04:30 And he said, “A lot of people don’t want me to keep up with this bombing. What do you think about it?” I thought, “What the heck’s he asking me for? I’m a flight sergeant, you’re the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief,” I said, “I don’t think there’s much you can do, is there? Nobody else is doing anything much.” So he thought, “This guy’s on my side.” He said, “I want you to do something

05:00 for me, you don’t have to do it, it’s not an order, if you don’t want to do it just say, ‘No,’ and you can go home back to your squadron.” I said “What is it?” My God, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, he said, “I want you to go onto the BBC before the seven o’clock news and just say what you saw,

05:30 just a couple of minutes that’s all. Will you do it?” I thought, “No skin off my nose I expect – Yes I’ll do it.” He said “Right.” In comes the squadron leader, “Look after the flight sergeant take him, what do you want to do?” I said, “I want to go to sleep.” He said, “Take him to a hotel and get him into the BBC at five minutes to seven.” So anyway the chap took me off, “Is there anything else you want?” I said, “No. I’ve had it

06:00 I’ve been up since five o’clock this morning, I’ve been to Berlin and back and I don’t know whether I’m coming or going.” He said, “Okay I’ll call you at about a quarter to seven.” Anyway he turned up and took me to Bush House I went up into a thing and a right light on and a microphone. A bloke comes in and says, “You right?” I said “Right.” “When the red light comes on say your piece,” so I said it. After there were about a hundred reporters from all over the

06:30 world and I was up on a dais with a few people, every question they asked me, “Sorry I can’t answer that.” People asked me, “What plane were you flying?” “How high were you flying?” The Germans knew perfectly well why that was. I went back to my squadron nobody said anything to me. That’s it. Propaganda.

07:00 **Why do you think he selected you?**

Because of propaganda, reconnaissance pilot on the spot, in every newspaper in the free world. As far as I was concerned it was the kiss of death. Now the Germans knew that that reconnaissance pilot who was over there was Keith Campbell. Instead of saying there’s a blue

07:30 Spitfire over there, they’d say, “I wonder if it’s Keith Campbell, we’ll get him.” In Australian newspapers even my photograph, I bet you the Germans had that. The whole thing was if you were captured all you gave was name, number and rank. That’s all you’re supposed to tell them, nothing. Here’s the newspapers telling them my name, my photo, all about me where I come from.

08:00 If anybody’s interrogating you, you’ve had it after that. There’s no use saying, “I don’t come from there, I didn’t do that.” “Well you look like this bloke all right.” It didn’t matter.

How did you feel about being utilised in that way?

I didn’t mind, I was only a kid. I thought it was great, see, I wanted to tell people but I didn’t dare say anything on the squadron of course, they’d say,

08:30 “You lying shooting so-and-so.” They could read the papers. They didn’t say anything, which was very nice of them really because it would have been very embarrassing for me.

Mr Campbell you’ve got the helmet in your hand, could you just hold that up to camera and tell us about that ?

Yes. This is the standard goggles and helmet.

09:00 This is the earphones and the connection to the pilot, you plug that in and it goes into both the transmitter and receiver.

This is the standard nice soft leather helmet, ordinary goggles which you never wore except landing and take off or in combat in case you were shot away.

09:30 These are the earphones. This is the connection to the transmitter receiver on the aircraft. As well as this you'd have an oxygen mask with a microphone in it and the oxygen mask is connected to the oxygen supply. It was very comfortable, but of course no protection against if you were hitting anything, it's just suede leather. This one has been over Germany and France at least ninety five times.

10:00 It's got no marks on it so I didn't get hurt. This, where is it? That watch although I had this beautiful navigational watch it'd be covered up with all this junk, I bought this for twelve, and that's been over Germany more than a hundred times, because my friends used to borrow it, because it was most convenient, you had it there and you just pick up, you've got gloves on and

10:30 you just look at it. We had an aircraft clock but it was much easier to look at the old West clocks, it still goes. Also it was a bit of a talisman you see. I'd got away with so much that they reckon if they were wearing it they'd would too. A bit of superstition. Do you want to have a look at those maps or not?

I might just ask you to explain the Mae West?

11:00 Every air crew in the Royal Air Force and the Australian Air Force will know what this is. This is the famous Mae West suit for protection if you fell in the water. It's got three ways of keeping you up, ordinary flotation and you could blow it up by mouth or you can pull a little lever here and it blows up automatically.

11:30 You can't sink with one of these on it's impossible, they've got the backpack for your head to keep your head out of the water. It's quite warm too. You know why it's a Mae West because of the ample breast plates here. Very good. I have tried it out, but only in a swimming pool. They made us do that, you had to actually go in with your dinghy, inflate your dinghy and have your Mae West on and try and get into the dinghy, it was in the water. To show that all these things worked

12:00 and they do or did.

What are all the little

That's a light that lights up on when it goes in the seawater, there's a whistle somewhere. When you're in the water, no use yelling out, "Help!" Nobody ever hears you. But if you go…policeman's whistle. Incidentally, if you get into trouble don't yell, "Help!" yell, "Fire!"

12:30 If you yell, "Help!" people run away, if you yell, "Fire!" they'll come to have a look. It's a fact. Bit of a nit.

Where did you have to train with them in the swimming pool, whereabouts was that?

That was in Benson, they had a swimming pool. This was a permanent station of course it even had its own sewage system. It was two thousand people, it was quite a big establishment. They used to take us, we had to do it in full uniform too. Not just in the,

13:00 in uniform, with boots on. Kick them off and then swim around and get in your dinghy which is rather hard actually to get out of the water. It usually tips over and comes on top of your head, good experience though. I'm afraid this pool old thing is falling to bits. Now what's in there, there's something in there. All these things have got tags on, so that you could handle them if you had bad hands. Another thing they

13:30 gave us that's not here is a burn kit and it had, not good these, it had tannic acid, two ampoules of morphine and it had, wrapped in a bullet proof thing, it had two tags on so you could hold them with your teeth and tear this thing open. Because your hands could burn and it had gloves that you could pull on over your hands, you could still use your hands even if they were burnt. That's another thing they gave us. Usually

14:00 you put that in your pocket here, I've still got that, I don't know if the morphine is still good. Never tried it. They were little flask things with a needle on, you broke the glass. Very cumbersome and not meant for people who were active, you know what the weight of it is, it's quite a heavy weight.

Would you wear that all the time in aircraft?

14:30 Oh yes because you're just sitting there you see. You've got dinghy, parachute, rubber cushion and just straps across you, you don't have to move very much to fly an aircraft, very little, all you do is move your feet like that or your hands like that. Hardly ever, no physical requirement at all. All mental

15:00 and plenty of time to think. Never had time to think about anything. So busy looking around, that's a fact. I never was bored. Never called on the Almighty for assistance, never thought of it. If I got into trouble I was too busy to think something out. That's a fact though, all the time never to be caught on the hop. If you're caught on the hop almost

15:30 always, bouncing we called it, if you bounced the other fellow got his shot in before you'd know about it. You've had it. Fortunately it never happened, or rather none of them hit. Silly.

Mr Campbell I'm just going to ask you one more question, it's just about going on reconnaissance to Hitler's lair, what could you actually see from the air?

16:00 Ah there's nothing much from the air on it. Just a collection long low buildings. It was built into the hill. Apparently the main part of it was way down under the ground with a long lift going down underneath. Of course we couldn't see that. What they were looking for was any troops or any idea of where he was trying to concentrate his wolf pack or whatever they were going to be, it was a wolf's lair. What do they call themselves?

16:30 Some romantic name, they were going to fight to the last, but they didn't fortunately. Nor did they used gas. When the few, I always carried a gas mask in the cockpit and first thing when you came back you'd look in what they called the 'signal square', and if it had a 'G' in it G for gas you didn't land there you went somewhere else. He never used it, they had stacks of it. So did we.

17:00 **So you were taking photographs at that time?**

Yes. I was, apart from my rest, that's between June and December 1944, I was in action for the rest of the war from 1942 to 1945.

Do you know what they used those photographs of Hitler's lair for?

No. I think just to see what was happening. Nothing was happening fortunately. I haven't got them because

17:30 I gave them to a Geography Master at the Tech, I could get a copy of it. As I say, all our photographs millions of them, full plate are held at the University of Keele in Staffordshire. What you do if you want one you indicate roughly the latitude and longitude and they will supply the photographs if they've got them of course. They must have some, all over Europe. You pay an honorarium and they send it to you.

18:00 I didn't know about that somebody me in the historical society and I wrote to them and they wrote back and said, "What photographs do you want?" Of course I've got quite a few of my own that I took. I've got the ones of Berlin and Hamburg, the dams and all sorts of ones. I only took a few of the choice ones. I started to collect them, I started to collect

18:30 harbours and airfields and things like that, but it got too much. Any memorable ones like Berlin or Hamburg or the dams I kept them. You can't fake them because they've got the date and the squadron number on them and they link up with my log book.

I can tell you what date that was. Every pilot has to have one of these. It has to be entered immediately afterwards.

19:30 That's June 1943, it's coming apart, there we are (indicates).

So what's on this log book?

20:00 That was just if you took a local flight, flew around for fun or to test an aircraft. The Ops are underlined you see the number, 25, 26, 27 that's my 27th Op 'Berlin DA'. That was the one that all the fuss was about.

That's your clipping from when you were in the paper?

That's one of them. That's

20:30 the newspaper. Hamburg was the most horrific bombing ever done. Now take it from me, Hamburg was worse than Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was done with ordinary bombing, it took about three or four days, modern concrete city not bamboo and three hundred thousand casualties. That's German figures, not ours. This

21:00 the fires, the smoke beat Hamburg. I've added the odd comment here. They've got to signed by your flight commander and your squadron leader

It must be signed by his flight commander and squadron leader. Every now and then,

21:30 they'd call them in. Now they've got a sense of humour these Englishmen,

22:00 you know in cricket a 'no ball' goes off the wicket that's what they call a flying bomb site – no ball. Then they were called something else afterwards, yes, 'no ball' targets. That's it. Every now and again they'd call you in, oh there's another Berlin DA of that's when I did the three to Berlin, Berlin, Berlin.

22:30 This is an assessment. They'd assess you every now and again as to whether you were still efficient. If you've got a bad mark you'll probably go off. December, Berlin, Berlin, Berlin.

23:00 All I've got for that dreadful tale of mine is, "Berlin today, intercepted by four enemy aircraft fifty miles south of Berlin, landed with five gallons of fuel." The whole thing is reading this I can't believe that it's me, it's somebody else. It

23:30 isn't me is it, it can't be me, I expect it's me mentally, but not physically. I couldn't do it. That's a Focke-Wulf, that's cut out of a magazine, that's what a Focke-Wulf looks like coming for you. One of their best aircraft Focke-Wulf. Focke

24:00 not Focker in the old war, Focke. It had an in-line engine but it looks like it's a radial but very good indeed. Very good. Mad. There's another one. We alternated between, there were are, what did I say about my first flight? Don't say anything.

24:30 Silent. I shouldn't have said anything there's no record of that, that I just told you. There Douglas Hamilton, he was our CO.

25:00 That's Dougy, Douglas Hamilton the son of Lord Douglas Hamilton who Hess came to see. He was our CO at the OTU at Fraserborough. Quite a nice bloke too. He took us, anybody could do, to his hunting lodge, his family's hunting lodge up in the King's preserves. Of course we thought it was going to be a super place. We cycled up from Braemar, everybody had a cycle,

25:30 when we got there it was completely gutted, not a single stick of furniture except the kitchen. Quite a big place. His family had donated it to the war effort, they would of course. We had sleeping bags and blankets and palliasses, which is a bag with straw in. Then he took us walking through the King's Preserves, we had a very nice weekend. He was a health and physical expert

26:00 too. They all were. He flew Mosquitoes. It was his brother I was talking about that was married to Prunella Stack. Dougy was all right. He was on the Mosquito Squadron, I didn't' have anything to do with him in flying. They thought they should look after him and gave him a navigator.

26:30 **Thank you very much for showing us your memorabilia**

I've got all sorts of junk here.

It's not junk. It's a great bit of history and thank you very much for talking with us today.

It's been a pleasure. Thank you.