

Australians at War Film Archive

Francis Field (Frank) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:36 **Mr Field, thanks for talking to us today. To start, can I ask you to give us brief summary of your life?**

I was born at Corowa in the southern part of New South Wales in 1928. I was reared on a farm at a little place called Daysdale, which is about twenty-odd

01:00 miles north of Corowa. My father was a mixed farmer. He was a returned soldier from the First World War and had a returned soldier's block as a result of his overseas service. I went to school at the Daysdale Public School. I did not receive any high school education because the nearest high school was thirty miles away, no public transport in those times, and my secondary

01:30 education was rather skimp, and it wasn't until I joined the air force at the age of eighteen that I started to further my education. I worked on the farm until I was eighteen. I didn't like farm life; didn't appeal to me. My father was one of the old school. He'd made his money with horses and he maintained that I could do the same. I was one of the modern, well more

02:00 modern, era and I wanted a tractor, a modernised farm. He wouldn't agree, so there was only one thing for me to do was to pack up and leave and I decided to join the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]. That was in 1947, February 1947. And my life continued from thereon; twenty-three years in the RAAF. I left the RAAF, joined the New South Wales Department of Agriculture. I was there for sixteen-odd

02:30 years, left that, and I went to work for private industry for a few years. Reached retiring age, sold up where we lived at Penrith and moved here.

Can you tell me briefly what the major points were in your RAAF service?

I wanted to be a technician and I set my heart and soul on being a technician of any description. Following our recruit training at Laverton

03:00 we were sent to Wagga [Wagga Wagga], the technical training school. We did a twelve weeks basic training course and as a result of that twelve weeks basic training, which was fitting, electro, electro mag [magnetic] and a few other topics, they decided - and when I say they, the higher-up stuff at the RAAF base at Wagga - decided which mustering or technical vocation we were most suited for, and I was selected

03:30 to be an electrician, an aircraft electrician. I was an aircraft electrician following our basic training as an electrician. We went out on the units for field experience. Then we were returned to Wagga again and we did a conversion course. We became electrical fitters and that's where the training so far as the RAAF was concerned. Finished, and we just increased our knowledge by working on aircraft over the years. When I was at Melbourne,

04:00 at headquarters in Melbourne in the early '60s, I did go to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and complete an industrial electronics course and I also did a lot of motor electrician's courses in my own time at night-time, and that further training gave me a little bit more of an insight into the aircraft. Well those days solid state circuitry was being introduced,

04:30 equipment was being miniaturised and the electronics course at the Melbourne tech [technical college] helped me a great deal later on.

And where were the places that you served in the RAAF?

Following Wagga I went to AD [Aircraft Depot] at Richmond in early '4. Then I was transferred to Schofields to work on Dakota aircraft, back to Wagga for additional training and early '49

05:00 back to Schofields again. Then the wing moved from Schofields to Richmond, the entire wing, 86 Wing, and then the rot set in. I was posted to Ballarat in late 1949 as an instructor to teach radio trainees electricity, magnetism and basic fitting.

- 05:30 I was there for eight months, didn't like the place, and eventually found my way out by getting posted to the RAAF base at East Sale and that was in May 1950. I stayed there for two and a half years. Arrived at the place an LAC [Leading Aircraftsman] and left there two and a half years later as a sergeant. That was the best base by far that I ever served on, East Sale. It was magnificent in more ways than one. In late
- 06:00 '52 I was posted to 91 Wing in Japan. From Sale we went to Richmond for onward movement. We spent about three weeks there until they could arrange an aircraft with Qantas and we went over to [UNCLEAR]. And then, well I left Richmond in late November '52 and went to Iwakuni in Japan and that's where I joined 91 Wing, which was the controlling
- 06:30 element for 77 Squadron and 30 Communications Unit. I joined 30 Comm Unit for a while. Then I joined 77 Squadron in Korea, from Korea back to Iwakuni at 491 Maintenance where we did all the heavy maintenance on many aircraft. I was there for about twelve months and then for the last few months of my service I went to 36 Squadron. Back to Australia. We joined 77 Squadron when they brought the squadron home
- 07:00 on the aircraft carrier Vengeance. I come home as an advance party on the old migrant ship, the SS New Australia. We cruised down the Pacific. We left Kure. We went to Pusan, picked up the, I think it was the 3rd RAR and four hundred New Zealanders and we left Pusan early one morning and headed down through the Pacific, down the East Coast to Australia. Pulled into Brisbane,
- 07:30 dropped off a few Australian Army fellows and some of the New Zealanders. We continued onto Sydney. I was in charge of a technical team. I had to go to Richmond to prepare the hangars and what have you for the arrival of the Meteors coming home on the HMAS Vengeance I think it was, and we had about a week or ten days' wait until the aircraft arrived. When they did arrive at Richmond we had to reassemble them and prepare for Operation Welcome Home,
- 08:00 whereby the squadron flew around Australia to all the major capital cities. That was completed. We went... Sorry, we went to Melbourne firstly. Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth. We had a week or ten days in Perth because Western Australia was the home state of 77 Squadron, was formed there in 1942 and hadn't been back in twelve years, thirteen years. Consequently when we got to Perth
- 08:30 we were given the freedom of the city and made most welcome. We had a really good time in Perth, terrific, thanks to the Western Australians. Then we picked our way back across the Nullarbor, the Meteors not having much of a range. They had to put into I think Ceduna, before they got to Adelaide for fuel. We followed up in the old Dakotas and we finished up down in Tasmania. We were down there for a few days. We returned back to
- 09:00 Williamstown and up to Amberley and that was the finish of Operation Welcome Home.

OK, that's wonderful, but we'll come back and talk about that Welcome Home operation in detail. So I think we'll go back and talk, if we can talk about your childhood and Corowa, what do you remember about what sort of a town it was when you were a boy?

Corowa?

- 09:30 Corowa was supposed to be the capital of Australia. Well it was considered as one of the three options. It was a big base during the war. Matter of fact I, as a child, they'd built an aerodrome at Corowa during the war as part of the defence chain when the country was threatened by the Japanese. At the age of fourteen I worked for what was called the CCC - the Civil Construction Corps.
- 10:00 I was rather tall for my age. At the time I put my age up to sixteen to get a job and we did a lot of earth excavation, draining the areas to keep it dry in the event of floods and what have you, and that was my job. I wasn't the only one. There were probably two or three hundred of us with horse teams, scoops, ploughs. And it
- 10:30 never became an operational base because the Japanese advance had been stemmed and all the bases back here had moved forward into Queensland and Far North Queensland. But Corowa at the time was a thriving industr... It wasn't an industrial town. It was a farming community, mixed farming was around there: wheat, sheep, a few cattle, a little bit of milk.
- 11:00 But it was quite a vibrant town in those times, population round about three thousand then. It's double now, of course. The last time I was back there it had.

How quickly did that aerodrome go up?

It was made operational within about eighth or ten months. It was used by the civil airlines after the war. It was the main

- 11:30 aerodrome for Albury and all centres around there because Albury never had an all-weather strip, which Corowa did. As a matter of fact I've been told that it, that the strip, whatever it was built with, it was sealed with a metal out of the river and they reckon of a moonlight night with the moon shining on the white gravel they could see it for miles and miles away by air and that a lot of the pilots didn't need the use of

12:00 strip lighting to light the place up to point it out to them. They could see it for miles away simply because of the reflection of the moon on the white gravel. But it was quite a good aerodrome. It never got to the stage where they built hangars because, as I said earlier, the Japanese advance had been stemmed and it never needed the hangars but they did have a very, very big aerodrome at a place downstream called Tocumwal. It was,

12:30 I believe, the largest aerodrome in the southern hemisphere. It was huge; hundreds of aircraft there. I worked there during the war as a member of the Air Training Corps and we used to go there on weekend camps and it was massive, believe me, a massive place.

You mentioned that the Japanese threat to Australia was serious. Can you explain how that aerodrome was going to be used in terms of that Japanese threat?

It was one of a chain of aerodromes around the place where they could base aircraft

13:00 to stem any advance of the Japanese or probably landings to sea. It was built inland for that purpose, I believe, because it was out of range of shipping or being shelled by ship-based armament, and it was too far for them to reach with their naval aircraft. And it just was a line of aerodromes that were built right across southern New South Wales and into the

13:30 upper part of Victoria as part of the defence plan. We often refer to another line that was called the Brisbane Line. That was the first one they were going to fall back to. If the Japs advanced any further than that, well, we were to be the second line of defence.

So given the role that the town had in this contingency operation, can you remember what the mood was like, what the atmosphere was like in terms of the perceived threat by the Japanese and how life might

14:00 **change in Australia?**

It was always considered a serious threat because of their rapid advance down through the Asian countries. New Guinea was where their advance was stemmed. We didn't know that at the time. I was only, what, fourteen or fifteen, and I paid a big attention to the war effort, not only here in the Pacific basin but also in the Middle East, probably passed on to me by

14:30 my Dad because he was a returned soldier from the First World War.

How did you follow the news of the war and the campaigns and what was happening?

We were one of the few people in the district at the time that had a valve operated radio set, and it was through the radio and the newspapers of the time was the only way that we got information from sources that gave us any

15:00 knowledge of what the Japanese were doing and where they'd landed and where they'd attacked and how our forces were doing to repel them. But radio and newspapers was our main source.

So how do you think people in the town or the district felt about the perceived threat of the Japanese?

They were concerned mostly because of the rapid advance that the Japanese had made and there was, at that time, little or no way of stopping their advance.

15:30 It was only when they got into New Guinea and they stretched their lines of communication, particularly their shipping, or in the main their shipping, and then the Americans come on the scene with their submarines and their fleet and their ships, or their surface ships were exposed to the American fleets and American submarines. Then they started to see quite a few and the Japanese then realised that they had stretched their lines of communication to the maximum, and it was only then that we started to realise that the

16:00 war was starting to slow down, or their advance was slowing down. And eventually it was stopped and it was turned around and only then did the people in Australia realise that we were safe. But up until the Japanese advance had been stemmed, we were under threat. There was no fear about that.

What other preparations were being made in the town, or what other contributions to the war effort were being made?

Well I can remember as a child going to the Daysdale Public School

16:30 that the parents, or our parents, had dug slit trenches in case the school was bombed so we could vacate the school in a hurry if we got ample warning and jump into the ship, sorry, jump into the slit trenches. And that was a little bit fearful for us at the time.

17:00 But that was the only preparations that we had taken around our district. There was no army. There was a small army based at a little place called Oaklands but it was only a transportation depot because the New South Wales and the Victorian rail joined there with the two different gauges in those days. It was a major transport, major transshipping place for all ammunition, troops and things going north and south, and of course it was too far inland to be attacked by

17:30 the Japanese from many naval based or aircraft based aircraft. No, people were quite fearful of being occupied by the Japanese at the time, knowing what they'd done to a lot of prisoners, particularly the 26 sisters that were shot at - Bangka, Bangka Straits. One survived.

18:00 That was the one that survived, only died two or three years ago. No, it was a bit fearful.

Who worked on the aerodrome? How was the work commissioned?

It was commissioned by the federal government of the time. They formed what they call the Civil Construction Corps or CCC we used to call it, and they co-opted, coerced and got

18:30 volunteers to work for them to prepare this area of land which was almost devoid of all trees or any other objects. It was one of the best aerodromes around Australia, I believe, because it was flat. There were no hills and mountains for miles and miles around so aircraft could make relatively low approaches without fear of flying into objects such as hills, hilltops.

19:00 I would say the majority of the construction teams were people from the farms and they gave up their time, or some of them did. Some of them went back to their farms and worked, put their crops in, did other farming activities whilst someone else took their place to keep on with construction. But that was the urgency we were supposed to follow it. We all realised the urgency and no-one,

19:30 well I'm not saying no-one, but very few, if any, objected to working on the aerodrome to prepare it as a line of defence against the impending Japanese invasion.

What sort of defences or anti-aircraft facilities did it have?

None. It never got to that stage. As I said earlier, the Japanese advance had been stemmed and it wasn't needed

20:00 as a major base to stem the advance if the Japanese had landed in Australia. It never got to that stage, so therefore there was no anti-aircraft or no other provisions around the place, around the aerodrome, to be able to defend it against any possible attack.

What do you remember about recruitment drives or local men in the district who went off to war?

The big recruitment drives

20:30 were going through the press, posters, and this had an adverse effect on the farming community because of the drain on the labour. Farmers had to co-opt one another so that one neighbour helped the other because of the number of young men that had joined the armed forces and gone overseas.

21:00 It was a big drain on the labour force, and farming in those days was labour intensive. We never had hydraulic lifts. Everything was done manually. If you lifted a bag of wheat, you lifted it manually. A bag of wheat in those days weighed a hundred and eighty pounds or more and it was back cracking, believe me. And the farming, those who were, who

21:30 remained, were either too old to join the armed forces or medically unfit, but they had to carry on with the farming activities. It was a big drain, a very big drain, and it fell back on to some of us younger men to fill the void. We were too young to join up but we were considered able enough, strong enough, fit enough and probably silly enough to do the work.

Was there a place in town

22:00 **where men would go to enlist?**

I don't recall in Corowa a recruiting office. There was probably one at Albury, which was a major town. There were two huge army camps up at Albury: Bonegilla and Bandiana. And they were massive military establishments. And I would imagine there would have been a recruiting office in Albury but I don't ever remember one being in Corowa. So

22:30 anyone that wanted to join the armed forces would have to go to Albury, up to, I would say the minimum, or possibly to Melbourne because in the southern part of New South Wales, probably most of the Riverina up to the Murrumbidgee River, considered Melbourne or Victoria more appropriate than Sydney. Sydney was a little too far away, a little bit too remote, and of course we were also aligned to Victoria because of the Victorian

23:00 football. We played Victorian football right up through the Riverina. Not like it is today where it's a national game. Years ago it was very parochial, very, very parochial, believe me. There were some bitter arguments, not between neighbours, but within the household because different members of the family would support different teams And that was... It was hilarious at times, and when you're looking back on it, to think of the... It's

23:30 not so much today, in my opinion, but in those days it was a religion in Victoria.

Was there division in your household over football teams?

Yes, but it never got to the stage where it was divisive. But it was the subject of many discussions and if

my team played your team and I won, well I'd let you know about it, and vice versa. You'd rub it in but you had to cop it.

What were the factions and

24:00 what teams did they represent?

In our family? Two of us followed Essendon. My mother didn't follow any particular team but my sister was a Collingwood supporter. Of course brother and sister there's a rivalry there, so the football teams added to it. But we also had our local football and league. Again the players,

24:30 most of the young ones had joined up and gone to war. And if my memory serves me correctly I think the football association was called off for a couple of years until after the end of the war, and then the league was re-formed and that became quite strong after the war. But that was our main source of entertainment, Saturday afternoon football. Everyone went along and barracked for their team and went home rather

25:00 joyous or disappointed. But that was life in those days. It was a simple life. But one of the things that I had to do as a child, I was taught the piano. I detested it. I thought pianos were for girls. I wanted to play a wind instrument but my father wouldn't be part and parcel of it. He went to

25:30 an auction sale one day and he came home with a second-hand piano and I had to ride twenty miles every Saturday on a pushbike for music lessons, come hell or hail or shine, irrespective, I had to go for music lessons.

What was your piano teacher like?

The first one? Well the first one taught me dance music.

26:00 Her name was Mrs Britain. I saw her many years later in a little country town called Ganmain, down in the Riverina. I was taught by her for a couple of years and then she moved to Ganmain. Her husband was a baker and he got a job there, and I thought I'd been turned free but another music teacher came on the scene, a lady by the name of

26:30 Miss Griffin. She didn't teach dance music. She was more classical, upmarket. She was a graduate of the London Trinity College of Music. Came out here before the war and bought herself a car, and she used to drive around all the country towns teaching the children the piano, the violin and elocution. And when she turned up I was reintroduced to piano practice again and I was with her for a couple of years.

27:00 I wasn't the only one. There were several others. She taught the violin, the piano, elocution. And when petrol rationing was introduced in the early part of the war she never had the petrol to get around all these places to teach children, so she just had to call it off. I was totally free again.

Why do you think your father considered a piano tuition so important?

Part of the education program

27:30 likely, because we never had the opportunity to go on to secondary school and in those times most people played a musical instrument of some description, unlike today where you just go up and push a switch and it comes out of a speaker. In those days you just couldn't do it. We had old gramophones and we played 78 [78 rpm - revolutions per minute] records but there were no such things as stereos and all the modern contraptions of today.

28:00 And as a result the only entertainment we had was to have a piano where you would, someone would sit down and play and other people would either dance, or you'd have a singsong, a musical evening, and we had many of those at home. The publican's wife was an accomplished pianist. She was magnificent. She loved our piano because it was old. It had genuine ivory keys and it really had a good tone and she would turn up with

28:30 three or four people in her car and half a dozen bottles of beer and they would sing around and dance around the place, around the floor, until early hours of the morning sometimes. That was the only entertainment that we had. Of course there were the usual balls held in the district, Red Cross, [Australian] Comforts Fund. A lot of money was raised for the war effort as a result of balls. Debutante balls: a lot of girls made their debut. That was the only entertainment we had.

29:00 Although I did play the piano for a while. I became interested in it when a lot of people went off to war. This lady became ill. Another fellow and I started up a bit of an orchestra. It wasn't an orchestra but we used to call ourselves an orchestra, and that's why I never became involved in much socialising because instead of being down on the floor and meeting girls and other people, I was sitting up on stage on a chair playing the piano.

What sort of venues would the orchestra

29:30 play?

We used to play dances, the balls. There was an orchestra in this district but they were limited to the amount of travelling they could do, again because of petrol rations. And for local dances they held,

every serviceman in the district that left to go overseas was given a farewell party. This was usually in the form

30:00 of a dance at the local hall. And of course being country, women cooked cakes and scones. It was a real lavish affair come supper. Sponges, cream as thick as the sponge itself, cakes, coffee. It was a real night out, particularly for us younger ones. We were fourteen, fifteen, sixteen at the time. It was our only form of entertainment.

30:30 We enjoyed it.

Can you tell me about these farewell parties, who would organise them and what would happen at them? Would there be speeches?

Yes, there were speeches. There'd be a dance committee. It may be through the Australian Comforts Fund, like the local branch It may be through the Red Cross or the Prisoner of War Appeal, and churches. Some of the local churches organised them, particularly if a member going overseas was

31:00 a good church member, and in those days there were. They'd arrange a dance, engage an orchestra or someone to play and then during the course of the evening the one, two or depending on the number of people going overseas, would be called up on stage and they'd be introduced and they would say what they had done. Couldn't reveal too much, obviously, for security reasons. They couldn't say where they were going,

31:30 if they knew where they were going, but they would be called upon to give a bit of a rundown on their service career. Then someone would talk about their private career and what schools they'd gone to, what they'd done with themselves up to the time they'd joined up. Then they'd be given a present in the form of a watch or a fountain pen if they already had a watch, well they'd give 'em a pen but they'd always be given some memento to take with them overseas.

32:00 And a lot of them treasured them, treasured their watch, their pen, whatever they were given, a ring, signet ring. But they were very, very well organised. It wasn't only in our district. It was throughout the entire country, I would imagine. But it was something that they were given. Many came back, some didn't.

So what sort of impact did that have on the town then if one of these young men were killed?

32:30 The first one that was killed was a local fellow, Bobby Norris. He was killed in Syria. He was the first one and that had a terrible impact. It was a very, very small community. It wasn't... It was called a town but it was very, literally a locality. We had a couple of shops and a couple of garages, a few houses. But everyone knew everybody else.

33:00 I suppose everybody knew everyone else's business and when he was killed it had a profound effect on the district. He was the first one. There were two or three others.

Can you tell me about Bobby Norris?

He was much older than me. When I say much older, he'd be twelve, fifteen years older than I was. But I can remember him quite well. He was a fellow, probably five ten [5' 10" tall], five eleven, snowy hair,

33:30 thick built. And being in the bush most of his work was working on farms, so he naturally took on this heavy-built stature. His mother and father were very well respected. His father ran a, not so much a nursery, but he used to grow a lot of vegetables. He used to sell those to the locals as a source of income. Incomes in those days were quite meagre,

34:00 but people in the bush in those days grew most of their own fruit and vegetables and between all of them what one had the other didn't, well they didn't sell, they exchanged. Now that's about as much as I can recall about Bobby Norris, but he was the first one to pay the supreme sacrifice.

Do you remember about how you heard that he had been killed?

Word of mouth. In those days

34:30 they used to send telegrams. We had a local post office. The old postmistress was a Miss Bulmer. She was the first one to receive a message. All notification of casualties in those days, or next of kin they used to call them, notifications were by telegram. Rather an abrupt way of doing it but that was the only... There was no counsellors or not even any ministers or priests around

35:00 to get the news first and then convey it. It was just in the form of a telegram. Terrible.

How did the town rally round the family when someone's son was killed?

A lot of support, a lot of moral support, and this takes place in all country towns. It did in those times. I don't know what it's like today. But if someone

35:30 lost a parent, a child or an adolescent, everyone came around to give those people support in more ways than one, did whatever they could, and the same happened for Bobby Norris. His parents were quite elderly and they weren't rich by any means, but there's more to helping people than giving them money

36:00 and things like that. It was just moral support. And also the same support was given to the parents and friends of the other people that paid the supreme sacrifice. One fellow was quite young. He was on one of the ships. He was captured by the Japanese. He was a member of the 8th Division. He was captured by the Japanese in Malaya and he was

36:30 one of those thousands of blokes the Japanese took to Japan to work on the steel mills, coal mines and other areas, forced slave labour. And the ship that he was on, taking him back to Japan, the ship wasn't marked and the American submarine torpedoed and sank it. They didn't know that POWs [Prisoners of War] were on board. They just thought it was an empty Japanese vessel going back to Japan for more supplies for their own forces. He was young. He was barely

37:00 eighteen. He put his age up to join the army. I think he joined at about sixteen.

Given that the best and brightest of the town's and district's young men were away, some being killed or seriously wounded, can you remember what the town felt like, as a boy, as a teenager with this sort of absence, this loss?

Yes. People

37:30 were, particularly if they were young like this fellow, it was a, well the same with Bobby Norris, but it was a real loss to the district because it was a small district. It's not as if it was a large town where he was probably only known by a few, but in small localities everyone knew everybody else. If you had problems people knew about it and you helped, and in this case everyone knew about it and everyone was saddened and disgusted

38:00 because such a young life had been snuffed out in the early part of his life. He hadn't even reached his twenties. If my memory serves me correctly he put his age up. He was about sixteen when he joined the army. He was about eighteen when he was drowned on his way to Japan, so that was, had an adverse effect. And particularly a lot of the... I can remember my Dad. He was very bitter,

38:30 very bitter, more so probably because of the atrocities that had been committed. He was, he had a lot of anger. He was a placid person

39:00 in the normal run of affairs, but when issues like this came up, people being tortured for no good reason, he hated that. And I can see him now. He was like a bear with a sore head, as we used to say in those days, for quite a while because people's lives were being taken brutally through torture, though

39:30 the rules of the Geneva Convention, I think it was, had just been flouted because the ship wasn't, they weren't carrying flags to say that they had passengers on board, or prisoners on board, and this what caused a lot of ill feeling, a lot of bitterness.

Your father had served in what was supposed to be the war

40:00 **that ended all wars. How much do you think that had to do with his anger and bitterness?**

Yes, a lot. He was in France in the First World War. He didn't get there until the latter part of it. He joined up here. He was kept in Australia for quite a while before he sailed for overseas and he got to the UK [United Kingdom] and he did further training there. And it wasn't until the early part of 1918 that he was transferred

40:30 to France, but he was in the thick of it at the finish. He was in the gas part of the war. He was badly gassed. One of his lungs were adversely affected. And being a farmer in those days, farming, as I said earlier, was labour intensive and he having an adverse lung, or one lung badly affected,

41:00 he used to tire very quickly and he never had the capacity to breathe, and that made him bitter. And of course as you asked why the First World War was the war to end all wars, well some twenty years later here we are in another major conflict, so he felt as if, not only he, but probably hundreds or thousands of others felt that all that effort was a wasted

41:30 effort and here came a repeat of twenty years earlier, and I think that's what made him so bitter.

Tape 2

00:34 **You were talking about your father's involvement in World War I. Were there other men in the town who had also been involved?**

In World War I? There were several, many as a matter of fact. I can picture the roll of honour board in the public hall at Daysdale and there would be probably thirty or forty names on it from the First World War,

01:00 probably more, but at least, yeah, there'd be forty. That's from the First World War. Many of those paid the supreme sacrifice because the First World War was, it was hand-to-hand fighting, unlike the Second World War where they sort of stood back a bit and, with aircraft. Never had aircraft. Well they did

towards the latter end of the First World War. No, quite a few.

Did you talk to your father about his experiences in the First World War?

01:30 I didn't because I was too young to realise what it was all about. And our neighbour, he and our neighbour used to talk. Our neighbour was a Welshman. He came out to Australia as a migrant before the First World War and when the war broke out he was one of the first to enlist, hoping to get back to the UK to see his parents in Wales, but he finished up in Gallipoli, with all the ANZACS [Australia and New Zealand Army Corps]. He's still alive.

02:00 But he and my Dad would discuss what they took place during the war but really, very rarely did they ever mention what happened, outside themselves. They didn't talk about it. It was too horrific.

How much did you know about what was going on in the Second World War when you were growing up?

I followed it closely through the radio that we had. I listened to the news

02:30 bulletins each day. We used to get the paper every day. One of the Melbourne papers, The Argus, which has since gone out of publication, back in the '50s it folded, but that was where I got all my information from. And they would publish a list of those who were killed and those who were wounded, not throughout Australia but those from Victoria and the southern part of New South Wales. I kept in contact

03:00 through that, who was injured, wounded, medically sent home and those who paid the supreme sacrifice, through the newspaper. Of course I followed the daily obits [obituaries] through the radio, used to get the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] news from the local radio station, 2CO Corowa. There was only one, no, two commercial stations we could receive, Shepparton and Deniliquin, so we were fairly limited and

03:30 restricted in where we could get our news from.

Could you tell me a bit about your school life?

There was no kindergartens or pre-school in those days. You went straight into the routine. We had two schools:

04:00 a little school and a big school. First and second class at the little school, and when you first started school you always had a female teacher, probably because of the motherly attention and motherly effects, so that you didn't feel as if you'd been torn away from your family too much. After two years of indoctrination, I suppose you were supposed to forget about that and the third class onwards you moved into the big school. But we had good teachers. They to teach all subjects.

04:30 And in the big school they taught from third class up to eighth class, as we used to call it. In those days you could leave school when you were fourteen. Later on it was extended. You had to go through right until fifteen. But we had the one old school teacher, one from 1939, who they took up a petition amongst all the local residents that he'd been there too long that he'd lost his interest in teaching.

05:00 And in 1940 we got a student teacher from Sydney, a fellow called McCallum. He boarded at the local hotel. He was very good. He was terrific as a matter of fact. A lot of us liked him. He was one of the younger generation of teachers. He, whilst he taught all subjects, he stressed

05:30 geography and the need to travel and broaden your minds, broaden your outlook, and that's probably where I got the bug to travel, from him. But he was only there twelve months and then they built another school residence or teacher's residence. The first one got burnt down as well in 1939. And they sent another

06:00 school teacher, a fellow called Parnaby. We didn't take to him too well. His wife was very nice. She was also a teacher but she didn't teach. She did relief, give him some relief. But we didn't take to him too well. He was a, he wasn't one of our type. And this was about the time he arrived that I left, probably end, yes, 1942, when I pulled the plug.

06:30 **How large was the school?**

There'd be about sixty children went to the school. There'd be twenty in the primary school, about forty in the secondary school. Yeah, the little school we used to call it, and there'd be forty children in the big school. Numbers fluctuated a little bit because there was an itinerant, a group of people moving around, particularly in those days where people were looking for work in the rural sector,

07:00 so you may have sixty, sixty-five one day, six months later you might be fifty-five, sixty. But there were those of us whose parents owned farms or owned houses in the district when we were there, permanently. We never changed. But the average school attendance in those days would be sixty.

How would you get to school?

Traditionally I rode a horse

- 07:30 a distance of four miles each way. That was a Shetland pony and he had the better of me. Many a time I've come off him. He was as cunning as you know what and he had no difficulty in dislodging me. And I was, when I was three or four years of age, or six or seven, well it was even par
- 08:00 but I gave the pony away and I started to ride a bike. And then when my sister started school we used to drive a horse and gig. My Dad had a special gig made for Shetland ponies. It came from the Sydney show I think it was in 1938 or late '30s, and whilst he was in Sydney he ordered this special gig just for a Shetland pony and we went to school
- 08:30 in that for two or three years, so I had to give my bike up and take my sister to school, which didn't appeal to me but never mind, that's brother and sisterly problems.

You mentioned a teacher who instilled the love of travel in you, and you've also mentioned the experience of World War II. How prominent were those two factors in your decision

09:00 **to become involved in the armed services?**

Probably a lot at the time, of which I didn't realise, but what, there were two things that changed my mind about staying on the land. One, it didn't appeal to me. I was engineering minded although I had no engineering training, but I could see the need for

- 09:30 farms to be mechanised. During a lull period on our farm, it was only a small farm, but during lull periods I would go and work for a pastoral company which backed onto our property, and this pastoral company had six, five or six properties, and each son managed one of them. Now they had tractors, trucks, all the mechanical agents you could think of, and this appealed to me. And I can recall
- 10:00 I used to work for the eldest brother of the family and he used to let me drive one of the big trucks, and because I was only a kid, well a young feller, fifteen or sixteen years of age, he'd let me drive the truck into the local wheat sidings place called Oaklands.
- 10:30 I didn't have a licence but because of the shortage of labour in those times, particularly in the farming sector, the local policeman just turned a blind eye. He knew what was going on. He never intervened because it wasn't, it wouldn't be the right thing. And that was one of the things that did influence my decision. Another one was my mother's youngest brother was a member of the RAAF. He joined up in the early part of the war. Course he would come
- 11:00 home on leave, tell us what he'd been doing, the aircraft he'd worked on, what he'd been trained to do, what he was doing, and that really whet my appetite and that was the final nail that made me decide that the air force was for me and farming was out. And that was back in, yeah, that'd be back in the early '40s. And when I was sixteen years of age I joined the Air Training Corps. We had a local flight at Corowa,
- 11:30 part of the Albury squadron, and I enjoyed that. That furthered my education because we had to do a lot of maths: my first introduction to algebra. Didn't like it then, still don't, but that was an education. And I did a navigator's course, or I started a navigator's course in the Air Training Corps. When I reached the age of eighteen I had to terminate because of
- 12:00 when you reached eighteen years of age you either went into the RAAF or you left the Air Training Corps.

What was the... Who ran the Air Training Corps? What was that about?

It was the RAAF. It was a branch of the RAAF and a lot of members of the air training corps, who joined the Air Training Corps at the age of sixteen, stayed with them till they were eighteen. I transferred to the RAAF. A lot of them became air crew. A lot of them went overseas. Others went into ground staff musterings. Some just

- 12:30 pulled out. A lot of them either they were medically unfit or they just didn't want to go into the armed services. But I enjoyed it. We used to go away to weekend camps. I had my first flight in an aircraft when I was a member of the Air Training Corps. We used to go to Albury for weekend camps and they used to bring an aircraft over from Deniliquin, an old Avro Anson, and we used to fly it at the Albury Aerodrome.
- 13:00 I was having my first flight. I was caught the first time. I sat in the wrong place. The old Ansons, in those days the undercarriage had to be wound up with a handle, a hundred and forty turns. I'll never forget that. As soon as they got airborne one of the pilots would say, "Let's start turning." By the time you got the undercarriage up, you start to have a look around, they were coming back into land again, so you had to turn a hundred and forty turns the other way. Future flights I never sat in that seat.
- 13:30 Get caught once, never get caught again.

Could you explain your first flight in detail, where you were and what it was like?

I had to get my Dad's approval. In those days you couldn't fly unless you had parental approval and parents had to sign away,

- 14:00 I think there was called an indemnity. The Commonwealth wouldn't be held responsible if you got killed or hurt, injured, maimed, have no claim, and he was very reluctant to do that because he didn't have any faith in the aircraft. I did. But I talked him into it and it was an experience to be , well, what'll I say, go aloft, get up around two or three thousand feet
- 14:30 and look down on the land below you cause we flew out over the Hume Weir. It was an experience. I did several flights after that, not only out of Albury, but also out of Corowa. I often look back on it and think, "Well, the aerodrome we helped build, I had a few flights out of there." And we used to go down to Tocumwal. That was experience. Tocumwal's a huge place, massive, massive place.

15:00 **What was there?**

There was a large aircraft depot where they did heavy maintenance, or they call it heavy maintenance today. In those days it was major inspections of an aircraft that had been damaged in battle, say in New Guinea, up around the islands, and bring back there for a major overhaul, major repairs. It was a bomber training unit. And I can remember as a child on the farm,

- 15:30 probably late in the afternoon around about half past three to half past four, something like that, we would see flights of aircraft, Liberators in those days, four-engined heavy bombers, going out on navigational training exercises. And they'd be away for ten, twelve hours. We'd hear them coming back in the early hours of the morning, still dark. But they'd been away up around the Barrier Reef somewhere teaching crews navigational training, pilots, get their experience before they transferred to
- 16:00 the war zone, Papua New Guinea as it was at the time. But it was a huge base, massive. There were over eight thousand servicemen there, massive.

Could you explain what the first plane was that you took a flight in?

An Avro Anson, made of wood and fabric, fabric cabin, twin engines. Engines were radials and if my memory serves

- 16:30 me correctly they were Armstrong Siddeley Cheetahs. What mark, I don't know. What mark the bomber was I don't know, but I'll always remember building it up, the old Cheetah engines. Matter of fact they were, well they were designed and built pre-war. But to start the engines they used a crank handle. Used to get up on top of the wing between the fuselage and the engine and
- 17:00 there'd be a crank handle. Not that we did it, but the ground staff that came with the aircraft, that was their role. But they were antiquated. But that's what they used for trainers in those days. They used them. Not only did they use them for training navigators, signallers and what have you, but they used them well into the war for coastal patrols, coastal surveillance. It was all they had. They were too old for bombing purposes. They just didn't have the
- 17:30 range or the capacity or the load carrying capacity, but they used them for training purposes. They were Ansons, Oxfords, a few others. But no, they were good. They were safe to fly in.

So how often would you go for training in the Air Training Corps?

We'd go away for a camp every three or four weeks. We'd either go into Corowa for training in the way of drill. Our

- 18:00 instructor in Corowa was a returned soldier from the First World War. He was a bit of a disciplinarian. He was one of the local mercers, or clothing shop. We'd get drilled but I didn't mind that. And then for advanced training we'd go to Albury where they'd sit us. It was one of the, might have been the Albury High School
- 18:30 they used. But we were given tests, intelligence tests and flights, drill. Aircraft recognition was a big thing in those days. They used to flash, they used to use the old slide projector and they'd flash different aircraft up and you had to identify them. They wouldn't leave them there for any length of time, maybe there for half a second, but you had to identify them as part of aircraft recognition. That was good. And of course we used to enjoy the meals.
- 19:00 They were different, different to what you used to get at home. And you had to sit down with other people. That was quite good.

What were the meals?

Pretty basic, but they were good. You might get a bowl of soup, lamb, beef, maybe a bit of chicken, but they were cooked in quantities. I don't know where they came from, probably service cooks around

- 19:30 the place or somewhere. But we enjoyed the camaraderie. It was different to sitting down with your parents, where the conversation would be around farming activities or something like that. But when you get people from different walks of life sitting around the table talking about different things, it was quite enlightening, particularly for someone that had led a fairly isolated life as a young person. I enjoyed the camaraderie. It was good.
- 20:00 And of course when I joined the RAAF, well it became better again, all walks of life.

You mentioned earlier that you had quite an isolated childhood. How significant do you think that was in terms of your decisions later in life to join the air force?

I don't think it had any major bearing on my joining the air force. As I said earlier,

20:30 my two main reasons for joining the air force, one, to get away from the rural sector, and two, to become involved in engineering or to get some engineering training because there were no tech schools around where I lived. The technical training was non-existent. Even the uncle of mine that joined the RAAF, and he was... In those days they called them fitter turners or fitter engines. He was a motor mechanic but he didn't do an

21:00 apprenticeship. He just got a job at the local garage and like, picked up what they could. 'How To' books or manuals or guesswork. But I wanted to be in the technical area, rather than back-bending and backbreaking jobs on the farm.

While you were at the Air Training Corps, were you working on the farm at the same time?

Yes. I had to go into

21:30 a public school in Daysdale every Wednesday night. And the local school teacher was our local tutor and he taught us. It was mostly mathematics which applied to the RAAF, things like algebra, trigonometry, which in those days navigators used exclusively to navigate their way around the place.

22:00 Most of the navigation in those days was either by sight. If it was night flying it was done by astro navigation, by taking positions from the stars, and this is what we were taught. And of course there was a lot of mathematical equations used to define your position, to work out where you are. But we used to go there every Wednesday night. He was quite good, a fellow called MacDonald.

22:30 And then every three or four weeks we'd go away for a camp either at Corowa, Albury or Tocumwal. We did go to Melbourne a few times, which was quite enlightening because we would meet with people from all over the state of Victoria. And I was lucky once down there to get a flight in an old flying boat, either a Sunderland or a Sandringham, I don't

23:00 know, but one of the English flying boats. That was quite an experience, taking off and landing on water, particularly coming in to land. It was quite noisy, I think, like someone's going to tear the bottom out of it as you hit the crest of the waves. Makes a lot of noise, particularly when you're sitting in that big, long, hollow tube. All the sound, the noise, reverberates inside. That was enjoyable. I liked it.

So once you turned eighteen,

23:30 **you mentioned that you were no longer able to be in the Air Training Corps. What did you do then?**

Well eighteen, that was '46 and war had ceased, so my chances of joining up and going away to fight the foe just was all snuffed out, so I had to stay on the farm but all the,

24:00 but this twelve months I was weighing up my options. There was no technical training available. There was no dole system in those days so if you wanted a bit of pocket money, well, you had to work for it. And it wasn't until late 1946 after the war when tens of us, or hundreds of thousands of members were discharged from the armed

24:30 forces and they returned to civil life. And an ex, a former civilian when he joins the armed forces, when he's discharged he's not a civvy [civilian] again: he's an ex-serviceman. And we still use the expression today. We're not civvies, we're ex-servicemen. The armed forces realised that they let too many go and they were short of staff. See there were

25:00 a lot of armed forces, members of the armed forces, after the war used for occupation. We had a large contingent in Japan, in the occupational force in Japan. There were members, I think there were some overseas in Europe. I'm not too sure on that, but we did have a large contingent in Japan. It was called the BCO, part of the BCOF, British Commonwealth Occupation Forces, made up of Australians and New Zealanders, British and a few Canadians.

25:30 They were the major components. I think there were others, too, from the British Commonwealth of the time, say India, Pakistan, a few of those. And it wasn't until late 1946 that they started to advertise again for members to join the armed forces and I thought, "Well here's my chance." The harvest was coming up in '46 and with my Dad's bad health,

26:00 I decided to stay and help him out. And early 1947 I wrote to the air force in Melbourne, asked to send up some application forms to join the RAAF. But my biggest obstacle was to get my father to sign the consent because those days you had to be over twenty-one. Anyone under twenty-one you had to get your parents' or your father's consent to join the armed forces, not only to join the armed forces but to do a lot of other things as

26:30 well. I got the papers, filled them in. In the meantime we'd had our differences of opinion. It wasn't good on my mother because she was the conciliator, arbitrator, referee, umpire, not that we had any violence. We never had any violent disputes. It was bits of snipes and things like this. But it was uneasy

and my mother was trying to keep the peace,

27:00 so I thought, "Well, there's no room for two of us here. One of us has got to go." So I wrote away for the papers. As I say, I filled them in and I had to get him to sign them. And I thought, "This going to be a problem. I'll have to bide my time and approach him at what I thought was the most appropriate time when I thought he would concede." So I did and he signed them, reluctantly. He said, "Why are you joining the air force?" He said, "You can't

27:30 fly." I said, "What would you like me to join?" He said, "I'd prefer you to join the navy." I said, "Well I can't swim." So this was the type of thing that was said and went on. He signed the papers. I sent them back and they called me about a fortnight later to go Melbourne for an interview at the RAAF base at Laverton for an interview and medical examination, which I did. And they said, "You can return home and we'll let you know. You're medically fit, you've passed the aptitude test

28:00 and a few other things." And they said, "We'll let you know." Well about the middle of February I received the letter to report to the RAAF base Laverton on the 25th February 1947, where I was inducted into the Royal Australian Air Force, took the oath of allegiance. Stayed there for twenty-three and a half years and enjoyed every day of it. That was my introduction to the RAAF.

Do you have a memory of when the war

28:30 **finished?**

Yes. Jubilation, magnificent. Went into Corowa that night. The old car we had was an old 1927 Buick, and the place was jumping with joy. It was magnificent to think it was all over. We'd won.

How did people celebrate in Corowa?

29:00 Well pubs closed at six o'clock, so there was no drinking, or supposedly. But they just jumped, danced, sang, really enjoyed themselves. I was one of them. I was only seventeen at the time. But it was really good to think that it was all over and everyone would be coming home and settle down

29:30 and get back to normal again. It was marvellous. I remember it well, see it now.

What are your memories of people coming home?

Joy, glad it was all over. One fellow I went to school with,

30:00 I worked with him for this pastoral company for a while. He'd had it tough. He was one of a twin. His twin brother, I remember them both, died when he was nine and this fellow joined the army when he was seventeen, the oldest surviving twin. He was a member of the 7th Division.

30:30 He finished up in Greece, maybe. He went to Greece cause the Germans occupied the place and chased them out. He got separated from his unit. I can remember him telling us stories, separated from his unit cause all he had was his trusty old Lee Enfield rifle, the old .303. They only travelled at night because if they travelled at day they could be seen.

31:00 And he joined up with an Australian captain who was also separated from his unit and they finished up in the southern part of Greece, and they were evacuated out of Greece to Crete. And he had three boats sunk beneath him between Greece and Crete by German dive bombers. He survived, got out of Crete. And then the Australian government of the time brought back all the, or the majority of the Australian Army from the Middle East

31:30 to defend Australia. Now he left the desert, where there wasn't a tree to be seen. He came back here and he undertook jungle training and they put him into the jungle in New Guinea, so he went from one extreme to the other. He had a shocking form of malaria, and I'll never forget one day it was a very hot day in harvest time. We were sitting under the shade of a tree having morning tea

32:00 and he started to wrap himself up in wheat bags. He just shivered and shivered and shivered, through malaria, and that was the first occasion that I've seen someone who had been adversely affected, long term effects of malaria. I've seen several since. But he was the first one because I was at that age where I didn't know too much about those sort of things, if I knew anything.

32:30 But the adverse effect of them all, all the malaria had on him and his nerves getting out of Greece and three boats sunk beneath him between Greece and Crete, shocking. He didn't live long either. He was killed on a horse shortly afterwards. One night, he was a fairly good footballer, and after the game he got on his horse to ride back home and the horse was a bit old and

33:00 fractious and reared and fell back on him and killed him. He survived all the adverse effects of the war, killed on a horse, got killed by a horse, shocking. Never mind, life. That's life. Some are lucky, some are not, but it's...

33:30 To think that the two twins, well two, obviously, they're twins, but twin brothers, neither of them saw much of what we've seen.

You mentioned that, I mean there was obvious jubilation at the end of the war but you were also in a position where you had wanted to join the armed forces and people were now

34:00 **coming home. What was your feeling about being too young at that time to go overseas?**

Well it was probably a godsend in one way, but if I'd have been of the age to enlist, I'd have gone. I suppose to put it in... Looking at it from a personal point of view, I was a bit disappointed because the war didn't last long enough for me to become a part of it.

34:30 But that would've been a selfish attitude to adopt because when the war finished, well it saved the lives of thousands of others. But that was my personal view. But subsequently they recruited and I was able to. The only thing is I didn't get any war service at the time, that's Second World War service,

35:00 subsequently had others. But yes, I was probably a little disappointed, but in another way I was quite jubilant to think the war was over, that things would get back to normal.

You mentioned you had an interview in Melbourne. Do you remember much about what you were asked?

They were general questions and in those days they weren't too particular about

35:30 selecting people. If you volunteered and you were medically fit and you looked capable of doing the job, well they still put a uniform on you, unlike it is today. One of the things that I do recall quite vividly was my education level, and that also came up during my service career. But the

36:00 thing that got me through the education level was that I joined the Air Training Corps and I had undertaken the navigation course and I'd passed the exams and I had the papers, which I subsequently lost, to prove that I'd sat for these exams and I'd passed them successfully. In those days 60% was a pass. I don't recall whether I just barely made the 60% or I got more, but I was successful and it was on that score

36:30 that the interviewing officer decided to accept me as a member of the RAAF, and he recommended me for technical training, which I subsequently got. But other than that it was a basic interview, very basic, cause I wasn't the only one. There were hundreds lined up so they weren't going to spend too much time with any one particular applicant. But I was lucky.

37:00 I made the most of it.

At that stage, why do you think men like you were wanting to join the forces at the end of the war?

Adventure, adventure was one of the reasons. Travel was another. My main reason for technical training, which I pursued and I made the best of. I always

37:30 thought that I had the ability to absorb the training. The only thing is I didn't have was the basic education to apply to it, particularly in the electrical and the electronic musters, radio and electrical instruments. There's a lot of, particularly radio, complicated formula, working out frequencies, capacities,

38:00 condensers, value resistors, voltage drops and a lot of other things. But I got there. It was a battle. I could tell you more about that later.

So once you got the phone call or the letter saying that you were in, where did you have to go?

Had to go back to Laverton. That was a bit of a tough day.

38:30 It was a Monday morning. I don't know how I got... I had to get to Corowa, and in those days there was a mail coach. Now I don't know who drove me from the farm into Daysdale to catch the mail coach. Certainly wouldn't have been my father. It must have been my mother. And I had to say farewell to her, which made it a little bit more hard for her

39:00 because it was three days before my nineteenth birthday. I caught the coach to Corowa. From Corowa I caught another coach to a little place called Springhurst, where I joined the train to Melbourne. Stayed in Melbourne on the Monday night and went out to Laverton on the Tuesday morning, where I was inducted into the RAAF mid morning. Had to report to TDR - Transit, Discharge

39:30 and Recruit section, and they got us in and allocated us a service number, when we took the oath of allegiance to His Majesty King George VI. And I swore the oath the day that I never knew what I was letting myself in for, like the rest of us. But that was it and I started my recruit training. We did about a month recruit training at Laverton, only a month in those days.

40:00 A lot of time was spent on the bullring, that's what we used to call it, the bullring, the drill square. And that was broken up with, in those days, lectures. That was on service traditions, service knowledge, medical requirements, socialising, not to do this, not to do that otherwise you'll bring the service and uniform into

40:30 disrespect and things of this nature. We had to behave ourselves otherwise we were up before the old man, as we used to call it, punished accordingly, and that was good. Needles were the worst thing. On my nineteenth birthday I got an armful of needles along with the rest of us. We all lined up, marched

down to the station sick quarters. A real hot day.

41:00 I'll never forget, hot day in Melbourne, end of February. And in those days they used to use ether as an antiseptic and the place just reeked of ether. Nursing staff like it. I believe they become addicted to it. Ask my wife, she can tell you. A lot of blokes passed out. Whilst they were lying on the floor they pumped the needle into them.

41:30 I didn't pass out. I stood there. Sore arm and that was good.

What were the needles for?

Overseas service. There was tetanus, typhoid, TB [tuberculosis], I can't think of the others.

Tape 3

00:32 **What were your initial impressions of the other men who'd enlisted?**

Well it's the first time that I'd ever had, well apart from the few camps I did with the Air Training Corps, where I had to live, socialise, work with a group of people other than people that I knew.

01:00 We had people from all walks of life. Some come from banks. Some, like myself, come from the rural sector. Others came from broken homes, even in those days, and to sit and listen to other people's hardships and experiences, it was educational, very, very educational, opened my eyes a lot.

01:30 **I guess cause the air force has this image of being full of glamorous fly boys, to what extent was that accurate or inaccurate?**

Well when I joined we were all trainees, so there was no distinction between the fellow that stood next to me or sat at the table next to me. We were all the same. We were all recruits. But I found out later on there was a distinction.

02:00 The air force had the nickname of the 'blue orchids'. Some of the pilots considered, or some of the aircrew, considered themselves a little bit better than the average run of the mill but we brought them back to earth. We let them know in subtle ways that you only took the half a turn of the screw here and there and make their life a little bit interesting

02:30 for them if they didn't toe the line. But that image, it did exist, for sure, and there is a lot of, on some squadrons and operational units there was that aloofness of some aircrew. Not all aircrew, some. Some of the aircrew were magnificent, terrific. One that I can speak of very, very highly was a former Governor of New South

03:00 Wales, Sir James Rowland. He was my boss in a couple of places. He finished up chief of the air staff and after he left the air force he was made governor of the state, and I still kept in contact with him. I never knew that he was terminally ill but I found out when we were away, after we came back from the trip around Australia, that he had passed away. But he was a pilot, a POW.

03:30 He was bombed down over Germany. But he was one of the exceptions.

Where did you serve under him?

The longest period was at command headquarters at Penrith. He was our branch head. But I did first come in contact with him in Japan. He was... After the war, he left the RAAF. He completed his engineering

04:00 degree at the University of New South Wales and then he re-enlisted and he was stationed at ARDU at Laverton Aircraft Research and Development Unit. He was sent to Iwakuni to fly the Meteors and to test them for dive bombing characteristics, and that's when I first come in contact with him. My first contact with him, another fellow and I were working on a Meteor and we had

04:30 problems with the bombing circuit, and it was that time of the year when thunderstorms and adverse weather conditions would prevail of an afternoon and he wanted to get airborne; he wanted to know how long it would take us to fix it. I didn't know who he was. All he had on was a pair of brief shorts and a pair of Japanese thongs. He came out and he said to me, "What's wrong, sarge [sergeant]?" and I said, "If I knew what was wrong, I'd fix it." I said, "We're

05:00 still trying to find the problem." I didn't know who he was. Anyway this fellow and I subsequently found the problem and fixed it, and I told him to go back in and sign the aircraft, make it serviceable, and I'd be in to countersign, while I put the panels back on where we were working. So I go back in and of course he'd got the message. In the meantime here he comes out in his flying suit with two and a half bars on it. I thought, "God, here we go!" But it's the first time I come across him. And up at Amberley later on I come across him and we were both transferred to Penrith.

05:30 But he was terrific to go away with on the various staff visits we had to make. They had to visit all our

units at least once a year. I used to go away. At least he'd take me away in his team. We had some good times, believe me. He was one of the boys, he was. He worked hard and he played hard but he was as genuine as you could get. When he was made

06:00 governor, he was governor elect after, what's his name? I can't think of it now. A VC [Victoria Cross] holder. I wrote to him and congratulated him and I said it was a fitting finale to his marvellous air force career. He reached the pinnacle. He was the chief of the air staff and it was a fitting tribute that he could get this role.

06:30 And he wrote back a very nice letter. I've still got it and I cherish it. He was terrific, nice bloke, Jimmy, one of the best.

In rookie training were there any distinctions between people who'd been selected for technical and pilot training?

No. We all had to do our basic training. We all had to learn how to march, rifle drill.

07:00 Down at the rifle range we had to qualify with the old .303, formation marching, marching past in review order, things of that nature, ceremonial parades. And then at the conclusion of the recruit course then we were posted to our respective units for the training. Those who had been selected for

07:30 technical training went to Wagga. Those for radio training went to Ballarat. Those to become equipment people, I think they went to 1 Stores Depot. I can't recall. For those who were in the catering service, I think they went to Wagga, went to the catering school there. But after we completed our recruit training then we were posted to

08:00 the selected units, or the units that we'd been selected to undergo training in our respective training area. As I say, I asked for technical training and I was subsequently sent for technical training to Wagga. I reported to Wagga in early April '47.

What do you think about your skills made you stand out as someone who was right for technical training?

Aptitude.

08:30 These things were picked up on aptitude tests. We did several aptitude tests, mostly of a technical nature. Some of them were basic, asking us to identify various tools, what was the advantage of one saw over another, or what was the advantage of one type of spanner over another. And these aptitude tests, if I remember rightly, they were the

09:00 multiple choice, which made it easy because you didn't have to sit down and write a description. Some of the questions we had to describe something, but most of them were the multiple choice. But on aptitude tests someone may have wanted to do technical training but they just failed the technical side of the aptitude tests. Some of the questions were quite simple, like 'Black is to white as day is to...?' You had to put in

09:30 'Night'. Things like that. But as you went through the paper they got a little bit more complicated. Geometrical shapes, you had to name them, put them together to form other shapes and name them, technical things. Technical questions, as I say, were mostly about hand tools, machine tools. And I would gather on those tests, well they said, "Yes, you're suitable for this," or, "You're unsuitable," as the case may be. Obviously I

10:00 was suitable for technical training, went to Wagga.

How far had your family gone back as farmers?

On the land? Only my Dad and his brothers. Their father, no. He was a rural worker but he didn't own land, didn't own a farm. As a matter of fact the farm that my Dad had

10:30 was a returned soldier's block from the First World War. It was a grant of land that they got. It was part of a big pastoral company, huge. It occupied, I believe, in the early part of its... When it was originally... In those days they could grant some land. I forget the exact title. Title was called something else. But it occupied half the Riverina.

11:00 And as more and more people took up farming, some of those larger estates, larger properties or stations they called them in those days, they were cut up and reduced in size and given to other people as a means of livelihood, and my father was one of them.

So where do you think your technical aptitude and interest came from?

11:30 From my mother's youngest brother. He was the only one of that family that was technically minded and he was the youngest, and of course he came on the scene when engineering was becoming a little more diverse. Instead of it being located in the larger cities and

12:00 larger towns, it was starting to trickle right down to the really small towns. And of course with the advent of cars coming on the road, see I can recall some of the early model cars that were introduced

into Australia as a child, and someone had to service them or maintain them or fix them up if they broke down, and he was one of those that slotted into that particular job.

- 12:30 And it was from him that I got... What I put it down to is it was him that I got my, whet my appetite to take up engineering of some form. I wanted to be an engine fitter the same as he was, but when that... Like I'll tell you later on, they put me on electrician's course. I was quite disappointed. Turned out the best thing, though. Someone made a wise choice on my behalf.

What were those initial instructors like at rookie training?

Hard,

- 13:00 had to be because they had to knock the rough edges off us and bring us into due form. They wouldn't tolerate any insolence or back talk. If we did something wrong, even if we dropped our rifle, it was a cardinal sin in more ways than one and we'd have to carry the rifle above our heads and double around the bullring and put
- 13:30 two shillings in those days, or twenty cents, into a tin for the pass-out parade or pass-out dinner. So you only dropped it once. The twenty cents was a third of your day's pay. You only got sixty cents a day in those days, or six shillings a day, sixty cents, so if you dropped it once you didn't drop it again because having to double around the bullring with this thing above your head on a hot day
- 14:00 was no joke. No, they were hard but they were fair. They were tolerant, had to be, but no, it was good. It really made you work as a team. That was the first time in my life that I had to become involved in team efforts because if I did something wrong, well particularly so far as health and hygiene
- 14:30 was concerned, the sanitation. Monday nights were closed camp. No-one was allowed off the base. There was always an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] in charge of each hut and there were twenty-four to a hut. We were all allocated duties. Someone cleaned the windows. Someone clipped the grass. There were no such things as lawnmowers in those days. You got in with a pair of hair clippers,
- 15:00 swept up, tidied up. Now if I slipped up, on the following morning... Tuesday morning was always CO's [Commanding Officer's] inspection, and some of the COs we had were so dedicated to the job they used to wear white gloves, so they'd feel over the tops of the doorjambes and if there was any dust that hut was confined to camp again that night and had to clean it again.
- 15:30 So it was a team effort because if I let the mob down I had another twenty-three on my back because I deprived them of their liberty for twenty-four hours. You only did it once. You didn't do it the second time.

What expectations did you have of air force discipline before you joined?

I knew it'd be tough, like

- 16:00 all the armed services are tough, although the air force would be the most relaxed of the three. The navy was the strictest by far, had to be. People at sea on ships and small areas, confined, very confined. Their discipline was far, far superior to ours. Ours was good. The army was in the middle, I'd say,
- 16:30 but ours was... We were never involved in ceremonial parades then, like the army and the navy were. We were the junior service. They probably didn't want us because we didn't have the, what's the word, the career behind us to go up front in front of the public. The army and the navy were well
- 17:00 known because they'd been there over the centuries. We'd only arrived on the scene about twenty years beforehand.

What sort of contact did you have in that initial training with men who had served in World War II?

We had, there were about half a dozen on our recruit course that were re-enlistments and we enjoyed their company very much.

- 17:30 They used to tell some stories, tales. We used to sit around like kids and listen intently, learning, thinking what we'd missed out on.

What sort of stories would they tell?

What they'd done, where they'd been. Some of the good things, some of the bad things, some of the things they'd done they shouldn't have done. It was an education.

- 18:00 But mostly of their experiences: drinking out of hours, breaking camp, getting back in without getting caught. That's where we learnt a lot of things, from the older blokes. You learn a lot from the experienced people, just sit and listen. As I've always said, "I was born with two ears and one tongue and I use them in that proportion. I listen twice as much as I talk."

What would you do on leave at Laverton?

- 18:30 We had to get permission to go off the base. That was another funny experience. Just after the war they

still had women in the service. They hadn't terminated their service. I remember I had to ask this female officer for leave for the weekend. We had to have our leave pass signed because if we were seen

19:00 off the base in uniform without a leave pass, well we could be picked up by the military police or the service police. And she asked me where was I going and I said, "I'm going to Melbourne for the weekend to stay with an uncle of mine, one of my mother's elder brothers." And she said, "Where would that be?" and I told her. And she said, "Well, you be back here at 2359 Sunday night." Had to be back in before midnight. So she signed the leave pass and I grinned

19:30 and she said, "What's so funny about that?" And I said, "Well it's the first time I've ever had to ask a woman other than my mother if I could go anywhere." Anyway, luckily she saw the funny side of it. Others wouldn't but she did, so I was on leave for the weekend.

What would you do while you were in Melbourne?

I'd stay with my uncle and his family. Might go to the pictures, go to a dance or something like that. Other than that, nothing, because we never had the money to do anything else.

20:00 Six shillings a day doesn't go far, or didn't go far in those days, sixty cents.

Can you give me an idea of what that might buy at that time?

Not much, but it bought enough. In those days, and I still don't, I didn't smoke, didn't drink either, so I never wasted that six shillings on alcohol and cigarettes.

20:30 I saved a lot. All our meals, accommodation, medical, dental was all provided free, so it was just toiletries and things like that: a bar of soap, a few razorblades. I think initially we were given razorblades. Every payday we used to get two razorblades, not that they were much use, gave us these two razorblades. Star brand I think they were called,

21:00 yeah, Star. You might get a couple of shaves out of them, that's about all. No, that was six shillings a day got me by. A lot didn't, particularly those that wasted their money on cigarettes and beer and what have you. That was all.

So when you went to Wagga for technical training, how many of the

21:30 **people you'd been in rookie training with went to Wagga?**

There were fifty of us or more. Laverton was one of the training areas, recruit training areas. There was one at Richmond and there was one at Amberley. When the recruits had finished their recruit training and they were selected for technical training, they were destined for Wagga. When we arrived at Wagga we were put in a training pool and then we'd be...

22:00 As we'd come to the top we'd have to undergo a twelve weeks basic training course. But we just didn't sit around during the day with nothing to do or having nothing to do whilst we were waiting to go on our basic training. They used to give us all sorts of jobs. And I'll never forget the first morning we arrived on parade, the roll was called to make sure everyone was there. Then we were allocated tasks.

22:30 And again, you always get the old wartime experienced fellows trapping the young initiates or troops. And I can never forget the first morning, the sergeant in charge of the training pool, he said, "Is anyone amongst you...? All those that can play golf put your hands up." So those who could play golf

23:00 put their hands up. I couldn't play golf. He said, "Righto," and he pulled the separate flight, or they formed a separate flight. He got the one with the lowest handicap, "Right, you're in charge. March the flight down to the barrack school and report to Sergeant Smith." Away they went. "Salute all officers." "Yes, sergeant." Off they went. Then he called out, "Any swimmers here?" and they put their hands up, so they formed a separate flight, "Right, you report to so and so at the airmen's mess."

23:30 Saluted them all off, "Yes sarge." And away they went. "Any divers here?" I couldn't dive. Anyway it got down to, "Anyone here drive trucks?" Up goes my hand. It's driving trucks, driving air force trucks, 4 x 4s and jeeps and God knows what. I was driving all right. We had to report to transport section. I was using, not only me but the rest of us that said we could drive, here we were

24:00 driving a three-pound sledgehammer, swinging a three-pound sledgehammer driving pegs into the ground and here we're thinking that all these other blokes are playing golf, swimming, diving. Here we are. Anyway come lunchtime, we're all gathered back in the hut again, "What are you doing? Playing golf?" "No, we're not playing golf." "What are you doing? Playing eighteen holes?" "No, we're cleaning out eighteen hole toilets." "What are you doing? Wwimming?" "No, we're swimming around the Queen Mary," as we used to call it.

24:30 In the airmen's mess was a huge big washtub, about six or eight foot long, about four foot wide and about four foot deep, full of plates. They were swimming around looking for plates. The divers were diving looking to getting the plates and cutlery off the bottom. So we all got caught. But you never told the next lot that came in, let them get caught the same way. But this was the

25:00 old wartime blokes, blokes with the experience. They never told you what you were going to do till you got there. I suppose that was the element of surprise. It was a surprise all right. So we did that for a few

weeks, not that I did that for long. I was allocated another job one time, probably a few days later. Had to go over and work in one of the hangars. And there was a Flight Sergeant Field in charge of that,

25:30 so I did as I was told and did it to the best of my ability and he said to me, towards the end of the day he said, "How do you like working in the hangar?" I said, "It's better than working in the airmen's mess washing plates." He said, "Well I'll organise that you stay here permanently with me." So I stayed there for the probably two and half, three weeks until my name come up to go on the basic training course. An education. God, you learnt a lot.

26:00 Talk about it's a very fast learning gradient and you had to be on your metal all the time. Some of the older blokes they used to pull some swifties I tell you, catch you. You soon learnt. It made you wise, very wise in a very short space of time.

How did it make you wise?

Because you fell for the three card trick. You just didn't

26:30 have the experience and they had all the... They'd been caught time and time again when they were young and they just passed it down the line. I did the same, time and again, particularly when you get into supervisory roles, because you get young fellows trying to pull the wool over your eyes. You say, "Listen, son, I did that years ago. I'd forgotten about it. Don't try it with me. Do as you're told

27:00 or else. Don't question it. If you don't like it, do it." No, I was never that way inclined. I used to ask, rather than order. I had to order a few times, but you can get more out of people by being pleasant rather than be domineering. I had to a couple of times but that's another story.

27:30 So what did you do in that initial technical training, what were you taught to do?

Because we were going to become technicians we had to be able to make and fit things, so they'd give us a piece of metal, probably two hundred millimetres long, fifty millimetres wide, ten millimetres thick and we'd have to make it into a spanner. And there you'd be for days

28:00 and days on end. First of all you had to get the piece of metal flat. Then scribe onto a piece of metal the shape of a spanner which you had to make. The size that you had to make was already told to you and you had to copy from a drawing and there you'd be. After you'd marked out all the piece of metal, you had to go around the outline with a drill and drill hundreds of small holes.

28:30 Only ones got to go off the line, over the line and you start all over again. And then you'd get into rough shape and there you'd be for hours and hours filing, filing it into shape. Dovetail joints were another thing we had to make: two joints that they had to fit perfectly. One was a V, like a male and female section. Not only did the inside V have to fit, but so did the outside.

29:00 And we did that for twelve weeks. That was interspersed with lectures on technical drawing, other technical aspects, how to use tools, how to look after tools, elect and mag, basic electricity and magnetism. There were thirty on each basic course,

29:30 round about thirty. And they taught us electricity and magnetism for those who were going into the electrical, the instrument musterings, because electrical, obvious, instruments also have a lot to do with electricity. So that again was a sorting out process to see who was more suitable for instrument and electrical training, and the others would make up non electronic musterings

30:00 as we later called them. They became engine fitters, airframe fitters, armament fitters and some that couldn't make the grade would become transport fitters. But it was tiring. You'd be just standing at a bench all day with a vice and a file in your hand. And the instructors were quite precise. Matter of fact, my old instructor is still alive. He's in his nineties. He still lives in Newcastle,

30:30 poor old Gordon Murray. They used to have gauges, low gauges, go and no go gauges, further gauges. We never had those. We just had to use a ruler, a steel ruler, calibrated down to a sixty-fourth of an inch, and they used to use micrometers, which could measure to a thousandth of an inch, to see how far we were out. You

31:00 had to be a particular measurement, certain thickness and length, angle. They used to use instruments. We couldn't. That made you ever so more careful. And the instructors would say, "Is it good enough?" And you'd say, "Yes, it's near enough." And they'd say, "Well near enough is not good enough." So you'd go back and do it again. But it made you all the more careful

31:30 in using tools. Instead of being brash, be a little bit more gentle so you wouldn't mark it because when they finally assessed the finished article, well they'd measure it up and if it was near enough to perfect, well you got a good score. If it wasn't good enough, well you either did it again or you just barely got a pass. For twelve weeks we did that, twelve hard weeks.

What did you do then?

32:00 One Friday afternoon after our twelve weeks, and there were two other courses had run parallel with us, so there were three going through at the one time, and the powers that be would determine where the shortages were, or probably air force headquarters would tell them where the shortages were in

each mustering: whether they wanted more engine fitters, whether they wanted more airframe fitters, electrical fitters, instruments, armament, as the case may be. Anyway, this particular Friday afternoon about three o'clock we're all lined up

32:30 and the officer said, "On the Monday morning there will be an instrument..." In those days we used to start off as instrument preparers, electricians and flight mechanics. And he said, "There's an instrument preparers course starting. There's an electricians course starting and there's a flight mechanics course starting." I wanted to be a flight mechanic. I thought, "Well there it is. I've only got to be chosen for that."

33:00 So this particular officer called out and he said, "The following members form up a flight on the right and you will be," whatever it was, "Number 167 Instrument Preparers Course, Monday morning." So thirty odd-bods were called out and my name wasn't amongst that lot. I thought, "Well, that suits me." "The following members form up a flight behind them and you will be 157 Electricians Course commencing

33:30 Monday morning." I think I was the third one. I was disappointed, and you couldn't swap. There might be someone in the flight mechanics course that wanted to be an electrician but no, the decision had been made and it was final and no correspondence would be entered into.

Why do you think that decision was made about you going into the electricians course?

34:00 Probably based on elec and mag. I enjoyed it. I thought it was terrific. Again it involved a lot of maths. Well it involved maths but it wasn't complicated, working out the values of various circuits, resistors and condensers and magnetism, how unlike poles attract, like poles repel. We had to sketch magnetic fields around a horseshoe magnet,

34:30 magnetic fields around a bar magnet. You can see if you put a magnet under a piece of glass and just sprinkle iron filings over it because the iron filings will take up the strength of the magnetic field, cause you'd just sketch them in, had to nominate the polarity. And I think that was the criteria that determined why I was on the electricians course. And probably because of the fitting. A lot of the people I felt sorry for were not on the land.

35:00 Well we used to make a lot of our own and repair our own farm machinery. I had access to files then, hacksaws, other hand tools, so I didn't go in there cold like a lot of other people did. The people that came from clerical type families and they've somehow or other finished up on this technical training course. They never had the

35:30 technical ability, I'd say, to use files, hacksaws, drills. Yeah, I'd say that's the reason why.

What sort of equipment were you using in the electrical course?

We were taught, we followed up electricity and magnetism, elec and mag course we had in our

36:00 basic training. We were taught how generators worked, how electric motors worked, how DC [Direct Current] motors worked, how AC [Alternating Current] motors worked. They were two entirely different things. How speed was varied, how you vary the power output. Then we went onto power distribution, voltage regulation. We went on to armament circuits,

36:30 bombing circuits, gun turrets, cause aircraft in those days carried guns, particularly the bombers. The Lincoln bombers, they had quite advanced gun turrets, gun laying mechanisms, voltage regulation, anything to do with an aircraft's electrical system. In those days, compared to what they are today, they

37:00 were fairly basic. Generators were generators. Voltage regulators were of the carbon pile type, unlike today they're all electronic. Gun turrets are no longer in existence but other up-to-date and more modern weapon launching systems are involved, much more complicated infrared radar. We never saw those, not until much, much later. But that's what the training consisted

37:30 of, so that was for sixteen weeks, fairly intensive I'll tell you, very intensive. And that's where we also did a lot of theory. We used to go to the education section. One of the education officers taught us much further advanced maths, particularly on the AC side. That's alternating current. That was quite complex. It was complex for us.

38:00 Several of us had difficulties keeping up but there were two members on my electricians course who were educated. One bloke had matriculated. He came from New South Wales. Another fellow was highly educated, from South Australia. He had his Leaving certificate and they were able to

38:30 teach us at night-time and taught us all the way through by teaching us the advanced maths, as we called it in those days. One bloke finished up a major, a prominent member at Qantas. He's still around. The bloke that had his matriculation joined the aircrew and was killed in

39:00 Korea.

What sort of advantages did men who had significant high school education have?

It come easy. This fellow that was killed in Korea I can see him now, particularly during the physics side

of it. He'd be in the lecture room. He'd be sound asleep cause it was old hat to him.

39:30 Bonzer bloke. He went to sleep one day and he started to snore and the instructor, I'll never forget this. It taught me a lesson. And the instructor got the bloke's eye sitting next to him. He said, "Will you wake him up?" And this fellow looked at him and said, "Well you haven't had to put up with this rubbish like we have." So he looked back at the instructor. He said, "You wake him up. You put him to sleep."

40:00 I'll never forget that.

How did you cope with the academic side of things?

Found it difficult, very difficult but with the assistance of this fellow I was just telling you about and the fellow from South Australia, they tutored us and they made sure that we were proficient and we got through. Sixty per cent was a pass in those days and you were never told what percentage you got.

40:30 That was classified information. So whether we got sixty or any more we'll never know, never will know. It's classified, probably destroyed by now. No, we got through. It was a struggle. Some who never made the grade on the course ahead of us, they got put back to us

41:00 and it happened all the way through. But I stuck it out because the only other option I had was if you failed the technical training they re-mustered us to what, a term they used in those days, you either become an equipment assistant or you become a cook. Didn't want to be that, so I put my nose down, nose to the grindstone. I was determined.

41:30 I made it. Sixteen weeks later came out as an electrician, ten shillings a day, a dollar a day, four shillings or forty cents a day increase in pay, marvellous.

Tape 4

00:38 **Would you be able to tell me what you did after that first lot of training, that first lot of technical training?**

After we completed our initial technical training, in my case the electricians course, we were sent out to units within the air force, the various units for on

01:00 site training I experienced. In my case I was posted to Number 2 Aircraft at Richmond. There I put a lot of the training I'd received at Wagga into use working on aircraft, electrical components, doing aircraft servicing: 102-, 103-, 104-, 100-hourly inspections on the various aircraft,

01:30 servicing the electrical equipment that we moved. Some of the aircraft components, electrical components, plus other musters, aircraft components have to be removed and taken to the various sections, whether it be electrical, instrument, radio, hydraulics, engines, and the components overhauled and tested. Electrical, to AD, or to aircraft depot, being a depot had

02:00 big sections, a lot of complex electrical test equipment. Not only did we service the components of the aircraft based at Richmond but we also received components from other units that didn't have the complex and heavy testing equipment. They'd send it to us for overhaul testing and we would return it to the respective units. I was there for about

02:30 three or four months, I think, and then I was transferred to Schofields, where I was working on C-47s all the time. And I spent another three or four months there and back to Wagga for additional training. But it was on-site training that we received after initial electricians course.

How different was it to be on site at this stage?

Well one thing, we got away from training school

03:00 atmosphere, discipline wasn't so strict, more relaxed and it was putting your training to use by actually working on components that come from aircraft rather than components in the training schools that were there for years and then dismantled, inspected, reassembled and tested, and they showed signs of it.

03:30 But it was getting the practical experience that was really worthwhile and made the job worthwhile, and it gave me anyway a lot of job satisfaction working on aircraft. The thing that was first and foremost in your mind when you were working on aircraft was aircraft safety. Unlike a car, if a car breaks down and runs out of fuel, well you pull over to the side of the road and call the NRMA [National Roads and Motorists' Association]. If you're twenty thousand feet and you run out of noise, as we used to

04:00 say, you can't pull over to the side of the road and lift the bonnet to see what's wrong. So what we did we had to do properly, knowing in our own mind that we're placing people's lives or the crew, and if it was a passenger-carrying aircraft, including your own, placing your own life at risk, so it was very demanding at times but you did it properly. If you weren't too sure you sought assistance from your

superiors,

04:30 who had to check your work anyway because every, whilst I suppose it's still the same today, every job that you did you had to sign for and someone had to countersign to say that what was done had been done and done properly.

So what was the day-to-day routine like?

Challenging, sometimes boring because it might be repetitive for a while, but it was part and parcel of service life.

05:00 The most rewarding thing was when there was a new problem come up that you weren't aware of and you had to diagnose a fault, find it, fix it, and then you got the satisfaction of knowing that you fixed it and fixed it properly because the aircraft was back in the air again. It hasn't got the same problem. If the crew or the pilot came back and reported the same problem it was a bit of a letdown. In my case it was because I always prided myself in doing the job and doing it properly.

05:30 What was the relationship like between the technical support staff and the pilots?

Mostly very good. Once in a while, but this not only goes for aircrew cause we used to say the aircrew were a little bit aloof, a bit snobbish. Some were. The majority weren't. Same went for the technical side of it, too. There were technicians, as I'll call them technician,

06:00 but I'm referring to all the technical musterings, there were some technicians that thought themselves a little bit better than other people but we used to bring them back to earth cause we were all wearing the one uniform doing the same job to try and achieve the same objective. I don't know why they thought themselves better but they might have been better academically and they might have been better on the job, too, and may have had more experience.

06:30 But we used to make them share that experience. That's one of the things that I did when I became a supervisor later on, that if someone became an expert or had expertise in a particular area I used to conduct or organise training sessions of a Friday afternoon, so if one person had particular expertise that the others should have known about I'd get him to pass it on, bearing in mind that if he was transferred away from the unit he'd take the knowledge with him.

07:00 You lose all the experience, so you'd pass it on.

So what would you do from the moment you woke up? How was the routine of the day organised?

We had to be cleanly shaven, with the exception of the upper lip if you wanted to wear a moustache. Hair had to be short, short back and sides in those days. Long hair was not even thought about, let alone tolerated. Then

07:30 after breakfast you're in the dress of the day, whatever that might be. If you were working on aircraft well you wore overalls. If you're on duty that's what required you to be in 1As or 5As we used to call them in those days. You'd be dressed in the dress of the day. On parade to be accounted for and then you'd be allocated your duties or you'd go to your duties, and that's where you'd remain until lunchtime. Back for lunch, back to work

08:00 and then in the early days you would be marched from your place of work back to your barracks. You weren't just allowed to walk out, amble out and take your weary body back to your barracks. You all lined up and you marched back at a brisk rate, no talking, saluting all officers. But that was relaxed later on: too much time wasted. Time became money. But that was the

08:30 routine. If you were sick, well you went to station sick quarters to be treated. If you were sick enough they admitted you. If you went back two or three times they'd send you to a specialist. That's how it worked. It was good. The meals were good. We used to complain. That's human nature. You can't please all the people all the time but you can please most of the people most of the time. But cooks had a tough

09:00 job. I used to feel sorry for them. They've got to please everybody three times a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. We only had to please the pilots whenever they flew. If the weather was fine it might be every day. If it was inclement, well we'd got a rest. The cooks never. We still had to be fed. And you had to leave your barracks in inspection order. You just couldn't leave things lying around. Everything had to be

09:30 put away. Everything had its place. Everything had to be in its place because there could be, other than Tuesday mornings, which was the CO's inspection day, there could be the orderly officer of the day could just pick out huts at random and wander through. If they weren't up to required standard, well everyone stayed back, or a particular individual was picked out and made an example of in the way of extra drill,

10:00 extra duties. If the offence was bad enough, well he'd be formally charged, up before the old man and awarded a few days CB [Confined to Barracks] as the case may be. And that happened time and again. Never happened to me. I wasn't divine but I got away with a lot of things, you know, the old eleventh commandment, "Do what you like but don't get caught."

What kinds of things

10:30 did you get away with?

Do I have to say?

You don't have to say, but it'd be good if you did.

I'd be late for parade, have some silly excuse. If you thought that sixth commandment proper, well you got away with it. I did my share of extra duties

11:00 and one that I can recall, down at East Sale. Monday nights was closed camp for airmen of the rank of corporal and below and there was a big ball to be held at a place called, I forget it now, up near Bairnsdale. Another fellow in the hut and I decided to go and we both had the same sort of cars, same colour,

11:30 same brand, same make, same model. The only thing different was the number plates. So we snuck out. Anyway they booked... I forget what happened. We either booked his car out with my name out the main gate or vice versa. Then when it come to, someone must have checked on the logbook at the main gate and we were booked out say half past six, whatever the case may be.

12:00 This fellow now lives at Lord Howe Island. He was over here a couple of weeks ago. They couldn't charge us because the evidence wouldn't stand up but the station warrant officer we called them in those days, he knew we were off the base because my car was booked out, put the other fellow's name or vice versa, so he gave us three nights duty, without being charged, in the sergeants' mess. We had to go up there and clean the place

12:30 out. We used to go up there and play billiards, have a few beers and go back to the hut, but those sort of silly things. We got away with it. We got caught. Part and parcel.

How much leave time and socialising were you able to do?

We had the weekends off unless you were on weekend duty. In the technical musterings, on flying units, particularly transport units, we used to have a

13:00 aide-de-sail they called them in those days, air sea rescue, particularly on the bases around the coast, and we'd have a duty crew. There'd be one member of each mustering on for the weekends, Williamtown, Sale, Richmond, all those places, Schofields, so if an aircraft was required out of normal hours we were there to service it, start them up and see them off.

13:30 Other than that, well our time was our own. But socialising, well in those days there were only two things you did. You either went to the pictures or you went to a dance. That's what I did because I wasn't and I'm still not a heavy drinker, social drinker, so going to the pub of a Saturday afternoon wasn't my style. I stayed home and get my clothes ready to go out to the dance on a Saturday night, particularly Sale. That was a fantastic place

14:00 for socialising, cause I was fortunate down there. I had relatives. There was one lady, she and my mother were first cousins and their house was open house as far as I was concerned. If I didn't feel like eating in the mess or on the base at the time I'd go in there for dinner, home-cooked baked dinner, better than food that's mass produced. It was good, same

14:30 everywhere else really.

So after Richmond you went to Sale, is that correct?

No. I went from Richmond to Ballarat as an instructor. I was only there for eight weeks and I got out of there by devious means. Don't ask me because I won't say. It's not what you know, it's who you know.

Sounds intriguing.

It is.

You're not going to say?

No, although all those that I've involved have since gone

15:00 but you get around the system, go around the system time and time again. And as we used to say, "There are regulations and there are orders, but they're only there to be broken," or not to break, but to bend them. I used to bend them.

So why didn't you like the instructing?

I didn't like Ballarat for a start. The township is all right, or not a town, it's a city. It was quite good.

15:30 But the base, the atmosphere. And it started from the top. The CO was not liked, not only by the trainees, well all trainees got no time for the upper echelon anyway. We didn't, although we respected them. We had to. We mightn't have liked them

- 16:00 but we had in Wagga, the OC [Officer Commanding] of the base at the time when I was there he was very very popular as he was a good athlete, good swimmer, diver, and he would compete with the airmen. Although he was of air rank, when it came to sport, well he was equal to anybody else. Ballarat,
- 16:30 just the reverse, and it came all through the ranks and just filtered through and that didn't appeal to me. I didn't like the job because I didn't have the experience to teach. I'd never been taught to teach. I hadn't undergone an instructors course or a teachers course and that made it difficult for me. And I can imagine how difficult it was for the trainees
- 17:00 because I never had the knowledge to impart my knowledge, or little that I had. And I wanted to get back on the aircraft and get some more experience, so I 'arranged' a posting to Sale. It came off.

How long were you in Sale for?

Two and a half years. It was the best base I was ever on.

- 17:30 Probably getting out of Ballarat made it that way. If I'd have come from some other unit it may have been on a par. But Sale, one of the things that, many things, aspects of it being so good, it was a training base. When I worked there we had eleven different types of aircraft when I first arrived, from some of the oldest to the most modern one we had were the
- 18:00 Australian built Lincolns. The OC of the base was a fantastic fellow. The CO of our squadron, he was an old pre-war permanent officer, very very cagey man, but he was loyal to us if we were loyal to him and he would go into battle for us.
- 18:30 The social life at Sale in the town itself was fantastic and so was it on the base. After I was made up to a corporal I was appointed, I was a member of the committee of the Airmen's Entertainment Committee and we used to have a cabaret ball every three months. There was a ball on the base every month. There would be either the airmen's ball, which was ours,
- 19:00 the sergeants' mess ball or the officers' mess ball and then it would recycle. School of Air Navigation was at Sale at the time and they used then Dakotas and Lincolns for their training, or in-flight training. Whenever there was a function on on the base, for some reason or another, the aircraft would all head across Bass Strait to King Island
- 19:30 or Flinders Island and they'd pick up seafood galore. They'd come back with it and it would be given to the catering staff and they would prepare it, and the meals that we used to provide were fantastic and the balls that we used to run, when I was made up to a corporal I became president of the Airmen's Entertainment Committee. We would be excused from duties midday on the Wednesday.
- 20:00 We'd clear all the seats out of the theatre, put them onto bulk trolleys and take them down to where all the hangars were for safekeeping. And we'd clean all the place up, decorate it. Come Friday night, the ball. We used to get one of the local orchestras, about eight or ten-piece orchestra. We'd invite the OC of the base and a few of his sub lieutenants and we'd have a magnificent
- 20:30 time, eighteen 18-gallon kegs of beer. Any tickets that were left over we used to sell them to the civvies. We used to have a waiting list and some of the civilians would come a distance of sixty or seventy miles just for the ball. They were fantastic, magnificent.

Which girls were invited to the ball?

If you had partners, girlfriends,

- 21:00 wives. Some of the... A lot of the members were married, particularly the older people. Well I suppose I wasn't married at the time. I was a free white and twenty-one, but no, I never took a girl to any of the balls because I was too involved with the organising of
- 21:30 running and make sure there was no problems, not that we had problems because we always had two or three senior NCOs or sergeants, flight sergeants, as bouncers. Well they call them bouncers today. They weren't known as bouncers in those days but they'd be just sitting in the background somewhere. If anyone got a little bit out of hand, well he was quickly told to behave himself. If he wouldn't, well he was taken out and told to go home. But we never had any problems,
- 22:00 never ever. But come about ten o'clock all the meals, or the supper I should say, would have been prepared in the airmen's mess and we used to have lobster, fish, anything you wanted, magnificent. All for about five pound, ten dollars, as much beer as you could drink and as much food as you could eat, and have a good time as well. They were terrific. Stayed there until I was...
- 22:30 October '52. The last twelve months I was there I was promoted to sergeant. I was surplus to establishment in the section and the CO of our squadron at the time, Rear Commander Apakear... The air force headquarters had changed the trade testings, as we used to call it. If I wanted to go for promotion I had to pass a trade
- 23:00 test. Along with the drill and administration they brought in promotion exams and they changed the trade structure testing, and he wanted someone of a senior NCO rank to read all about it then put it into effect, and if he got any questions or any problems I was to, or that person was to answer direct to

the CO. So the warrant officer in charge of our section said that the CO had approached him

23:30 to ask me to consider moving across to the administrative role, well a tactical administrative role, not just shuffling paper around. And I hesitated for a while and the old warrant officer, albeit one of our instructors in the bomber area, he said, "Well I would take it if I were you." He said, "You've had enough experience with aircraft." He said, "You've now got into a supervisory role and it's time

24:00 you got some more experience," so I took it. It was good. Not by... I'd have preferred working on the aircraft but I could understand that also, so I moved over to squadron headquarters. That was an education. The CO of ours, old Abby we used to call him, he called a spade a spade and we had females working in the office

24:30 and he'd be on the phone, cause telephones weren't like they are today, in those days. He'd be speaking to one of the other units. He had a bad line, he'd be shouting, hear him halfway around the base. Some of his language was quite colourful. These girls on the typewriters would be just about punching the keys through the roll to try and drown out some of his verbs, descriptive language, but it was an education.

25:00 **I wanted to ask you what you knew about what was going on in Asia at this time?**

Asia? Well there was the Malayan Emergency, which was fairly low key so far as we were concerned. That was the... The Malayan Emergency was...

25:30 It became the Communist Party in Asia, but they were armed and trained by the Brits [British] during the war to upset the Japanese occupation, which they did successfully in the couple of books I've read on it. But when the war was over and the British moved back into Malaya,

26:00 those that had fought the Japanese behind the lines weren't given what they expected, or asked for or some agreement, so they in turn become a force to be reckoned with.

What information did you have at the time?

Only what we'd pick up from the newspapers, radio. We weren't say assembled in a theatre or on parade and told what was going on.

26:30 It never was. About the only time you became directly involved if you were posted to one of the squadrons. See we had air force units at Singapore based at Tengah and Changi. Bombers based at, Lincoln bombers based out of Changi and, bombers based out of Tengah and transport aircraft based out of Changi all during the conflict. Until I got there myself in '59 it was still

27:00 going. It was right at the end of it. But aircraft used to fly over there, old Dakotas with huge loudspeaker systems, talking to the terrorists below to get themselves to give themselves up, but that's all we heard about. Malaya was the thing that was most prominent in our minds. Indo-China was at flashpoint, as you know, when the French went back into their sector,

27:30 namely Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, but they got kicked out in 1955 and the Korean conflict had started. That's how the air force became involved in that. 77 Squadron was to come home. All Australian forces were to be withdrawn from the BCOF but the North Koreans launched their attack and the Americans asked

28:00 the Australian government if the Australian forces in Japan could support their force in Korea. The Australian government agreed. That's how the Australian Army and 77 Squadron became involved very early in the piece, particularly 77 Squadron.

While you're in training and there was this unrest in Asia, did you have thoughts at this time that a war was coming?

Not so much in

28:30 the Far East or up north of Australia, more so in Europe because of the Cold War feelings between the Allies and the Russians. That was more of a threat so far as we were concerned, well I mean as far as I was concerned anyway, from what I could gather from the newspapers and radio it was. We didn't see any real threat with

29:00 up north, not even from our neighbours just across the water because they were trying to re-establish themselves from colonial rule. I'm speaking about, well I'm referring to Indonesia cause they were a Dutch colony for two or three

29:30 hundred years, and the Dutch had relinquished their command of the place so the Indonesians were trying to reorganise themselves, and I don't think they had any expansive ideas then. The rest of Malaya, as we know about, the communist insurgency there, the Philippines was an American satellite base anyway. Japan was occupied

30:00 until the North Koreans became involved. That changed the outlook a lot but there was no real threat. No, Europe was more, in my opinion, Europe was more of a problem than Asia.

What were your thoughts on communism at the time, did you have much knowledge of it?

Well first of all we didn't understand it properly. Russia was

- 30:30 the base of all communism I think and it was their satellites that they embroiled in their strategy and their long-term plans; I think it was to make it a socialist world. I saw it as a threat to our system of government and
- 31:00 all other countries that followed the democracy and a lot of republics. I didn't like it. I didn't like what I had read and I didn't like what I heard on the radio, and all due respect to you two people. A lot of it was brought about by journalism. Some journalists wrote it up.
- 31:30 In my opinion they padded it a bit. Others were a little bit more realistic and you had to sort out the wheat from the chaff. But I didn't view communism favourably because it was a state system whereby everything was owned by the state. Private enterprise was not encouraged, or it was wiped out. Everything belonged to the state and I thought this...
- 32:00 It removed any challenge from any progressive growth because if you improved yourself you weren't the benefactor; the state became the benefactor. And this didn't fit too well with me. But I saw it as a threat at the time, as we were told
- 32:30 that Russia was a power. Well as it turned out and we've found out since, well such wasn't the case. But then again you could look at it another way too, I suppose. It kept thousands employed, or hundreds of thousands employed, producing arms, which could have been put to better use, but that's my opinion.

What did you know about Korea?

Nothing, never even knew it

- 33:00 existed. I've found out a fair bit about it since.

What was the first information you had about what was happening in Korea?

That the North Korean army had pushed across the parallel, 38th parallel, and then I started to pay some attention. But I never even knew about the division between the North and South Korea. I never even knew that Japan occupied it

- 33:30 in the early part of the twentieth century. But no, I never knew anything about it. Know a bit more now.

Did the mood at Sale change at all while this was all going on overseas?

No, it was a training base, training for... There were the Air Armament School, the School of Air Navigation, simple

- 34:00 flying school. The simple flying school, their role was to teach pilots how to teach other pilots or become instructor pilots, so they were given advanced training in flying, teaching pilots how to get out of tricky situations. They put aircraft into spins and what have you, so that the instructors can teach pupils how to recover from aerobatics and what have you. School of Air Navigation taught navigators
- 34:30 and the Air Armament School taught people how to bomb and the gunners to use the gun turrets. And we in Maintenance Squadron maintained all aircraft and all the components of the aircraft. But as for the Korean War, I don't think it had any negative effect on us. We used to get the odd pilot coming back, navigators.
- 35:00 I was in a hut with a navigator and a pilot, came back from Japan, and they were interesting to talk to. We used to pump them for information, find out what they did in Japan, what they bought, what they couldn't do, what they could buy.

What kinds of things were you personally interested in about these men's experiences?

Their flying, the tight situations they'd

- 35:30 got into, problems, what was it like flying up there, adverse weather conditions, how did their weather conditions compare to ours? Entirely different, still flying the same aircraft as we had in Australia but under entirely different conditions and adverse working conditions. Lots of places they never had hangars. They just worked on the aircraft out in the
- 36:00 open on the aprons, as we used to call them, hard stands. And it gets cold up there, I can tell you. The coldest I struck it was minus fifty-one. That's on the old Fahrenheit scale. And people worked on aircraft. I was only there about a week or ten days and I was in charge of a couple of blokes that had to go across to Korea and do an engine change in a Dakota, middle of winter, and I tell you it's no joke
- 36:30 when you get the cold winds swirling around and you're frozen to the marrow. But we used to get their information and I'd get the information from these blokes in the platoon. And one of the pilots came back. He was in charge of the section that flew to Korea. The Australian Mustangs were in, that fellow I was telling you about earlier, he'd matriculated. Well he lost his life. He called up his section leader to say that his

- 37:00 engine was overheating. Obviously he'd been hit by ground fire and the cooling system had been ruptured. He was losing his coolant. The engine was overheating. He did the right thing but to get out of the aircraft he lifted the canopy, rolled it over on its back, fell out. His parachute never inflated. They picked his body up a few days later in the Sea of Japan, give all this information.
- 37:30 I had a lot of time for this fellow because he was one of the two that helped us with our maths, getting through the basic course. A terrible waste. Nice bloke, nice fellow. Let's move on.
- How did you get the news that you were going to go overseas?**
- Do I have to answer?
- 38:00 I was at Sale and a fellow on the same course, 2 Course, that I was on was up there, and I knew he was due to be replaced. This fellow is still alive. He lives at Newcastle. He came from Kempsey. There was a Senior Pilot Air Armament School. He came from the same area, well not the same area but within the region that I did, and his name was also Francis James, another name, surname.
- 38:30 I knew him well. When I worked at heavy aircraft he got me to go on a test flight with him one day on an old Lincoln bomber. That was an experience. Anyway he's walked across the hangar floor one day and I called him aside, again not in accordance with the book, and I said, "I want to know if you'll do me a favour," and he said, "What's that?" I said,
- 39:00 "A mate of mine's due out of Japan the end of October." I said, "I'd like to replace him." This was about June or July. "Yeah? What's his name?" I told him. He said, "Okay." He wrote all this down on a piece of paper. "Give me your number, name, rank and your experience, how long have you been in the service?" He said, "I've got a mate in posting section in the air force headquarters." I said, "Righto." He said, "Not a word about it." I said, "No. I'm well aware of all that."
- 39:30 So I gave him this piece of paper later that day I think it was. About a week later he called me aside and he said, "You are going to Japan at the end of October," he said, "but don't tell anybody." I said, "I won't tell anybody." And he said, "You did the postings office a favour because they were looking for a replacement but didn't know where to find one, and," he said, "you volunteered indirectly, so I'd say you're going." I said, "Right. Thanks very much." So I kept quiet about it and about the beginning of October - we used to get about three or four weeks' notice -
- 40:00 sure enough, posting authority came through and I was to report to RAAF base Richmond for onward movement to Iwakuni. So that was another arranged posting. It's not what you know. It's who you know.

So what preparations did you make to head to Japan?

Well I didn't have to make too many arrangements because I wasn't married at the time.

- 40:30 The only thing I had was a car and a few other personal things that I wanted to leave behind. But my mother at the time lived in Melbourne, after my Dad died, and she moved to Melbourne, so I left my car with her and a few other personal effects. Then I went to Richmond where we had to join a pool of people. When they got enough people to go they would arrange an aircraft through Qantas
- 41:00 and they'd fly us to Japan. I had about three weeks there I think, three weeks' holiday, because we would report of a morning to the transit officer, or the TMO they used to call them, transport movement officers, and he'd say, "There's no aircraft arranged today." So all the airmen would get due to... They'd send them off to various places. And we'd hang around for a while, us senior NCOs, and we'd just drift off.
- 41:30 The cricket was in Sydney at that time, so a couple of us used to go and watch the cricket. Until about three weeks later we... Before I left Sale I got all the needles down there, the vaccinations, and when we were at Richmond they sent us all again to the hospital to make sure we were still medically fit for overseas service.

Tape 5

- 00:32 **Mr Field, you were talking about that journey over to Korea. Can I just ask you to explain what that trip over to Japan was like rather?**
- Well after about three weeks at Richmond they told us that an aircraft would be made available and we'd be enplaned at Mascot and flown through to Japan. We left Richmond about eight or nine o'clock one evening and taken by bus
- 01:00 or buses to Mascot where we boarded a Qantas DC-4, and in the early hours of the morning we took off. We flew all, well from about one o'clock till about ten o'clock the next morning and we landed at Port Moresby for fuel, refreshments, took on board fuel. It's the first time I'd ever been standing in the rain and the sun was shining,
- 01:30 first time. And the first time I'd ever seen New Guineans, or Papuans, and that was something

enlightening too to me because I'd never been exposed to people of that nature. They were pleasant. They were lovely. About eleven o'clock we boarded the aircraft and over the Owen Stanleys [Owen Stanley Ranges]. Then we hit the bump as we flew over the equator, which the pilots told us.

02:00 We were in the Northern Hemisphere. And we landed in Guam. We spent the night there at an American air force base. They fed us and housed us, or billeted. I can remember we had a warrant officer on board and he was in the equivalent of their, or our, sergeants' mess, but our warrant officer's badge used to be an eagle

02:30 and a crown and the Americans objected to him being there because anyone that wears an eagle in the American armed forces, he's a highly commissioned officer. So to overcome the problem he took his badges of rank off, so he stayed there. We had a few beers and went to bed. Boarded the aircraft next morning and flew into Iwakuni.

What was that American base like?

Guam, we didn't see much of it. It was

03:00 very, very restricted. We weren't allowed to go anywhere. Of course you never asked questions but at that time that was one of their most advanced bases, I believe, in the Far East and that was where the aircraft took off from that dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, the Enola Gay, based at Guam. It's a huge base. I can remember that, huge.

03:30 **What sort of briefing did you receive about Japanese culture and what post-war Japan was like, before you arrived there?**

We were briefed. We arrived late in the afternoon, inducted into the place, just shown our quarters, things like that. Next day we were gathered in a

04:00 large room and we were told what to expect and what not to expect, what to do and what not to do. Whilst we were the victors we were not to be aggressive towards them. If they showed any aggressiveness or harsh attitudes towards us we were to tolerate it and not to respond or react in any way. This wasn't always the case.

04:30 There were skirmishes, not only with the air force. But the army were based at Kure, which was about an hour, hour and a half away in a train. There was a lot of resentment towards the armed forces obviously because they were the losers but we never showed

05:00 any adverse attitude towards them. I'm not saying it didn't happen. I didn't cause I'm fairly placid by nature. We were all warned about fraternising. That was not encouraged and it was discouraged, well for reasons

05:30 best known to us, that you could get into a situation where you could be molested, attacked. We avoided going into areas on our own, for that reason. Some did and they weren't attacked. Some of the Japanese were very pleasant. But it was members of the armed forces or anyone tied up with their armed forces who

06:00 had attitude problems. I had three Japanese working with my section. Two were former ex-servicemen. One was ex army. One was ex air force. The other one was only young. He was about sixteen or seventeen, so he wasn't involved in the conflict. But they were friendly, very friendly towards us. We never had any problems. Never had any problem with their staff because we had... In the sergeants' mess there

06:30 was one girl to every three rooms and it was her job to do all our laundry, washing, cleaning our rooms, mending, repairing clothes and things of that nature. All the dining hall staff were females. The bar staff were males in the sergeants mess' and they were all supervised

07:00 by Japanese supervisors. We never had any problems with them.

What were you initially told about prostitution in Japan?

We were told that it was rife and there were problems. Venereal disease was rife. Well it was called venereal disease those days, STD [Sexually Transmitted Disease] now, and it was, just by the number that

07:30 didn't heed the warnings, became victims. It happened in my own section. I worked in the cinema for a long time at Iwakuni. When I was at Ballarat I was taught how to be a projectionist and we were all voluntary. We weren't paid. We just put on the pictures of a night-time and periodically we would have to show films on health,

08:00 or sanitation. Some of them were grim, grizzly, what happened to people who got the various diseases. It had a deterring effect sometimes. Other times it didn't. But it was a problem, particularly around armed forces bases. And it

08:30 was particularly bad around where the Americans were based because of their money.

Were servicemen issued with condoms?

No, not in those days.

Why do you think the lectures and the briefings had such a little impact on servicemen?

Feelings. Some it did. Some it didn't.

09:00 Others just shrugged their shoulders and said, "Well it's one of those things. If it happens, it happens. If it doesn't, it doesn't." And ever many fell by the wayside. Some that didn't. But that's part and parcel of life. And then it not only happened in the armed services. It happens throughout the whole civil community.

09:30 But it was particularly bad in Japan at the time. Some of the very strong, virulent forms of VD [Venereal Disease] were there, ones that were difficult to treat.

Can you describe what the base at Iwakuni was like?

It was a former Japanese wartime base where they trained their... Had one of the uses... They trained their

10:00 kamikaze pilots cause it was also a normal air force and I think it might have been a Japanese naval training base as well cause it was right next to the sea but it had large hangars. The accommodation was good. I think the accommodation was built after the war, though, to western standards. It was far, far better than what the Japanese building standards had ever been. The rooms were

10:30 spacious, huge as a matter of fact. I was a senior NCO at the time and each senior NCO had his own room. If you were a warrant officer, not only did you have your own room but you had an ensuite, but you had to be a warrant officer to get an ensuite. We had to use the common bathroom and the toilet block; nothing wrong with that. They were all cleaned by the staff.

11:00 Can you explain in as much detail as you can recall what the facilities looked like where the kamikaze pilots were trained?

We never saw them. They were all gone. I s'pose they had lecture rooms. Yes well they would have had because all they were taught was to fly and to swear allegiance, I s'pose, on oath that they would crash their aircraft into the side of ships, or ships, whatever the case may be. But there wouldn't be anything special.

11:30 I would imagine there'd be nothing special other than training rooms. They may have had their shrines. They may have had their temples or other forms of religious commitment. I don't know. Obviously they were committed, otherwise they wouldn't have done it.

So in terms of the former Japanese facilities, how much of that was used by your squadron at Iwakuni?

Only the hangars. The strip was

12:00 completely re-laid by 5, I think it was 5ACS. It might have been 2ACS, Airfield Construction Squadron. And the taxiways, probably a new control tower but most of the old hangars were carryovers from the Japanese conflict, Japanese side of it, and some of the buildings. But I would say the majority of the accommodation blocks and the messes were built after the war

12:30 to come up to our standards.

Can you explain exactly what squadron it was there and what the role was?

There was only one composite that went. We were all posted into 91 Composite Wing and then we were internally posted to the squadron where you were needed. Now there was 491 Maintenance Squadron, where all the heavy maintenance was done.

13:00 There was 391 and Base Squadron and they were the administrators, like well they kept your pay records, your leave records and all other paperwork type jobs. There was 77 Fighter Squadron, which was based in Korea at this particular time. And then there was 30 Transport Unit when I first arrived there, eight Dakotas, which communicated between or flew between

13:30 Iwakuni and the bases in Korea every day, and it was their role to support 77 Squadron in Korea. So they were the four, yes, the four squadrons in Iwakuni at the time I got there.

And where did you fit?

When I first arrived there I was internally posted to the transport unit, and we had eight Dakotas and they flew between

14:00 Iwakuni and the bases in Korea, whether it be Pusan, Taegu, Kimpo, Seoul, each day, either taking mail over, taking personnel or bringing back personnel, bringing back the wounded, medivacs [medical evacuations], people who were more seriously wounded, other than superficial wounds. They were treated on site. More seriously wounded or ill, sick or ill, they were brought back on medi [medical] flights and taken to hospital at Kure, where

14:30 the British General Army hospital was. That happened every day. Even in some of the most adverse weather conditions, they still flew. Our blokes would fly where no other would attempt to go, and it still happens.

Can you describe for someone who's not familiar with it what sort of an aircraft the Dakota is?

The old Dakota, well there's several versions,

15:00 a DC-3. DC stands for Douglas Commercial. The DC-3 was a twin-engined, single wing or monoplane, was powered by two Pratt and Whitney fourteen cylinder engines. That's the air force version. Civil versions had single rail rods. It had a range

15:30 probably about seven or eight hours maximum all up fuel. It carried about twenty-eight passengers, a crew of four: two pilots, a navigator and a signalman. A most reliable aircraft. Go anywhere. And you could rely on them. Easy to maintain, very easy. Good aircraft to fly in, docile.

16:00 They had no vices, not like some aircraft: you've got to watch them like a cat watches a mouse. But the old Dakota you could take your eye off them. They were good to fly in. A bit cold. They weren't airconditioned. Well they were airconditioned all right. They were cold. They were comfortable but noisy, but most reliable.

16:30 What sort of modifications needed to be made to them if they were performing medical evacuation?

They'd pull the seats out. The seats used to run down each side and they'd put in these litters, we used to call them, and they'd put the stretchers on them. There's a photograph up there in one of those books showing a medical evacuation and a nursing sister, or nursing sisters, attending to the wounded on the return flight from Korea back to Iwakuni. I think they could carry about

17:00 fifteen litter patients and that would allow the nursing staff, there'd be three on either side, one, two, three and they'd go back, and that'd allow the nursing staff room to walk up the middle and attend to the patients. Some of them had severe wounds, some had not so severe, but they would attend to them and make them the most,

17:30 they'd make them as most comfortable as they could for the flight back to Kure, where they'd be met by ambulance and transferred to the British Army hospital at Kure.

And in your time working in that transport squadron how frequently would those medivac flights operate?

Well that would be on demand, to use a term. If there were a skirmish and there was a heavy casualties as far as wounded concerned, well there might be two or three flights over the next couple of days. If there were no skirmishes or injuries were

18:00 slight, well there may not be one that week, or two that week. May be two or three weeks apart, depending on the conflict and the engagements that the army were involved in. Not only would they be wounded, but sometimes there were those who became sick and had to be brought back for medical treatment.

Were there nursing staff based at Iwakuni?

Yes. They were based in the hospital there. That was one of the three 91 Base Squadron's responsibilities

18:30 was the hospital. It was a good hospital, not that I spent any time in it, but had a good name. It was mostly used for people being medivacced back to Australia. Those who were unfit for further overseas service would be brought from Kure Hospital back to Iwakuni where they'd be kept overnight,

19:00 stabilised, made comfortable. Then they would join the Qantas flight back to Australia next day because Qantas used to fly out of Iwakuni of a morning and they'd get back to Guam for an evening, or that night and they'd be back home to Australia. They might go via Guam. They might go via Manus Island, which was still governed at the time, or they might go via Hong Kong. A lot of this was determined by weather in those days, particularly cyclones and

19:30 things of that nature.

Would the seriously injured be evacuated back to Australia?

Yes, eventually, particularly if they were no longer fit for overseas service, so when they became fit enough to fly and to be medivacced home they would be medivacced home. I saw one shocking case but, yeah one. Most of the others had

20:00 lost a hand or an arm or a foot or something, some other serious injury. They'd be medivacced back.

What were the particularly shocking or serious injuries that came out of Korea?

A lot of them lost limbs. One of our fellows, still alive, had his face blown off, lost everything, lost his

ears,

20:30 nose, lips, just the bare bone, in the explosion. Sixty-one operations later they skin grafted some of the skin from all over his body to give him a face, give him eyelids, give him ears, lips, nose, nostrils. Poor devil. He's still around. He survived. Nearly lost him once at Richmond where they

21:00 did most of the surgery before he got out, nearly died. He didn't want the operation. He just felt he just didn't want it. Whilst under the anaesthetic they nearly lost him but they saved him. He's still around. He's happy. Matter of fact I got him a job later on.

Was he a pilot?

No he was a transport fitter.

21:30 **And so what was the nature of the explosion that he was involved in?**

Fuel tank exploded. Bonzer bloke.

Was that at Iwakuni or was that in?

No it was at Kimpo in Korea, Kimpo. I wasn't there when it happened but heard about it very quickly. I didn't know him then.

22:00 Saw him at Iwakuni before he was, the night before he was medivacced home. I didn't go to see him, didn't even know he was there but another one of the fellows that I was on strength with, fellow from Western Australia, he was medically unfit and they medivacced him home and I went over to see him before he went back to Australia, and unbeknown to me this chap was

22:30 in bed a couple of beds up, a sorry sight. Never mind. He survived. Will, willpower, a very strong part of the body, does a lot of funny things. No, there were terrible cases come out, POWs.

23:00 Six or seven of our pilots survived. One bloke was a good mate of mine. He was on the electrical course before me, electrical fitters course before me, then joined the aircrew, came to Iwakuni for conversion on the Meteors and come over to Kimpo. He came over while I was there. Matter of fact I strapped him in, saw him off.

23:30 I was talking to him last year, met him. He was the last one to be shot down, in an aircraft that was one of the last aircraft in 1952, a special camera, so that it could go in and get really good movie shots of the damage done by the area aircraft that attacked the target. It had an American camera, movie camera fitted to the nose.

24:00 He's still around. Looks well too, Don. He survived. A couple of them got tortured. They survived. Others never made it, were killed. I think we lost forty-one pilots during the conflict, yeah, round about forty-one I think. Some RAF [Royal Air Force] pilots were exchanged. They were lost.

24:30 Just hate to see them go. People in the prime of their life. It's like walking around the big cemetery in Singapore, crazy, terrible, yeah.

25:00 What's next?

Can you tell me about what your daily routine would be while you were on transport squadron in terms of getting planes ready, what you would do from waking up?

If you were on duty crew the aircraft would be loaded and prepared the night before, whatever was to be loaded into it

25:30 unless it was perishables; well they were put in it last thing. But if it was armament or rocket heads or anything that was non perishable, well they'd be loaded the day before. We knew the aircraft. We knew the number. We knew their destinations. And if you weren't on duty, well it was just a normal working day. You got up, normal preparation. You had breakfast and you reported for work. But if you were on duty crew, depending on what time the first aircraft was away,

26:00 well you'd be up an hour before. In weather like this it was okay. If it was winter time it was a different story. The aircraft had to be covered with big covers over the wings and the tail plane, so if any snow had settled overnight, well instead of having to get up in the main plane and sweep it off, you just pulled the covers off and the snow come off with it. Other than that we would

26:30 service the aircraft. My role would be to check to see that the batteries were still fully charged or near enough to it. Engine fitters would check the engines and drain the fuel for water, especially the drain cocks, cause water being heavier than petrol always settles at the lowest point, so any water would settle over the drain cocks. Framies, or airframe fitters, would check the tyres and surface controls. Instruments would do the same. Radios would, radio technician

27:00 would turn the radios on, see that they operated. The crews would arrive. They would do their checks, get in, start up, taxi it and take off and we wouldn't see them again till mid afternoon. There might be two, three, four, depending on the commitment and we used to have eight aircraft in strength. We'd have at least four or five every day. The others, one or two would be on standby

- 27:30 and one was probably undergoing inspection because they used to log a lot of hours quickly and every hundred hours in those days they had to be inspected and they'd be out of the flying program for two maybe three days whilst we worked on them, checked them over and tested them and put them back into the program again. But that was it and if you were on duty crew well then you went back and had your breakfast and come back and do your normal days work until the aircraft returned that afternoon and then
- 28:00 any unserviceabilities that the crews had noted and logged ended up in the aircraft maintenance form we used to call in those days, a SS-77. Well we'd have to fix them. Now it might be something trivial, like in our case changing a light globe. It might be more serious. It might be the generator failed in flight. Well that could be anything, maybe a generator change, whatever the component
- 28:30 was that failed. Well we had to fix it and you'd have to ground run the aircraft to make sure it worked and signed it off, make it serviceable. The engine fitters would refuel the aircraft until it would go back on-line and in the program next day if it had nothing serious the matter wrong with it. Sometimes there were things more serious. The aircraft had to be pulled from the program, maybe an engine change. Who knows? Engine might have run out of hours. That was quite often.
- 29:00 Engines were up for change in between inspections. You couldn't let them run through to inspection because they'd over-go their allocated hours. But that was it. During the day well you just did your normal maintenance. If it was a bit of a slack period, as I used to do, I was in charge. If the aircraft had returned, there were no unserviceabilities or no serious ones, blokes had fixed them, I'd say, "Well away you go,"
- 29:30 because maybe that morning they started at five. And there was no leave in lieu; it was a love job, as we used to call it. So if they worked two or three hours overtime, well two or three hours to spare. Well you keep one fellow back. I might even stay back myself. Let the rest go so they could pursue their hobbies, whatever they were doing. A lot of them did it. Aircraft,
- 30:00 making model aircraft was big up there at the time. They used to get their model aircraft and take them to an area where they could fly them.

Where did the model aircraft come from?

They'd buy them from Japanese shops. A lot of them came from the American PX [American canteen unit] we used to call them, post exchange, as the Americans call them. We call them canteens. We used to buy a lot from the Americans. They had some good stuff, very good, far, far

- 30:30 advanced as compared to ours.

What role did weather play in aircraft maintenance value at Iwakuni?

Not at Iwakuni it didn't concern us because we could put the aircraft in the hangar. If the weather was inclement you had, particularly in winter when it was cold and windy and snowy. Summer time wasn't too bad. It was very, very humid up there, extremely humid.

- 31:00 We put the aircraft in the hangar if it was any prolonged maintenance period, but if it was routine like refuelling, changing a tyre, in my case changing lamp globes or something minor, well it stayed out on the tarmac, serviced there. Only heavy maintenance or as the expression is used now, put the aircraft, you put it in the hangar.

And what sort of weapons would the Dakotas be equipped with?

The only thing they carried was a Very pistol

- 31:30 and that was only to fire a cartridge, a warning cartridge. No armament. They never carried armament. They did during the war but not during the Korean conflict. I'm talking about the Second World War. But not during the Korean conflict. No armament at all.

So while you were at transport squadron were any Dakotas lost?

My second stint, yes.

- 32:00 Not the first time. Before I went to Korea. The last six months I went back to the transport squadron, yes, we lost an aircraft. I've got a photograph of it up there. The crew survived. There was one loss before I got there. Well it was written off, put it that way. It was severely damaged. It was waiting to take off in Korea and was hit by an American Mustang, an American-flown Mustang.
- 32:30 Extensive damage and it was written off. Well they might have stripped it to get component parts and the bits that weren't damaged they may have recycled, the current expression. But the one that crashed, well it crashed into the sea at Iwakuni. There was a pilot training and there was a fire broke out in the vicinity of the port engine, or the left-hand engine.
- 33:00 The pilots were not aware of it until the engine fell out and of course not only did the engine fall out as a result of the fire, but the fire burnt into the wing and came into the cockpit section after the two pilots, or back where the navigator would normally sit, and the fire went down the inside of the aircraft

and burnt off

33:30 all the fabric, so they lost control of it. One engine had gone in the flap. It burnt off the elevator. It just fell into the sea. The two pilots scrambled out. There was a hatch on top above the two pilots and they scrambled out through there. They recovered the aircraft. They got a recovery crane and lifted it up and brought it back just to try and find out the cause of the accident. But that was the only

34:00 Dakota that was lost while I was there. They flew thousands and thousands of hours. No other incident. Might have had some engine failures and things of that nature, have to go over to Korea and do an engine change once in a while, but there was nothing life threatening, put it that way. A few adrenaline rushes but nothing life threatening.

So what would happen when you had to go to

34:30 **Korea to do an engine change?**

Well I was only there about a week or ten days and I was involved in one, not that I'm engines, but there was electrical components that had to be disconnected and an electrician had to go. Course I was new on the block. Others had been there, knew what it was like and didn't want to go. "He hasn't had any experience, so we've got to cull him some time, so let him go. Send him." So a couple of engine fitters and I...

35:00 It was late in the afternoon. Well first of all they've got to get a replacement engine and load it into the Dakota, which they could do quite easily, take it up front up near the bulkhead and strap it down. And myself and two engine fitters had enough gear to sustain us for a couple of days. Away we went. We landed at

35:30 K-16 it was called, Seoul airport, where the old Dakota was that had the engine failure. We got the engine off with the assistance of the Americans and their cranes and lifting equipment and we placed it on the ground. And it was too late to do anything with it, so that evening we were taken over to K-14 where 77 Squadron were based and we were quartered there. I was put in

36:00 this tent, or they were wooden frames with tents over them, like a tent over a wooden frame, American structures, and in the middle of it was a oil-fired heater. I suppose it stood about that high, two foot six, a big bag of sand, a tray of sand around it, oil burning stove to keep the place warm. When I walked in there were several boxes around it and there were

36:30 tubes of toothpaste, toothbrushes, shaving cream, shaving brushes. I thought to myself, "Untidy lot that live in this hut. I won't put my stuff there." So I put it under my bed, didn't I? Next morning I found out why it was sitting around the fire. Toothpaste was frozen stiff and so was the shaving cream, so was the toothbrush. It was like a wire brush. So I learnt quickly. They used

37:00 to place them around the fire to keep them fluid, keep the brushes soft. That's how cold it got. So we went back to Seoul and changed the engine. A crew came over and flew back and we went back with them. But that was my introduction to Korea. Cold; it was bitterly cold. What makes it worse was the wind. Cold is one thing. It's the chill factor. The winds that come off the Gobi

37:30 Desert in China. The rivers freeze up. People just walk across the rivers like they're normal thoroughfares. That's during the middle of winter. When they start to thaw out it's a bit risky, not that we ever did it.

When you spent that first night in Korea and you experienced what the cold was like, what sense did you have of what sort of a nightmare it was

38:00 **for troops?**

Wondered what I was doing there. It was cold. It's the first time I'd ever been exposed to it, so cold conditions. And then I started to think, "Well why are we here? There must be better places to fight over." But then you stop and think

38:30 about it, well again what the Soviets wanted was communism and that's what we were there for, to suppress it. Otherwise they just wanted South Korea as part of their empire, so there was a reason to be there. I'm not saying it was the right one but we were there. It's part of the allegiance that you take when you sign on the dotted line. But it was an experience. I survived.

39:00 Thousands of others did too. And that's what's in the back of your mind, "If others can live through it, well so can I." You mightn't like it. And that wasn't as cold as I experienced a few months later. That was only the start of the winter. When I was there with the Meteors I was colder still.

Might go on to talk about that later. What did Korea look like from the air on that first flight?

Cold and miserable, snow everywhere.

39:30 It's a very mountainous country, not like Australia. It's not flat by any means. And if you ever run out of noise, as we used to say it, engine failures and you had to crash land, you had no hope. It was just jagged mountains. I wouldn't say they're very high, but they're high enough to stop you from crash

landing or making a crash landing. All landings are controlled crashes, some better

40:00 than others. No, it was very forbidding. Place you wouldn't want to go down in. I thought I was once, but that's another story.

How long did you spend initially in transport squadron?

Only a few weeks. I was only there till about end of February, I think, or some time in February when I was transferred to 77 Squadron in Korea.

40:30 We were there for, halfway through the tour and they were given a week's leave to go back to Iwakuni. You could go where you liked. A couple went to Tokyo, up to Ebisu, that midget submarine training base, was the British Commonwealth Forces Rest Centre they called it, rest centre. Then back to Iwakuni and movement order back to

41:00 Korea for the latter half of our tour, which was anything up to five months at a stretch. That was an education. We were catered, all our meals were supplied by the Americans and booked up to... We had to sign for our meals. Used to be a master sergeant sit

41:30 beside the door, a master sergeant. He was an American, three up and three down. Anyhow we'd go in there. We'd sign anyone's name, Bob Menzies, the Prime Minister at the time, Ned Kelly, Ben Hall, the bushrangers, sign anyone's name. I'll never forget one day this master sergeant said, "I don't care what name you put down," he said, "but that Ned Kelly's been here

42:00 about fifty times."

Tape 6

00:33 **Wanted to ask you whether you were ever in a plane which was in danger of crashing or whether you ever had an emergency like that?**

Once. It was in Japan. We just, I had to go over to Korea for some reason. I went back a number of times. But on this particular occasion we were taking

01:00 a load of rocket heads across, and rocket heads used to be put on the floor of the aircraft with a big pig net put over them so they wouldn't move around. And I thumbed a lift across on this particular aircraft and as we were approaching the east coast of Korea - I was up on the crew compartment because it was the warmest, sitting in the hydraulic compartment - and next thing there was a scatter. The signalman, the navigator grabbed me. The props [propellers] had iced up.

01:30 One of the props iced up. The aircraft loses its momentum. And it started to descend and they couldn't get the ice off, and we had to get rid of the load so we undid the pig netting over the rocket heads, and whilst we were doing this the pilots were changing speed of the engines, so they could increase and decrease the centrifugal force

02:00 acting on the props. And they also used alcohol. They used to pump alcohol on the blades to soften the ice. And we'd just undone the pig netting and the ice came off and we were right. We didn't throw any rocket heads out, but we'd just reached the stage. But we were descending fast. And one of you asked earlier what was the terrain like over Korea? I'll tell you, it doesn't look very inviting when you're sitting up top and something goes wrong. But that was the only time we had,

02:30 that I've ever had an adrenaline rush. It was a bit threatening because we'd have had to ditch into the sea and they used to tell us, through lectures and what have you, that if we ever ditched into the sea in winter time we had three minutes to get into the dinghies otherwise you're history. You'd die of hypothermia. The only other times, lifting off from Mount Isa in a Herc [Hercules] one time we had an

03:00 in-flight fire warning on one of the engines; we had to put back in pretty quickly. But it was a false alarm, but you don't treat those things as being false. A warning came up there was an in-flight fire, so you take all the immediate precautions.

In Japan what were the major mechanical faults with the planes that you had to deal with?

They were routine. The only people that,

03:30 the airframe people had problems because of the weather conditions. The Dakotas had fabric covered ailerons, elevators and rudder and the fabric used to be stretched and made taut in the extreme cold conditions, but otherwise other musterings the weather never adversely affected our serviceability rate any more than what it would have here in Australia.

04:00 **Were there particular things that you needed to look out for?**

On the surface, yes. On the surface controls, yes. We were all vigilant as far as that was concerned, not only the airframe fitters and the aircrews but all technical musterings, particularly when we had the

wings covered with snow covers in winter time. We had to be particularly careful removing them, particularly if there was a lot of snow on them.

- 04:30 And we didn't place too much weight on the fabric, otherwise you'd tear it. That rendered the aircraft unserviceable until it was repaired. But it was only the snow that made the role of airframe fitters more difficult than anybody else. We in the electrical game never had any problems other than what we'd strike anywhere.

You mentioned earlier that there were different names for the various roles.

- 05:00 **Could you explain on camera what those names were?**

Well they were nicknames. We electricians were referred to as sparkies, just someone wanted an electrician, well he'd yell out for a sparky. Instrument fitters were watch winders. Engine fitters were sumpies. Airframe fitters were framies.

- 05:30 Armourers, as I said earlier, we referred to them... If we didn't want to be too cynical they were gun plumbers, but if we wanted to be more cynical, well we referred to them as cracker stackers. Photographers were referred to as Kodak. And getting away from the aircraft mustering, cooks were referred to as bait layers.

- 06:00 **Why was that?**

Well we used to reckon they'd try and poison us, so they'd put poison in the food. Well that was being a bit, that was going overboard a bit I suppose. But they all had nicknames. The medical people we referred to them as po jugglers. That's about all I can recall at the moment, yeah,

- 06:30 nicknames. The air force were only amateurs so far as nicknames are concerned compared to the navy. They had a language all of their own. It was good to listen to but it was difficult to work out who they were talking about or referring to. It used to go over our heads a lot of the times.

Did you have much association with the navy blokes?

No. The only time I was associated with the navy was

- 07:00 again at Iwakuni. Not much contact with the Australian navy. The Royal Navy more than anything because they had a detachment of aircraft based at Iwakuni, carrier-based aircraft, but they used to build them ashore, off-lie them ashore, into Iwakuni where they could do their heavy maintenance and they'd fly back onto the aircraft carriers again. We had several

- 07:30 other services at Iwakuni, Canadians, Brits, New Zealanders. They all had a role to play so far as the operation in Korea was concerned, supporting their forces. We all got on well.

What kinds of things were there to do socially at Iwakuni?

What did we do?

- 08:00 Well there wasn't much that you could do. A lot of the blokes used to go to the cinemas, the local cinema. At least they'd get films straight from America, or what we used to call green films. And by green I meant they weren't censored in any way. We had pictures on the base. As I said earlier I was one of the cinema operators there for quite some time.

- 08:30 We used to have two shows every evening, six o'clock and eight o'clock session. Saturday and Sunday the three shows, a two o'clock session and six and eight again. But pictures were the main attraction. There were no such things as dances like we have here in Australia. There was none of that at all. Sightseeing was very popular. A lot of people used to go far distances for sightseeing, like Iwo Jima or

- 09:00 Miyajima Island, Kure, Hiroshima. We used to go to Hiroshima quite a bit, just stay overnight, come back next day. That was interesting to look at because much of the damage caused by the first atomic bomb was still there. As a matter of fact the hotel that we used to stay in wasn't very far from the industrial hall, where the bomb detonated immediately above it, and the

- 09:30 remnants or remains were still there. And there were lots of other evidence around the place, landmarks, shadows. And you'd see people walking around with scars. There was one fellow next to the, or not far from the centre where the bomb went off. All his skin on his back just run down like you'd throw paint on a wall.

- 10:00 His skin had melted and gathered across his waistline. That was one of the attractions up there in Hiroshima. But that's about as much socialising that people did.

You mentioned shadows at Hiroshima?

Yes. There were granite walls and there's one that I can recall. There was a fire hydrant then

- 10:30 was just standing above the ground and when the bomb detonated the intense heat, obviously all of the light, it protected the wall behind it from the blast, or not so much the blast but the intense light given off, and it formed a shadow. It was quite clear, quite distinct. One of the waitresses in our dining room

survived

- 11:00 but she was obviously quite a distance away, but the backs of her hands were burnt and she had marks to her forehead – I think where she put her hands up to protect her eyes. Because with the Japanese dress, the obis and what have you, long traditional dress they used to wear in those days, protected her legs and arms and things like that. It's only the exposed flesh that she was burnt. I believe the lower legs were burnt too,
- 11:30 horrific, what we used to see on walking men at Kure, not Kure, Hiroshima. There might have been some in Kure too but it wasn't far away from Iwakuni. It was only about forty minutes on the train. I never got to Nagasaki to have a look. That was the only southern tip of the southern island.
- 12:00 One was enough. I'd like to go back there now and have a look. It's been completely rebuilt. Even when I was there last in '54, late '54, a lot of it had big shopping malls, shopping centres. And in August '45 it was flattened cause Japanese buildings wouldn't stand
- 12:30 up to blasts because they were all made of paper and bamboo, so any blast would destroy them. It's only the more substantial, any built out of stone or granite, brick, that survived.

What were your feelings on seeing the damage done by the atomic bombs in Hiroshima?

It was horrific but it certainly

- 13:00 brought the war to an end very abruptly. Whilst tens of thousands of Japanese died and hundreds of thousands or more sustained injuries of some major, life threatening, a lot died as a result of radiation sickness and I believe they're still dying of radiation sickness.
- 13:30 There wouldn't be too many left now, I suppose. But it was horrific, terrible. But on the plus side, it saved tens of thousands of our soldiers. Enough had already paid the supreme sacrifice. And the Japanese were forced then, or their hand was forced, into the unconditional surrender, only after the second one, the one they dropped on Nagasaki. They could see then that there was no alternative but to surrender,
- 14:00 as much as they hated doing it because it wasn't their... Well they were... It was drilled into them never to surrender, to die first. No, that was an advantage for us. That's how we figured it was.

While you were based in Japan, what kind of feeling did you get from the local population about their

- 14:30 **views on the occupation forces and their reaction to that time?**

It was, I'd say, fairly neutral. We were there for a purpose and they realised it, I think. I've no doubt there was some sharks amongst them but

- 15:00 when you stop and think about it, the majority of the Japanese are a fairly placid race. But it was only those involved in the armed services and their administrators or probably their government that were in any ways linked towards aggression. They just wanted to expand their empire. They didn't have the raw materials. They didn't have lots of things which other countries in the Pacific basin
- 15:30 had, and they were suppressed. I'm not going to say by whom. But it was their ambition to expand and share in the world's spoils and that's what brought the war about, not because of the Japanese, the average Japanese wish. It wasn't their lifestyle. And even when we travelled and we stayed in Japanese hotels I never stayed on my own. There was always two or more
- 16:00 of us. The old saying, "There's always safety in numbers." But we never come across any aggression. They were quite polite. Shopkeepers, traders, we were polite to them. Taxi drivers, we were polite to them, although a friend and I were going out one evening to a function towards the end of our tour there and we had a bit of an altercation with a taxi driver,
- 16:30 nothing serious, but.

What was that over?

Fare. We thought he was overcharging and he thought we were trying to short change him, I suppose, so we stood our ground. He stood his. We said, "Well here's the money. That's it. Take it or leave it." He took it and we left, but other than that, no problems.

- 17:00 Shopkeepers were quite good. And of course you'd go to the markets and a big market, there was in those days, in Tokyo called the Ginza, probably still there. And the local Asian countries, when you want to buy something there's always the asking price, but that was the difference between the asking price and the price you agree on. That depended upon your attitude as to how they reacted to you. If you were aggressive well they'd take the same stance. Don't
- 17:30 blame them. But if you were pleasant and you just bargained and put your case and they put theirs, you could always come to an agreement without becoming aggressive.

What kinds of things could you buy at the markets?

Anything, well apart from livestock and cars. I'm talking about clothing, foodstuff, vegetables, fruit, but

18:00 mostly though it was clothing. That big photo album I've got up there I bought at the markets. I can remember when I asked the price it was seven thousand yen. Well that was an exorbitant price, seven thousand yen. I said, "I only wanted one, not the boxful." And that's where you go from there. One of the problems was the language difficulty. With my pidgin Japanese and their broken English it was definitely a hard time getting the message across.

18:30 They asked seven thousand. I wouldn't pay any more than a thousand, so you'd walk away. But you'll eventually get someone to accept your price, someone who's a bit destitute or desperate to get rid of the article, so I paid a thousand yen for it, in those days was two dollars. Big difference now in the exchange rate.

19:00 **What was it like staying in the Japanese hotels? What were they like?**

Well you could get two class of hotels. Well I say two classes, two types. You either got the Japanese style or the western style. If we went away anywhere and we stayed overnight in a hotel we stayed in the western styles. You're sleeping on the floor with a tatami they used to call them, and the pillows were made of rice husks.

19:30 In the real cold weather they used to have these little coal-fired, not coal. It was a type of coal-fired heater in the bed. They used to call them an abachi. You can imagine rolling over in bed and put your leg up against that. But anyway we used to stay in western-style hotels. Stayed in western-style hotels in Tokyo and three of us went to

20:00 Nikko, about three hours' drive from Tokyo those days by train. We stayed in a western-style hotel there. That was magnificent. A great big lake up on top, like in the crater of a mountain. We got there and it started to snow, a beautiful big open fire, sitting back there having a few beers watching the snow fall down.

20:30 They come and asked us about mid afternoon what would we like for dinner. But that's how they were. They were good. We never had any problem with them. Others did, other races, no names, no pack drill. No, Australians are pretty easy to get on with but when we get stirred, well it's a different matter.

How about the relationship between the Australians

21:00 **and the other nationalities in the occupation forces?**

Competitive; just Australians by nature. We got on well with the New Zealanders, very well. We got on well with the Canadians. The Canadians they were very good.

21:30 We had one in our mess at Iwakuni. Bill was his name. I can't think of his other name. But he was a terrific bloke, magnificent. He came from Vancouver BC [British Columbia]. The Brits - a bit of friction, nothing serious. We respected one another but

22:00 probably a bit of jealousy. I don't know. But no, we got on all right with them but there wasn't the camaraderie or the friendship that we, between the Australians and the New Zealanders, probably because of the ANZAC tradition, brought us together more closely. The Brits were across the other side of the globe. We had to go over there twice to help them fight their wars for them.

22:30 It was that sort of thing. But there was no animosity or distrust or hatred or anything like that, no, never that. Just that little bit of difference. And I s'pose the Kiwis tagged along with us. They had to go over there twice and help them out. The only other ones that I had much to do with were the Americans, the American armed forces, particularly United States Air Force. They were a different kettle of fish altogether.

In what way?

23:00 Well they had everything and they let you know about it, whereas if we had achieved something, well we might talk about it amongst ourselves but we don't go putting it over the airwaves, publishing it.

Whereabouts were they based?

They were based at Iwakuni.

23:30 But the American navy, the navy, air force were there. They were a good lot. They had their problems and we helped them out and we had our problems and they helped us out. The American air force were a different lot. They were relatively young. They only formed the USAF [United States Air Force] I think towards the end of the war. Prior to that it was known as the United States Army Air Force. But

24:00 no, we had our difference of opinion. There were a few fights, not that I was involved in any, but others were.

What were the fights over?

Attitude probably more than anything. I know when we were in Korea there was no messes there. There was either aircrew or ground crew,

- 24:30 so if you were ground crew you were all in the one area. If you were aircrew, well you were in another hut. And we used to have, used to be Americans come to our ground crew club and they'd come and buy their two bottles. It was all bottled beer there. They'd come in and buy their two or three bottles of beer, go quietly and drink it and go home. They didn't like their clubs because they were noisy and coca cola and ice cream and all that was fine, but there was one big Negro used to come in.
- 25:00 He was a bonzer bloke. John was his name. I don't know his surname. But he'd come in very quietly. He'd buy two or three bottles of beer. And he was an avid reader, bring his books in and get over in the corner quietly and just read away. He liked it. No-one pestered him. No-one annoyed him. No-one picked on him because of his colour. One night one of our blokes had one or two beers too many. He didn't pick him, but to annoy him he thought... But this particular fellow had vivid blue eyes,
- 25:30 and this fellow walked up to him and sat down. He said, "Listen John, I admire you for lots of things, this, that and the other. But," he said, "there's one thing that intrigues me." He said, "Where did you get those vivid blue eyes from?" And this John put his books down. He said, "Man, you'd have guessed there must have been a nigger in the woodpile somewhere," just picked his book up and started reading again. But that's the type of fellow that he was. Put himself on the bottle roster. Every night someone was rostered to pick
- 26:00 up the empty bottles off the tables. He thought it was good enough for us to allow him to come in there and participate in our fun and liked to use the place, well it was good enough for him to help, so he did, and we admired him for it and respected him. He was terrific. We got along with the... As a matter of fact, we used to defend them. Some of the other Americans would pick on them because of their race and colour.
- 26:30 **What was the relationship like between the African Americans and the Americans?**
- It depended on where the white American came from. If he was a southerner there was a lot of hostility. If they were northerners or Yankees, as they called them, they were more tolerant and this was very evident. But we kept out of it, right out of it,
- 27:00 right out of it altogether.
- What kinds of things were said or done?**
- Some of the things were very cruel. I suppose there were... Not that we ever saw it, but they'd be isolated, just pushed aside. But we got on very well with them, very well. I was walking home from Iwakuni one night.
- 27:30 It was raining cats and dogs. I could hear this big six by six coming up behind me, cause the Americans wore their vehicles on left-hand drive and I was on the left-hand side of the road and he just stopped and he said, "Want a lift back to base, Aussie?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Hop in." So I went around the other side and got in. But down the road there were a couple of white Americans thumbing a lift. I think he found the biggest pool of water he could find, just drove on. But that was typical of
- 28:00 what went on. Like it's something we don't see here in Australia, or we didn't back in those times. Things have changed a bit now, unfortunately, but many changes around the place. No, we got on well with them, liked them.
- In Japan, what kind**
- 28:30 **of evidence was there of the economic dependence of the Japanese on the occupation forces in terms of the money that was...?**
- Recovery?
- Yeah.**
- At the time quite a bit. The Japanese, although all of our domestic staff, the ones that worked in the kitchen, the dining rooms
- 29:00 and in the dormitories, that was part of the war reparation. The Japanese government paid them. I don't know how much they paid them. We never asked. It was nothing to do with us. But after the war, because of the Japanese economy, it was on its knees and the yen was virtually worthless compared to what it is today, but full marks for them. Of course going
- 29:30 back before the war a lot of toys used to be made in Japan and now their parents wouldn't buy them. They were just rubbish. Well after the war they realised that if they were to get back on their feet again they would have to make goods to put on the world market that were of world quality that people in the world would buy, and this has happened, not only in major heavy industry
- 30:00 like ships and things like that, but cars. They improved their quality out of hand: cars, cameras, TVs [televisions], VCRs [Video Cassette Recorders]. It's top class. And as a result of that they capitalised on it. Of course they bought a lot of their raw materials from Australia, as we know. See that's why Japan went to war in the first place, because they just didn't have

30:30 the raw materials.

At that time when you were living in Japan, what did you see or feel about the pace of their recovery?

When I was there it was just in the first stages of recovery. See they hadn't even made any cars to export to Australia. It wasn't until the late '50s or round about the '60s that the first Japanese cars arrived in Australia

31:00 and they were looked upon with a little bit of scorn, I suppose, because of the past events and what had taken place. But full marks to them. They recovered. They persisted. And like you know yourself today, we can drive around the road and probably one in three cars that pass you, maybe more, are of Japanese origin, VCRs, cameras.

31:30 That's how well they've done and full marks to them. And they've also got a policy today that they don't become involved in world affairs as part of their constitution, but that was all in the embryo stage when I was there but since then its just grown exponentially.

How did you get to be transferred from Iwakuni to Kimpo?

32:00 It's a part of the internal system rotation. People just, or members just weren't sent to Kimpo for say the whole fifteen months' tour and left there. We were rotated within the wing. It was on a rotation basis. That's how it come about.

So when did you arrive in Kimpo?

February '53.

What was that place like?

Cold,

32:30 stark, a hive of activity. It's a big American base and we were there as lodgers, I suppose, or just another element. And the Americans were operating F-80s and F-86s; the Shooting Star was the 80 and the 86 was the Sabre, the early model Sabre. We were flying the Meteor, which wasn't a match for the MiG-15, but the

33:00 Meteor was excellent in ground support, rocketry from the 20 millimetre cannons that they were fitted with. But the base itself was huge; just the one big strip. There were other aircraft there too, like American B-26s in the main. They were part of the 67th Technical Reconnaissance Wing. They used to do reconnaissance work. And we

33:30 were fed by the Americans, as I said earlier, and that was part of the 67th Reconnaissance Wing. We had our own doctor. We didn't have our own dentist. We had to go to the dental section, 67 TRW [Technical Reconnaissance Wing], as we called it, for any dental work. They were magnificent. I had to see a dentist there. When I went into the orderly room the clerk behind

34:00 the desk said, "All the white dentists are busy. You'll have to wait. But," he said, "the black dentist," as he called him, "is free." I said, "I don't care what he is. I don't care about the colour of his skin, as long as he's a dentist." Well I went into his surgery and he was amazed that I would sit down, let him work on me. He was a big man but he was as gentle as could be. He was magnificent. He was surprised that I

34:30 sat down because the white Americans wouldn't go to him, obviously. I never asked him but it's just a feeling I got. He fixed me, so he must have been all right. He was all right.

What other facilities were there on that base?

Well you didn't go anywhere because you were confined to the base, couldn't go out. You worked six days, seven days a week,

35:00 eighteen hours a day.

What was the layout of the base like?

Well it was restricted. You couldn't go in lots of places. We were restricted to our area and even if you went for a late meal at night-time to the American mess, it would be nothing to be apprehended by one or two guards, American guards, "What were you doing there? What was your purpose?" And that used to not frighten us but we used to be concerned a bit cause they were a bit trigger happy,

35:30 and we used to say they fire first and ask questions afterwards. But we were restricted. We were kept in our own area. You weren't allowed to wander in other parts of the bases, no way. It was very restricted, seven days a week. You never left the base. We did go into Seoul one day on an organised tour, but even that was restricted. You only go to certain places and

36:00 no. It was restricted.

What was your accommodation like?

It was good, comfortable, in these tents except when Bed Check Charlie came around. Bed Check Charlie used to be a light aircraft that came in from North Korea and

36:30 he used to carry light bombs, used to cause a bit of confusion around the place. Never caused much damage. We had to get, when the air-raid siren went off we had to vacate our tents and get out in the trenches until he passed. But he used to come in very, very low. An older type aircraft, I believe it was. We never saw him because he always came in of a night, but he used to come in that low the American radar couldn't pick him up. He'd drop his few bombs and go back again.

37:00 Never caused us any problems, never hit any of our aircraft, although one did land near our accommodation area one night, caused a bit of damage. No-one was hurt, useless value, Bed Check Charlie. Check that we're all in bed, get us out.

Did you always get into the slit trenches?

37:30 Mostly. If it was comfortable in bed, well I stayed there, run the risk. There was a couple of times I didn't bother getting out, only a couple.

Did anything ever happen when you didn't go into the trenches?

Not to me it didn't, eleventh commandment, "Don't get caught."

38:00 **How far away were those trenches from where you were sleeping?**

Twenty, thirty metres, just away from the sleeping area so people didn't fall into them at night-time, cause they were open. They weren't guarded. There weren't guard rails or safety rails around them or warning signs to say 'Keep out' or 'Don't fall into this'. If you wandered off

38:30 and wandered into one, well you fell in. They'd be about twenty-five, thirty metres away from the tent lines.

And what was the layout of the tents like? How many men in a tent?

Eight. They were in two sections, and the one that I was in, someone prior to my arrival there set up one quarter of it into a sort of

39:00 kitchen so if you wanted a cup of coffee, tea, biscuits, have supper. There was no canteen to get it if you felt a bit peckish, so we used to 'acquire' certain lines from the American mess, take them back: bread, jam, butter, coffee, tea,

39:30 set ourselves up. But again that's Australians' nature, look after yourself and the people with you, at somebody else's expense. Not that we caused them any harm. We didn't cause anybody any harm, looked after ourselves. But eight to a tent as a rule, four each side with the big pot-belly stove in the middle,

40:00 kept us all warm in winter time, big oil burner.

What were the Americans' response to the Australians arriving at Kimpo?

Well we were asked. When the Korean conflict occurred I can't recall an exact history of it

40:30 but I have an idea there was contact made between the senior American officer at the time and the Australian or the British commander, whoever was in charge at the time. He could make a decision because it involved government policy because the Australian forces were to be pulled out of the occupation force shortly after or just before the North Koreans invaded South Korea,

41:00 and I think the matter was referred to the Australian government and they said yes, they would help the United Nations, or become part of the United Nations. And that's when 77 Squadron was the first one to be involved, shortly, fairly early in July I think it was. But to answer your question, we were just a token force but

41:30 because of our strategies and battle tactics they called upon the squadron... And this has been evidenced in what's taking place again right now in the Middle East. We're highly regarded as fighters. As a matter of fact I think it was Rommel, who was

42:00 the commander of the Afrika Korps in Germany...

Tape 7

00:32 **Mr Field, I just wanted to ask you one more question about Iwakuni. You mentioned earlier that you had Japanese former servicemen working with you. Can you explain who they were and what their role was?**

The eldest one of the three was in the Japanese army during the war and he saw service in China, or so

he told me. He was quite a

- 01:00 timid, very, almost subservient. If you asked him to do anything he couldn't do it fast enough for you, very obedient. And the other fellow, the next one, the middle one, he was a Japanese fighter pilot during the war. He was very well educated, very fluent in the English language
- 01:30 and he was good to talk to, and I got his confidence a number of times and we used to discuss things and he would talk about them quite openly, and he didn't say in as many words but I got the indication that he admired the Australians and to a slightly lesser extent the British because of their
- 02:00 tolerance, I suppose, or attitude towards a conflict. The last major battle he ever, air battle had ever fought was with British fighters just south of Japan. They knew about this fleet coming up, obviously to attack the Japanese mainland, and they sent bombers ahead and they timed when the fighters would arrive, and the bombers arrived over the fleet. But what they didn't know,
- 02:30 he said that there was a British, one or two British aircraft carriers mixed up with them and their radar must have warned them of the approaching Japanese bombers. Or they wouldn't know that they were bombers, but there were aircraft approaching. And they scrambled their fighters and they were sitting up top waiting for them. Course when the bombers arrived, the fighters arrived and the Brits were sitting up top in the sun. They couldn't see them and they made a mess of them.
- 03:00 And fighters couldn't stay to defend the bombers because they never had the fuel. And he was saying there was several never made it back to their base because they just ran out of fuel and crashed in the sea. Others were shot down, never made it, but he was more fortunate. But he was very, very tolerant. He was good to talk to but he had no bitterness.

You had followed the progress in the operations of World War II quite intensely. What was it like to

- 03:30 **get that perspective from the former enemy?**

Well I s'pose they're human like everybody else. He didn't say and I didn't ask whether he was forced into the air force or conscripted. I don't know.

- 04:00 It might have been against his will but, like everybody else, other countries, if you're conscripted by government legislation, the armed forces, well you go or you suffer the consequences. And of course the Japanese in those days the consequences were harsh, horrific, and I suppose they would do similar things to their own if necessary. I don't know. But no, he
- 04:30 didn't show any animosity towards us at all. I never experienced the animosity cause I... Well he was the only... They were the only two that I knew of. And there were probably others that worked in other parts of the station, or out in the hangars, that may have been ex-servicemen. I don't know cause I didn't go around and ask people. If they volunteered it, well that was a different matter, but it's not my style to go around and ask people
- 05:00 what they are or what they do, no more than I ask you what you do or anybody else for that matter. I may be interested. If you indicate what you do, well then I'll take it a little further, particularly if it interests me. If it doesn't, well I just let the matter drop.

How did their style of engineering fit in with the RAAF?

Well they worked for us and we told them what we wanted done. Their standard of workmanship

- 05:30 was good. The fellow that was in the section that worked, that wasn't ex-army, Japanese army, he was very, very good. I can't recall ever having to correct any of his work, or the fellows that worked with him, Luck Ma Bin, having to complain about him. Even the younger fellow, he did most of the work on the aircraft because the Meteor was relatively... Like most fighters, everything's jammed in tight. We used to get him into tight spaces,
- 06:00 tight spots, where we couldn't get. And he would do the work as diligently as any one of our fellows and we never had any reason to, put it this way, to suspect that they would cause problems or they'd ever sabotage anything. We never even thought along those lines and I don't think they had any intent.

Did they ever offer any perspective on the war with North Korea?

No, not to my knowledge.

- 06:30 See Japan occupied North Korea in the early twentieth century. Then it became part of the Japanese empire and they lost it after the Second World War because it was divided or split and that's how the conflict came, well the Korean War came about. But they never offered any, they may have amongst themselves in their own language, which we couldn't understand
- 07:00 other than the odd word you'd pick up, but when they put it together it meant nothing to us. They may have discussed this amongst themselves but they didn't ever with us.

What uniform did they wear?

Working for us? Nothing, just ordinary civilian clothes because they were civvies. They were no longer part of the Japanese armed forces.

So once you were at Kimpo and working on the American base, how did the RAAF system incorporate

07:30 **with the American style of engineering?**

Well we're two separate identities. We didn't have anything to do with theirs and they didn't have anything to do with ours. We were operating British aircraft, which the Americans knew little or nothing about. They didn't fly our aircraft, we didn't fly theirs, cause the pilots were not cross-trained, so we stuck to our side of the fence and they kept to theirs. But we used to get our

08:00 operations from them, so they knew what we were doing and we didn't overlap.

What was the nature of those operations in 77 Squadron?

At this time our basic role was ground support, which was rocketry and gunnery. And every now and then our fellows would get jumped by MiGs, well

08:30 it'd become air-to-air combat but that was rare. Our role was ground attack, attacking transport supplies, troop movements, troop centres, troop concentrations, blocking tunnels with rockets. While I was there there was a huge convoy of North Korean troops moving down a road, so our fellows waited until they got into a tunnel, filled in

09:00 both ends with rockets. How many they trapped they don't know in the way of personnel or vehicles. But that was our role in the main: support.

But they were Meteors?

Yes.

What specifically made the Meteor suitable for that sort of ground attack?

It was a little bit ancient. It was designed during the Second World War, or the latter end of the Second World War it came into use.

09:30 The British used the Meteor I think against the V-1 bombs. They used to fly up beside them and put their wings under the wing of the V-1 and cause the gyro in the V-1 to topple a little bit, and they'd direct them back towards Europe, or if it didn't have the range it'd crash in the channel, or the sea, the North Sea. And of course

10:00 we bought them because we couldn't get the American Sabre at the time and we weren't making them here in Australia. The Americans couldn't keep up their supply to meet their own needs, so we had to opt for the Meteor and that's the reason why we bought them. But they were a little bit out of date or they'd passed their use-by date, modern idiom, so far as aerial combat was. The MiG-15 was superior in speed and

10:30 manoeuvrability and that's why the Meteor was relegated to a ground support role, which they proved to be quite efficient because they carried lots of rockets. We could put sixteen rockets, yeah, sixteen HE [High Explosive] rockets and eight napalm rockets on them. They were very effective.

How frequently were the Meteors equipped with napalm?

Only when required.

11:00 Again we'd get these requests from the Americans but we never used napalm. We didn't use it that much. I know we had a huge stack of napalm at Kimpo but a lot of it was there when I left and the war finished shortly afterwards, so I don't know where it finished up; couldn't tell you.

Did you ever see napalm dispensed?

11:30 You mean fired? No, only pilots would see that and the receivers on the end of it. It was horrific apparently, the effect, cause once it lodged on something it just stayed there and burnt. If you tried to brush it off you only spread the fire. That's what we were told. We used to handle it rather gingerly when we were loading the rockets

12:00 and the rockets were unstable because of the large heads. There wasn't enough air flowing around the fins to keep the rockets stable. Unlike HE rockets, was a small head and the large fins and there was plenty of air passing up ahead and down past the motor sections around the fins to keep the rockets stable. Pilots were a little bit wary of them because well they could topple like that. They'd fire them and move out of the way rather quickly,

12:30 so we were told.

Were there many incidents or accidents involving those problematic rockets?

One that I can recall, The pilot, we don't know whether the electrics

13:00 failed or what happened. I have my view on that but the pilot blamed the electrics and we couldn't find any fault with the electrics.

So what actually happened?

Well he couldn't release four of his rockets. And they have to pull out of the dive and make their recovery long before they get in near ground level, and if you've got these extra four rockets hanging on with the extra weight it was a little bit dicey for the pilot.

13:30 And because it makes the aircraft unstable, he pulled that much G [G force - Gravity] that the rocket heads, what will I say, bent. Instead of being in line with a rocket motor they were hanging down on an angle because he had all of that extra resistance, air resistance, on the way back, which made his landing difficult because he couldn't judge his landing speed, made that coming over the fence a bit, say at say a hundred a forty knots, well maybe he had to come in at over a hundred and sixty knots, so he landed much faster.

14:00 I don't know. Only the pilot would know that but it caused quite a stir at the time.

Were there reconnaissance flights to determine the damage that...?

Yes. The Americans did that in the main to assess the damage but, as I said here earlier, we had one Meteor in 1982. It was fitted with a special American camera.

14:30 All Meteors had cameras, so they'd take photographs of where the shell of the rockets were going. And there used to be a sixteen frame overrun, so when the camera, they'd start the camera running with the camera button and it would continue to run until they pressed either the rocket release button or the gun, pull the gun trigger and there's always a sixteen frame overrun. But the cameras were fairly basic.

15:00 The images were quite poor. But this one aircraft, they bought this American camera and fitted it and it used to come back with some magnificent shots, cause it always went in last and took a movie film of the damage done by the previous aircraft and when it hit the targets, so they could see where the rockets landed and where the gunfire had landed and things like that. But so far as reconnaissance, no.

15:30 We weren't involved in that. The Americans used to do that.

So with this particular Meteor, who maintained and equipped the aircraft with the photographic?

The photographers looked after the photographic equipment. Other than that it was just a normal aircraft, so it was used for rocketry, gunnery, whatever, but the photographers looked after the photographic equipment, loaded the camera, or loaded this particular camera with film.

16:00 After the mission they would go and recover it and process it.

What role do you think these ground attacks played in the war overall?

Well we were in support of the Australian, or the British Commonwealth forces, the Australians and New Zealanders, the British and Canadians. We were supporting them. Occasionally we went out if the Americans asked us and support their troops if they were being harassed or shelled,

16:30 long-range artillery, but we supported the British Commonwealth Forces in the main.

So how important were the ground attacks in terms of the war?

Excellent because, as you can imagine, you can see a lot more from upstairs than what you can from down at ground level and they could see troop movements, transport movements

17:00 and attack them. And, as I said earlier, they even followed the convoy into a tunnel one day and when they were all in this tunnel they filled in both ends with rockets, so that stopped a lot of troops, ammunition, other supplies getting to their front. So if you stopped one truck, well you probably saved someone's life. But they were very, very effective in the ground support role,

17:30 excellent cause they carried good weaponry in the form of rockets, HE rockets, which were, yeah, they were very effective, HEs and armour piercing.

How many Meteors were actually part of that squadron?

Squadron strength was sixteen.

18:00 Out of the sixteen there could be more. It could be less, depending on the serviceability. If an aircraft had suffered extensive damage which was beyond our ability to repair at Kimpo, well we'd make it serviceable enough to fly to Iwakuni where it would go back for heavy maintenance. One aircraft when I was there suffered a lot of damage one day. Pilot was lucky to get back. He got back and landed safely and we just made it

18:30 serviceable enough to fly back to Iwakuni, where it underwent extensive servicing or under extensive

repairs I should say.

While you were there, how many pilots didn't return?

During my tour? Four or five.

And how and when would you become aware of that flight mission?

- 19:00 The aircraft missing? You'd hear about it before they landed, over the air radio. Not that we had air radio in our section but the intelligence hut did. Like the aircraft in 1952 was shot down and the pilot ejected and survived. He was a POW. The area of concern that day for me, because he was a friend of mine. He was an electrical fitter before he joined aircrew or trained
- 19:30 as a pilot, but I strapped him in and what we had to do, the pilots would get in the seat and we had to help them strap in, connect up their radio, their oxygen supply, and when they were all strapped in we would remove the safety pin from the ejection seat, show it to the pilot that the seat was then armed, it wasn't safe, and he would put his hands on the ejection handle otherwise he'd be blasted into the air.
- 20:00 But we'd pull the pin, show it to the pilot and start, and then we'd start him up and starting up was just standing in front and saying, "Well it's all clear." Then when the engine started you'd disconnect the battery cart, pull away the chocks and away they'd go. But I strapped him in and I think, "I hope I did everything right," because what you helped him do assisted him to get out safely.
- 20:30 And when I found out that he'd ejected and that he was seen to land in enemy territory, landed safely, well it's relief from the person that strapped them in because you know you did your bit of the preparation for it.

What sort of things, though, do you experience given that you're the person in charge of how that plane flies once it's left?

There's a lot of people involved

- 21:00 in getting the aircraft to the stage where the pilot gets in it. That's all the musterings. They make the aircraft serviceable. When the pilot gets in it and you strap him in, it's his responsibility to make sure that he's strapped in properly and all his parachute harnesses are done up correctly, his dinghy, his survival equipment. Whilst he connects his oxy [oxygen] hose and
- 21:30 his radio, you're the one that pulls the safety pin out of the ejection seat, which arms the seat and it stays armed till either he returns and it's the first thing you do. You may not see the same person back in as you saw out because you just line up when they come in willy-nilly and whoever stops in front of you, hope that he doesn't pull the trigger, stops in front of you. He shuts the engines down. You step on the side
- 22:00 of the aircraft, the first thing you do. He opens the canopy first, of course, to give you access to the cockpit. You pull the disc out of the stowage and put it back in the seat, so that it's no longer armed. It's safe. But it's not so much a worry but you think to yourself, "Have I done it properly?" Because we all make mistakes. We're all human. Some people make more mistakes than others. Some are not so
- 22:30 prone. Yes, it's a worry because what you do, someone's life depends on it. Even oxygen, cause once you get above ten thousand feet the old oxygen's getting a bit short, twenty thousand's too bad. When you're sitting up round about forty thousand, forget about it, so those things you, it's like plugging a radio in properly.
- 23:00 Well he would know before he left if his radio wasn't plugged in because they always do a radio check. But it's the other things that you can't check on that you hope you've done properly. And I s'pose I've made some mistakes but nothing that I can recall that ever cost a pilot his life, or ever caused a pilot to be in a tight situation.
- 23:30 **So what were the major reasons why a plane would go down over Korea?**
- Ground fire. Ninety per cent of it, probably more, was ground fire cause they'd go in low on the rocketry runs and they'd pull out. A couple didn't pull out. Now whether they were hit by ground fire, wounded, killed, we don't know.
- 24:00 Another problem is target fixation. That's a term they used, or pilots used, was to get that target in the gun sight properly, and whilst they're doing that they're descending at a rapid rate of knots. In other words the ground's coming up at a very fast rate. By the time they realise it, it's too late. They haven't got enough time or space to recover. That happened a number of times.
- 24:30 And whether it was target fixation or whether it was ground fire you don't know, but a number of aircraft were hit either on approach or over the target area or climbing away after attack. The fellow that was shot down, the last one to be made a POW, he was hit by ground fire as he recovered, but the aircraft was extensively damaged and he lost control. He had no alternative
- 25:00 but to eject. Another pilot was hit one day. The aircraft was extensively damaged, throttles were jammed open. He couldn't use some of his surface controls, an RAF pilot on exchange, but he was able

to get the aircraft back over the bomb line as we call it, back into friendly territory. He plucked up the courage, jettisoned the canopy and pulled the blind and left it.

25:30 That was interesting to read his account of... He was afraid of ejecting. He didn't know what to expect. But he said it was a relief after everything worked. He was dangling on a parachute and there was no way he could have ever landed the aircraft. He couldn't control the engines. They were at full power; can't have full power coming in to land. But

26:00 he survived, wrote up the experience. It was good reading, very good. No, ground fire was the cause of most of our ground losses.

Were you ever involved in any crash recovery of aircraft?

Yes at Sale, wasn't nice, charred bodies,

26:30 yeah. Two pilots, both the same surname and not related.

Were they pilots in training at Sale?

Yes. That was early '52, shocking event. I saw many

27:00 aircraft crashes but I wasn't directly involved with them. This one I was involved in the recovery out on a farm, terrible. I've seen other crash landings, particularly Meteors come back. Again,

27:30 ground fire, couldn't get their undercarriage down, would have to do a belly landing, quite extensive damage to the underside of the aircraft, the engine cells, but we'd recovered them, lift them up, get the undercarriage down, repair them enough to get them back to Iwakuni and they'd undergo extensive repairs and they'd come back into service again.

How often was

28:00 **a plane written off?**

I suppose written off, you mean as a result of a crash landing or a heavy landing or war damage, the lot? Well we had a graveyard at the back of our hangar at Kimpo and I can see, visualise four or five aircraft there now,

28:30 a couple during my stay there, others before. But we used them as Christmas trees as we used to call it. If another aircraft wanted a panel or something or other, if one of the aircraft had it, well you just took it and put it in one of the aircraft that were damaged. Christmas trees we called them, just go and take it off it, put it on the damaged aircraft and throw the damaged bit away.

29:00 We wouldn't throw it away but dispose of it properly.

So they were aircraft that had been flown back to base but were then considered unserviceable?

Either crash landings, belly landings, heavy landings. When the squadron returned from Korea to Japan we lost an aircraft on approach. The pilot undershot and hit the seawall,

29:30 an old 139 I think it was. It didn't come back to Australia. A lot of them got caught up in jet wash as we used to call it. They'd come in too close, or too close to the fellow in front of him, cause the air's all disturbed and when you're on final, well your speed's critical. If the air around you is turbulent, well you can lose control.

30:00 That's what happened to this fellow.

So during these ground attack missions, how many planes would be in a convoy?

In a flight or a section? Well there could be four, six or eight, depending on the role and what was required and the number of aircraft would be allocated. It varied. There was no fixed, they'd always go out in pairs. They'd never go out on their own, at least two, probably four, but pilots never

30:30 patrolled on their own. There was always someone there to keep an eye; they kept an eye on one another.

Were any of those pilots veterans of World War II?

Yes, many of them, with the sprinkling of the post-war pilots coming through. COs, all the COs were, commanding officers, were World War II,

31:00 some decorated. Flight commanders, they were World War II. One of them doesn't live very far from here. They were all commissioned officers, liked by everybody, respected. They were good.

What did those pilots tell you later about their prisoner of war

31:30 **experiences?**

Not much. This fellow that I strapped in, he was the one I was speaking to last year and I'm not one to probe. I don't say much. Although when he was released and he come back to Iwakuni, he came into my room early hours one morning. He was a bit

- 32:00 tipsy, shall I say. He didn't say much and I didn't ask him. We spoke about other things. He just wanted someone to talk to, someone that he knew relatively well outside his own aircrew, yeah, someone he could talk to. I didn't tell him to go to bed. I didn't tell him I wanted to get
- 32:30 some sleep. I just sat there and listened to him. But no, he didn't talk about his ordeal. None of them do. It's something that seems to be ingrained into them. They don't talk. Just like POWs. They don't talk. They might if you win their confidence, but just to start talking about it... Whether they don't want to tell other people,
- 33:00 thinking other people think it's all made up, it's a dream. They don't want to create that impression. POWs, people that are shot down are the same, and I respect their wishes. I don't probe. If they want to talk, I'll listen.

You mentioned you'd been fired upon by Bed Check Charlie, what knowledge

- 33:30 **did you have generally about the enemy's air forces?**

Not much because there was no need for us to fear air attacks because they never had the aircraft to start an air war. The only aircraft that the North Koreans had, and the Chinese and the Russians were resisting then,

- 34:00 were MiGs. They never attempted any heavy or massive bombing raids, other than those nuisance raids by Bed Check Charlie but he only carried light bombs, something like the African twenty-five pounders. He used to get in occasionally and drop a few bombs around the place but they missed mostly, dropped out in the vacant areas cause they had no idea where they were probably, or where the aircraft were located. Well they might
- 34:30 know but see they never had any air reconnaissance, so they were just a nuisance value more than anything, so much so that once in a while we wouldn't even bother getting out of bed for them, run the risk That's Australians for you. You buck the system like you do.

Where was Kimpo in proximity to Seoul?

West

- 35:00 a few miles. It was between Seoul and the coast of Inch'on, inland a bit.

The war in Korea had pushed back and forth a lot, how safe was that base considered in terms of the shifting front line?

By this time, the time I got there, it was fairly safe. It was fairly static. The Chinese and the North Koreans did make a couple of massive

- 35:30 assaults but they were repelled. We were never in any peril. Once it got a bit hectic. The Americans on the base started to vacate but we didn't.

What was the evidence of things becoming hectic, what were the Americans actually doing?

At this particular time the Chinese had made a breakthrough somewhere, a bit of a thrust. I don't know where

- 36:00 but we never, didn't concern us. I s'pose it did concern us but we didn't panic, put it that way. If we had to evacuate, well they'd have got us out somehow but there was no thought of flying aircraft in from Iwakuni to evacuate us, not that we knew of. It might have been on the books and they might have been on standby but we were never alerted to it. We were never told to go and pack our stuff and destroy
- 36:30 this and make it as safe as possible. We just carried on with our daily routine.

Did the Americans look like they were beginning to evacuate?

Well they were starting to become mobile but the breakthrough or the thrust by the Chinese army was stopped and they just settled down again. But they were on the move. We knew that.

What do you mean? What were they actually physically doing?

Well they were packing up stuff,

- 37:00 getting their personnel ready to evacuate. They had trucks galore. I don't know where they came from, but we weren't involved. We weren't even, we knew about it because of the pilots coming back from the debriefs but we were never warned of any need to evacuate, so we didn't pay much attention to it.

How had your feelings or concepts of the

- 37:30 **war changed once you were on the ground in Korea?**

I wondered why we were there. Well I knew why we were there, but was it worth it? As we used to say, "I wouldn't exchange a cubic yard of Australia for the whole of the Korean Peninsula." That's what we thought of the place.

38:00 Of course in those days it was very backward. There was no industry. If there was industry it was rural, agricultural. They just grew enough food to sustain themselves, not like it is today. It's changed. South Korea has, anyway. I don't know about North Korea.

38:30 You don't know much about it.

What sort of village life was there in the surrounds of Kimpo?

Village? Don't know. We weren't allowed out. There was a small village adjacent to the camp but there was a high wire fence all the way around. They couldn't get in and we didn't want to get out anyway.

Why's that?

Make it safe.

39:00 Make it I s'pose to keep them out because you don't know who they are. Same as it was in Vietnam. You couldn't tell the difference between North and South. I suppose they couldn't tell the difference between us, like the Australians and New Zealanders. But there was a high wire fence all the way around the perimeter. We didn't want to get out anyway, nothing to do, nowhere to go, no clubs or hotels.

Why were you posted back

39:30 **to Iwakuni?**

I finished my tour of duty with my rotational basis. We used to do five or six months depending on the number of personnel in each particular mustering, but our particular mustering was about five months rotational basis. Went back to Iwakuni to 491 Maintenance Squadron, where we did heavy maintenance on the Meteors. I was in charge of the section there.

40:00 That's where I had the Japanese fellows working for me, plus Australians.

And at what point did you become part of the Welcome Home operation?

That didn't take place until the squadron arrived back in Australia. The squadron was operating out of Pusan its last few months in Korea and then the Australian government decided that all Australian forces would, this was after the ceasefire,

40:30 all Australian forces would be withdrawn, including 77 Squadron. It returned to Iwakuni. The Meteors had their wings removed and the aircraft were prepared for return to Australia and they were brought back on the aircraft carrier Vengeance, HMAS Vengeance. The rest of us, all the maintenance personnel and the backup personnel, equipment, medical, stores, drivers, transport,

41:00 were returned to Australia progressively as they could be spared. I was one of the... There were eighty air force came back on the New Australia. It was a migrant ship and it had been under contract to the Australian government to take off the migrant run, send it to Japan to bring back the Australian Army. We left Iwakuni early one morning

41:30 by launch. We went to Kure and joined the New Australia, along with some Australian and New Zealander army personnel. We left Kure and sailed around the tip to Pusan and we took on board the remains of the Australian Army, remains of the Kiwis [New Zealanders], and we headed home. Didn't sight land until we come down the east coast of Australia, pulled into Brisbane.

Tape 8

00:34 **Before I talk about the return home, I just want to ask a couple more questions about Japan and Korea. In Korea I wanted to ask did the Americans have names for their planes?**

As in names other than numbers? Yes.

What kinds of names or decorations did they have?

Well they referred to their aircraft as a rule

01:00 by their F number or P number. F-80s were Shooting Stars. F-86s were the Sabres.

How about nicknames and things?

No, never heard of any nicknames, no, never. I'm not saying they didn't have them but because we weren't associated all that much with the Americans we never got to hear about them. They may have had nicknames amongst themselves but no, we

01:30 never picked up on, never.

When you were back in Japan at Iwakuni, I just want to talk to you about the work that you did there. What kind of relationship did you have with the Americans there during that time?

With the American navy it was very good. When I say the American navy, the air arm of the American navy. Not only did they have their fleet or ships at sea

02:00 but they also had aircraft and they used to do a lot of weather reccies [reconnaissance flights]. The aircraft they used there were privateers and they were a naval version of the old Liberator bomber, very much like a Liberator to look at. I think they probably were Liberators but they were heavily modified or altered. The C-47s, well the one we used, the old

02:30 Dakotas, they had a lot of equipment that's interchangeable with the Americans and so if we were ever short of an item or two we approached them and they had no qualms in giving it to us, and likewise the American navy used our hangar occasionally if they ever had to put an aircraft in under cover. They never had hangars.

How different was the training that they had received in maintenance compared to the Australians?

Different.

03:00 To give you an example, an Australian airman trained on engines, he would have to look after all components on the engine, whether it be the carburettor, the magneto, spark plugs, he was trained in the lot. The Americans, they just specialised. They might work on engines but they'd be specialists in spark plugs, magnetos, propellers, carburettors, engine

03:30 mounts, something like this. So if they ever got, an aircraft was snagged, say the engine was running roughly, well the carburettor bloke would blame the magneto bloke and the magneto bloke would blame the plug bloke. The plug blokes they hadn't asked not to release the harness and it used to go round and round in a circle and it used to amaze us. Whereas if we sent one of our engine fitters say, "Listen, this engine's not running too well. Go out and fix it," well he had to look at all aspects of it; what could be causing the problem?

04:00 So he had to diagnose the problem and he had to turn around and fix it. But the Americans, they had to decide in the first place who was responsible to fix what. It used to amaze us. But that's just the difference in their approach. They got there, long way around compared to ours.

You mentioned earlier that there weren't any specific weather problems in Japan

04:30 **because you were working in hangars. How about in Korea? What were the conditions like there?**

We had a lean-to if we had to put an aircraft under cover, but it was just a roof, didn't keep the wind out, so the snow couldn't fall on you. But the wind used to get through and that was the problem, the chill factor. Cold is one thing. When you put that chill factor in with it,

05:00 it's like being out at Orange on a windy day in winter compared to here.

What were you wearing in Korea while you were doing the maintenance?

As much as you could. In the middle of winter we would, well you'd have your normal underclothes on. No, you wouldn't have a singlet. We used to wear, we used to call them an onion bag singlet. It was made out of

05:30 very coarse wool, I suppose. I don't know. But squares, it'd be made up of squares of about twenty centimetres, twenty millimetre squares. You'd pull this on first and just put your singlet over the top of it, so that formed air pockets, and we'd have a thick wool shirt and a jumper and you'd have

06:00 a coat, combat coat. Over that you'd have a parka they used to call it, great big hood with the wire frame and you'd pull the flap up between your legs after you'd zipped it up and buttoned up. And we used to have three pairs of long pants on. You'd have long underpants made of cotton, wool material, and you'd have these really thick

06:30 woollen over-pants over the top of them again. Then you'd have a pair of cotton pants over that again, which you'd wash every day, to keep you warm, two pairs of socks. Always wore gloves, two pairs of gloves. And the parka, you'd pull it up over your head with the wire and you'd bend the wire and you'd have a very, very narrow field of vision, so if you wanted to look at somebody

07:00 you had to turn maybe a hundred and eighty degrees or ninety degrees. You couldn't turn your head. And I can remember the moisture in your breath would get on the woollen lining inside the hood and form little icicles and they used to wrap up against your cheeks and round here. You'd finished up with a rash because it was like sandpaper, worse than sandpaper.

07:30 It was cold, bitterly cold.

How did you do the maintenance work wearing gloves?

With some difficulty. If it was refuelling or the armourers were fitting or refilling the ammo [ammunition] bins and rearming the aircraft, well they were large objects and you

- 08:00 could handle them through gloves, but we electrical people and the radio too and the instrument people handled very small screws. It was a problem. Being so cold we had trouble with micro switches on the aircraft. They were made of bakelite or a type of plastic. It'd get that cold they'd used to get that hard and brittle they used to break. You'd have to change
- 08:30 them and replace them. They had very small screws to hold the leads in. Well there's no way in the world you could pick up a small screw with a pair of gloves on, so you'd set everything up as best you could, everything in position, pliers, screwdriver, with your gloves on, and me being right handed, you'd whip your right hand out of your gloves and you'd put it up under your armpit to get some warmth in it, warm feeling. When you think the time was right
- 09:00 you'd whip it out, pick up the screw and hopefully you'd get it in before you lost all sense of feeling in your fingers. If you didn't get it in, well you started again. That was what we had to do. That's in the middle of winter when it was bitterly cold. That would be in February, March when I was there. That's where I got infected
- 09:30 antrums, or sinus trouble. They put it down to a very, very fine dust, comes off the Gobi Desert. That's why the Koreans, well we were told, had these very, very slitty eyes, to keep the dust out of the eyes. Not like you and I with much more wider eyes. They've got just small slits to see through. Apparently over the years their eyes have gone that way just to keep the dust out.
- 10:00 But I got dust. Well they put my antrum, sinus trouble down to the dust because I went into hospital at Kure after I got back for a fortnight.

How did the dust and the cold affect the operations of the planes?

Didn't, made them hard to start. The only reason why they were harder to start was

- 10:30 we used battery carts. If the batteries weren't charged fully or up to a certain level they wouldn't discharge the amount of current required to turn the engines over. In the warmer weather it wasn't a problem. In the cold weather it was cause anything that's cold, doesn't matter what it is, takes more to turn over when it's colder than it does when it's much warmer, like an ordinary car
- 11:00 engine. Aircraft engines are no different. That was our problem though, electrical. We had quite a few wet starts, as we used to call them. The batteries didn't have sufficient energy to bring the engine up to self sustaining revs and they were all timed. They had two different timing switches which controlled all the
- 11:30 starting sequences. If the engine never came up to self sustaining revs, well it just shut down until you went and found a battery cart that had the required energy to kick the engines over. This was a bit of a, it was a problem but it'd be just the cold weather that brought it about.

How would the spare parts, apart from the plane graveyard which you could raid, how were other spare parts obtained?

From Iwakuni.

- 12:00 We had a good supply at Iwakuni. We kept items at Kimpo like high usage items, globes in the main, fuses, batteries. But other items they gave us very little trouble, like starter motors, relays, fuel pumps, generators. They rarely failed. Globes used to fail,
- 12:30 burn out, but if we wanted any major items, well we used to ask Iwakuni to send them over, which they would on the next aircraft. We wouldn't have to wait for them if there was nothing available in the graveyard.

When you were back in Iwakuni you were in charge of men there. What kind of men did you have under your command?

What do you mean?

Well what stories do you have to tell about them?

- 13:00 Good. I had a good crew, a very good crew. Some I knew before I went there. They'd worked with me or for me back here and they knew me before I arrived. Sometimes that's a good thing, sometimes not so good. But no, I had a really good crew, excellent crew as a matter of fact,
- 13:30 magnificent.

Were there any funny stories of what went on?

Yeah, some that I can repeat, some I can't, I won't.

Which are the ones that you can repeat?

I could tell you one incident. A fellow up there, I tried to locate him twelve or eighteen months ago through a Vet Affairs [Department of Veterans' Affairs] magazine. I put an ad in there but he didn't respond but many others did, so I don't know whether he's still with us or whether he's

- 14:00 not here any more. I don't know. But he was a bit of a character. He was as loyal as you'd get anyone. He was as loyal can be but when he played he played hard, and this day they were to go to Kure to play rugby union. They were either playing the Kiwis or the Brits. I don't know who they were playing. But when they got up there it was a wet day, so they called the match off, so they went on a pub crawl.
- 14:30 Most uncharacteristic of Australians to go on a pub crawl! Anyway on the Monday morning he turned up for work. God, he looked like he'd been fifteen rounds with a revolving door! And I said, "It must have been a rough game of football yesterday." He said, "We didn't play." And I said, "Well how come you look like this?" He said, "We went on a pub crawl." I said, "Did you?" I said, "That's typical. It
- 15:00 looks like you were on a pub crawl." And he said, "It's more than that." I said, "Is there?" I said, "What is it?" He said, "We got into trouble with the British Red Caps [Military Police]." I said, "Did you?" He said, "Yeah, they finished up locking us up but they let us go." I said, "Did they?" And he said, "I've got no money." He said, "I had to flog my identity card."
- 15:30 Now that was a cardinal sin to flog your identity card to get a loan on it. I picked up the phone straight away and I rang transport section. I said, "I want a jeep to take this fellow up to his block, so he can get dressed and drive him straight down to marine section," because every day we had a vessel used to go across to Kure. And I said, "How much did you flog your card for?" He said, "I think there was thirty thousand yen." So I went up to my room
- 16:00 and got forty thousand or something like that, gave it to him and I said, "Now, right. Away you go. And keep out of trouble," because I wasn't supposed to do it. But I covered for him and he didn't let me down. But he went back to Kure, got his card, come back and thanked me for it. That's all was said. He said, "You'll get your money back pay day," and I said, "That's all right." Didn't say any more. But I got my money back. Lots of things like that. You looked after your blokes that worked for you.
- 16:30 He was, not only him, but others. They did similar things. But if they worked for you, well I always used to maintain, "Your NCO or officer is only as good as the men that he commands, and when you've learnt to obey you've learnt to command, so you can command." That's always been my motto. And I never had any trouble.
- 17:00 I did at the finish. When I was at Amberley I had problems, not of my making but I became involved. I never had any problems. I enjoyed working with the lot of them. We'd have our differences of opinion but it never festered any further than that, so it was good.

What about special occasions at Christmas, or I understand

- 17:30 **also there was a Coronation Day?**

No. Coronation, well that was when the Queen got a new hat. The Americans gave us a day off to celebrate, so we did.

Was this at Kimpo?

Yeah. Celebrated all right. I went for breakfast but I didn't have it.

- 18:00 I couldn't stand the look of those greasy eggs and greasy sausages and bacon. Leave it at that. Christmas was good, Christmas '53 at Iwakuni. I played the piano a bit those times and after dinner we went into the mess or into the drinking area.
- 18:30 We had a few beers and someone dragged the piano out, so I sat around there and we had a bit of a singsong and it came near midnight and there were church services we held. There were two chapels on the base, so we decided to go to a midnight church. It's a wonder the place didn't fall in.
- 19:00 A lot of us were heathens, I s'pose, but we still went. We enjoyed it. One bloke got challenged by the padre. He said, "You're in the wrong place." This fellow said, "Don't tell me where to go."

Why was that? Was he...?

Well we weren't to a particular denomination. He was another one. I won't say which but

- 19:30 the padre was of another denomination and he knew that he wasn't one of his flock. And this fellow was a bit put out about it. He said, "I'll decide where I go, not you." It was nothing more than that. It was just one of those funny things. We knew he wasn't of a particular creed but we also knew he was not one of those you wouldn't make aware of it either.
- 20:00 Fixed the padre dead to his, what will I say, a misunderstanding. But no, we still enjoyed ourselves. We didn't cause any harm and we didn't harm anybody else. You'd feel a bit sick and sorry for it the next day but okay, you're young and silly. The old saying goes, "To be old and wise you had to be young and

silly once." I don't do it now.

The Coronation Day,

20:30 **how strongly did Australians feel about that day and how strong were the links to the British monarchy?**

I suppose there was some connection in those times because in those days if you went to the pictures, before the picture started they used to play the national anthem. Everyone stood. Unlike today, they don't even play the Australian anthem, so there was a certain amount of allegiance

21:00 I think. I never heard any adverse comments or criticisms of the day. I suppose if anything we were quite pleased to see that she got a new hat. I don't know. It didn't worry me.

How did you celebrate that day?

The day? Staying in bed, trying to get well again.

What had you done the previous night?

I think the food must have been off.

21:30 Something was off. No, I had too much to drink. But it's another old adage too, "If you wake up sick in the morning after a bad night out, you know as the day goes on you're only going to... You'll get better." If you wake up with an illness, well you don't know where you're going to finish up at the end of the day, do you? With hangovers, you must get better. No, that's how we celebrated.

22:00 But as for the attitude towards the British, or the monarchy, as I say, in those days even when I operated at the cinema as the projectionist, when you turned the lights down you played the national anthem, everyone stood. Then you rolled into the newsreels or whatever the case may be. And in those days it used to be the King, and he'd come up

22:30 on the screen and everybody stood. As soon as it was over they all sat down and you went into your newsreels, in those days newsreels. Then you might have a short [film] or two. Then you went into the support and then there was the interval and then you went into the main feature film after that. I worked for the Americans in Iwakuni for a while. They had trouble keeping their projectionist. We had three nights a week and they had four, so I was

23:00 working seven days a week. During the day I was working in the section and I used to sneak off a bit early, have a shower and change, have an early dinner and go across to the cinema, check the film, which we had to do, rewind it back and check it to see that there were no breaks or broken sprocket holes, prepare it, load the projectors and start rolling at six o'clock. I've got a group certificate, taxation group certificate, around here somewhere to

23:30 prove that I worked for the American armed forces. I don't know where. It's still around somewhere. I had to go to Kure to the Army Entertainment Centre where they tested me because you just don't give people thousands of films and hope they're going to respect them, look after them. I had to go over there and I was tested, not only cleaning projectors, loading them,

24:00 starting them up, changeovers, but splicing, editing to do with film. I've still got that licence here, too, somewhere. I don't know. I haven't seen it of late. But I worked seven days a week. I did that for quite a while until I got fed up with it, told the American entertainments officer, whatever he was, called himself, he'd have to look for his own operators, that seven days a week or seven nights a week was getting a bit too much and working during the day.

24:30 And because some of the longer films would go till eleven o'clock, so by the time you wound up, cleaned up the projectors, put all the film canisters in the containers, locked them down and readdressed them, you wouldn't get away from the place for another forty, forty-five minutes cause you just don't walk away from a projector after having used it. The oil goes cold and

25:00 you have trouble cleaning it up, so you'd clean the projectors whilst they're warm. I went out again for a while. I used to go downtown of a night-time and have a look around the shops. That was a new experience. I'd normally go to Tokyo with two other blokes. That was an experience except I haven't used since, but it kept me out of mischief.

25:30 **I wanted to talk to you about coming home. You mentioned that you came home and you sighted land, whereabouts was that?**

Out of Brisbane, Moreton Bay Island. We senior NCOs, or sergeants and above, we had the rear cafeteria as our mess. The officers had the main lounge on board as their mess and the enlisted

26:00 men, as they're referred to, had the run of the ship. The beer ration was one bottle of beer per person per man per day, perhaps. I've never seen so many men drunk on one bottle of beer in my life. The crew were selling beer. They had, I don't know, tons of it, and down below somewhere and they were selling it to the fellows on board. But

26:30 we were down the back. No, that was quite a good trip. We struck the edge of a typhoon one night that

was a bit rough, but apart from that there were no problems. There was a Lincoln bomber. I've got a photograph up there taken from the Lincoln bomber, of the Australia coming into Brisbane harbour. That was where we first sighted land. Half the Kiwis got off there. All the

- 27:00 Queensland based army got off there. We stayed overnight and sailed next day and come down to Sydney. We berthed in Woollahra. A lot of them went to other returning pools. I had to take my technical blokes out to Richmond. We had to prepare the hangar for the aircraft coming home and the remainder of the RAAF coming home on the aircraft carrier Vengeance,
- 27:30 and when I got out there I found out that the aircraft depot had already set aside one hangar and everything that we needed was in place. The aircraft carrier wasn't due for another ten or twelve days, I think, so the warrant officer in charge of the orderly room, a fellow I knew pretty well, said to me, "What are you going to do?" I said, "We'll just have to hang around here, I suppose, until the aircraft arrive." He said, "Well I've got another suggestion."
- 28:00 And I said, "Have you?" I said, "What is it?" He said, "I suggest that you all go on leave." I said, "Well that's going to take eight or ten days off our leave records." And he said, "No. I'll get all your blokes to fill in a leave application form," he said, "and I'll put them in the drawer. And," he said, "if nothing happens, well I'll just tear them up when you all come back." He said, "But make sure that you all get back." And I said,
- 28:30 "Well it's up to me to tell the blokes the story. Will the absence be noticed?" And I said, "I can't see any better offer." I said, "It's an offer I can't refuse." So I got my fellows together and put the case to them and they said, "Yes, good one," so away we all went. Three or four of us headed for Melbourne. My mother was alive at the time and she lived in Melbourne, so I went down there for a week. Other people
- 29:00 went all their own way and they all turned up. No-one was late. No-one got into any trouble. So I went and saw this particular warrant officer and said, "We're all accounted for," so he pulled the drawer out, pulled out the leave applications and tore them up, so we had about ten days' leave, no leave taken off our card. And the aircraft arrived.
- 29:30 That's when the rot set in cause when they lifted the aircraft onto the carrier they lifted them onto a lighter first, took them out to where the carrier was anchored and they lifted them off the lighter into the aircraft carrier. Well they put these slings around the eyelets on the wings. They cut all our electrical looms, cut the lot. We didn't notice until
- 30:00 the aircraft arrived and we started to uncover them. So we worked day and night, we electrical blokes, and I enlisted the aid of people from the depot, electricians, electrical section from the depot. They gave us a hand to make up new looms and we still got the aircraft assembled together. And we got away on Operation Welcome Home on time, but we pushed it.

What were the looms? Could you just explain?

Electrical looms. And they took power out to the

- 30:30 lights, landing lights, and the rocket release circuits. But it certainly put the program back a bit. Well it didn't initially, but we put our shoulders to the wheel and we got them all serviceable, wings on them, test flown. They were serviceable and we started on Operation Welcome Home, flew around Australia, or the southern part. We didn't go
- 31:00 up north at all. Amberley was as far north as we got.

Could you explain what the reception was like?

Good, very good, particularly in Perth.

Could you run me through where you went and...?

Melbourne first, had a few days in Melbourne. Then we flew on to Adelaide. The reception in Melbourne and Adelaide were normal because it was just another event to them,

- 31:30 but Perth it was a big event because the squadron was formed in Perth in 1942. Left Perth. Went to Darwin first and then went over through the islands up to Japan, Korea. The first time it's been back in Australia was the end of 1954, so it was away for twelve years. And it was looked upon as being a Perth squadron and they were very closely allied to it, and I think they
- 32:00 gave us the freedom of the city, if I remember rightly, or something like it. It may not have been the freedom of the city but there was some award bestowed upon the squadron. So we stayed there for about a week or ten days and we picked our way back across the Nullarbor. We were in the old Dakotas and support aircraft and we had people at staging posts on the way through to refuel the aircraft cause the aircrew didn't do it, or couldn't do it, and we followed up in the old Dakotas. Whilst they were cruising at about four hundred and fifty knots
- 32:30 we were getting along at about a hundred and twenty knots, so the further we went the further we got behind, but we caught up with them eventually. We went from Adelaide to Hobart in the one day. The aircraft staged through Melbourne somewhere, the Meteors. I forget where we staged through for fuel,

probably Melbourne. I don't know; can't recall. But we were in Hobart for a week. We were down there at the time of the Hobart Regatta,

33:00 so the Tasmanians were in good moods and they welcomed us.

In each city did you have a parade, or how did it work?

No, no parade, just a flyover. No, there were no parades, no time for them. Not enough personnel anyway. There wouldn't be any more than I suppose fifty would have pulled up the ground staff,

33:30 so there wasn't enough for a parade. They just let the aircraft fly over, 77 Squadron formation as I showed you earlier. That was a big time. All the local newspapers printed it, wrote up a bit of a story. But Perth though it was excellent, excellent in more ways than one.

Could you describe what happened in Perth

34:00 **that made it so special?**

The people. People ringing up the base inviting us out to parties, cocktail parties, anything you like. Another fellow and I went to a party - that fellow that I tried to locate. He had no sense of direction, none whatever, utterly hopeless, and we

34:30 come out of this party, came over in Perth in those days they switched out all the street lights at eleven o'clock, so we came out of this house and the place was in total darkness. We wanted a taxi to get back to Perth, so we could get another taxi out to the base. We might have got the same taxi over again, a little bit confused in the head. I don't know what caused it. It must have been something I ate. And I can recall

35:00 we came to a street corner. We had three pennies between us and that was in those days threepence, which you had to use to make a phone call, so we made this phone call after we found the taxi number and they said, "Where are you?" I said, "Western Perth somewhere." He said, "That helps me a lot, doesn't it?" So whilst he was heading on the phone, he was standing on my shoulders striking matches to read, cause the street signs were fairly high. He couldn't read them at street level.

35:30 Some of the silly things you do. But that was the people of Perth. We were invited to parties all over the place every night of the week if you wanted to go. Some did. They paid for it in the finish. It caught up on them, I tell you. Never mind. No, it's a very, very friendly place, Perth. I've been back there several times since over the last... Well since we've been here, I've been back there three or four times, trips.

What was the general reaction

36:00 **of the Australian public to the returning Korean servicemen?**

Pretty flat. It was the forgotten war because it was so close to the end of the Second World War. People were still becoming established. I don't think too many people paid much attention to it because it didn't threaten Australia, unlike the Japanese

36:30 some ten years earlier. That was a real threat. Australia was attacked. Darwin was bombed. Broome was bombed. A lot of flying boats were sunk at Broome. Sydney was shelled. Aircraft flew over. As a matter of fact the pilot of the aircraft that flew over Sydney lived at Iwakuni. He

37:00 could describe Sydney, the layout, not that he ever saw it, but from maps he could describe it perfectly.

Did you meet him?

No, I didn't meet him. Others may have. They also landed a few shells in Newcastle. You could have bought a block of flats anywhere around the foreshore of Sydney around Woollahra and Rose Bay and those places for ten shillings years ago. People just got out, fright.

37:30 **So what was your feeling of how much Australians knew about what had happened in Korea?**

Not too much unless it affected them directly, like someone was killed or wounded. Not much at all. As I said, it was too close to the end of the Second World War and people were still getting over it,

38:00 those who had lost loved ones. And, as I said, the war in Korea never threatened Australia so it wasn't a serious problem and that's why there wasn't much attention paid to it, nor was there any attention given to us when we returned. We just blended in with the populace.

How did that make you feel?

38:30 I was too young to think about it, probably. It didn't... I'm not one for pageantry. I like going on parades. I used to like that. But as for marching down the street and having confetti and newspaper thrown over you, no; it didn't appeal to me. Others might have sought that sort of thing to

39:00 be recognised, get some recognition. I didn't. And I can't remember anyone making any complaints about it; didn't affect us. That's the reason in my opinion why people didn't pay much attention to the Korean War. And we weren't militant, like to seek recognition,

- 39:30 unlike the people from the subsequent conflicts, a little bit more militant, getting more recognition, seeking a few more benefits. We don't seek the benefits that they do. We haven't got them. It's only in the last few weeks that we've ever received a large
- 40:00 questionnaire from Veteran Affairs asking about it, health mainly, because we're all over seventy, into our seventies, some in their late seventies.
- Do you think there's been enough recognition for Korean War veterans?**
- Right across the board, no. Some areas have got recognition.
- 40:30 Some ex-servicemen now have got recognition and benefits from the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs]. Others have sought them and been refused. I s'pose, like most applicants who are seeking repatriation benefits, if your case is genuine and you're presented properly, well they'll recognise you.
- 41:00 Some of them in my opinion have been poorly presented, left holes in it because the DVA people pick it up, take it up and refuse the application. Although I think there's been a change in the last few years but earlier on there was a couple of problems. But overall, as far as recognition
- 42:00 is concerned, there's a cenotaph if you like to call it now in Canberra. That was dedicated about four years ago. I went down to that, met quite a few people I haven't seen for many, many years. Some had reached most senior rank. One fellow was chief of the air staff. He was a sergeant pilot with us in Korea. We had a...

Tape 9

- 00:30 **Mr Field, can I ask you to explain when you became aware of what was happening in terms of the Malayan Emergency?**
- Well that happened back in the early '50s. Australia had a role, both the army, navy. The army, navy and the air force were involved one way or another. The air force were involved out of Singapore with both the bombers
- 01:00 and transports in the early stages, and in the late '50s the Australian government became part of the Far East Strategic Plan and we sent a squadron of bombers to Butterworth. And a 78 Fighter Wing, Sabre fighters, were compatible with as well, as part of that plan.
- 01:30 That's when we first became involved. We were aware of it beforehand but that's when we first became, or well when I first became involved, when I went to Butterworth with 78 Fighter Wing from Williamtown.
- What was the role of 78 Fighter Wing in the conflict?**
- Well the same with the bomber squadron. We were there just in case there were problems. The communist terrorist campaign was coming to an end.
- 02:00 The British forces along with, needed the assistance from Australia and New Zealand, had driven the communist forces up the Malaya Peninsula, and to make the place really safe I think we were asked to send forces there in the form of two squadrons, or a wing and a squadron on two separate aircraft, and the Australian Army were involved along with the New Zealanders. They were still doing sweeps in the jungle, not that we ever, I think there was one or two minor
- 02:30 strikes that the Sabres became involved in but the main problem when I was there was the agitation of the Indonesians at the time, and we were keeping an eye on them cause they did try and invade Malaya, or they did get troops into Malaya, airborne troops, after I'd left.
- 03:00 And subsequently in the early '60s our aircraft couldn't fly over Malaya, couldn't fly over Indonesia to Malaya. Our Hercules had to fly from Richmond to Perth and Perth to Cocos, up around the northern parts of Sumatra and fly back down to Butterworth. But that was our main concern then.
- What were your first impressions at Butterworth?**
- Hot. It was
- 03:30 a new base. It was an old RAF base before the war. The Japanese occupied it and used it during the war. It was apparently run down and dilapidated and it wasn't suitable for modern aircraft, particularly jet aircraft with low profile tyres and high pressures. The strip had to be completely... The old strip was ripped up and a new one put down, and that was done by our airfield construction squadron.
- 04:00 And when that was completed in, it must have been late '58 or thereabouts, we moved in there early '59. Sabres were flying up there and we moved up. I went up ahead of my wife. She followed about three weeks or a month later. But it was a good base. It was new, new buildings, new hangars, new hard stands, quite good. We lived on the island, used to commute each day. Single living-in

04:30 people, well they lived in, all the single people, but we married people, with the exception of some who had appointment houses, lived on the base, but they were mostly officers. We lived on the island, duty free.

How different was it being away on service while you were married with your wife there?

How different was it?

05:00 Well I had to go home every night, didn't have the freedom. I s'pose I did in another sense. No, you were still doing the same job but as a married person, so you didn't have the mess life. You didn't have the camaraderie of the people you worked with cause came time to stand down of an evening at five o'clock, well you went home rather than

05:30 going to the mess and socialising. If we socialised on the island, which we did do, we had our own friends. We socialised with them and their families because all those who lived on the island were married. It was a different lifestyle but it was an enjoyable lifestyle. That was forty-odd years ago.

Who were those friends that you had on the island?

Air force people. We also made friends with the

06:00 locals. First place we lived in there was a family lived opposite. They were Eurasians, actually, but they were a bonzer family. The people next door were nice. They were Indians, very highly educated, the entire family. They were doctors, solicitor, all the children. The parents were very highly educated but they suffered during the occupation, the Japanese occupation,

06:30 particularly the eldest one of the family. She was a young girl during the occupation. We were never told what took place but obviously something had taken place because she'd had fits of illness. She lived with us, or came into our place for about a fortnight once,

07:00 most disturbed. What happened to her I don't know, but her two brothers, one finished up a dentist, the other one a lawyer and the two, the sisters were medical practitioners. No, we enjoyed it. We made good friends there. Good place to shop, more than what you wanted.

Did any of these locals discuss how they felt about the British reoccupation?

No.

07:30 I think they welcomed it to get away from the Japanese occupation, the brutality and the harshness of it. I never heard any derogatory comments or remarks about the British coming back and taking the place over again. Well they helped rid them of the communist threat, general temper, and the British or the

08:00 Commonwealth forces, Australians and New Zealanders involved, so it gave them their freedom back. And then in '57 I think it was they got their medaka, or their independence. That caused problems, not by us but amongst themselves, the various races.

So what was your daily routine while you were in Malaya?

It was like another job: get up,

08:30 get dressed, catch the bus, get into the ferry terminal. Board the ferry. Go across the straits to the mainland. Go through customs. Some of the things that happened there, never mind.

What do you mean?

Well Penang was a duty-free port. Anyone that lived on the base bought anything on the island, took it back through customs, had to pay customs duty, unless they took it back to the mainland, or the peninsula on the Butterworth side.

09:00 So if one of my younger fellows, single, lived in, wanted to buy a camera or a small radio that asked me to bring it back for them, we used to get it through. There were ways and means. Some were devious but never mind, that's the system. And we'd catch the bus on the other side and go to work, spend the day on the base

09:30 servicing aircraft, flying programs, staying back if aircraft were unserviceable and you'd have to make your own way home as best you could. No telephones in those days to ring up and say, "Listen love, I won't be home till eight o'clock tonight," something like this. Have dinner on the table, no-one would turn up for it. That happened rarely but it did happen occasionally and that was it. Once in a while we went down to Singapore for exercises with the RAF. The RAF were in Singapore at the time.

10:00 What sort of operations were the planes involved in that you were servicing?

Just training, maintaining their efficiency and proficiency, and if anything did happen well they were up to their maximum proficiency if they were ever called upon. We were called upon a couple of times with a couple of urgent rushes down to Singapore. People across the way got a little bit agile,

10:30 bit of a threat. And then one day we were in the hangar having lunch and next thing we've got pilots

everywhere. They got the message to get as many Sabres as they could down to Singapore as quickly as we could. We had a plan in those days that, there was a plan like people for a week, ten days, a fortnight and we were on a bus next in an old RAF Beverley and we didn't know

11:00 where we were going but all we had was what we stood up in. But we had fly-away kits at home, as we used to call them, clothes packed, so they'd swing around and picked up our goods and about ten o'clock that night they turned up. We knew we were going south because of your sense of direction. If the sun's setting in the west and it's on your right-hand side, you know you're travelling south, and only one place down south was Singapore. The Beverley couldn't go any further, so we finished up at Singapore for a fortnight, just a show

11:30 of force. We weren't engaged in anything, just a show of force, aircraft to fly around with Sidewinder missiles hanging onto the wing, ammo bins full of ammo. Never a shot fired in anger. But that's what we were there for, just to maintain the peace.

Who was that a show of force for?

12:00 Do I have to say? Well people that lived north of us or north-west of us. Probably about two or three years later there was a lot of agitation between these people at the time were the Malays. They did get some airborne forces into Malaya but they were quickly arrested.

12:30 A couple of other aircraft tried to get across the Straits of Malacca but they were shot out of the sky, Hercules.

Were you aware at the time of that sort of agitation?

Yes. But this happened after I'd returned home where I was at that time based in Melbourne, command headquarters. It was going on because their leader at the time was a little bit, he was, what shall I say, belligerent.

13:00 He was flexing his muscles. That's why we weren't allowed to fly over the archipelago, had to go right around.

What evidence was there of that sort of agitation while you were there, or intelligence even?

Well we weren't allowed to see what the intelligence reports revealed because that was,

13:30 that's very, very restricted information, restricted to very few people. But you get the feeling and occasionally it would appear in the local press of incidents, people that had been arrested of a certain nationality, so it was there and we just pieced it together. We'd talk about it amongst ourselves on the way to work, at work, on the way home from work. And of course when we were,

14:00 I was with 3 Squadron at the time and we had this deployment to Singapore in a hurry, well we knew, well we didn't know, but we guessed, put two and two together, there were problems involved.

What level of tension was there among the local Malays about potential Indonesian expansion?

They were concerned. They didn't express it to us openly

14:30 but a tension was there. They were concerned, yes. Likewise with us but it's settled down now. Well I think it has anyway. That's my opinion. Only got the problems now, their problems today are internal rather than looking externally.

15:00 That's my opinion.

What were your living quarters like in Malaya?

Very good. The first place we were in was a private house owned by a nursing sister at the Penang General Hospital. She looked after us and we looked after her place too. By the same token we didn't abuse it and she did the right thing by us. And then they,

15:30 we were scattered all over Penang so a vehicle would drive around over large areas each morning and afternoon either picking up or dropping people off. They decided to concentrate us in the one area, which they did, and we had to move to Tanjung Bunga. We moved into a unit there. It was a former hotel and we were on the second level, big places, very spacious, quite nicely furnished, fitted out, terrazzo floors, beautiful. Right on the seashore,

16:00 right on the shore. It was nice lying back at night-time in bed listening to the waves lapping on the beach, very soothing. It was lovely. No, they were good, good shopping, good exchange rate. Yeah, most enjoyable.

What sort of household support did you have?

16:30 There was a gardener to every three houses and his role was to maintain the gardens, clean up, sweep up, and up to and including the rank of warrant officer there was an amah. They just come and did the washing and ironing, cleaned up. Officers got an amah and a cook but we had no children at the time

17:00 and our amah had little to do because she'd come in of a morning about eight. She'd be gone by eleven. I had to come in and work on a Saturday morning, so what we often used to do was we'd go to the markets on Saturday. We'd buy up our fruit and veggies, take them back, and she used to prepare them. And we'd ask her to stay for dinner, not dinner, stay for lunch, which she did occasionally,

17:30 if we put enough pressure on her, but I don't know whether she didn't feel like it was her place but we thought we owed it to her for what she did for us.

Was there still jungle fighting while you were there?

Yes. The army used to go out for six weeks and not come back for about two and go back in again. There'd be a changeover. Australians and New Zealanders would be involved.

18:00 There were Brits too. Yeah, they used to. They were a bit of a... We were negotiating to buy a second-hand car. You had to buy it before the New Zealanders got back because anything they saw they'd make a profit on and they'd buy it, so if you saw a car that you liked, the first thing you found out was how long the Kiwis had been there and that

18:30 gave you bargaining time. The car that we bought, I think I had ten days I think when I found it, I come across it. The Kiwis coming out of the jungle, if they'd have seen it, cause they didn't have to keep it for a certain time out of the country, out of New Zealand, and in those days they didn't have to keep it for any length of time after they'd arrived home with it, whereas we had to own a vehicle eighteen months outside Australia and keep it for two years after we got back otherwise we paid tax on it.

19:00 **What sort of contact did you have with the Australian Army troops?**

Not much, not much at all. Only when they came out of the jungle and they lived in two blocks of units about half a mile, a bit over half a kilometre away from us, and when they come out of the jungle you kept out of their way.

Why's that?

19:30 Well they were tied up in the jungle and they weren't allowed to drink and carry on, so when they had their week or ten days' leave they went to town. Good on them, really let their hair down. We could do it any time we felt like it but they couldn't.

Where would they let their hair down?

In the clubs, pubs around the place, beer houses, and there were many of them in Penang,

20:00 being the old colonial days. The Pearl of the Orient they call it or it was known as the Pearl of the Orient, beautiful old buildings there, the old E&O hotel, the Eastern Oriental Hotel, Japanese headquarters there in the war, beautiful old building, beautiful.

What state was the conflict in when you left Malaya to return to Australia?

It was finished.

20:30 It was wound up when we were there. We were there about twelve months and the Emergency was declared over and finished with. But we used to see aircraft or hear aircraft flying over Penang Island asking the altercators - they used to have these big amplifier systems strapped underneath them - asking the terrorists to give themselves up. Some did. Some just stayed in the jungle but there were no problems.

21:00 After the twelve months we were there it was declared over, although the local police still kept a diligent lookout for any strays. If you were driving around in a car, nothing to be pulled over and they'd search your vehicle, go through your boot, note your number, where you were at a certain time. I got pulled over one night three times going home, car was searched, had to open the boot.

21:30 They have a good look, can't find anything, let you go. They weren't only looking for the bodies. They were looking for ammunition, guns, anything the terrorists could use.

So why were you pulled over specifically?

Well they just pulled cars over, not knowing who was driving. There was no grace given to anyone. If you were driving a car you just got pulled in irrespective of who you were.

22:00 They were quite, very polite about it. They were in no ways aggressive. Maybe if I'd have been aggressive or belligerent, well they might have reacted in a similar way but we never had any problems. I never heard of anyone else having any problems with them but we knew why we were there and what was going on and we just had to cooperate, which we did.

What knowledge did you have at this time of what was happening in Vietnam?

That was at the

22:30 very, very early stages. I did go to Vietnam. I had an overnight stay in Saigon. We flew up there one day but that was just to get some aircraft through there that were going to the Philippines for an operation

or a competition with the Americans but that was in the very, very incipient stages of the Vietnam problem. That didn't flare until some time later.

What did you think at that time,

23:00 **can you recall, about the domino theory about communism in South East Asia?**

It was always a threat. The communists terrorists, or the CTs they called them in Malaya, they'd been pushed back. They'd either been arrested or wiped out or pushed back over the Thai border and Malaya was free, or declared free.

23:30 But that only puts the problem elsewhere and I think this is evident in my opinion of what happened. There were problems with the French, or French Indo-China it was called then. They lost possession of Indo-China in '55 I think, and it was festering. Not that we knew much about it. Probably intelligence knew a lot more. I'd

24:00 say they would, but they never told us. There was no need to. But I think it was festering then, and of course later on it erupted.

What was the social and political climate like in Australia as that Vietnam conflict was brewing? And I guess I mean sort of compared to, say, the start of the Korean War.

24:30 **What was the climate like in Australia?**

I can't recall much of an attitude towards it. I think it was only when Australia became involved that it got a lot of prominence in the press and radio and TV but up till then, we became involved, I don't think we paid much attention as a populus at large. Maybe the parliamentarians and some of the defence

25:00 chiefs, intelligence people, I guess they would have paid more attention to it. I've no doubt. But we were never told until we became... We were not made aware of it on a large scale until we became involved with our armed forces. Then we took an interest.

Do you think that people were wary of communism in the same way that they were in the '50s?

Yes, because we were being reminded of it

25:30 continuously by our politicians, either political structure at that stage or in that era. They were regarded as a threat with politicians. They played on it. I'm not saying it wasn't true but there was, not that we had any political affiliation. We may have had political affiliations but you weren't allowed to

26:00 express them or discuss them. But they had their own idea. Some were favourable, others not so favourable. But the outcome I think speaks for itself. It was a nice country, short time I was there, in turmoil

26:30 because of the conflict. A very rich country as far as very, very rich soil because some of the best rubber plantations in the world are in Vietnam, some of the best made tyres I believe come out of, or the rubber comes out of Vietnam. A lot of it was devastated because of the use of defoliants,

27:00 not only the rubber trees but a lot of the vegetation, which is a shame but that's what happened.

How did the fact that the country was in turmoil seem to affect the Vietnamese on a day-to-day level?

Well that I don't know because I never had much to do with the Vietnamese. As I said, I was only there for a brief time

27:30 and we were on a fairly tight schedule that we had to do, a number of places that we had to visit and the tasks that we had and I never had, I had very little contact with the local people.

Can you explain exactly what your role was, and when you became active in terms of like the date you became active in those operations?

I got there in late August, what would this be?

28:00 '69, yeah, late August I think it was or early September, and I was there for about six or eight weeks. But we were sent, there was four of us I think, we were sent there on a specific task by the air force and the army. We were based out of Vung Tau. We used to fly into Nui Dat.

28:30 What was the other place? Can't think of it now. Nui Dat and we went up to the 2 Squadron bomber base. They were based at Phan Rang I think, way up the north part of the peninsula. We had a week or ten days there doing what we had to do and back to Vung Tau for a few days and home.

And what were you doing?

29:00 Can't say. It wasn't... It was a bit covert I suppose, certainly wasn't overt. Nothing sinister.

So why was it covert?

29:30 Classified. I don't want to speak about it. It was nothing, as I say, sinister but there are certain things that we know of and do we have to maintain secrecy.

That's okay. How had aircraft technology changed by the

30:00 **time it go to 1970 in Vietnam?**

Modern warfare stepped in about that time. Dropping bombs by guesswork and firing guns by guesswork was old hat. Radar controlled gun sights were in vogue. Gyro gun sights before then.

30:30 Navigation was much more accurate and wasn't by a rule of thumb or guesswork. Even the C-130E Hercules they had on-board computers in those days for navigational purposes, so if the navigator wanted to find out where he was any time, all he did was looked up at the readouts.

31:00 So he could see where he was, longitude and latitude, and relate that to the position on the surface, whereas prior to that they had to work out their position by speed and time and they had to take into account wind drift. That was already worked out for them. Of course since then its become more sophisticated with satellite navigation.

What sort of impact do you think that had on

31:30 **bombing operations in Vietnam?**

Made it more precise. There wasn't the hit and miss attitude of the earlier type of aircraft that didn't have the sophisticated bomb sights and navigation equipment they've got today. They could pinpoint their accuracy and since then it's

32:00 improved. Well I can only imagine its improved because I left the service in '70, so there's been massive changes take place in that last thirty-odd years. I've heard of it, been told about it. I've read about it. But modern technologies the last, I had two years at Amberley and I was supposed to go across to the [United] States with the F111 project

32:30 but that was deferred. Aircraft delivery times had been put back. No new aircraft were coming through, so somehow I finished up at Penrith command headquarters.

We talked a little bit about the use of napalm in Korea, what evidence of how extensive the use of napalm did you see in Vietnam?

Didn't see anything.

33:00 Only the pilots would know and those who were in the area where the napalm rockets landed, but I've no doubt it had a devastating effect, terrible stuff. But we never saw any film. All the camera films were highly restricted. We never saw it.

33:30 Pilots did but they never discussed it, not in our presence.

During that time, what were your overall impressions of how the Americans were conducting themselves?

Well they were holding the, along with the assistance of the British Commonwealth forces and other people of the United Nations who were with them, they were holding back the Chinese, North Koreans and anyone

34:00 else that was involved in their side. They have massive firepower the Americans, massive. They just throw equipment into any conflict willy-nilly in my opinion and that's how they overcome their adversaries.

How do you think that compares to their level of intelligence?

34:30 I guess it's a waste of firepower. If they would apply what they've got a little bit more conservatively... Sure, they've got their intelligence. We all have intelligence gathering sources, but how we use it's another issue, another matter.

35:00 Some make good use of it, some not so good. But no, they've got massive firepower, massive, always have had, and that's how they come out on top, or one of the ways, reasons, why they come out on top. But to comment on their intelligence, no

35:30 I can't because I'm not involved. I don't know anything about their intelligence.

So given that level of firepower, what do you think the reasons were for Vietnam not being as successful for them as they would have liked?

Wrong approach. All they

36:00 had, they had massive firepower. The Vietnamese, or the VC as they were known as, Viet Cong, they were skilled, very skilled and they built tunnels underground and they moved about unobserved and they moved about in the dark under cover of massive tropical vegetation. That's why the Americans used so much defoliant

- 36:30 to try and expose them, in my opinion. The place was defoliated, lost the entire country or a lot of it, just to try and reveal where the VC were. And it's difficult to tell the VC from a South Vietnamese.
- 37:00 We used to go down into the village of Vung Tau occasionally and the VC would be on leave and you couldn't, well I couldn't pick them but other people could, people that had been there for some time, just by their military nature, the way they walked. They'd be in civilian clothes, of course, but they'd be on R&R [Rest and Recreation] in the same place that our people would be on R&R, so I was told, not that they knew them by name or by face but
- 37:30 just by their military makeup. You could see that. Well these people could. They reckon that they could tell that they were VC just by the way they walked. They didn't walk. They marched. They were disciplined, which they were.

Were they service people who could identify VC?

Yeah, people that had been there for some time, months.

- 38:00 They'd probably been told by the people who served there before. How true it is, I don't know.

Given the fact that you'd been involved in Korea and Malaya and Vietnam, looking back now can I ask you to reflect on the necessity of those conflicts in terms of stemming the flow of communism?

- 38:30 The Korean conflict was probably, was the first, probably, one in my opinion, the most important because Korea had a backup of tens of millions, billions, of communists and if they'd have broken through, occupied South Korea, well that would have given them the incentive to go further, well in my opinion, but they were checked there.
- 39:00 I would say that the Korean War was the most important one to stem the flow of communism because there were millions and millions of troops involved, or could have been involved because it was all connected. I suppose you could say the same about Vietnam too. It's part of the same land mass but seemed to, in my opinion, it had lost a bit
- 39:30 of its initiative in Vietnam. In other words, all they wanted to do was to make the two Vietnams the one country again and that was easier to achieve than what it was for the North Koreans to achieve the same campaign in the North and South Korean conflict. That was Vietnam. Malaya
- 40:00 I don't think it was ever a threat, and I base that on strategic grounds because Malaya's a peninsula, a long peninsula, and all the British Commonwealth forces had to do was to clear an area at a time, just move it away progressively up the peninsula, which they did do and they did it successfully. Whereas in Korea
- 40:30 if they went back over the 38th parallel, well they became involved in Manchuria and the Americans weren't allowed to even fly over Manchuria. The same in Vietnam, again a little bit of a peninsula but it had that massive, that land mass behind it and millions of people. But I don't think they were seeking other lands; they just wanted to unite the two Vietnams and they did.
- 41:00 It cost them a lot, money, people, but they achieved what they wanted to achieve and they haven't, in my opinion, haven't been or haven't shown any aggressiveness since. Whereas the Koreans are still, there's problems there now, agitation, and they've still got the building at P'anmunjom. They still haven't signed...
- 41:30 There's an armistice but they haven't signed a peace agreement. It's fifty-odd years ago, so they're still... I think the North Koreans would still like to occupy the South, more so now because it's a highly industrialised country.

I'm going to say thank you very much for talking to us today. I want to end on that note there before we run out of tape. That's where I wanted to finish the day.

INTERVIEW ENDS