Australians at War Film Archive

Adrian Marks (Monty) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:42 **Okay, let's start of with the book sleeve of your life.**

Okay do we start right now?

Yep.

Okay, my name is Adrian Marks, I was known as Monty when I was at school, my middle name is Montague, I don't know why it was given to me, but I think my parents thought I should be in the

01:00 diplomatic corps. and be an ambassador. I was born on the 12th of June 1921, at Potts Point in Sydney. My parents moved up to a suburb of Sydney called Chatswood, I'm not sure of the year, round about 19-, probably about 1930 something like that. I went to Chatswood Boys Primary School and from there I went to selected high school, the North Sydney Boys High School.

01:30 From 1933 to about 1937, or may have been '38, I'm not sure, I went to fourth year, my parents felt that they couldn't afford for me to go to university, it was Depression years still following on, things were tough, my father was a public servant, he was on half pay. I realised years down the track how much my parents had

02:00 sacrificed in favour of me and my brother, we were, I guess lucky kids growing up cause we don't seem to have suffered at all, and we frankly have little memory of what the Depression was all about, but we found this out down the track a little bit. From leaving school at North Sydney Boys High I went to a business college called Wentworth College where I started studying accounting.

02:30 I graduated from that college in 1930, beginning of 1939. At that stage, all the young guys like me were thinking about, oh, you know, if the Germans ever declare war, we'll belt them over the head and it'll be over in six months sort of thing. In fact in September 1939 when Britain declared war on Germany, I and about five or six of my

03:00 mates, we went up to Chatswood railway station, they were bringing out a special edition at midnight about the, what the war's all gonna be about. And we were stupid enough to think well let's hang our washing on the Siegfried line and all that sort of business, little did we realise exactly what was probably in store for us. My mother did, she had been an army nurse from 1915 to 1919 and she'd

03:30 served in Greece, Egypt, France and England, and she'd seen the horrors of war. My father couldn't enlist because he, in the First World War, he had a hernia in those days, but they didn't operate on it and frankly he was medically unfit. I wanted desperately to join the army, even before the war started my parents wouldn't agree to it. I'd badgered them and badgered them but to no avail.

04:00 They did give me permission in 1940 to join the militia, at that stage I was only just eighteen and course you weren't your own boss until twenty-one in those days. I served in the militia on and off, prior to the Japanese invasion in Honolulu, then was full time duty. Prior to that I had got permission from my parents to join the army Reserve, very reluctantly.

04:30 And but still I had to go back into the army. Fortunately, my parents, when the time came for me to be called up into the army, they knew some rather high officials in the Victoria Barracks in Sydney and they were able to pull a few strings I guess, and I was able to transfer to the army in 1942. That's where you want me to stop I think isn't it, cause that's the service.

No well we'll just go

05:00 **to quickly where you served.**

Okay. I first went into Bradfield Park we're there for about oh, two and a half to three months. Like every young guy you wanted to be a pilot, I was, I guess I'm a fatalist. The, prior to that happening, before going into the army, I decided that it was very good to have a knowledge of Morse code as recommended you should know Morse. And So I bought

05:30 a set of my own and the, it was in the PMG [Postmaster General] Department, they conducted lessons, so I used to go to those and I also bought lots of books on aircraft recognition, both of which stood me in good stead as it turned out in the long run. When I was rejected my occasion for a pilot I appealed, but I guess I was going to be a wireless operator, come hell or high water, because I was

06:00 good at Morse code and also I used to lecture, even though I was a trainee at Bradfield Park, on aircraft recognition. From there I went to Parkes, we did a radio course for about six or maybe seven months. From Parkes we went down to Port Pirie for a short period of about four weeks, we did a gunnery course. From there I came back to Bradfield Park,

06:30 we're there for oh, not too sure how long, probably three or four weeks. There was a hole in the fence, we used to be able to get through at night and taxis were always waiting there to pick people up, so I could go back and see Mum and Dad. Course they bring you back. I'm sure the powers that be knew about this hole in the fence, it was quite famous. From there we went, at that stage I'd,

07:00 we'd finished my training in Australia and I was graduated as sergeant. From there we went down to 1ED [?] in Melbourne, we were then told that we'd be exchanging our Australian pounds into US pounds, shillings and pence so I knew I was going to the UK I was able to ring my parents and tell me I'm going to see Uncle John and Uncle Trixie soon, so I knew I was going to the UK And from there we went to Adelaide

07:30 and boarded a ship that took us over to England. Is that okay?

Yeah, that's great. Let's go back.

Yep.

And tell me what your earliest memories are of growing up in Sydney?

Probably being a naughty little boy. I can remember, okay, my very earliest recollection is the fact that when I was a young kid I had a liver problem and I

08:00 couldn't keep a lot of food down a lot of the time. Anyway, I overcame that but I can remember, when I did go to kindergarten or prime, yeah, kindergarten I suppose it would be, I was about seven years of age. And the school teacher told my mother that if I'd leave it any longer, I'd have been looking to marry somebody while I was still at school. That was at Chatswood. Then I went to the primary school at Chatswood, which I suppose there were about

08:30 four years, something like that. I was lucky enough, I then went to North Sydney Boys High School, which was a selective high school in those days, and I think it probably still is and I was there from about 1933 to about 1937 or something like that. I can't remember a lot of what happened when I was at high school. I do remember we had a PT [physical training] instructor

09:00 who came from Aldershot in England, he was always dressed in white with a white polo neck sweater, and he expected us to be mere mortals like he was, things that he could do that we couldn't, but we soon learned we could and he was pretty strict. But we did have a lot of moans and groans because he was stretching muscles we didn't know we had, so that's probably good for us. That's about all I can remember at school days. And as I said previously, I went to a college called Wentworth in Sydney where they taught accounting

09:30 and basic law which I studied for a couple of years. Then the war came along and I was coming up anyway, and so all those studies stopped and I resumed them after I was discharged in 1945.

The liver condition that you spoke of, do you know what it was?

I've no idea, I've no idea, except I was quite a delicate young kid.

10:00 What caused it I don't know, and how I got over it, I don't remember, but anyway it's way behind me now and it has been for many, many years.

Do you recall starting school that little bit later than everyone else, was that an issue for you at the time?

Not really, no, I don't think so, it, the, I think it was good, as far as I can remember, to be able to go to school and play with other kids. Probably not, bit older

10:30 but not that much perhaps, about a year or two older than what they were. Yeah, I don't think it did, I think I was pleased to get to school and be able to muck around like a normal young kid would do.

The other kids didn't give you any kind of hard time for being older than them?

No. None whatsoever, no. No it was, actually, it was very interesting as I can remember because I'm naturally left handed. At school the teacher told my parents that I'd have to start writing

11:00 right handed, because those days everyone aspired to go into the public service and you could, you'd have a job for life, sort of thing. You know, this was getting around about the beginning of the Depression years so that was a lot of people's thoughts. So I started to write right handed and to make

me change to be right handed and stay that way, try, I was threatened with the cane. As a consequence of this, today I write mainly right handed and

11:30 I can write left handed but it's not as good as my right hand. And that had an affect, because my wife will testify, if we go driving in strange territory, say we're in, going through Queensland or New South Wales, where I might be. And I might say, "Oh we should turn right at the next cross roads." And she said, "You mean left don't you?" And I mean left. So I think it's had an impact on me down the years. I don't think it had a detrimental affect

12:00 but certainly there's something occurred in my brain when I was forced to change from right, left to right handed.

Do you know why they wanted you to be right handed specifically to go into public service?

Yes, because they said that they only made desks for people who were right handed. And so you'd never get a job in the public service if you were left handed, or wrote left handed. And that was the reason behind it. These days of course they don't do that.

You said your Dad was a public servant, was that right??

12:30 Hmm-mmm, yep.

And what did he do?

He was chief ledger keeper as the, they used to be called the Sydney Harbour Trust and they had lots of properties around the waters in Sydney. And his job was to make sure that all these people who were renting property from the state government, that they kept up to date, which is quite an onerous job. I don't know how many

13:00 staff he had working for him, quite a number but yeah, if you like, he was the chief watcher for the, of the money bags .

And you mentioned that during the Depression he was on half pay?

Yes.

I've actually not heard of that before.

Yes, most public servants during the Depression years were on half pay, and he was one of them. Which obviously would've made things pretty tough for my mother and father, but we weren't aware of it at all. I guess we're

13:30 selfish young kids, that's about all. Like most kids, they don't realise the situation. They accept and want, and Mum and Dad probably went without.

Do you recall seeing other people going through hard times in the...?

Yes I remember kids at primary school at Chatswood, they were bare footed, they couldn't afford shoes. I can remember seeing people

14:00 sitting, waiting in queues, obviously for, to apply for a job. I didn't know what they were doing but I remember seeing people in queues, so I can only assume even now that they were waiting for the opportunity to try and get a job somewhere with somebody. That must've been pretty horrible.

Did you have a uniform when you were at Chatswood?

No, in the Depression years, it was optional, parents couldn't afford to have a uniform.

14:30 At high school, North Sydney Boys High, yes, we had a uniform. In the colours of Bismarck, coral and gold, yeah, quite unique colours to have.

When you're at primary school, what sort of games did you play?

I played football, I played cricket and we used to go swimming down at the North Sydney Olympic pool, which had recently been opened.

Is that the one just under the bridge?

Just by the bridge, yeah,

15:00 yep, so it was a treat to go down there. In those days of course I doubt, oh very few homes would've had their own private swimming pool. These days it's pretty common.

What do you recall about Sydney Harbour at that time?

I remember going across with my, probably my mother, I guess, and my brother in the ferries and looking up at the harbour bridge being built. I can remember very clearly it was flood

15:30 lit at night where they joined the two arches, and at that stage there was no roadway beneath where the trains and trams and cars were to go. My thought was, how in the hell are trains going to go up over the

arch and down the other side. I wasn't very bright I don't think. But yes I can remember looking up and then gradually you'd see the roadway being built, it started from the centre and went, no I

16:00 think they started from the ends and joined again in the centre, I'm not too sure about that. Yes, it was interesting watching it. I can remember the punts that used to go from near Kirribilli, across to the punts near where the Opera House is now, to ferry the cars across. I remember in 1932 when it was opened, that was a great treat to watch, we had

16:30 binoculars and actually saw the group cut the ribbon instead of the premier then, it was Jack Lang, I remember seeing that. Of course it was also on the news reels if you went to see the news reels at the picture show. That's about all, about I remember.

What about the Opera House?

Oh yes, well that's only fairly recent. The Opera House was an old tram depot as you probably realise.

17:00 This fellow, Utzon, who was the, he won the prize for the architecture of the Opera House. I think most people thought it would be a pipe dream. They, to finance it they had the Opera House lotteries, so, I'm not too sure of the prize, I think it was a hundred thousand pounds and they run them about once every, oh when they feel I suppose, but probably every six to eight weeks they'd run them, and that helped

17:30 finance it, and of course the cost also escalated. Watched it being built I guess, but those days you were travelling in the train over the harbour bridge so you didn't see an awful lot. If you'd been on the ferry, before the bridge, okay you'd have seen a lot of development.

When you were a child though, did you go on the punts over to where the Opera House…?

Yes every, if, my parents didn't own a car, they had some friends who did and if we were going somewhere down the south

18:00 coast or something like that, it was a real treat, we'd go across on the punts and then down to wherever we're going to, but that wasn't very often.

So where the Opera House is now, what was the tram depot like, was it a very busy area?

Well it's where the trams were housed over night, they didn't run all, twenty-four hours. I would presume they did repairs to the trams there, I don't know, but it was quite a large area. And they had another tram depot just near Moore Park,

18:30 they're the only two I know of. But yeah, I guess the, oh, I don't know how many trams, there could've been probably, fifty to a hundred trams or more go to bed overnight and then come out in the morning.

Did people go swimming in the harbour very much?

Not that I'm aware of, no. I don't, the only part where they probably would've gone swimming would be Clifton Gardens where they had a shark proof net. And the other one is near,

19:00 was near Vaucluse House, I've forgotten the name of the place now. But I'm not sure whether they had a shark proof net, they probably did, there were sharks in Sydney Harbour. There's Port Jackson shark which is pretty harmless I believe, I don't want to, never want to trust them. But I think there are other sharks that would've come in too, particularly chasing fish. And at Manly of course, they had a big shark proof pool there just by the ferry wharf.

19:30 **When you were learning to swim, how did you learn to swim?**

My mother and father taught us. I don't know we were taught all that well but we were able to swim sufficiently if ever got any trouble, we knew how to swim. I doubt if we were up to Olympic standard though by any means.

Did they teach you to swim down at the Olympic Pool or…?

No, we used to go down to a place called Austinmer, on the south coast,

20:00 about forty miles or around about sixty kilometres, sixty-five kilometres south of Sydney. It was a real holiday beach place, had quite a large rock pool down there and we're taught to swim in that. And also, life savers used to come down occasionally and have a look and see what we're doing. And say, "Hey don't do it that way, do it this way." But mainly my parents taught us to swim.

How often would the family get away on trips to the south coast?

I, only once

20:30 a year and that was over Christmas, we'd go down there for about, oh six weeks I suppose. My father would be working in Sydney and he'd come down on weekends.

Was that a big event for the family holiday?

Yeah it was. Yeah it was, you'd go down by train, as I say we didn't own a car and you'd go down by train, you'd be picked up by the stock and station agent in his big Hudson open car.

21:00 Drive us to where, the cottage we're staying in, our food would come down from the Anthony Horderns in Sydney in big packing cases. I can remember as a kid, oh no, we're teenagers at this stage and the packing cases would stay in the yard and next door people they lived there permanently, they had poultry, had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and they preferred our packing cases to lay their eggs in, cause there was a lot of straw. And so we

21:30 were getting eggs, my parents obviously told them what was happening. They said, "Oh well take what you want and leave what you don't want," so we had a lot of fresh eggs. But I can remember at one stage, my brother and I, we had one of our friends, school friends that came down with us and stayed. We're probably pretty cruel, cause we got the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s by the tail and swung them round in the air, then let them go, then we had feathers in our hands, and we got into trouble over that. We were probably about thirteen or fourteen something like that.

What

22:00 **other sort of trouble did you get into as a kid?**

Oh disobeying our parents I guess. We always knew better, our parents didn't know... and I guess that's pretty normal. We used to get a bit of pocket money, wasn't very much, sixpence a week. That was enough to take us to the picture show on a Saturday afternoon and buy a penny's worth of lollies.

22:30 So money wasn't plentiful.

What, do you recall what pictures you were seeing?

Haven't got a clue now.

Or who any of the movie stars were?

No idea. Oh Tom Mix I think was one, he had a white horse and he was a cowboy. I think it was Tom Mix but I'm not too sure.

Where did you go to the movies?

At Chatswood, the Arcadia picture show, now they call em cinemas.

What was at the picture show, was it

23:00 **sort of like the serials before hand or...?**

Oh yeah, there used to be a serial. Just about as somebody was going to get their head chopped off or something's gonna happen to them, they cut it off, 'to be continued next week,' so you had to go back and see what was happening. Yeah, that was every Saturday afternoon, they had a serial on, they probably had one full length movie or may have had a couple of cartoons, I can't be sure.

And by that stage had they, I know in a couple of those

23:30 **old cinemas in Sydney they still had the big pipe organs?**

Yeah the Arcadia picture show in Sydney, or in Chatswood was owned by some friends of my parents and they had a Wurlitzer organ in it. It was a very good organ apparently because in those days the ABC used to come up and record people playing the organ. There was quite a large picture show and much, much bigger than what you see these days in

24:00 the suburbs. And in those days of course no television. As we got older we'd go to the films on a Saturday night and you had to book, you'd never get in if you didn't. But they didn't show those horrible serials to the adults, it was the kids that used to enjoy them.

With the Wurlitzer organ, did that play through the whole movie or was it just in the...?

Oh no, they were talkies, yeah.

So it would play at intermission or...?

Oh we'd have, there was

24:30 always the recital by the organist, it'd be Saturday afternoon or it'd be at any performance. There was always a recital which at least probably lasted about, oh, anything up to ten minutes and then they'd be playing organ music during the interval. The guy was Barry Brodona I think his name was, the organist.

So when you were playing sport, when you were a young fella, where were you playing

25:00 **cricket and football?**

I was playing cricket with a local team, we were playing in the, I think it was the Killara... I've forgotten now the name of the association. I think it covered the Killara down to Willoughby area and they had A, B and C grade teams playing. We played on grounds any

25:30 where between Willoughby and Killara on a Saturday afternoon. Football, when I was at school I, this is

one thing I disobeyed my parents about, they said I wasn't to play football, but I was playing anyway and I was borrowing boots. And when I was at school a guy kicked me in the foot and broke a couple of bones in my right instep, course it was pain, swollen. I had to be taken home by one of the teachers and of

26:00 course the cat was out of the bag at that stage, so I never played football again after that. I'm sorry. I enjoyed it, but anyway that's what happened so football, after I left school I didn't play, but I played cricket and I played grade tennis, which I enjoyed.

What other sort of games would you play when you're at school? Apart from sport, were you into cowboys and Indians?

We did a, we

26:30 had an open air gymnasium, best way to call it. After this fellow who came out from England, he was our, became a bit of an idol this fellow, who came from the army, with his white creams and white polo neck sweater. And we used to enjoy on the parallel bars and all other sorts of gymnasium equipment in the school grounds, they, it was open air. And you'd probably have to queue up to get your turn on the

27:00 parallel bars or whatever else you were going on to do. So that was at school. As I said, I played a bit of football until I was caught, I played cricket and that was about it. Oh I say, a bit of swimming, again down at North Sydney the big pool.

Did you get in much trouble about the football?

Not from the school, from my parents, yes I did. I think they're probably bitterly disappointed

27:30 because it's probably the first time I got caught out doing something I wasn't supposed to do. I'm not too sure about that but I think that was probably the case, yeah. They'd probably be disappointed but probably deep down, 'Oh okay, a young guy, why not?' But that was the end of it because the instructions were given to the head master, 'not again.' That was it.

Do you recall what sort of punishment you got?

I think I, my parents, my pocket money was cut out, there for a week or two, something like that, that was the only thing really.

Who was the disciplinarian

28:00 **at home, was it Mum or Dad?**

I think my mother. Yeah, my father was more a bit laissez faire if you like, I think Mum was more of a disciplinarian.

What sort of discipline was there?

Oh well she'd be chasing us up, we'd want to go and have a game of cricket in the street, those days there weren't a lot of motor cars around, we'd want to go and play cricket. And she'd say, "Hey, can you do your home work!" And if you got something to do, "What have you got to do?" Course my father wasn't home, he was

28:30 at work. Yeah I think, well okay, we used to come in and do our home work and if there's time, we'd go probably back and find our mates and see if they still want to have a bit of a bat and bowl in the street with a cardboard box as the wicket. But yeah, I'm glad my mother was strong in that regard, that she realised that okay, that

29:00 sport in those days would never keep you, and that was interesting. At the cricket I was pretty good and I was selected in the New South Wales school boys to go and be coached by the state cricket selector, a fellow called George Ghanzi, that was out at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Now it meant I had to go from school by public transport, I suppose with a teacher, I don't remember now but probably a teacher, and had

29:30 to find my way home. And my parents said, "There's no way you're going to do this on your own, and apart from which it's going to interfere with your studies." So I was very disappointed about that, I was a reasonably good left hand slow bowler but okay, it was all for the best because cricket never ended an important part of my life. I played grade cricket later on in life in Sydney but yeah, the best years were behind me then I reckon.

30:00 **Would've been quite a trip from Chatswood to the SCG wouldn't it?**

It was yeah, it was quite a trip. And you had to go by tram, by ferry and then by tram and then come home by a tram and train.

Did you ever go and see games at the SCG?

Ah yes, my father was a very keen cricketer, he'd been a good cricketer, and soon as I was able to, at the age of twelve, he made me a junior member and my brother when he became twelve,

30:30 yes. But seeing that I could go in the members stand at that age but my brother couldn't so, and Dad

was a member, we'd go and sit in the public stand, the Sheridan Stand, always behind the wicket, get the best view of the ball. As I grew up and became a fully fledged member, in fact I was a member for fifty years, before coming up here to Queensland to live. So a lot of

31:00 cricket.

Did you see Don Bradman play?

Yes, I saw Don Bradman play. I remember at Chatswood Primary School where there was a charity match and course Don Bradman at that stage was, he and Kingsford-Smith were the heroes, of my age anyway. And they're playing a charity match at Chatswood, and Bradman was playing, and there's no way I was gonna get his signature but I got Mrs Bradman's and I thought well that's the next best thing.

31:30 And I remember that match. Yeah, Bradman was batting and a fellow called Harry Thick, he played for Saint George, first grade, he was a fast bowler and he bowled an orange at Bradman, first ball, and of course he smacked it and it went everywhere. Yeah, that's one of the things I remember.

A few of the people that we've spoken to, of course it's part of the Australian identity I guess, of through some of those tough Depression years, of

32:00 **how much people really looked up to people like Bradman to sort of give them a bit of hope?**

Yeah, that's very true. There was another hero, Kingsford-Smith, who I did meet and I'll talk about that in a moment. Yes, it was unbelievable the relief that people got for, to, I guess, latch onto in the way, of Bradman and Kingsford-Smith. When Bradman was batting at the cricket ground, the, suddenly

32:30 people would jump on the trams, they'd be foot board riding when there's no room inside, just to go out and see him. And I guess the conductor'd never get round the footboards so they didn't get their fares collected. And they probably pay, I don't know, about sixpence or a shilling to get in to watch Bradman bat. Yes, you're quite right when you say that, he was a hero and he made a difference to a lot of people who were desperately unhappy by not having work, and the dole wasn't worth very

33:00 much anyway. As far as Kingsford-Smith's concerned, my aunt has some very good New Zealander friends and Smithy was basically a New Zealander by heart. And so they arranged for me and my brother to go up one night in McLeay Street in Sydney to where they were living in their unit, to meet him. I always thought of him being a tall man but he wasn't, he was probably no more that five foot

33:30 six, five seven. He had a crew cut hair which surprised me but when I walked in, he walked towards me and he was so friendly and low keyed. "I'm Kingsford-Smith, what are your boys names? Come and sit down and talk to me." And I remember going back to school the following day and probably for the next week I never washed my right hand. Yeah, I'd shaken hands with one of my heroes.

34:00 You know, he was a very easy to talk to person. So they were my two heroes.

What did you talk about when you were talking to Kingsford-Smith?

I can't remember, I think I was probably so awe struck, I think he asked all the questions, I'm not too sure.

So would you say he had the same affect on people as Bradman?

Oh yes, he was, he and Charles Ulm, more Smithy, he was the, pardon me, the pilot. Charles Ulm was the second pilot but he was the

34:30 financial guy and Smithy wasn't. And he was easy come, easy go, and he lost his money very easily. Yeah he was creating records flying the Pacific and doing all sorts of things there that England Australia, Australia England, and so yes he was a real hero. Wherever he went there were crowds to watch him, to land at say, Mascot airport or wherever it might be, he was a fantastic guy.

Apart from meeting

35:00 **him, did you ever go and see him fly?**

No. No, the only time I saw him fly was on the Movie Tone news, when we went, you'd go to the picture show and be on the news.

And what sort of stories would be on those news reels?

Oh just the adoring crowds, they'd mob him, you'd see the Southern Cross came in and land. They didn't have runways like they have today, they were mainly grass runways and a little bit bumpy perhaps.

35:30 Crowds would surge around him and I guess he enjoyed it no doubt. If you read his book called 'Smithy,' you'd realise how he enjoyed that sort of adulation. But only, the only time I was close to him was that time I met him in his unit. But I think he was a fantastic guy.

You must've been the envy of your friends when you got back to school?

Oh absolutely, no, there was no question. And I think that's another reason why I was so keen,

36:00 at the age of fifteen I wanted my parents to let me go, apply to go down to Point Cook as a cadet to learn to fly. And so meeting Smithy, I was then about oh, fourteen I suppose, fifteen and there was another great incentive to try and fly. I always wanted to fly.

Where do you think that lust for wanting to fly came from?

I've no idea, not the faintest idea. Nobody

36:30 that I know of, did my parents know who flew, I'm sure not, no. It was just I wanted to fly, whatever reason, I can't tell you, it was just to be in an adventure I think.

Might it have had something to do with watching Kingsford-Smith on the news reels?

I can't answer that, I really don't know. I think I was always keen on anything to do with flying, any post card

37:00 I'd see in the shop of an aeroplane, and they were pretty funny old things in those days. I'd ask my parents could they, would they buy it for me, probably sometimes they did, probably sometimes not, I don't remember.

What about your brother, was he older or younger?

No he was younger, he was sixteen or eighteen months younger than me.

And how did the two of you get along?

Like two brothers we used to fight. Yeah, not physically but, you know,

37:30 I guess sisters are probably the same, I don't know. But yeah, we'd , I remember one stage he had on, wearing a tie which I claimed was mine, and so we had a tug of war and it broke in the middle, tore in the middle, and we both cried, I can remember that. But no, okay, as we got older we were pretty close.

What sort of, you know, kids fight over all sorts of silly things…?

Well

38:00 I could've been a matter of, a certain amount of jealousy, I think the younger, the older one is always the leader. I was the first one to go into long pants, when I did, he did. So I think there's a little bit of resentment that I had to battle to get them and he didn't. When I got them, he got them. So I think there's a little bit of probably jealousy that he didn't have to fight for what he wanted, or what he wanted to get, he got it same as

38:30 I did.

Did the two of you have chores at home?

Yeah, they weren't very onerous as I remember. We had to help our father in the garden, I'm not sure what we did to help him but probably more nuisance than anything else. We had to help, in those days we had an open fire place and so we had to take it in turns, we had to try and clean the fire place every morning,

39:00 and take all the ashes and so on outside. I really can't think of anything else, probably there were other things but I don't remember that.

Had you spoken to your Mum at all growing up about her service during the war?

Yes. I have one great regret. Somehow between moving up here from Sydney or when our Chatswood house

39:30 was sold, my mother had a shoe box full of war photos and she had all her medals. And my mother apparently was a very highly regarded nursing sister and she was mentioned in despatches which is quite unusual. And those medals and those photographs have disappeared. I'm very, very sorry about it. When we were just recently in Canberra last year we

40:00 did trace back my mother's, some of her history. We know she left in 1915 and the name of the boat she went on and she was paid six shillings and sixpence per day, cause she was an officer. She came back in 1919. I know one place where my mother served, I can identify it, it was in Egypt, oh what's the name of, what's the name of the,

40:30 the hotel we stayed at by the pyramids where mother…? Mena House, Mena House. It was a palace owned by the Egyptian King and during the First World War, it was converted into a hospital, army hospital. My mother served there, I know that, because she used to talk about it. And my wife and I, we went back and when we were in Egypt we stayed at Mena House, was then being put back into a

41:00 really, five star hotel. So I know she was there, I know she used to speak about being on a troop ship, when they were stopped in the Mediterranean by a German submarine. And they were carrying soldiers who had been returned to duty and if they'd been found on the ship, the ship could've been sunk. That was rather horrifying when you think of it

41:30 now but anyway the, they didn't get these couple of oh, probably half a dozen of these army people.

Tape 2

00:30 **Sorry, we'll just go back to that story. So your Mum was on the hospital ship and they were taking…?**

They were taking back soldiers who had recuperated from their injuries and they were being taken back on the hospital ship, probably back to Cairo where they would then join their units. They've had the German submarine stopped them, the, they were boarded but they didn't find the soldiers or their

01:00 kits or their rifles. That in itself would have been, you know, rather frightening. I can remember my mother talking about the hospital, one of them in France, where it was, I don't know at this stage, but they had a lot of double amputees in her ward. And they didn't, they had wooden floors and they had to be polished every day, I guess it's one way of keeping the floors

01:30 very clean. And so they, she organised races for these guys, they'd sit on a blanket and they'd be pulled with somebody who had their legs, and they'd have races with these amputees, and of course doing that the blankets would polish the floors. I remember my mother talking about that side of it. And there was one reason, you know, I wasn't even allowed to, nor my brother, join the boy scouts. My mother was so, had seen so much of injuries to

02:00 people in war time and in her opinion boy scouts were getting towards military, so I was never a boy scout, nor was my brother, for that reason. She talked about other things, seeing, being in London and seeing a Zeppelin come over and they put search lights on it and [it] got shot down in flames, I remember her talking about that. I've got a

02:30 an invitation, she was invited to a grand ball in the Crystal Palace I think it was, in London, I still got the card, with invitation to go to this ball in 1918 after the war had finished. And that's the only thing I really got from my mother's war time, apart from the photo of this hospital ship.

Did she ever discuss with you what had made her want to go and serve over there?

She had been, all

03:00 her four sisters were nurses. I think my mother was about the middle in age, something like that, and so she became a nursing sister. She went to, I think it was Cootamundra at one stage, where she was deputy matron at Cootamundra Hospital. I'm not sure then whether the war had broken out in 1914

03:30 or whether it was before, I can't remember that, I probably don't know. But they must have been asking for people to volunteer and my mother did. Whether her mother was happy about it, I've no idea, but I know that there was a lot of comradeship post war with the people, they called themselves the 'Anzac Aunties.' On Anzac Day they used to go down to

04:00 the Domain in Sydney for the service and then they'd go and have lunch together and they, I guess they'd talk about all the experiences, same as I do now when we get together. I think it made quite an impression on my mother during the rest of her life, about the atrocities of, they were atrocities really, the way they gassed people and so on, it made quite an impact.

What sort of woman would you say your Mum

04:30 **was?**

Very forthright. I say, pretty strong willed, she was a very, again I haven't got a photo of her, she was a very pretty woman but very strong willed. And I guess as far as my father's concerned, she probably always got her way. But I have very happy memories of my mother and my father.

What was your Mum like with you and your brother?

Strict.

05:00 She didn't brook any nonsense. That's 'Can when you get older.' Little bit different when you're about eighteen and so on, you're, these days you're an adult, those days you were still a teenager. But again my mother would sort of offer advice but we didn't have to accept it, we probably accepted some and discarded others, I don't know. I remember her advice to me, the

05:30 first time I went into army camp, and she told me, "Be careful, there'd be army followers." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "The girls," and they'd be following the army camp, "Beware of them." Yeah, so, that's something my mother had obviously learned during her service days. Yeah, she was with it.

What about your Dad, what was he like?

He was a very pleasant

06:00 man, he was, like me, very sports minded. As I say he played grade cricket in Sydney and he had managed inter-state cricket teams for New South Wales at times and he was on the, whatever they called it, the board of something, Cricket Australia, or as they called it in those days. He was very easy going. I can't ever remember him chastising me or my brother, at any time, I think he left that to Mum.

06:30 So pretty easy going sort of person.

Did you spend much time with your Dad?

Yeah, when I was still at school, we're playing cricket on a Saturday morning, he'd always come with us. I'd get the tram and he'd act as scorer. After we left school, no I was still at school, Saturday afternoon cricket we graduated from the early, the cricket mornings

07:00 to afternoon cricket and so he'd come along and watch us play cricket and act as scorer, yeah. For that reason, I think he enjoyed our company and the other kids and their teams.

When you were growing up, what was the family home like?

We had a home at Chatswood, it was built, I think about 19-

07:30 '27 or '29, I can't be sure. It was oh, it's a home that had three bedrooms, but these days of course you wouldn't build that sort of home because you didn't have inside toilets. You had a toilet adjacent, along side of, right, built in to your house but you couldn't have a toilet inside your house, that wasn't permitted, it

08:00 had to be outside, for ventilation purposes I guess. Gas bath heater, it used to occasionally, if you didn't get the tapering quickly enough and course the gas that was there, it'd go, 'boom!' like a bomb going off, it didn't explode. But it was a comfortable home for those days.

How did the gas bath heater work?

08:30 You had, if I remember correctly, you had a ring down at the bottom, you had an opening to get your hand in, you'd turn the gas on and you'd light the ring, or the pilot light would light the ring, I beg your pardon. And then you should turn the water on, which would then ignite the ring. Well sometimes you were too slow, the gas would build up at the base of the heater. It was, oh I suppose the heater was about

09:00 four or five feet tall and if you didn't turn the water on quickly enough, as I say, there would be, you know, 'boom!,' like a small bomb going off, but it never did any damage to the heater, obviously didn't, cause it kept on working.

So did that actually heat the water before it went into the bath or was it…?

Yeah it heated the water, it just, obviously the ring of flames there and the water was passing over it,

09:30 and you had a reservoir as well heating up the water. If I remember correctly you could adjust the handle to get the flow of water or to increase the heat, something like that, I can't be sure now, it's so long ago. But they were pretty archaic, if you saw one today, you'd laugh your head off.

And you and your brother, did you share a bedroom, or you had your own bedrooms?

I think we, no, my brother no, we

10:00 had a balcony wired in half glass windows and half wired in, a balcony right across the back of the house. And my brother and I used to sleep out there. We could've probably slept in one of the rooms but I think we preferred to sleep out in the balcony, from what I can remember.

And meal times, what sort of meals were the family having?

Ah, I guess mainly

10:30 there'd be meat of some description, could be pork, could be lamb, could be beef, chicken was too experience in those days. That was a real treat if you had chicken, probably once or twice a month, something like that. Vegies, potatoes, mashed potatoes, roasted dinners most Sundays. That seemed to be following on the old English tradition, you had to have a roast dinner on Sunday for lunch, and

11:00 my mother, not that she's English, but again, just followed that custom, I think a lot of people did in those days.

And were family meal times fairly formal or…?

Oh no. No, when you say formal, no, I mean, you're free to speak, in other words it wasn't a case of be seen and not heard, no you're free to speak and so on.

Was it fairly lively

11:30 **times at meal times?**

Oh I can't really answer that. The, I'm not even sure what we probably talked about. Might have been school things, it might have been sports things, it might have been something my mother had found interest in, I don't know.

And after the family meal at night, what would the family then do?

Listen to the radio. In those days

12:00 the radio was pretty basic. I can remember even crystal sets, where you had two earphones, only two at a time could you tune in and listen to the radio. And then of course things moved, you got these huge valve machines, they weighed a ton, where you had a speaker, it was like a great big question mark sitting on top of it.

12:30 And then of course progressively the radios improved, particularly post '45. But they were, yes the radio, I mean there was no television. Oh we played cards, we very often, we played Rummy or Strip Jack Naked or Five Hundred with Mum and Dad, yeah, we played a lot of cards.

13:00 **When you were listening to the radio as a family, was it news or music or serials?**

No, there'd be, no there'd be serials, pardon be, there'd be serials. You had Bob Dyer I think and Dolly Dyer, his wife were on at that stage. Oh even before that they had serials which were interesting. I'm not sure now whether they, well I

13:30 guess they were serials that my brother and I could listen to. Mum and Dad would listen too or maybe they'd go and read a book if it didn't interest them. We had a program on one night, I remember every Sunday night, oh they used to have the Palmolive Hour and they used to have a serial or a play every Sunday night for an hour and that was always worth listening to. And then after that you used

14:00 to have a half hour program of world famous tennis, and that was a must, we had to listen to that. But beyond that I just really don't remember.

You know with the tennis, was it the same sort of zeal as with the cricket, where the commentators would re-enact it with sound effects or...?

No, no the world famous tennis, they were records and they weren't personal appearances or anything like that, they were just gramophone records, they didn't have compact discs or tapes or anything like that in those days.

14:30 So that was a bit and in to bed and school next day.

Who were the characters in your neighbourhood?

There was one lady who, she was a bid odd, she used to object to us playing cricket in the street.

15:00 She, sometimes the cricket ball would go into their front garden, and she wouldn't let us go and retrieve the cricket ball, so we'd find another one to play with. As a result of that we wouldn't let her eldest son Sammy play cricket with us, so that made her even worse. And she even sent the police round to our house claiming that my brother and I were

15:30 abused children. I remember the sergeant of police coming, I opened the door and I was scared stiff, I didn't know why he was there for. But anyway he interviewed my mother and he just took it as a great big joke. She was, she was a screw loose there's no question about that. The other person who was an identity, was a fellow called, he was a great friend of my mothers, he was a great Bridge player

16:00 like my Mum and Dad and they always get a four somewhere and they'd play a lot of Bridge. But he was also a very clever engineer and he then worked for the Sydney City Council it was then, as an engineer. And he was an amateur radio person, he used to build radios. Much to my regret, he offered to teach me how to build a radio and so on but

16:30 I was too keen on playing cricket, so I never did. He was, when the war started in 1939, I'll always remember this, he was then seconded to whatever government instrumentality was on security and he had to fly to Brisbane for a meeting. It was a Sunday afternoon and he, we knew he'd be flying east of our home, we faced east in Chatswood our big front veranda,

17:00 and we arranged with him that we'd have sheets and blankets and we'd wave them. Now he was so far away in the aircraft he wouldn't have seen it and he was probably sitting the other side anyway. See, but that was quite an event for somebody to be flying, it's the first person we ever knew who'd flown in an aircraft as a passenger, and I don't know what sort of aircraft it was now. But they're about the two identities I can think of.

Did you quiz him about that flight afterwards?

I can't remember, probably I did, I really don't

17:30 remember.

Did the family go to church?

No, we didn’t. The, my mother had been a Sunday School teacher, pardon me, and she had a few boys wanted to go to Sunday school or go to church, it’s up to you if you want to go, so no we didn’t go. I don't think I knew the words for it either

18:00 for that matter.

Did Mum and Dad entertain?

Yes they did. When I say they were card players, they played a lot of Poker, apart from Bridge. And they’d have dinner parties and they’d play Poker in the afternoon and have dinner at night and then play Poker again, and what time they’d play to, I have no idea, but yeah they entertained quite a bit.

And so when Mum and Dad were entertaining, were you boys

18:30 **included or…?**

No, not really. Oh, we’d watch them probably playing Poker, we weren’t told… you weren’t to speak because you couldn’t say, “Oh, you got three Aces!” But I do remember at one dinner party, I did get into trouble over this. There was a, in the Strand Arcade, in there was a magician’s shop and they sold all sorts of things, and so my brother and I we saved up some pocket money and went in and we bought,

19:00 I remember, a couple of things. One was a glass, similar to that one, but it had decorations round the top where your lip would go, and in those decorations they had slits, so when you drank the water would drip down. And also on a chair you blew up this little apparatus, it was only small, but when you sat on the chair with the cushion on top of this thing, it made a very rude noise.

19:30 And so anyway we put these things around the chairs and we swapped some of the glasses with these little holes in them and of course when people started to drink, it was dripping down here. We started laughing our heads off and my parents suddenly realised what we’d done, and we got into trouble over that. I can’t think what happened, I know we did get into trouble.

Do you ever remember as a child growing up, hearing of any, you know, scandals or grown up

20:00 **things that you thought were a bit exciting or…?**

No, I can’t remember anything at all.

When you were at school, what was your favourite subject at school?

I think probably history and chemistry, my two favourite subjects. French wasn’t far behind. I was reasonable at maths, it wasn’t my favourite

20:30 subject, I really had to work hard at maths. Where I found the chemistry and history very easy.

Did you have any favourite teachers?

Yeah, one guy who used to throw chalk at you, if you weren’t paying attention. He was a maths teacher, if people weren’t paying attention, he was also a cricket coach so he could throw

21:00 a cricket ball and he could also throw a piece of chalk. He didn’t hit anyone in the eye but again he pelted a piece of chalk at you if you weren’t paying attention. Yeah he was a good sport also, he got on well with the boys.

Did you have a least favourite teacher?

Yeah. He was a Latin teacher, I didn’t like Latin at all. But he was an obnoxious character.

21:30 Anybody who he didn’t like he called them ‘Harrow Barzoneys,’ I think it was, who were supposed to be a Latin idiot, something like that. But he’d call people out in front and twist their arms behind their back, there, and, ‘So this is for not paying attention, I’ll do it harder next time,’ and he’d hurt. He could’ve been reported to the head master

22:00 at the school but I guess you were never game to do that sort of thing, so he was rather a despised teacher. These days you’d be hauled across the coals.

When you were saying North Sydney Boys High, is that correct?

Yeah.

And that was a selective school?

Yeah.

What was the selection process?

It depended on your marks. When you were at primary school, my final exam called

22:30 sixth class, there was a qualifying certificate and you had to get a pretty good pass to go to North Sydney Boys High. My brother and I were lucky enough both to go there. So I can’t tell you, other than

the criteria would have been the marks you got and the qualifying certificate examination.

Did you enjoy school?

Yes I did, I enjoyed it. Oh there were

23:00 times you didn't of course, but yes, by and large, I think I enjoyed school. I enjoyed the friendship of some of the guys. I enjoyed the, probably the sports, tremendously organised sports. I don't think when you first start going to high school you realise how important it is, that you accept what's being told to you and taught to

23:30 you because it's going to affect you later on in life, it's very important. I think you, initially you don't, but then as you get a little bit older, around about fifteen, you suddenly twig, okay I really got to do something about this and really pay attention, pardon me. But yeah, I enjoyed school by and large.

Was there a sister school?

I don't remember. I don't, there could've been, I don't

24:00 know.

So as you were growing up, were you starting to go to dances and...?

Yes, yep. Go to dancing classes, you had to wear white gloves, if you put your hand on the girls dress back, you didn't want a sweaty paw on her dress, or something like that. Yes we used to go to dancing classes at Chatswood, my brother and I and a couple of our friends.

24:30 The couple who ran it, either he and his wife were, was a champion dancer, Kingsley-Graham was their surname. After you'd had an instruction with a girl, how to dance, okay, you'd all come to the floor together. And then you, boys there and girls there and you'd sit and wait and you'd be eyeing off the prettiest girl, saying, "Gee I hope I get a chance to dance with her." And maybe the girls were saying the same thing about that guy, "Gee I wouldn't dance with him if you paid me." But yeah that was

25:00 normal, just growing up.

So as a teenager, apart from meeting girls at dances, where else would you meet girls?

Coming home from school, girls from North Sydney Girls High School. You'd meet on the North Sydney Station and have a bit of a natter and talk and then catch the train. Yeah that was about the only other time,

25:30 except at dances.

Did you have a girlfriend?

Oh I think I had, like everyone at that stage, you had several girlfriends you'd like to call girlfriends, if you rang one that she couldn't go, you'd ring another one, there. Oh that was pretty much the same for the girls too I reckon.

When you were going through school, either at primary school or at high school, what were you being taught about our military history?

26:00 Taught more at primary school than at high school. There was always, come Anzac Day or Armistice Day in November, talking about the Arcadia picture show, we always went down to the picture show, the whole primary school at Chatswood. There'd be a lecture, I suppose it would be, by

26:30 somebody who had been in the First World War. There were probably some films or maybe stills shown on the screen and then you'd go back to school, that would probably last an hour or maybe a bit longer. But I don't remember anything like it at high school at all, we might've, in the school hall, I don't remember this but this might've happened.

27:00 It was a big school hall, about as big as the Arcadia picture show, there might've been a service there by one of the ministers or something like that, coming and giving a bit of a talk about... I don't remember that, but it could've happened.

So what did you, like the Anzac tradition is such a big part of our culture and our national identity, as a child or, you know, young adolescent before you left school, what did you know of it?

27:30 Oh I knew quite a bit because of my mother, my uncle he had a Military Cross, and so I knew a lot about the Anzac tradition, about the war and so on. My uncle wouldn't talk about it very much, but I'd sort of pester him and he'd talk a little bit about it, I think he was still a bit shocked at what happened to him.

28:00 But yes it was important. We used to go in to the dawn service as young kids, with my mother. If we didn't go to the dawn service we'd go to the march by the, stay at the Cenotaph and go to the service in the domain, as kids, so yeah it did mean quite a bit to us.

Those services now are very crowded, were they crowded back then?

Oh yeah. The, in the

28:30 Martin Place where they have the cenotaph, that was choc-a-block of people and like-wise at the dawn service. At the dawn service you could hear a pin drop, and that was crowded too. But they didn't march at the dawn service, they only marched for the service that used to start round about nine o'clock and then go down to the [Sydney] Domain where they had another service at eleven.

So as a child before World War II, would it just be World War I

29:00 **veterans marching or...?**

Yeah I don't think they had, well, every Anzac Day of course they marched, but they might've had other ceremonies, which I certainly wasn't aware of, I've no idea.

What do you know of your uncle's service?

He, when, he first of all joined up I think in 1914.

29:30 He went over to, I think I'm right in saying this, over to Egypt. From there over to France. And I think he was either a corporal or a sergeant, I'm not too sure about that, but I know he was an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer]. And apparently he was showing some sort of ability so they sent him to an officer school, in fact it was Oxford University, and he finished up rowing for

30:00 them. Then he came back and joined his battalion, he was very badly wounded when he led a charge on a machine gun post and he was the only officer left. And it did affect him in later life, very much so, I had great respect for him.

How did you see it affect him?

It affected him that he was never able

30:30 to settle down. He was, according to my mother, he was a very intelligent, a very good student at school, in what area, I just don't know. He couldn't settle down, he went back to work, I think he was in the public service, but I can't be sure about that even. Couldn't settle down. He decided he'd have to do a soldier's settlement thing, he came up to,

31:00 I think it was Maxville on the north coast of New South Wales, a small farm. He wasn't successful. He tried other things too. Eventually he went back into the public service, quite a few years later, I'm not sure, he never married until about the 1930s, early 1930s, and he went back to the public service. But

31:30 he could never settle down at all, he just, he'd still have pieces of shrapnel coming out of his body at various times, so I'm sure it affected him, although he never mentioned it.

Did he try and discourage you from wanting to go into the services?

No. I don't think I ever discouraged him for that matter, or even talked about it with him. I might've, I don't remember.

So as you were coming

32:00 **through school, what was it that you were thinking you would go on and do?**

Well I still wanted to fly, I always wanting to fly. Even the time I left school, I was then probably about sixteen and a half, seventeen, something like that. My parents, they wanted me to learn accounting,

32:30 accountancy. My father said he didn't want me or my brother ever to go into the public service because the, their policy was, in his working days, was not on ability but on seniority, and some people got appointed way above their capabilities as a result of it. So that's why I went to Wentworth College and started learning accountancy and also a bit of law.

33:00 I'm not sure, at that stage, things were very unsettled. I can remember it at school, the last year at school I think it may have been or maybe the second last, we had one teacher who was a geography teacher. He was pretty clueless. And when he'd walk into the room, the first thing the guys would say, "Excuse me sir but what's happening in the war in Abyssinia?" Cause that's where Italy

33:30 with Mussolini had invaded Abyssinia [modern Ethopia], and the Spanish Civil War was on at the same time. So things were very unsettled around that period and everyone hoped [for peace] but expected there would be a war. How soon, nobody knew but they expected it to happen. So I think everyone was a little bit unsettled and as you were growing up, and I think probably parents with, had boys growing up, they were getting towards military age, and

34:00 I think they probably felt the same.

You were saying that your Mum hadn't wanted you to join boy scouts, but did she end up letting you join air cadets?

No. Nope, no way. No, it was actually forbidden, you know, say, 'verboten,' bit of German. No there's no way we could join the boy scouts. I, that's why I think she eventually let us join the militia, because at

that stage, or me

34:30 and my brother, he was younger than me, he didn't join at that time, but you could not be sent out of Australia and that changed of course down the track. So I think that's the reason why mother said, "Okay, you keep on pestering me or pestering me and your father, we'll let you join the militia," knowing full well I couldn't go outside Australia and fight. And course the Japanese at that stage were not even on the horizon about having a war. I think

35:00 that's why she gave in.

You mentioned earlier when you were talking about Kingsford-Smith and that you'd wanted to join the air cadets when you were about fifteen or so. Did she…?

I wanted to go down to Point Cook, that was the training school for Australia for the RAAF, where they taught you to be a pilot or in those days you generally had a, you were a pilot or a navigator or navigator gunner, basically, the aircraft were not very big. The biggest aircraft

35:30 would have been probably an Avro Anson, and that was pretty antiquated anyway, and they would only had a wireless operator, a navigator and a pilot, that's all they'd have in it. So that's why I wanted to go down there and train, but anyway, that never happened.

When you were talking earlier about you got your own Morse code set and you got the books about aircraft

36:00 **identification, was that all prior to the war breaking out or that was…?**

No, that was after war broken out. They, I was able to join the militia in 1940 and all you were doing at that stage was doing a month's camp or maybe a couple of month's camp and then you'd come back and I'd go back to where I was working in the shipping company. I wanted to

36:30 eventually get into the army, as I mentioned earlier, and my parents agreed, that was round about 19-, late 1940 or 1941. It was quite a wait to be called up so I joined the army, I think they called it the Air Force Reserve and you wore a badge here just in case somebody didn't give you a white feather when you were in civvy [civilian] clothes. I

37:00 decided the, I'd learn Morse code, I was advised it was good to be able to learn Morse code prior to going into the army, cause everyone's supposed to have learned it, how to operate Morse code, which of course wasn't true as I found out. And so I bought my own set and I went to the GPO [General Post Office] in Sydney where the, well the PMG [Postmaster Generals] Department it was, they were conducting classes for people who

37:30 wanted to learn Morse code. And again if you're going to be flying, it's good to know a hostile aircraft, the, at that stage the, the Japanese, there was thought of Japanese aircraft but certainly the war in Europe, and so I bought books and I used to look at them. Coming home in the train after work I'd see all the advertising hoardings,

38:00 I'd translate it into Morse code. I was keen to learn it and I did become good at it.

So before the war actually broke out, what sort of whispers were there before hand of war?

Well there was all the… ignore the Japanese, because I don't know any whispers about the Japanese at that stage. But all the annexation of countries in Europe by the Germans were the Nazis,

38:30 they were taking over one after the other and they were re-arming. Whereas the British and the French and I guess to a lesser extent, the Belgians and the Dutch, they were way behind believing that war wouldn't happen. And you might remember seeing a film of Neville Chamberlain coming back from Munich and he had a piece of paper and he said, "Peace in our time." He signed an

39:00 agreement with Hitler, which wasn't worth the paper it was written on. At that stage I think the Brits realised they were playing for time to try to catch up with the Germans. Like the French, they built the Maginot Line, unfortunately the guns couldn't swivel so the Germans came behind them when they invaded. So I think they realised it was going to happen, it was only oh, when, it was not if but when. So you probably, oh, three or four years before 1939

39:30 I think people expected this was going to happen down the track.

So while those whisperings were going on, or you know, they probably were louder than whisperings by that stage, what was Mum and Dad saying about it at home after, you know, the experience that the family had had?

I don't really remember to be honest. I think they probably felt the same as every other person, every adult anyway. How terrible this is,

40:00 people walking in, the punishment of the gypsies and the Jewish people, or people who are disabled, how they, the Germans got rid of them, because they didn't want them to procreate and produce more disabled kids. I think people were a bit horrified but I don't remember it being discussed at home.

What about amongst your peers, were young guys hoping it would start?

Yeah I think so.

40:30 Yeah, I think that was exemplified by the night war was declared, when about ten of us went up to Chatswood Railway Station to get the 12 o'clock edition. You know, “Oh you beauty, here it comes, here it is.” But that was sheer bravado looking back on it, I’m sure now, we didn’t realise what was going to, or could happen, and did happen. I had a lot of my friends; I had nine very good friends,

41:00 most of us we used to go to dances together and pick out the prettiest girls to dance with and all that sort of business. And of those nine, we all went into the army, and five of them were killed in the army, one of them in the Middle East and the others in Europe. So we never thought of that sort of thing happening, but okay, that’s reality.

Tape 3

00:30 **Now I have to ask you about learning to speak German.**

Well it’s very interesting, I’ll come back to this several times. I’m a fatalist, and I reckon if I hadn’t learned German I might’ve been killed in the air somewhere along the line. After I left school and I was studying accounting at Wentworth College, my parents, for some unknown reason

01:00 suggested I should learn another language other than my schoolboy French. They suggested that I should learn German mainly because next door but one to us, lived a very highly regarded medico who was German, and he was brought out by Royal North Shore hospital as their chief pathologist, about 1934, ‘32, something like that.

01:30 His brother had been a barrister in Brunswick in Germany but he couldn’t practice law here, apart from which his English, as far as law was concerned, would have been impossible. So he had two daughters who were very clever girls, they were dux of their schools later on. And so he started teaching German and I guess at the same time probably getting a bit of English too, but I think his brother,

02:00 the medico would’ve helped him enormously. So he started teaching me German and I used to go there after dinner at night, about two nights a week perhaps, maybe three some times. And I learned basically German from him. It wasn’t so much the grammar, there must’ve been some of it but it was like conversational German, and

02:30 that was for about two years. It got to the stage that I could understand German far better than I could speak it, it’s such a horrible language, it’s very guttural and trying and speak it, so I could understand it far better than I could speak it. So that’s why I started to learn German and at that stage of course I had no idea, not in the faintest idea, to what use it would be put to later on. Except my parents thought, ‘Oh well, maybe he can become an ambassador

03:00 to Germany somewhere and speak German,’ I don't know. But anyway I’m very glad I did, because I think in the long run it may have even saved my life, something I’ll never know.

A few people have told us they actually remember hearing some of Hitler’s speeches on the radio, can you recall that?

Yes I do. Yep, be, oh, round about, I think they had the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 and I can remember seeing Hitler’s adoring crowd, all their hands raised, “Sieg

03:30 Heil.” And what he was saying in German then, I had no idea, cause I hadn’t even started learning German. But yes and of course consequently there were excerpts, he’d suddenly say, bit of Hitler before the opening of hostilities, you’d hear him at these various places telling you what he thought of people and how good they were and how they’d been oppressed in the First World War and so on. Yeah, I used to hear them not

04:00 intentionally, they just happened to be on a, going to a picture show on the newsreel.

And can you recall the day that war was declared?

Very easily. Yep. See I mentioned a bit earlier that because the invasion of Poland and the British warned the Germans that unless they withdrew their forces by midnight their time, in Europe, that England would be at war with Germany. So

04:30 we knew this was going to happen, it’d been announced on the radio, we heard Winston Churchill, no, yeah I think it was Churchill announce that, “We are at war with Germany,” or, either he or Chamberlain. We went up to Chatswood Railway Station, waited for the special edition coming out, telling, I guess how good the Allies were and how rotten the Germans were, I don’t remember it, was all about now. I know we were up there, about ten of us, eight or nine,

05:00 something like that.

Can you remember Menzies' speech?

Yeah, I can remember Menzies' speech when he said, finished up by saying, "England is now at war with Nazi Germany, as a result Australia is now at war with Nazi Germany." Know it almost word for word.

And the reaction of you and your friends was one of excitement?

Yeah,

05:30 we were certainly, I don't say joyful, but excitement's probably a better word to describe it. Yes, we, I said previously that, you didn't think down the track, you're thinking for the moment, and yeah it was, 'We will do them,' that sort of attitude. Yeah.

What do you think about that in retrospect, now that, you know, having survived the war, when you look back on those times?

I think a lot of young people today would probably feel much the same. The

06:00 pardon me, I mean that's the expression of youth I think, you live for today and not tomorrow. Some of them probably would think about, 'Oh that's going to be pretty dangerous or pretty horrible.' And I think now these days a lot more horrible things can happen, you don't have to be close by, with the ballistic missiles, you can be some thousands of miles away and have something coming down to blow up.

And you mentioned earlier that you

06:30 **sang the "Siegfried Line"?**

Yeah there was a song, 'We'll hang our washing out on the Siegfried Line.' That was fairly popular before the declaration of war, I think everybody knew the tune of it really well, so I remember we sang that up at the, pardon me, at the Chatswood Railway Station that night.

Do you still know how that goes?

Oh, I can't sing now anyway, but yeah, I remember those words though, 'We'll hang our washing out on the Siegfried Line,'

07:00 and I can't remember anything else about it.

And what was your Mum and Dad's reaction initially with the declaration of war?

Oh, I think they were very saddened, I'm sure of it. I can't remember what they said. But I think from my mother's experience, my uncle's experience and although my father wasn't in the services but he knew what went on, only because of my mother and also my uncle. And I think they were rather subdued,

07:30 they weren't at all happy.

Was your uncle on Mum's side or Dad's side?

Mother's side.

And can you recall what conversations you might have had with your parents in regard to the war and you wanting to join up?

I can't remember the actual conversation but I know, come 1940 being 1940, that I persuaded my mother and my father that I should be able to join the militia. We had several of my, oh, close friends at that stage

08:00 living around me at Chatswood had joined the militia, and they were my age, seventeen, eighteen, or going on eighteen. And as I said previously, I think they were happy... not happy, but they were prepared for me to join the militia knowing that Australian militia could not go overseas and fight. And at that stage there was no thought, as far as I knew, of the Japanese possible invasion of this country, what, eighteen months later.

08:30 **What sort of news were you receiving about the war in Europe?**

There were the news items, and also if you went to the movies and there'd be newsreels, and you'd get, pick up some of it on that and also in the newspapers.

Generally speaking at that time, what would a young eighteen-, nineteen-year-old man's view of the world be?

The world in those days

09:00 was a smaller place than it is now. I mean you were twelve thousand miles from the UK and America, it wasn't thought of as being a place to go, really go and visit, it was mainly Australians went to Europe. I never thought, prior to the war, that I'd be travelling, because you couldn't fly that distance, if you did it

would take you about ten to fourteen days. You'd go by ship and that would take you

09:30 about five weeks, and there was no way as a young guy was I gonna get five weeks' leave, nor could I afford to spend that money going by ship, so I never thought about going overseas.

What about as a young man, being old enough to be shot at, yet not old enough to make those sort of decisions about joining the forces?

Well it was to me a very sore point.

10:00 Although I was in the militia, and was doing occasionally a month camp, and sometimes might be two months but then I come back and work with the shipping company that I had been working with, I'd been pestering my parents who, particularly my mother, to let me join the army and they refused. Eventually, I was talking at tea time,

10:30 I was probably pretty objectionable to my parents, that I used to argue with them about not letting me apply to join the army. I'd storm out of the house, might go to my mate's place, or go to the local picture show, come back, go to bed, not say 'Goodnight'. I wrote letters to the Sydney Morning Herald, complaining that eighteen years old

11:00 is old enough to determine their future, and I should be, parents should not prevent people signing up for the army, or applying for them to join. I used to show these letters, they were published in The Herald, show them, that must've been pretty horrible. I regretted that years later having ever done that. Til eventually one morning, I was on the way to work and my mother came at breakfast time, crying, and said, "Your father and I

11:30 have discussed the army, we've agreed to let you join, or apply to join the army." I must've put my parents in a very invidious position by doing all that, but anyway it was just, it happened, that's how I felt. And I felt that if I was old enough to make up my own mind... I don't think also at that stage you realised the dangers you might confront. I think that's another reason

12:00 why, okay, your mates were joining the army or the army or the army, why shouldn't I?

And in retrospect do you understand where your mother was coming from?

Oh yes. Very much so. I think I, as I was saying a few moments ago, I regret it now, down the track. I sympathise with them, the anguish that they must've gone through. Anyway that's history and this is what I did.

So when she finally said yes, what was your feeling?

Elated.

12:30 I couldn't get down to Woolloomooloo Recruiting Centre quick enough to get an application form and fill it in and do a medical.

Can we just go and cover what sort of things you might have done in the militia, what you were training?

Yeah, the unit we were in was, had been a light horse regiment but we didn't ride horses, we rode trucks and we were a machine gun regiment. It's very interesting when you think back how ill prepared Australia

13:00 was in the 1940s. We didn't have any rifles, I had a broomstick to do rifle drill with. Every Tuesday night we went up to a drill hall at a suburb of Sydney called Turramurra and we'd strip a Vickers machine gun and we'd put it together again and you had a competition and you were timed how long it took you to strip it and rebuild it. There were A, B and C troops

13:30 and they did it other nights of the week, now they only had one machine gun which meant about a hundred and twenty men, or young men, and a couple of them who'd been in the militia peace time, they had rifles, but the rest of us had broom sticks. And that's how it started.

Did you ever get to fire any of these weapons?

Yes. Eventually after the war against Japan had been declared, we were full

14:00 time camp and yeah in camp we certainly fired the Vickers machine guns. I can remember one, you had two, they had three legs and you had two clamps on the side and you had to make sure they were pushed down hard. And this guy didn't, apparently was too gentle, and the one on the left hand side collapsed and the machine gun swung round like that and it missed people by that much, by inches. Yeah,

14:30 we had plenty of rifle range, using a 303.

And did you have a uniform?

Oh yes, oh yeah. The, it was interesting, the universal train, these are people who were called up into the militia. And they came into camp and they came from the coal-mining districts around Newcastle

and they were tough guys, believe you me. The people who were in our regiment

15:00 post war, were light horsemen, and some of them did bring their horses in to camp, I'm not sure why, because we were a mechanised machine gun unit. But they were the officers and NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] and they wouldn't brook any nonsense from the young universal trainees. As I said to you, they were tough guys, they were children or sons of coal miners, and maybe themselves might've been down the mine,

15:30 I don't know. But they brooked no nonsense and they certainly realised that discipline was discipline and a few parades where these guys were put on detention duties like cook house fatigue, which is not very pleasant, washing up greasy pots and pans, that sort of thing, and leave cancelled for them, they soon fell into line.

And was it the full sort of light horse regalia?

Ah yeah the, we

16:00 still, and I don't know why, we still wore a, and I stress the word, 'plume' in our hat, at the moment I forget it was, I think it was this side over there. But anyway my mother, before going into full camp, full time camp, or some months before, she went into Farmers in Sydney because my plume in my hat, not feather, `plume'

16:30 they call it, wouldn't lay down properly. So she went into Farmers and where they stocked these sort of things, and she asked the man behind the counter, could she buy 'feathers for the light horse'. And he looked at her and he said, "Madam, we sell plumes, not feathers," so that's why I mentioned the word 'plume'. So yeah, we still wore that in our hat.

And what did you think of army life?

I enjoyed it, I think again

17:00 it was the comradeship. You worked hard, there's no question about you trained hard. Life wasn't easy and you only had to be caught, like I almost did one night on guard duty, which is quite ridiculous because it's where you're learning I guess. And I just, I was standing, and I went to sleep standing up, strange as it may seem. And suddenly I woke up and must've heard a noise and it was the

17:30 orderly officer coming round so I was able to challenge him, "Stop, who goes there?" Otherwise I'd have been short of leave, I'm certain of that. But yeah look, I grew up and I really mean it, and I think all the other my own age, re-grew up in the years of 1939 to 1945 because we had no Mum and no Dad to ask for advice. If you went to the sergeant major he'd say, "Get lost," or

18:00 in rather uncertain terms I won't explain here. So you had to think for yourself, do for yourself, and you grew up, I'm very grateful for that.

Having said that, were there still father figures within the unit?

Yeah, some of the guys who were older in the time units, yeah they were a bit like a father figure to you. Too, I think sometimes they had us on too, I can't blame them for that.

And did you learn much from the blokes that

18:30 **were veterans of World War I, that were still within the unit?**

Oh they wouldn't have been World War I. No, these were guys who had joined the peacetime unit, and I say they were mostly bushies, as a light horse regiment. And they were pretty big guys, tough guys, so you probably learned a bit about life from them, because they were older that what you were at that stage, but that was about it.

Had you

19:00 **ever started to think about, you know, if you had to resign your desire to join the army, the possibility of staying in the army?**

No way. No, army or nothing.

And how often would you go to the militia?

We used to go, when we're not in camp, we used to go once a week to the drill hall, excuse me, might get a drink of water.

Yeah.

19:30 We'd go to the drill hall at Turramurra on a Tuesday night once a week for about oh, a couple of hours, two or three hours. And I say, do rifle drill with broomsticks and pull down machine guns and reassemble them, that was once a week.

And did you ever get frustrated that you weren't sort of getting

20:00 **involved in the war quickly enough?**

Yeah, that's why I pestered my parents to let me get into the army, cause I reckon at eighteen and a half or thereabouts, maybe a bit older, that I knew my own mind and I knew what I wanted to, want to be in. At that stage the Japanese, pardon me, hadn't come in, so it was in Europe.

Can you remember Pearl Harbor?

Yes, very clearly.

How did you hear about that?

20:30 Well we firstly heard it over the radio about the Japanese attack. Strange as it may seem, oh we also saw it in the newsreels and that was in every picture show you can, or cinema, you could think of. We were about to go back into camp again, so at that stage we did have rifles too. And I can remember in-

21:00 stead of being called, oh about a week's time to go into camp, we were suddenly called overnight virtually, to report immediately to our drill hall and we're going straight into camp. So I remember Pearl Harbor quite clearly for that.

What was the name of the militia unit you were in?

It was the 1st, it was called the 1st Machine Gun Regiment, it wasn't light horse but it had been light horse. We still had our plumes though.

And from the time of the actual

21:30 **bombing of Pearl Harbor to seeing the newsreels of that at the cinemas, how long do you reckon that would've taken?**

Oh it's very hard to even estimate. I don't think it was very long after, it's probably only a matter of several weeks I imagine. But you got reports on the radio in camp, in your canteen,

22:00 there's a radio, you pick up reports on the radio, you go to the local picture show, you see films and you see the newsreels of Pearl Harbor and what not. So it wouldn't have been more than oh, two to, two or three weeks at the most, I think.

And what sort of impact did that have on people, that suddenly there was a new enemy and a new front?

Okay, I think it reinforced the people in the militia.

22:30 A lot of them transferred to the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] when the Japanese came into the war, at that stage the militia weren't allowed to travel outside Australia, but they left and joined the AIF. Yeah I think they felt, 'Yeah okay, this is getting pretty close now and so that's about time we joined a fighting force,' sort of thing.

Was the fact that the Americans, that they'd been brought in to the war, what sort of impact did that have on people?

23:00 Well I think it wasn't so much the Americans brought in, but what the Japanese had done and how crafty they'd been planning this all along and having everything ready from the word go when they attacked Pearl Harbor. They just walked into Hong Kong, it was all worked out, they knew where the people were, they took them as prisoners, they, talking about the various diplomatic staff, and that sort of thing. They were all prepared for it and I think the people felt, because I did, okay, this is

23:30 a real war now, it's coming close to home. And that's why I think a lot of the people left and joined the AIF.

Usually when we speak to people that were in the militia there's, and the AIF, there's always that choco sort or thing...?

There was at that stage, there's no question about it. That changed completely, our unit eventually went up to New Guinea and suffered quite a lot of casualties. But yeah it was, and likewise we looked upon the people

24:00 in the army, we were 'Menzies' Blue Orchids,' because they could, while we had a darkish blue uniform, but if you're training for air crew, you had a little white thing in your cap. So you'd hear the army or the army go, 'Here's another Menzies' Blue Orchid.' Looked upon a little bit as being like the militia, I guess cause you're gonna take so long to train. You just feel a little bit uncomfortable on occasions, particularly when you're out-

24:30 numbered.

And about the, before you go into the army, you were in your light horse regalia, how did that go down with the ladies?

I think we felt rather proud of it, wearing this uniform. And you'd, sometimes you had to go to a firing range, this is not in camp, a firing range. And you didn't have

25:00 time to change if you were gonna take a girl out to the picture show that night, so you'd stay in uniform. And I think you felt sort of proud, 'I'm in uniform and I think she's proud because I'm in uniform,' that may be all phoney now, I'm not too sure, probably it happened.

And a lot of people, there's discussion over whether people were doing it for 'King and Country', or purely, you know, for their own purposes, how did you feel about that 'King and Country' thing?

Oh, it didn't

25:30 worry me that, I think it was one, you're looking at survival. I was just thinking that if the, particularly after Japan came in, that we could be over run, we didn't know what was ahead of us. There was also the thought at that stage before the, Pearl Harbor, that the Germans would, because of a blockade, would probably attack the US. Now the German bund [federation] in America was very, very strong.

26:00 They had lots of Nazi collaborators, also in South America, there's books on this, and America was absolutely protectionist and they were forced into it. But Roosevelt, reading a book on it, he was very pro-Churchill. That's why they had this Lend Lease agreement with their First World War destroyers and so on. He was, but he was, hands were bound because the US

26:30 Senate wouldn't approve any hostile action by American forces. So it looked that America at one stage might be attacked, cause Germany was winning everything.

Can you tell me what your perceptions were of that relationship between Australia and England at the time?

They were very close. I don't refer to it as the `Old Country' by any means, but seeing the films of the privations

27:00 of the bombing of London, you just could not help but feel sorry for them. When you saw film footage of people living in the Underground with their canaries and their cats and what not, 'God that must be terrible,' and the rationing that went on with the people, and you couldn't help but feel sorry for them. And let's face it, after the French fell, the Dutch and the Belgians, they'd all gone, that the next step was, okay,

27:30 they'll be over in the UK and we're gonna go there, okay, next America. So anyway it was one of, not patriotism in my book, as far as I was concerned, it was purely, I felt very sorry for them.

What sort of, was there a feeling of dread amongst people, that that would happen?

I don't know about dread, it was always a possibility, distinct possibility. And that even widened further with the Japanese advance, they just walked

28:00 over everybody. So that was, I think by that time, I was back in full time camp, the Japanese submarines hadn't attacked Sydney Harbour when I went into camp but it, they did and I think people got really frightened. And of course they had the Brisbane Line [controversial policy line of defence to guard south-east Australia] up here, that if the Japanese landed on the Queensland coast they'd evacuate down south and let you look after yourself sort of thing, it's a pretty horrible

28:30 thought. That wasn't disclosed then but that's what was gonna happen. So I think people were scared, I think the Brits were and I think the Australians were.

Cause before Sydney and Darwin were attacked, Australia must've felt like it was almost immune to a world at war?

Yep, we're miles away. Yeah, the only thing is, they, when the Japanese took over Singapore and the British lost their two big battleships, the Prince of Wales

29:00 and Renown [Repulse] I think they were, something like that, that it looked very real. Cause that just, was like a tank just marching over everybody, all the POWs [prisoners of war] that were taken in Singapore, of Australians and Brits. And I'm of the opinion that people thought, 'Well okay, well Australia's the next step,' and that was before the bombing of Darwin.

From the outset of war in 1939, what sort of restrictions started

29:30 **in Australia, as far as rationing and that sort of thing?**

None. No, I don't think rationing came in to being until probably about oh 1940, and that was mainly petrol for cars. I don't think any food rationing or clothing rationing. But that certainly came in later. But oh boy, when you compare the rationing in England to the rationing the people say, 'Oh gee it was tough here,' believe me, they had a dream run.

When did you

30:00 **first notice things starting to get more serious in Australia as far as that went?**

Oh I think basically after the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor. I mean Europe was still a long, long

away from us and I don't think at that stage that was any great thought of any danger to Australia from the German forces in the, in Europe and the Middle East. Too far away.

So by the time your Mum and Dad had agreed for you to join the army, you

30:30 **were in full time camp were you in the army?**

No, no, I was, I'd been doing these one monthly and, or sometimes two months camps, in and out and back to work. No, I was still, I was still working and as I said, I was having breakfast, and Mum came out crying and said, "Your father and I have agreed to let you apply to join the army." No I was still in civilian life.

And

31:00 **did you have to tell them what you were going to do at work?**

Probably I did, I don't remember. Yeah, I'm probably sure I did.

So it was off to Woolloomooloo?

Off to Woolloomooloo that day, application form, I filled it in, I had to bring it home for my parents to sign and then take it back and they arranged a medical inspection. If you were physically and mentally

31:30 fit too, and I really mean that. 'Okay, you're accepted,' but what you were going to be categorised as down the track, that wasn't even entertained at that stage.

Can you recall sort of mental aptitude tests that you might've done?

Yeah they had all sorts of tests I remember. The main one was a confetti test to see if you were colour blind or not, and you had to pick out figures in a maze of various colours

32:00 blues and pinks and yellows and browns and what not. If you failed that, they didn't want you in the army. There was some questioning of your attitude towards other people, what respect you have for women and children. There was the, what you thought you'd like to

32:30 do in the air, what you'd like to be in the army, why did you want to do that particularly, all those sorts of questions. Of course then you had your physical examination as well, you know, blowing into this and lifting this and all that sort of business on a treadmill. But they were the sort of questions, that was a full day down at Woolloomooloo.

And did any of your mates go in with you?

At that stage, no, no. Some had already gone and others followed.

33:00 **And was it hard leaving your mates behind that were in the militia?**

I never thought of that way, I thought, 'I'm going into the army.' It was interesting that I got yellow jaundice in camp in the army. If you've never had it, you don't want it, you feel desperately ill. And when I was able to leave hospital I was sent down to Sydney

33:30 to recuperate because you can not eat any food that contains any fat whatsoever and for army cooks, that's pretty hard. So I was down in Sydney, and I, the call up arrived when I was still in camp at the Showgrounds. And so my pa, at that stage the army didn't want to let me go, I was an NCO, and so my parents pulled rank,

34:00 they knew some people in Victoria Barracks in Sydney and they got me transferred to the army. So I never went back to the camp, to the unit.

And how long was that time period, where you're waiting for your call up?

From the time I was accepted to the time I was called up, I reckon it'd been the best part of twelve to fifteen months. It was quite a long wait.

You must've thought it was never going to happen?

Well I knew it was gonna happen one day but, you know, you're getting frustrated and

34:30 then of course being called back into the army and to camp full time, I thought, 'Gee, I'll probably never get out and get into the army,' but anyway it did happen.

And a lot of people had, that we've spoken to, mention that they always thought the war was gonna be over before they got there, was that the feeling?

No, I didn't have that feeling. The, when I went into the army the German Army was still

35:00 occupying lesser countries like Latvia and up in the north. And they were building up their forces and they had a few aborted attacks, like abortive attacks, the naval landing in Norway, the other one in the coast of France, I've forgotten the name of it now, by Canadians, they weren't very successful. And the Germans were pretty, they were pretty clever people, believe you me, they were no

35:30 mugs.

And can you recall how the Germans that you knew in Australia, were being treated, all this while?

No I, well, the two, they were both doctors, one at law, one at medicine. The Doctor Limburgs, no they were still, he was at North Shore hospital. The other guy, he had started doing an accountancy practice with a fella called Clunies-Ross, who was so, he was a chartered accountant,

36:00 Clunies Ross. He was so mean, this guy used to ride his bike in from Chatswood to Sydney every day and he had to pay Clunies-Ross a pound a week for teaching him. He eventually finished up having his own chartered accounting business. But no, I don't know how Germans might have… the Japanese, yeah, like a guy I went to school with at Chatswood, his name was Yumano. His people had a Japanese steam laundry in Chatswood and they were interned, he and his parents and

36:30 his sister. But beyond that, I don't know.

So to the best of your knowledge, Japanese families were interned, but German families weren't?

I can't answer that, I didn't know any, well the only German family I knew were these two doctors and the other guy, the only Japanese I knew was the guy I went to school with at Chatswood Primary School, and they were Japanese and they were interned. But the two doctors, I don't know, they weren't I don't think.

Interesting. So

37:00 **that time in the militia, were they starting to send militia boys overseas at that stage…?**

No, they couldn't, no, I don't know if, at what stage it was possible, but I would gather it was round about 1943 perhaps or 1994. They, I'm not sure what they did, they changed some Act [of Parliament] somewhere along the line, allowed them to send militia overseas and they went to New Guinea and Labuan, Borneo, you name it, I know our regiment did.

37:30 **So how concerned were you in that initial period of time where you'd finally gotten your call up and the army weren't going to release you, how concerned were you then?**

I used to think about it, I know when I was concerned, I used to think about it and I used to think, 'God, will I ever get a transfer, when are they gonna call me up?' I might have been concerned, I just don't remember. But I used to think about it so I probably was concerned.

And you're obviously very happy when you finally were released to go?

I was elated, that's the only word to describe it. Thank

38:00 God it's arrived.

Could you share that elation with your family that's, being that they'd had a tough time allowing you to do that?

No, I was in camp, so I couldn't. See I was at the Showground and from there I went straight down to Woolloomooloo, and so I had no way of contacting my parents and talking about it. Okay, you went to Bradfield Park and you used to get weekend leave, oh maybe every fortnight get a weekend.

38:30 Course it was discussed then, there's no question about that.

So you'd still go home during leave?

Oh yeah and there was one particular girl I used to go out with, so we'd go and see a film or somewhere or something like that, or might go to a dance. At Bradfield Park, it's interesting, it probably getting off the subject matter, but it was very interesting, there was a hole in the fence and it was down near a place called

39:00 Fuller's Bridge. Now that's where the taxis used to wait and pick you up and they'd take you where you wanted to go and of course they'd bring you back and you'd get through the wire netting and you'd get back to camp. And I'm sure the authorities knew about it and they weren't gonna try and stop it, but you weren't supposed to go down there and get out and get back.

Did, have you ever thought, wondered why perhaps the authorities may have known about that but not acted on it?

I think they were quite prepared to let it happen, because it wasn't causing any problem.

39:30 The guys who were in the army, they were all volunteers, they were keen as hell to get trained and get, if you like, get stuck into it. So there was no doubt in my mind that any of the guys wouldn't've escaped, they all want to get on with the job, they were volunteers.

And in that same vein, did you notice that you were treated any differently in the army to the way you were treated in the army?

No, no different at all. Okay, with the army training I'd

40:00 had, I'd definitely expect to have the same sort of square bashing when I first went into the army. And the people who were generally the drill instructors were scrubbed pilots and they weren't very happy about the younger people coming up behind them who might stay in aircrew. But these had said, "No way, you're ground staff, and you're gonna be a DI," drill instructor. And so they used to really rub it

40:30 in, to particularly the guys who'd never marched before. They soon learned, I can assure you.

Rightyo, we'll just stop there and put in another...

Tape 4

00:30 So we're off again.

Yeah well, how did you find, obviously you'd already done all the militia thing, how did you find going into Rookies with the army?

Boring, yeah, I'd done all this before. We even had rifle drill at Bradfield Park which was, to me it was quite unnecessary. But again, it could've been to instil some sort of discipline in to you. Likewise you used to have hut inspections and your bed

01:00 had to be squared up, and you didn't have sheets in those days, you had blankets which were a bit prickly. But yeah, they had to be in the right position, had to have either your forage cap or your slouch hat on the centre of your pillow and all that sort of business. So yeah, it was wonderful for teaching discipline I guess to people who'd never been in the services.

Not having a problem with the mic there? Just looks like it's...

01:30 **...it's just folded under the tie a little bit.**

Oh I'll keep my hand away from it.

So besides drill and rifle training, when did they start to get more towards learning stuff about the army?

They, interspersed with your square bashing as I call it, yeah, you were learning Morse code.

02:00 You were learning about aircraft recognition, you were given a lot of generalisations such as, and I've never forgotten it. That if you see a flag on a masthead and it's straight out in front with the wind, you know the wind's at least ten knots, all these sorts of generalisations. Nothing specific. We had lectures about people who'd been there and done that, like

02:30 Killer Caldwell [?], I remember he came, he'd been in the Middle East, he's an air ace and he gave an account of what's required. And I can remember his pride of joy was that they used to fly, not sure whether it's to Cairo or somewhere, fill up with beer, and of course they get in and fly high in their Kittyhawks and they'd bring back cold beer. We thought that was a great idea. We did a lot of physical training and a lot of it

03:00 was, we virtually, you had two sides, you had to get from that side of the gym to that, and it was like a scrum, like a free for all getting across. And that I guess was to try and teach you to be a bit adventurous and not be afraid of getting hurt. They also, down on the Lane Cove River, part of the national park, they had a viaduct which was either for sewerage or water, I don't know, and was reasonably narrow, and you had to drop down

03:30 below oh, probably a hundred feet or more. And you had nothing, no guide rails, and you had to walk across that and back, several times. So I guess it was again, to give you some sort of feeling, 'I'm invincible,' I don't know, but that was all part of that training I guess.

And what sort of impact did having talks by blokes like 'Killer' Caldwell have on the young blokes?

How soon can I get there? That's all I can tell you.

04:00 **What was your uniform issue like in the army?**

Ill fitting, I can assure you. The, you know, one size fits all, sort of situation. But if some of them, for example, the trousers I was issued with were miles too short, they were about five or six inches above my ankle, so you can go back and change them. And likewise your tunic, if that was ill fitting,

04:30 okay, they'd always change it, but you, first up all sizes fit all, or one size fits all. And you were issued as well with your shoes, your, they used to call them 'goon skins,' your overalls, your cap, your slouch hat, black socks, yeah that's about it.

And was the army uniform considered to be better than the army uniform as far as quality?

Oh I think it was, yeah, I think it was better.

05:00 Not a lot, but the shoes were better. You didn't have to wear these hobnailed boots. But you also, you were issued with those in the army as well, but you had shoes like I've got on now, so that was going out on leave. In the army you had to wear hobnailed boots all the time.

And how did army food compare to army food?

Yeah I'd say it was better generally. Certainly at one stage, may,

05:30 I'm jumping the gun going to Parkes on training, but if I am, tell me. They had good food spoiled by a couple of so-called chefs. The saying was, 'Who called the chef the bastard? Who called the bastard the chef?' And he spoiled food, and so much so, that when you lined up in mess parade to go into the hut, you brushed the flies off the guys in front. And you get hot meat,

06:00 probably stewed meat or something like that, and you look at it and you count how many maggots were in the food. And you complained to the orderly officer and he said, "Well there's plenty more meat outside if you want to go and get it." You didn't, and every opportunity we'd go into town and get some sort of meat in town. Otherwise you stuffed yourself up on bread or toast. It was good food ruined.

Did blokes even bother trying to eat it?

06:30 You couldn't. I mean you'd look at the gravy and there are these white little objects swimming around in the gravy, you just couldn't. The porridge was alright in the morning, that was, if they were there you wouldn't see them, they were mixed up in the porridge, but certainly you'd see them in the meat.

And what were the accommodations like for you?

In army or army?

No, in the army.

In the army, oh you had long huts, corrugated huts.

07:00 Very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. They'd accommodate I suppose about thirty, thirty-five people either side, and you had these lockers down the centre.

And how big an intake were you in, in your, was it your flight that you're in?

I, they called it a course. I suppose it's probably about a hundred or more, probably over a hundred,

07:30 that was 32 Course. And then I applied to, whether you're a wireless operator or whether you were a navigator or a pilot or whatever it might have been, they were the only three categories actually.

And what had you nominated for?

Like everybody else, a pilot, of course. Had to be. But my ability with Morse code, my ability with the aircraft recognition, and I, as I say, I was

08:00 lecturing on aircraft recognition at Bradfield and so my fate was sealed, there's no question about it. I was going to be a wireless operator, no doubt about that.

And with all the stuff you'd done on the outside, as far as Morse code was concerned, how far ahead did that put you in the course?

It put me a fair way ahead, the, particularly with Morse code. The other guys eventually would catch up to you, or pretty close to it, I probably

08:30 always a little bit ahead, I'm not too sure about that. But it didn't, I mean at Parkes if you wanted to, you could always go back and do a bit more Morse code at night, or after the afternoon training had finished, you could always stay back and do more, and I'd never do that, so that was probably an advantage.

So going back to Rookies, how long was that course?

At Parkes were, I think it was about six months or maybe six and a half months.

09:00 At Bradfield Park we were there for about, between two and three months, during which time you were categorised in what you're gonna be, and then you went to the various schools.

And how did you feel once they'd told you what category you'd be going in to?

I objected and I asked for an interview to be re-categorised. And they granted it to me, but when I got there to the interview they said, "No, your expertise is in Morse code as far as we're concerned

09:30 that's more important than being a pilot, so you're a wireless operator." "Can't I be a pilot, sir?" "No." And that was it.

At that stage did you regret having put so much effort into learning Morse code?

I was probably disappointed but I don't know about regrets. Probably ‘disappointed’ is the right word.

And did you know, where there other blokes, particularly more so in Rookies that just couldn’t handle it, that dropped out or were kicked out?

I don't think

10:00 any dropped out at that stage but some did, because of air sickness, and some because of unsuitability. Now that could be lots of things, that you didn’t respond to discipline, you weren’t mentally fit to be part of air crew, I can’t give you real reasons but there were certain people did drop by the wayside on all the courses.

10:30 **And when was the first time you flew in an aircraft?**

At Parkes. In, probably beginning of 19-, either end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943, one or the other.

And what aircraft was that?

The old Wackett trainer. They were, oh, little single engine training aircraft, the Australian designed training aircraft by a guy, Wing Commander Wackett.

11:00 We trained in those. They were very slow, fixed under cart. Lot of the pilots, pardon me, had come back from the Middle East, they were bored stiff. Because just flying for an hour or two and then landing, and this going straight and level, they wanted to do aerobatics but they couldn’t, the aircraft wasn’t capable of doing it, so they were bored stiff, these guys. I felt sorry for them.

And was your very first flight just a

11:30 **familiarisation flight?**

I can’t remember that. Probably, we had these radio transmitters and receivers in the training rooms apart from the Morse code rooms. And so you learned how to, in those days they had, I think they called them ‘cords’ from what I can remember, if you wanted to change frequency, and these were pretty outdated equipment from the First World War. And you’d take one of these cords out and put another one in to cover a different frequency,

12:00 and for that reason they were very, very slow. So you learned to play with these on the ground and then when you got up in the air, you have one up there to use as well. And you had to make certain check points, you had to contact certain points to prove that you’re able to use that machine on a certain frequency. You made no real contact, except the fact that your log book showed you’d made contact with a point over

12:30 there.

So I guess despite your love of aircraft and your desire to fly, you probably didn’t get really to enjoy your first flight?

Oh yeah. Oh yeah, it was the thrill of a lifetime. Yeah terrific. Everybody talked about it. I mean, there were very few passenger aircraft in those days and our, young guys like us we couldn’t afford to fly anyway, so that was a great thrill.

So was it hard then to switch

13:00 **your mind off being an excited kid and having to do your job?**

No, I don't think so, I think you’re very keen to impress and do as well as you could, I know I was and I think the others were too. But as I said earlier, we’re all volunteers and we’re keen to fly in whatever capacity we’re gonna fly in. Unless you are well trained you’d make a mess of something, and when you were flying in,

13:30 in say for real in action, so you had to be good. And I think that’s the attitude I had and I think that was the other people the same.

And was flying all you’d imagined it would be?

Yeah, looking down from you know, a great height then, fifteen hundred or two thousand feet, I’d never seen anything like that before. So yes it was, something that was unusual, probably was exciting to a degree,

14:00 I can’t really make a comment on that.

And you’re telling us a bit about the equipment, how antiquated it was?

Oh it was old as hat, it was really antiquated. And they would never, well they might’ve in the first few days of the war against Japan, when they had the Wirraway aircraft, that was their frontline defender-fighter aircraft, and they were pretty slow. I don't know whether they even had radio equipment in any of those.

14:30 In the Avro Ansons they had, and they were vintage about 1934-35, they probably had that sort of equipment in them. I really don't know, I never flew in them here so I can't answer, but it was very, very slow, antiquated equipment.

Was it Australian-made equipment or... do you know?

No, I think it was English equipment.

15:00 I don't think at that stage Australia was far enough advanced in technology to be making that sort of stuff.

And was there an expectation that the army would be getting new equipment, or was it just make do, make the best ...?

Make do, make do, yeah.

How long was it before you got onto more advanced sets?

Oh, over in England, they had modern Marconi equipment. And they were

15:30 just so streets ahead to what we'd been used to training on in Australia. Those guys who trained in Canada on wireless, I don't know what they used, I've no idea, but they might've had the same as we did in Parkes, they might've had Marconi. But Marconi equipment in England was oh, a thousand percent better. And quicker.

Had you seen any of the radio sets that the army were using, before you came across?

A little bit

16:00 of it, yeah, I can't remember much about it. But, I couldn't even describe it to you.

Probably of the same kind of vintage?

I think the, well it probably would've been in the early stages, but I really can't comment with any authority.

I was just trying to find out whether perhaps the army had better radio systems than the army?

I wouldn't have thought so. I think we were so bereft of equipment

16:30 in 1941 when the Japanese invaded Pearl Harbor, I think we were so bereft of equipment that'd been so old and so antiquated, it would never have been used in service, it couldn't have been. They might've in the first few days but they must've had better equipment down the track. It was really terrible.

So did you know, sort of, have any idea of how the future was evolving for you

17:00 **as far as being in the army, like what sort of training you would be doing, where you would be going?**

No, I had no idea, and obviously I wanted, if I couldn't be a pilot, I wanted to go and train in Canada from Bradfield Park, but I missed out on that too. No, I had no idea where I'd be going to I think. I probably hoped I'd be going to the UK, but I can't be certain about that even now. But you know, you really had no idea,

17:30 it was luck of the draw, if your name came up to go to one spot, that's where you went.

And at that stage were they sending blokes north?

Oh yeah, the, they, yes they were sending people north then, they were flying Wirraways with two little piddly machine guns in the front. And they would've had Avro Ansons which were so old hat, but they were the best they

18:00 had in 1941.

And when was the first time you flew in an Avro?

In England. They used those for training only, that's all. They were slow as hell, very reliable, and I believe they were still using them there in 1945 just for training navigators and training wireless operators.

So besides the Wackett,

18:30 **had you flown in any other aircraft in Australia?**

No. Oh yeah, yep, the Fairy Battle in Port Pirie where we did a three-week gunnery course. They were a beautiful looking aircraft, like a big Spitfire, very trim, very slim, but very slow. And the guys who were flying those too, they were ex Middle East, and these you could do a bit of

19:00 aerobatics in them. And they tried, I, they, we got, these we had Lewis guns, they were certainly 1914,

they had the magazine, the round one on the top. You fired a drogue, if you like, a great big parachute behind a Walrus, amphibious aircraft, and you fired this and see if you scored any shots on it. And also it

19:30 had an open hatch on the floor, and you had to stand either side of it, if you put your foot in the middle you went straight through. One of these guys, he wanted to do a bit of low flying, he went so low that the propeller whipped up the water into where we were standing. He enjoyed it, I think we enjoyed it too. But that's the only other aircraft I've flown in, in Australia.

How much room was there in those Fairy Battles?

They'd taken out the

20:00 seating, they had a pilot and a gunner, and they'd taken out the gunner's seats so we had to stand up, all the time, for I suppose, each trip'd be probably forty minutes, forty-five minutes. And we each got a turn on the Lewis gun and then you back to camp again.

So how many guys would be in the aircraft on those sort of things?

There'd be the pilot and probably three us, oh two I think, generally three of us.

And just take turns?

20:30 Just take turns at the Lewis gun. Which was a waste of time cause the Lewis guns weren't going to be used, they were so old fashioned. They used to jam repeatedly, the gun would jam.

Was it still handy in that you got an elementary understanding of air gunnery?

Possibly, yeah I think it probably was. I know there were no failures on the course, I don't know if that means anything.

And would they actually score

21:00 **the hits on the drogue?**

Yeah.

How would they do that?

The guy in the Walrus towing the drogue, he could tell when the bullets were going through the drogue, they'd watch you from the rear. I'm not sure how many hits I got, I'm not sure if I even got any, but I passed.

And what else can you tell us about the actual training that you did on wireless?

That's the

21:30 extent of my training in Australia I've mentioned. Then we got over to, eventually we got up to a place in Scotland, we'd been in the UK at that stage about two months. And we then went up to a wireless school at Dumfries in the north of Scotland where we got on to Marconi, it's the first time we'd seen Marconi equipment.

So the training in Australia was very rudimentary was it?

Well no, you learned to use the Marconi equipment if you like in the

22:00 classroom and then we started doing a lot of night flying in these Avro Ansons. And you certainly had to plot and you had to tell the pilot where to go because you had these, you had a loop on, above the, Avro Anson, which you had to swing round to pick up the various stations. And you had to tell the pilot where you'd been and where you were heading for, so he would then make his way back towards camp. Now he would, obviously would've

22:30 known himself where he was going, cause he's probably done it so many times, but we had to contact, make actual contact with these various positions and that was recorded. We'd have done those, I suppose, three or four times a week, did a fair bit of night flying, there's no daylight flying. Which is very pretty on occasions with the snow covering

23:00 the ground, it was like fairy land.

If we can back up, back to Australia, just before you left to go to England, how did you find out that that's indeed where you'd be going?

Okay, from Port Pirie we went back to Bradfield Park, which was a section there called 2ED, Number 2 Embarkation Depot. We then went to Melbourne to 1ED at Ascot Vale and here we were told that any Australian money we had on us we had to change

23:30 into pounds sterling. Nod as good as a wink, so we knew we were going to the UK. And I was able to ring my parents and say I was going to see Uncle John and Aunty Trixie and they knew for that reason that I was going to the UK.

And that was cause you knew, you'd been told not to obviously mention where you were going

officially?

We're told we're not to tell where we're going under any circumstances. But you know, you're getting paid in pounds sterling, you're certainly gonna go to

24:00 the UK

So did you get any pre embarkation leave at all?

No. No, we were, like we're at Bradfield Park, I suppose, for about a week or maybe ten days, I'd say probably doing nothing. And then suddenly down to Ascot Vale and the second day we're over to Adelaide and on board the ship. So we had no leave at all, just straight over.

Just

24:30 **ask you again, how much you got when you exchanged your money for pounds sterling?**

The amount of Australian pounds, shillings and pence I had, I don't know but I got eight pounds sterling which made me feel very cashed up, I was pleased I had money in my pocket when I arrived in England. But I don't know how much money would've bought because my uncle and aunt took me during my first leave

25:00 and they spent money on me, and I didn't spend any money at all.

And how did you go over?

We left from Adelaide on a, I think a small ship, a eight, nine and a half thousand tonne called the Dembyshire. Actually there's quite a history about this particular ship. It was built in Holland and had completed its trials so it had its engine and everything ready to go, when the Germans invaded Holland.

25:30 And so the boat left and went over to UK, and the sister ship didn't have a motor. And the one we went on, it was rated having a top speed that was very high, twenty-seven knots, an average speed of twenty-four, twenty-seven top. And they figured the other boat would be the same so it was worthwhile towing, so the army towed it out of port, oh probably Amsterdam I imagine or Rotterdam, and towed over to the UK.

26:00 So we left Adelaide and went straight towards New Zealand and down south to the, through the straits of New Zealand and then immediately further south, it got very cold. And we kept as far south as was probably game to go and crept up to the coast of South America up in to the Panama Canal. But what was interesting, on the way across,

26:30 oh we had two incidents. It had watertight bulkheads on it and they claimed that the boat was virtually unsinkable, but it was never put to the test. But somewhere east of Cape Otway, we're going out into the Pacific now and the seas were getting a little bit high and the boat was rolling. And we had one guy going with us called Jock Charlie, he'd been a boundary rider, jackaroo.

27:00 And we're in the hammocks below deck and suddenly one of the watertight doors hadn't been properly closed and with the roll it slammed with an awful noise, and he yells out, "We've been torpedoed!" and he jumped out and everyone awoke. And somebody said, "Oh look it was only the door slamming." So that really startled us there with this, it made a very loud bang, it went right through the ship. The other one I remember very clearly.

27:30 We got caught in a very, very severe cyclone, this is well in the middle of the Pacific. We enjoyed it, we thought it was wonderful, we didn't realise the danger til it was all over. But the, according to the captain of the ship, when we got into the calm waters, he told us that he had to, we were doing minus four knots for a day and a half. Now he said, "I had to keep the nose in," he said,

28:00 "if we'd turned side on we'd have been rolled over." He estimated the troughs were roughly sixty feet deep and they were breaking, the boat would go up the trough and get near the top of the wave and break over and the whole ship would shudder. We lost nearly all the life rafts and whatever else we carried for escape. We didn't realise the danger. And we thought, 'Oh gee, look at this beauty coming up now,' and 'Wham!' she'd go. So that was something that I'll always

28:30 remember, just going backwards four knots.

And you enjoyed it.

We thought it was great. And course being in hammocks at night, you don't get the same affect if you're in a bed, you ride with it, you know, your body rises with the hammock, so it was great.

And how were, other than that, how were the living conditions on the ship, going over?

They were crowded. The, we were the first RAAF troopship

29:00 ever to leave Australia. It was an experiment, whether they had others to follow, I just don't know. The food was, oh, just below average I guess, it wasn't all that crash hot. Yeah it was, as I say an experiment I guess, because they, on the boat, they had army gunners, we had a, I think it was either four or five pounder on the stern.

29:30 When they had practise shots the ship really shook and you'd think all the rivets would pop out. They carried Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns, they were quick firing, they'd fire those at, they'd fire balloons into the air and have pot shots at that. And also they had, like drogues, they'd fire those up and they'd have a chain attached to them and they'd fly over the ship to stop low flying aircraft. Well we never experienced, but again it was good to see they

30:00 had it. It was, oh, you all had to do certain duties because it was no passenger ship, so you all had mess duties and in the high seas we had to be chained to the railing otherwise you could be washed overboard, but you'd get very wet nevertheless, I did several times. Other days you had to go on what they call latrine duty. And the latrines were open

30:30 toilets on the aft deck. You'd see the guys sitting in the toilet and you'd see this big wave coming up, everyone would stand up, like this, otherwise they'd get their bottoms very wet, then they'd go and sit down again. But it was fascinating to watch this going on. And we had to be there, latrine duty was just to make sure no-one got into trouble, that's all you had to do, just stand and watch.

31:00 In retrospect it was quite funny when you think of it.

And there was no escort at all for the ship?

No. We were on our own. We went through the Panama Canal, we got leave in Panama. That was an experience too, because we didn't have any US dollars and, but anyway there are ten of us, we called us, 'The Gang of Ten,' we were very close during our training.

31:30 And so we got into an American taxi, and I don't know how we all got in, first time we'd ever been in a left hand drive. He was a Negro and we told him we want to go to an American canteen, so we could change some money and pay him, so he trusted us obviously. We went to the USO [United Service Organizations] I think they call it, a canteen, and they gave, no, they wouldn't change any money, they didn't know how much pounds sterling was to a US

32:00 dollar, or vice versa, so they gave us some money to pay the taxi driver. They then prevailed upon us, they had an amateur concert, would we take part in it. So, "What have we gotta do?" They said, "Oh sing..." We had our Australia patches on, "We'll sing something Australian," and we sang 'Waltzing Matilda' and 'There's a Track Winding Back...'

32:30 I don't know how good we were but they gave us second prize, we think it was sympathy, and we got money for it, so that allowed us to buy cig, American cigarettes, never seen them before, American cigarettes. And I'm not sure if it was a wet canteen or a dry, I can't remember, anyway we bought things to drink. And then one of the guys in the canteen said, "Oh, I've got a truck outside, how about driving around and having a look at Panama city."

33:00 So they took us around. I remember he bought us drinks as well and then took us back to the canteen. No, took us back to the ship, that's right, to the wharf, and that was the end of our leave. Went through the Canal, we were stopped at the entrance to the locks, to go down into the Atlantic, oh Caribbean into Gatun Lakes, and then we're told you could jump or dive over the side of the ship.

33:30 It seemed an awful long way down to the water, but anyway I think everybody did, including me, but you thought you'd never be coming back up again. And they said, "Don't worry about crocodiles, because we got people on watch with rifles," but we thought we were pretty safe. And the next day we went through the locks out into the Caribbean and we passed an old coal burning ship, you could tell by the black smoke coming out, it wasn't diesel.

34:00 And next morning the captain said, `The boat we passed last night was torpedoed during the night and all hands lost.' So, from then on we had submarine watch, ah, you'd be surprised how many periscopes I saw at night time, and it was mainly the water being broken by flying fish. But you'd see the water being disturbed, 'Submarine!' Yeah, and you had two hours off, you took it in turns to do

34:30 two hours and have a sleep for the rest of the night. That lasted all the way through until we got into, almost into Bristol, the Bristol Channel.

When you were in Panama, what was your impression of the Americans there?

I thought they were very nice people, very friendly, they treated us. They couldn't understand why we were wearing shorts because in Panama they have a lot of mosquitoes, and they get

35:00 malaria, and they get, I guess dengue fever, all these tropical things, are passed by mosquitoes, we had shorts on and we're the first guys they'd ever seen in Panama wearing shorts. Some of them thought Australia was Austria and they wanted to know, 'Where had we come from Austria, why had we come from Austria to here?' We'd say, "We're from Australia." But they were very friendly, and they did their best for the ten of us anyway, I can't vouch for the rest. To show us a bit of the

35:30 town at night time, which is not an awful lot. There were no black outs obviously.

And to your knowledge, did any of the blokes get sick as a result of wearing shorts in Panama?

No. No, not at all.

And you mentioned having to go on submarine watch and that gentleman that cried out when the ship's door slammed shut. Obviously, I mean, was there, what kind of fear was there of something happening to you on such a sea voyage?

Well with the, Jock Charlie yelling out, 'Submarine!

36:00 We've been torpedoed,' that woke everybody up. I think everyone laughed about it quite frankly, when it was found out what it was. Submarine watch, we didn't take it all that seriously I don't think. We kept eyes out for it but no the captain told us, and they had radar on the boat, he told us that the, 'No submarine was capable, even on the surface,

36:30 of catching us.' The only way they, was to wait and lay, wait for us til we got near, then fire a torpedo at us, but we were too quick. And he said, "The only thing that could catch us would be destroyers." Well the Germans didn't have any destroyers in that area, so it was only the submarines that were a problem, so it was only a case of them laying in wait for us and firing a torpedo.

And what was it like when you arrived at Bristol?

37:00 There was an air raid on, on Bristol at the time. Yeah that was something quite unique, we'd never experienced anything like it. But you could hear the anti-aircraft going off and you could see the puffs of powder, and you could see the German, they were bombers but only light bombers. They weren't, I don't think they ever had any heavy bombers, the Germans, anyway. So that was quite an experience but we waited in the Bristol Channel for about, oh, almost two days

37:30 before going ashore.

And did the ship's armament help out in that situation?

No, oh no. The Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns, they were for low flying aircraft, they wouldn't have gone more that a few thousand feet I don't think. But these were much higher.

So were all the fellas on deck just watching the show?

Yeah, 'Look at that! Look at that!' Yeah. Yeah, they were watching.

And that was your introduction to war?

Yeah, virtually, yeah.

So what happened when you actually

38:00 **went ashore?**

We went, pulled in alongside the wharf, we then marched to, the railway came right down to the wharf, we boarded a train. We were told we were going to Brighton, we weren't quite sure where that was. Bear in mind we hadn't had anything to eat since breakfast, cause we expected to get off the boat before

38:30 lunch and we didn't, so there was no food. And we stopped at Salisbury, on the way across, that must've been close to midnight and they had food waiting for us, hot food, that was pretty good.

You weren't still in shorts I hope.

No, I don't think we were at that stage, probably not. And then we went on and we arrived in Brighton, at about the break of day, something like that and again marched down from the

39:00 railway station to the Metropol Hotel, where we were, that was taken over, had very big hotel, taken over by the army, and that's where we were initially.

And you were billeted there?

Yep, yep. Australians, caught up with a lot of friends when I was there. I caught up with a friend, Ian Inness, who was the guy who knew somebody was going [(UNCLEAR)] in a couple of weeks. Caught another guy at school through ah, Johnson, oh I've

39:30 forgotten the other names. They'd trained in Canada, and they were over there in Brighton too. So yeah, it was like a bit of a homecoming.

And when you met up with people like that, that'd already been to Canada, did you feel like you'd been ripped off for...?

Yeah, I sure did, yeah. No, I was very envious.

What did you learn of their trip over there?

Well the different atmosphere, I mean the, it was, could've been winter time or partly winter, partly summer,

40:00 bit of both, the snow, the hospitality of the Canadian people particularly. On leave down into the, to New

York or it might've been, yeah I was pretty green with envy. And I guess all the other guys who trained in Australia were the same. But anyway it wasn't to be.

And how were you received initially by the Brits?

Oh I think they were very pleased to see anybody who was gonna try and lend a hand. They were very hospitable, to

40:30 you. I take my hat off to the Brits, what they endured, in the way of rationing, but how they were prepared to share with you what they had. I mean it seems incredible to kids these days, there was no ice cream for young kids. I remember before leaving to come back home, a little boy was given an ice cream

41:00 by his mother and he said he couldn't eat it because it was too cold. So they put up with all these privations, and I admire the Brits for it. But then again, they didn't have much choice either.

Tape 5

00:32 **Now where were we up to? You've arrived in Bristol and you've gone to Brighton?**

We've gone to, yeah gone to Brighton and I met up with a couple of friends, yeah.

So by this stage, had you any idea which squadron you're going to be allocated to or you're still on training at this stage?

Not the faintest idea. You're filming now?

Yeah, sorry.

Oh, yeah, not the faintest idea.

01:00 As I get down the track when you're talking about this, you'll find out why I never finished my training in the UK. Which is a little bit unique.

So when you were on the way to the UK, you knew that you still had more training to do or did you…?

Oh yes. We knew we had to get onto the English equipment which was so different to what we trained on in Australia. This was state of the art stuff and what we had in Australia was antique,

01:30 by comparison anyway.

How did it differ?

Well again, the receiver or transmitter on the Marconi equipment was so much easier to use. You had a far, well, in the Australian equipment if you wanted to change frequencies, you'd take to take a coil out and put another one in. That all took time. Then you had probably oh,

02:00 half a dozen or more coils, otherwise you couldn't get through to the area you wanted to, to put the right one in. In the Marconi equipment, you just had a dial, made it so simple and if you wanted to pick up something so you can make sure that you're going to transmit on the same frequency, and you've seen them on radios too, they call them magic eye [valve-powered lights]. And you have like an inverted 'V' and when the two cross over, like that, you know you've got

02:30 exactly the same frequency as which you are listening to and which you can transmit on. And it was just a matter of using dials, it was just so easy by comparison. It was a joy to use for that matter.

Must have been very exciting to be in a foreign country for the first time, using this state of the art equipment?

Yeah, the main thing is there, they spoke English, the, as far as we're concerned. Yeah, but that was strange because the climate, when we arrived

03:00 in, towards the winter, we arrived I think it was September or October in the UK, it was getting cold. You had to get used to, in our huts, having fires, where in Australia concerned, you didn't need them. You were rationed, even in the services, to the amount of cigarettes you could buy.

03:30 You suddenly found you were getting American cigarettes from the Australian Comforts Fund, which you, we used to buy a carton of two hundred was something like three and four-pence in those days, that's pounds sterling. You realised too when you went to a restaurant, that if you liked to eat sausages you were guaranteed thirty percent meat, the rest was bread, so all these sorts of things were new. English beer was a bit on the nose,

04:00 they liked it, oh not warm but certainly not cold and we're used to drinking cold beer. These are all strange. And we struck people putting red hot pokers into their beer, and it'd all froth up and they'd heat their beer. It was all weird as far as we're concerned. I don't think we ever got used to it really.

The, as far as the beer, because they didn't chill the beer, not like

04:30 we do anyway, even summer or winter here.

What about the English themselves?

I had a great admiration for them. They certainly took, I guess, overseas people to heart. If you, a lot of organisations in the UK, like the guy behind the Morris motor cars, Lord Nuffield, he

05:00 had a fantastic leave program for people to use and Lady Something or other had likewise a program. We found the usual people that you meet in the pubs or shops, they made you feel very welcome. While I can see the reason why they did it, because they wanted somebody to give their other, their own people some help. So I found them very friendly.

Did you encounter any

05:30 **sort of, being spoken down to like you're a, just a colonial or…?**

No they were keen, sometimes have a joke and say, "How are the kangaroos?" and that sort of thing, no, no way. We'd have a bit of fun that's all.

So once you were there and you were working on the Marconi sets, how long would you have taken to get up to speed on those?

Oh, it's a bit hard to think back over those years.

06:00 It was fairly simple equipment to use so it wouldn't have taken very long. As I say we had to train on it at first on the ground before we could go in the air and use it. Oh I don't know, probably four or five hours or maybe one full day, maybe a little bit longer than that, but it was very quick, it was very easy, very good equipment.

And so what were you flying in then, was that the Ansons?

06:30 Yep, the Avro Ansons, yes. And they just had a pilot and me, there was only just the two of us in the aircraft. And you'd fly round getting directions from various beacons, contacting, using Morse code of course, contacting various spots you're supposed to contact, they would record, they'd record you'd been in contact with them.

07:00 You get, what they call, radio direction-finding, we had a loop aerial on top of the Anson, you'd twirl that round. You'd help the pilot, tell him where he was, well he would anyway for sure, but you'd tell him where he was and so on. The flights would last anything between one and two hours, no longer.

And during that time when you're in England, doing that training, were you,

07:30 **were you still thinking I just wanna get out there and…?**

No, I think you've gotta be, realise the fact that you've gotta become an expert in your field. When and if you join a crew, everyone relies upon you to do the job you've been trained to do and to do it as well as you possibly can. And so consequently I think everybody was trying their hardest to be as good as they could get. Becoming

08:00 familiar with the equipment, being as quick as they could, I'm sure that applied to everybody.

Were you being assessed the whole way through?

Oh yes, yep.

And how were you doing?

I was assessed as a very good operator. I think my Morse code again came to the fore, I was pretty good at it. But using the equipment also, it was like water on a duck's back, really it was, not only to me but the others. So yeah, that was fine.

Must've made you fairly proud to…?

08:30 Yeah it's endorsed in my logbook that I was a very good operator, so I'm happy with that.

So from Brighton, where was it to next?

Okay, from Brighton, we're there for about probably ten days doing absolutely nothing except getting occasional lectures. And one of the myths was that you should eat a lot of carrots, it helped you to see better at night. And the MO [Medical Officer]

09:00 said, "Look forget about it, it doesn't do anything, but they're good for you, but they won't help your eyesight at night." After about ten days we went up to Whitley Bay, which is near Newcastle on Tyne. We went up there to do a commando course, I was talking about a little bit earlier. We did a lot of PT, we went to the rifle range, we fired 303s,

09:30 not sure why. We learned how to jump over big expanse of water using a rope to swing yourself across

and then the culmination of it, after about two weeks, we had a mock battle. And you were, they had the yellow bands and the red bands or something, I've forgotten now, but you had two sides, and you're supposed to be able to infiltrate one another. And they had

10:00 referees or judges to do this and we carried rifles and we had blanks in them so you couldn't hurt anybody, you'd just fire at them. And off go the blank and the referee or whatever he called himself, would say, "You're dead." And you'd say, "No I'm not," and you'd run away in the distance. You know, that was ridiculous, that sort of situation. Eventually, thank God, a pea-soup fog came down and that was the end of it, you just could not see... I probably wouldn't have seen those

10:30 chairs out on the balcony it was so thick. And we were lost, our group. We found a railway line and followed it, we thought in the right direction, and it was. It was on the way to Newcastle or where we were stationed wasn't very far out of Whitley Bay. And I think we got a bus back there, or something, I can't remember now. But anyway it was a fiasco and

11:00 as far as I was concerned and others, it was a waste of time. But the only good thing about it, while we're there we had one weekend leave and Edinburgh's not very far and so we got the train up to Edinburgh and we had a weekend. First experience of ice on the pavement and I went flat on my back at one stage, just went for a skate and no way of stopping myself. Visit Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace [Castle]. Tasted Scots beer,

11:30 saw tartans for the first time, everywhere you looked, even in wartime. Looked at the, saw the Forth Bridge, all those sorts of things we enjoyed doing and then of course we came back after the leave, and finished off the course and then back to Brighton.

When you were doing that course and the big pea-soup fog came in, had you seen anything like that before?

No. Never ever.

Did it give you any concerns that you might have to fly in...?

Never thought of it. Matter of fact,

12:00 a little bit later I'll talk about it, it can happen when you're flying, but you don't land at base, you get directed to where, somewhere else where there's no fog, you never land in it. Oh, we tried once and almost took the church steeple away. So that was our experience in Whitley Bay and then back down the Brighton. And there we languished until, I suppose for another week or ten

12:30 days doing the same thing. Which time four, four of us I think it was, we decided we wanted better accommodation so we rented a flat at Brighton. And that was good because we got our own breakfasts, we had food coupons so we got our own breakfast. We could entertain, we invited young ladies to come back at night we'd have a bit of a dance in the

13:00 unit, walk 'em home and then come back to the flat. That was pretty good. And then we were told we were gonna be posted to Dumfries up in the north of Scotland which is a wireless school, I was telling you about the Marconi wireless equipment and that's where we went up to. I think I was up there close on probably two and a half to three months, I'd have to look at my logbook or my paybook to

13:30 be quite sure about that, but it certainly wasn't overnight. And then leading on from what happened in Dumfries and it was, oh it was cold there, and in the middle of winter the sun would set at three o'clock, it would come up round about nine or half past nine. The pool where we supposedly did dinghy-drill experience, to jump in with your Mae West [life jacket] model on, you couldn't go in because of the ice, it was impossible.

14:00 It was freezing. Mid way through the course, a memo came round asking any person who could speak a foreign language, and particularly French and German, would they please put their name down, so I did and two other guys. Oh may have been a couple of others too, but certainly only those of us who could understand German. And we heard nothing for I suppose

14:30 three or four weeks and then suddenly one day the, we're called into the adjutant's office and we wondered what we'd done wrong. And he's a grey-haired guy, he must've been certainly First World War, old grey moustache and he just said, "Gentlemen, please sit down," which is most unusual to be called "gentlemen". And he told us that he hoped to have a personal interview us that afternoon to assess how good our German or understanding of German

15:00 was then. Unfortunately he was on flying duties and we had to postpone it to another day, so I for one breathed a sigh of relief and I thought, 'Oh gee, my German's not all that crash hot, maybe I won't get interviewed.' Anyway we left, or stood up rather, and as we're about to go to the door the Frenchman arrived. Now he spoke German with a French accent, which made it even more difficult.

15:30 Snowy Traegar, he was the first one, his parents were German, they came out after the Second World War and he lived in the Barossa Valley, and his German, I guess they probably spoke German at home, so it was pretty good. Then the other guy, Reg Hardacre, he had done German Honours at Sydney Boys High for the leaving certificate so he was pretty good, but a bit rusty. My turn came and it was just one very simple

16:00 question and the answer was either yes or no, I mean I understood what he was saying. And he just nodded, then he spoke to the adjutant in French so quickly that we couldn't understand what he was saying, then he left. And the adjutant then said to us, "Well the French captain said you all have a very good knowledge of German, that'll be all, gentlemen." So what's going to happen, we had no idea. We

16:30 suggested amongst ourselves, 'Oh, I know what they're going to do, they want us to brush up our German, they'll probably put us behind the German lines there, and, but they'll probably send us to Oxford or Cambridge.' So we coined the phrase, 'We are the Intelligentsia,' much to the chagrin of the rest of the guys on the course. We heard nothing though, oh I suppose for three weeks, we went back on course. And then

17:00 out of the blue came, 'The adjutant wants to see you again,' and this time we knew we had done nothing wrong, he was just going to tell us something to do with our German. And he just said to us then, "Well, you're going to another army station, you're going to what they call a Lancaster Finishing School for familiarisation." I remember saying to him, "Well what does that mean?" He said, "I haven't the foggiest idea, I don't know. All I know that's where you're going and it's supposed to be secret."

17:30 So in due course we got our posting orders, we got our rail pass and we went to this aerodrome in Yorkshire, first time I'd ever seen a Lancaster, I couldn't believe how big an aeroplane could be. When we got there they didn't know we were coming. Our paybooks, they were to be sent on and we wanted mainly to go into town. So they advanced money from the mess for us to go into town.

18:00 And after about three or four days we were told, "Oh you're here to fly in a Lancaster to see what it's like." So all the three of us did, we just sat like we're sitting now, for about oh, a couple of hours while the Lancaster just cruised around, and that happened twice and that was it. And then we waited, 'What's going to happen?' They couldn't tell us, so we just sat and waited. And then suddenly called to the, I don't know, commanding officers

18:30 office I suppose it was, and he said, "You're being posted to 101 Squadron." "Where's that sir?" "Oh in Lincolnshire." "What are we supposed to do there?" He said, "I don't know. You'll find out when you get there." So we found ourselves on the squadron, they knew we were coming. And we were met by a German who lived in Canada, his name was Broeksmann and he spoke perfect German

19:00 obviously, and he was the CO [Commanding Officer] of this intelligence unit we were attached to. So he explained us, oh first of all, he said, "I've got to get you to sign a form swearing absolute secrecy about the equipment I'm going to talk to you about, even before you look at it." So we very gladly signed the form, so then he started to tell us about this equipment, which had a code name, 'Airborne Cigar, ABC.'

19:30 And when he told us what we're supposed to do, he wanted to know if we were still interested and we said, "Yes." "Well I'll take you into the room and show it to you. And this is where you'll train on it for a couple of weeks until you build up speed. In the mean time you've got to find a crew to fly with." Now normally in a Lancaster and Halifax, they carry seven crew, in our case, 101 Squadron, I was gonna make the eighth member. Be the only squadron in the RAF [Royal Air Force, UK].

20:00 Alright? And...

Actually, might just get you to stop for a tick. Okay.

So Flight Lieutenant Wilksman said to me, "Okay, I'll show you the equipment now which you'll train on, in the mean time you've got to find a crew to fly with," and I talked about it being the eighth member of the crew. And we said, "How do we go by, how do we do it?" Normally you make up a crew when you go to OTU, operational training unit, where you get the pilots,

20:30 the navigators, the wireless operators, and so on, engineers. They don't know one another at that stage, and they go round sorting themselves out, seeing whose crew they will fly with, and they got a chance then to see if they like one another, when they're flying. So you have no compulsion to fly until you've got a crew. Now we were the same but their, our crew or our crews, had already been together at OTU

21:00 and they've come to a squadron as a crew. And we had to pick one and so we said to the, I think it was Flight Lieutenant Broeksmann or the wing commander in charge of the squadron, "How do we know a crew?" And he said, "Well," he just said, "I can't advise you, you've got to try and pick one." And he said, "But looks like a good English crew here that you might like to try flying with, a fella called Joe Davidson." I said,

21:30 "Okay." So we're doing a cross country, that's just flying around, and it was gunnery practise for the rear gunner and mid- upper gunner, and they had a Hurricane coming behind us with camera guns. And the gunner, particularly the rear gunner, supposed to be [able to] take charge of an aircraft, tell the pilot what to do, he must obey what the rear gunner tells him instantly. And the Hurricane

22:00 was coming along behind them so he told the pilot to either corkscrew port or starboard or something like that. And he said, "Why?" "Because there's a bloody Hurricane coming up on our tail." Now that was about ten seconds, and I thought, 'Ten seconds too long to start questioning people.' So when I got back on the ground I told either the wing co. [wing commander] or the Flight Lieutenant Broeksmann that I wouldn't fly with that crew, there's no way and I told them why. Then

22:30 I was asked in the mess by a Canadian, Stan Licorice. He was older, he was father of our entire crew, he was older. He'd been a school teacher in Canada and he just asked me, he said, "We'd like to have an Aussie on our crew, how about coming for a test flight with us?" And I said, "That's fine." "I'll introduce you to the guys." So Ken Fillingham was the pilot, he was maybe a year older

23:00 than me, he had been a test pilot for over twelve months, which impressed me. The flight engineer, he was younger than me, Denis Goodlet, and he looked a likely lad, as they say in Yorkshire. The bomb aimer was another Canadian, he was a lot of fun, so yeah I met all the crew and I thought, 'Okay, I'll have a go with you.' So we went on, that night, they call a bull's eye, it's a spoof or distracting attack, to the

23:30 Germans. The main bomber stream is going there and we went over there as far as the Dutch coast only, we weren't allowed to go across. We saw anti-aircraft fire from the flak ships for the first time and everything the, oh the pilot checked on everybody, and everyone else checked on the pilot and everyone else, so it was good communications. I thought, 'Okay, I'm happy with these guys.' So when I came back I told them I'd be prepared to fly with them, and we really had a wonderful crew there. We just

24:00 harmonised, the two Canadians and me and the five other, were Englishmen, and we just had a fantastic relationship. For those five and a half months, everyone's problem was your problem, and vice versa, it was a fantastic way of living. Never experienced it since and never experienced again. So that's how I started.

That's fantastic. Before we go on and get more detail about what you did after that, I'll just go back and ask you in a little bit more detail about some of those

24:30 **things that we just talked about.**

Yeah.

When you left to go to the Lancaster Finishing School, were you, could you tell anyone where you were going?

We told them whatever the aerodrome was, we were going to there, that was all. We didn't tell people, we may have been asked not to, I don't know, but I'm pretty sure we didn't say, " I'm going to a Lancaster Finishing School." We just

25:00 found our way by train and got picked up at the station by RAF truck and then taken to the aerodrome.

Was it exciting to be leaving everyone or a little daunting?

I guess it was time to get exciting at this stage. Because we suddenly realised if we weren't going to go behind the German lines and be spies or anything like that with our German, and I wouldn't have been good enough anyway for it, but

25:30 yes it was getting closer to what we'd gone across for, but we still didn't know what we're going to do. All we knew that we were going to be flying on Lancasters shortly, but how long or shortly, that we didn't know.

So when you first got to the Lancaster Finishing School, sorry, I can't remember which happened first, did they show you the radio equipment and get you to sign the secrecy first or...?

Oh no, no, no, at Lancaster Finishing School that

26:00 equipment there, the ABC equipment wasn't even on the horizon, we knew nothing about it, it wasn't even mentioned. No, we were just there, I still don't know why we were there, because all we did was sat on our bottom there for about two hours on two occasions while the Lancaster did cross-country flights with training people. At this stage they've been to a OTU, they had their own crew

26:30 and the crews then were getting used to flying in a Lancaster, that was the object of the Lancaster Finishing School. Now we just went there just to get the feel of what it was like to be flying in a Lancaster, that's all there was to it, we were passengers.

So you didn't have a specific role during the flight?

No, nothing at all. But we weren't bored because we were excited, but we had nothing to do. We asked questions, I'm not sure what they would've been but yeah, it was exciting,

27:00 cause at long last we were getting very close to what you came over to do, I guess.

How was flying in a Lancaster different to the other aircraft that you'd been in?

Well it was like, if you were to fly in a DC-3 here then get into a 747, that's about the comparison in size. If you now get into the Lancaster down in Canberra and get on a 747, likewise, the Lancaster today looks so tiny but outside and in, and you

27:30 compare it to the 747 or an Airbus. So yeah it was our first experience, the Avro Anson was quite large by comparison to what we experienced in Australia in the Fairy Battles and what not. The Lancaster was enormous and it was a big aircraft in those days, no two ways about it. So we just, for the rest of the

time we, I think Reg and I, Snow, and a couple of others, we played cards in the

28:00 mess. Our pay wouldn't allow you to be hopping in to Doncaster, was the nearest city, to go and have a few grogs or go to a dance or something so we filled in time.

And so from there you went to 101 Squadron?

Yep.

And when you got to 101 that's when they first brought to light the ABC equipment?

That's right, yeah. And also their, when we'd agreed to crew up, or might've even before,

28:30 remember the wing commander coming and saying, 'Well I got you guys now, you've gotta make a will.' And we thought, 'Oh God, this is it,' I'd never made a will in my life and had nothing to leave anyway. But anyway reality broke, at that stage, we thought, 'Well this is it, you gotta sign a will, or make a will and sign in,' just in case you were shot down and killed. So that was, really was quite graphic to the three of us and I guess to every other guy that arrived on the squadron, wherever it might've been,

29:00 was suddenly confronted, 'You've gotta make a will.'

How old were you at this point?

Twenty, ah, twenty-two. 1943, yes, twenty-two.

Did they make you make a will before you left Australia?

No. No, never made a will in my life. That was the first time. No must've been beginning of '44 not '43, beginning of '44 yeah.

29:30 And once we signed that, okay we were ready for operations. Once we'd done what we had to do on the Airborne Cigar equipment, we were trained sufficiently, you had to build up speed on the equipment. We had, again, the old reliable Marconi receiver with its magic eye and we had three transmitters. Now the idea behind it was they were to prevent the

30:00 air controllers on the ground getting communication with the night fighter pilots and advise them where to meet, because in the... let's go back just before that. In the early days of bombing of Europe, the aircraft didn't have the endurance to go too far into Germany. So they devised some sort of equipment from the ground to do exactly what I was saying about jamming

30:30 communication between ground to air and vice versa. But as the aircraft were going deeper into Germany, it didn't have the range. So some bright guy he had the idea, 'Well, if you can do it on the ground, why can't you do it in the air?' So that's how Airborne Cigar came about. So we had the one Marconi receiver and we had three transmitters and likewise, that's what we were doing at Dumfries. You zero beta'd your

31:00 transmitter in to a frequency, be listening on the Marconi radio, you had headphones on, and you'd, you could hear people speaking, you could hear music, and other frequencies, and you knew that there was going to be somebody, going to try and transmit a message, through to the night fighters. Now when a bombing attack was going on, the

31:30 aircraft never went straight to the target, they all dog legged everywhere until probably the last fifteen or twenty minutes or even less, they head straight for the target. Now the Germans were short of aviation fuel so what they used to do, rather than track us in, they'd be told by the ground controllers to assemble on certain points, or await further instructions, so they'd head for this point. By the time they'd get there they'd have another point to go to until they marshalled

32:00 almost all their night fighters together and by which time they had a pretty good idea where the target would be, and then they'd come in and attack. And they were initially quite successful apparently. The aim was to stop that happening and it was done quite successfully down the track, as far as we were concerned. But you learned, in our training, they did the, exactly the same thing, to us on the ground, so

32:30 you were prepared to what you were going to hear. And if you heard music, "Lili Marlene" or something being played, 'Oh, isn't that beautiful...' instead of which, they cut the music and put a message over. Likewise if you're tuning in a radio trying to pick up overseas radio stations or long-distance stations, you can turn your dial, even today and you'll hear a bit of a noise. So there's a radio station there somewhere,

33:00 but you probably can't pick it up, it's too far away. In the case of the Germans they weren't that far away, so if you heard that look sort of a click on your receiver, when you're searching, you'd bring one of the transmitters onto that frequency and you'd wait a minute or two or wait for the music to stop and if it didn't, you'd go and look for somewhere else. Now there were on an average about, between fifteen and twenty of our aircraft at 101 Squadron flying

33:30 every raid, every raid we went on. That's why we finished our tour quickly. It was so essential to have one of our ABC aircraft strung through the bomber stream, which could've been ten or twelve miles long, could even be longer. And the idea was to have it spread out so we jammed as much as we could.

Now if you, say you had twenty aircraft, with three transmitters, you had sixty people are on the sixty frequencies being monitored, and there's very little chance

34:00 of one of those broadcasts would get through. They tried all sorts of tricks. Initially they had males doing it but the females came into it later because their voices are higher frequency and they had more chance of getting through, but they still didn't manage to get through. Some messages obviously did but most didn't, because you can't be a hundred percent sure every frequency was covered. So that was our,

34:30 our prime job.

So when you first got to 101 Squadron and they brought out, you know, took you into a room and said, you know, 'We've got this equipment to show you but first I need you to sign this secrecy form.' Did that sort of really bring home that you were right in the thick of things?

Yeah, we're going to be, very shortly, yeah. Yeah that and my will, that made you realise that, 'Okay, it's not far away.' The Flight Lieutenant Wilksman, who,

35:00 who was an instructor he said, "Oh it'll take you about a week to get the feel of this because you, speed is the essence. And don't be tricked by what you hear, they'll try tricks like music and so on. And so, as soon as you pick up something, jam it, and you've got to be timed down here while you're training, we'll do the same thing for you on the ground. You gotta be quick, speed is absolutely essential, so you don't get any messages through."

35:30 Now, we're also told, 'Whatever you hear could be in code, if it doesn't make sense, write it down, because it might mean something to the people to whom our report will go to,' and that was to British Intelligence, and they would decipher what we'd written. Some of it could be unintelligible, I don't know, it looked most strange to me, but that's if it happened.

What was the actual secrecy

36:00 **document that you had to sign?**

We had to say in this document, as far as I can remember, that we will not tell anybody about 101 Squadron, we will not tell anybody we are the eighth member of a crew, that we are an ABC operator, I guess probably under penalty of death almost. We must never discuss it with anybody in any other squadron, if you're on leave, if you go home to your parents,

36:30 don't tell them, it must remain secret. Now initially I believe that the secrecy worked extremely well but then as some aircraft crash landed and they didn't set off the explosive inside the equipment in time, the Germans might have found out, I don't know. I'm assuming they probably did but may not have, I don't know.

So did they tell you what you were supposed to say then, when you're on leave,

37:00 **or if someone asked you what you did?**

No all, no you weren't told what you could and couldn't say. The only thing, I mean for example I couldn't tell my aunt and uncle or my two cousins there what I was doing, I was just flying, that's all there was to it and they never asked anyway, if I remember. But if they had asked, I wouldn't have told them. But because the Germans are no fools, believe me, and their counter measures were pretty good as, well, same as the British.

37:30 So okay, actually remained a secret until 1956 because of the Russian problem after the war.

So once you were told to choose a crew, did those crews know what your role was going to be?

Ah yeah, couldn't help but know. There was no way that they wouldn't know. But likewise I presume the other members were bound to secrecy too, because the,

38:00 we were officially known as the XYZ Squadron and not known by 101, so try and further deepen the mystery about the squadron.

The crew that you chose, actually no, let's go back, the crew that you first flew with, the one that you didn't want to join, they were part of 101 though?

Oh yes, oh yeah they, I refused to join them as I told

38:30 you and that was one of the best decisions I ever made, because the second trip they didn't come back. And I got a pretty good idea why, they didn't obey their rear gunner's instructions. I may be wrong, I'd never know why, but they didn't come back the second trip.

Did that pose any problem for you initially, that you'd said no to them, was there any...?

No, I mean, as far as I was concerned, as I said to you earlier, that everybody, the whole eight of us, were specialists in our particular area.

39:00 Everyone relied upon everybody else. If you had a weak link amongst the eight, you were probably

history, that was very, very important. And I just found the crew I flew with, they were superb, really superb group of people to fly with. So you gotta make decisions, quite early in the interview I talked to you about [how] I grew up, and everyone else did in the services,

39:30 and I grew up very quickly once on the squadron as well. So okay, I was lucky, I survived to tell the tale.

The other boys that you got sent to 101 with, did they crew up fairly easily as well?

Yes they did. One crewed up on all-Australian squadron, that was Reg Hardacre. And Snowy Traegar, he crewed up with an English crew but unfortunately he

40:00 got killed, he was shot down and killed. I'm not sure what the tale was now. So two of us survived out of the three. That's two thirds, that's not bad.

Tape 6

00:30 **So can you recall your first operation?**

Yeah, our first operation was in the Ruhr Valley to Frankfurt, I think it was Frankfurt. That's very heavily defended, the Ruhr Valley, that's their major manufacture, or it was the manufacturing, heavy manufacture Krupp Works and all those were in the Ruhr Valley. And

01:00 as I remember it, it was, if anything, when we got the green light on the ground to take off, or even before that, when you were briefed, as each different person, aircraft has a different briefing officer then, pilot, navigator, engineer, me, gunners, everyone. And then go into the briefing room where you were told, 'This is the target for tonight chaps.' And

01:30 introduce you to the nav. [navigation] officer and he'll, or met. [meteorology] observer perhaps and he'll tell you the weather you can expect on the tar…, over the target, on the way to the target and so on. So and then you break up and you go then talk to each of your, I guess your senior officers, who would tell you what to expect on the way to the target and over it and so on. So that, I don't know whether excitement but you certainly all geed up, that's the only way to describe it.

02:00 I think we're probably all a little bit apprehensive and all a little bit scared. I believe that anyone who says that they're not scared on operations are not telling the truth, there was a feeling, 'This might be it,' you never know. Anyway we took off and the green light came, we flew to our normal height in our aircraft, was also G George. It was a fairly new aircraft. We

02:30 joined the bomber stream, we flew over the target, we bombed, then we came back home. And we jokingly said before we took off, you always had a good meal, and it was known as "The Last Supper". You always had sausages and bacon and eggs and perhaps a chop or something like that, which you would not get normally in any restaurant on rations, so it was jokingly called The Last Supper. The trip was un-

03:00 eventful and we landed and then we came back to another hearty breakfast and interviewed by the Flight Lieutenant Wilksman again and in to bed. And I don't know what time it was, it was early hours of the morning, probably about two or three o'clock, and that was it. So we completed our first op.

Was every member of the crew de-briefed?

Oh yes, everyone. As soon, before you do anything, the first thing that happens when you land, you're given a hot mug

03:30 of coffee with rum in it, that's the first thing when you land. And you get your kit off and store it, they take your parachute from you and then you go to the various people, like the guy who briefs the pilots, the engineers, the navigators and so on, the wireless operators. And you're briefed and they take a full statement from you as to what you experienced, if you had any problems with your equipment, if you had any problems with the aircraft, what did you hear,

04:00 what did you see, so it was all taken down. Every crew was always de-briefed as soon as you came back, just in case you forget anything, during which time you have your coffee and rum. And then you go across to the mess and have your next Last Supper and then back to bed. And honestly it was a relief to get the first one over, and I think we all felt the same, 'Boy,

04:30 we've made it.' But it wasn't, you know, we had nothing to remember, that it might be eventful or something we think down the track. No it was just plain sailing, we were lucky.

But I would guess you would still receive anti-aircraft fire?

There was a fair bit of anti-aircraft fire, the Ruhr Valley is very heavily defended, with a mirror-ment of search lights it's like, pardon me, it's like daylight. Now

05:00 I couldn't see very much, I could hear what they were talking about, searchlights were port or starboard, or something or other, so you try and alter course a bit. Because what the Germans did, they

focused their searchlights and anti-aircraft guns onto exactly the same, so when they move one they move both, and so they have predicted anti-aircraft fire. The searchlights picked you up, that's where the guns are going to fire, up that searchlight

05:30 beam towards your aircraft, and they were pretty good at it. And a lot of aircraft were shot down because of it. So you dodged searchlights as best you possibly could, because if you didn't you know you're going to get anti-aircraft fire.

So where was your position, being the extra eighth member of a Lancaster crew?

Okay, I was in the middle of the aircraft, behind the main spar, which goes across the Lancaster, the wireless operator was ahead of me. And I sat facing the port side of

06:00 the aircraft, I had a desk, I also had a receiver and three transmitters. But all I could see, when the bomb bay was open and I could see through the slats in the floor, and you could see the fires and some anti-aircraft fire, that sort of thing.

How would you describe that sight, looking through the floor of the aircraft?

In common terminology, awesome. The, particularly if you weren't in the

06:30 first wave, the fires had started and you're flying over and you could see the fires and you hear the guys in the aircraft and the gunners and the bomb aimer and so on saying, "God, you should see the fires down there, unbelievable!" Or they'd talk and say, "Did you see that one shot down over there," sort of thing, but I didn't see that at all, not at night time.

Do you know what sort of bombs the aircraft were carrying?

We carried a four thousand pounder,

07:00 that's was called a "cookie," we carried probably about twenty or thirty five hundred pounders and a whole lot of incendiaries, probably twenty thousand incendiaries. We also carried a thing called 'Window' and that was to confuse the radar, every aircraft carried them. And they were aluminium strips, about that long and about that wide, about

07:30 probably a foot long and two or three inches wide. And they were in bundles and the bomb aimer had to drop those through the, his hatch in his bomb aimer's compartment. In the slipstream they'd all break up and so there were, on a large raid, there could've been millions of these strips coming down, and they appeared on the German radar as snow. And that was very effective.

That couldn't cause any problems to other aircraft, that would fly in to that?

We,

08:00 we weren't using radar.

No to, just having little strips of aluminium maybe going...?

Oh, it wouldn't have affected the night fighters, but it affected the people on the ground who were trying to direct the night fighters to go from point A to point B. All they could see on the screen, on their radar screen was snow, they couldn't pick up the aircraft. So that caused them a problem also.

And did you have to use oxygen?

Oh yeah, you're flying generally at twenty-four thousand feet.

08:30 You'd be on oxygen from about thirteen thousand, probably before. Oh you'd have been dead, if you didn't go on oxygen.

And what sort of problems were associated with oxygen?

There's no problems. The, if you like to call it a problem, and you learn from experience, on our second trip which we had to abort, and the reason being,

09:00 our upper gunner, his wife was having a baby, she was experiencing a lot of problems and she, her life was in danger so he was given compassionate leave to go to his wife. Go back to Scotland and we had a, I don't know how we came by this guy, but anyway he was floating around apparently, he was an upper gunner, so he joined our crew. As I said earlier, the skipper, and we all did it, check on one other, periodically, 'Are you okay?'

09:30 Or they point out what they could see from where they were. And at one stage, the upper gunner, he was, and I think it was the skipper, may not be, but anyway instead of getting a message, 'I'm okay,' he got, 'Argh, groan,' and it continued each time he went there so he asked me, seeing I was nearest to the mid-upper gunner, whether I'd go in and investigate and see what was wrong. Now to get to that position to find out, I had to get on to the emergency oxygen bottles stored right through the

10:00 aircraft, cause you can't just walk round, your lead on the normal oxygen supply won't go that far. And to my horror I found out that those I tried were either half full or almost empty, they had never been

filled before we took off. Which means I couldn't spend too much time on one, as soon as I saw it getting low, I had to race back and get another one and get on to the emergency oxygen, but I couldn't move the turret to get this guy out.

10:30 I think it was hydraulically controlled and was too stiff, so the engineer came down and between us we were able to turn the turret round so we could get hold of the guy's legs and pull him down. And he fell very heavy, like a sack of potatoes on the floor of the aircraft, he was completely unconscious, that probably saved him from injury. And we carried him to the first aid bed in the aircraft and we strapped him onto it. But one of us had to stay there

11:00 just in case, he was still unconscious at this stage, even though we had him on the main oxygen system. So one of us had to stay with him. I did. And seeing we only had, if you like, six of the crew operative, the mid-upper gunner no longer there and me away from it, we held a conference and we decided to return to base and abort the raid. It was a bit hairy because we still carried our

11:30 full bomb load and we landed at base with it on, but we hadn't switched on the fuses on the bombs at that stage, you only, you wait til you get near the target to do that. So the chances of them going off, when we landed, was more remote at that stage, but nevertheless if one should fall on the ground and explode, okay, you're history. Which it didn't do fortunately.

12:00 But there was a sequel to this, which is most unpleasant. When we, okay, we de-briefed again, and we were looked upon as if we had chucked it in. There's a thing called LMF, lack of moral fibre, in other words cowardice. And we were viewed, how we all felt, that they viewed us as being cowards, that we didn't go, we found an excuse

12:30 not to go on with the raid. It wasn't said to us directly, but you could feel it, it was most uncomfortable, believe me.

Where was this coming from?

From the people who were interviewing us, the station commander, the, I mean to return with a full bomb load in itself was scary. To return, abort a raid, was something that should never be done unless in extreme circumstances, and we felt

13:00 these were extreme. And the way they were questioning us there, made us all feel like second-class citizens as if we're being accused of cowardice. Anyway that passed over and we finished our thirty-one trips. That was pie in the sky as far as we were concerned. That was an experience I'll never forget either. But it taught us a lesson, the ground staff should have checked the emergency oxygen bottles and they hadn't, so we checked em future

13:30 and never had to use em again.

Can you tell us a bit more about LMF and what a big part that sort of played?

It applied to all services, lack of moral fibre. We had a crew, a Canadian crew, mainly Canadian with a couple of English men, one of whom was a rear gunner, and we got reasonably close to this Canadian crew, the pilot was Kit Carson.

14:00 The rear gunner's name I can't remember but anyway he had not seen night fighters coming in behind and so he spoke to his crew and to our crew, and he felt it wasn't fair to the rest of his crew because he couldn't pick the night fighters in the dark. Now he also admitted, his age was thirty-four and he put his name down as twenty-five or something, so he was too old for that job. And he was going

14:30 to go and see the wing commander and tell him that he just couldn't continue and reasons why, and we felt that he'd be accused of LMF. So we decided we'd all go down, our crew and his crew and this guy and we'd go and interview the guy, Wing Commander Alexander and explain this guy's problem, and he accepted it because the discussion we'd had.

15:00 Okay, they got another guy to take his place, but that was a stigma of LMF, if you've been charged and found guilty he would probably have been a latrine attendant for the rest of the time in the army. You couldn't get any lower than LMF. So that's the stigma of it. Anyway, they survived.

That says a lot about how you guys looked after each other, the fact that two crews went down to back this guy up.

That's right, yep.

15:30 Oh we had a talk together in the hut and decided that's the best thing to do. So they got another rear gunner and they finished their tour.

And do you know what happened to him?

I've no idea, not the faintest. I know he would go on to ground duties, and whether he lost any rank I don't know, I never saw him again.

What was the relationship like between air crew and ground crew generally?

Pretty good. The, I know as far as our aircraft

16:00 concerned it was excellent, apart from blowing up the sergeant in charge of the group looking after our aircraft about not checking the oxygen, which he thought they had done, I'm sure that's right. Very good relationship between them, yeah.

Cause you'd really have to maintain a good relationship wouldn't you?

Oh yeah, very much so. Well they always used to wait up, didn't have to, always wait up til we got back.

16:30 I guess all the other aircraft too. If they didn't all wait, they'd go and wake the others up, 'Okay, come on, George is back.' And meet us on the tarmac and shake hands or they might've had a cup of coffee for us or something like that. Very close.

You've spoken about how close the actual air crew is, but obviously you can't I guess form that same kind of bond with the ground crew, because you're both working at alternate times?

You can't, you couldn't, there's no

17:00 way you could, the closeness of your air crew be replicated on the ground, it just couldn't be done. Because you slept, ate and lived together, you really did. If you went into town, you went as a team. If you decided to go to the local pub, you went as a team. No, it was just, and if somebody had a problem, okay, it was discussed by all and

17:30 every one. And, you know, 'What do you think he should do?' It was just like a very close, Close brothers, eight of us.

And during those thirty-one ops, did you ever lose any guys?

No.

Out of your crew?

No. No, we were very lucky. We got a little bit of, I've lost it unfortunately, I had a bit of anti-aircraft shell that came in as close to you as to me, probably be a piece about that size,

18:00 I don't know where I've lost it. But other than… by at one stage going into a dive, when we're either hit by a, I think I've mentioned to you, a scarecrow that exploded near us and put our tail up and nose down and we went down about five or six thousand feet in a dive. And I was ready to jump out before the aircraft was pulled out. That was a bit of a sigh of relief too I guess. But no

18:30 we talked about it when we got back to the mess and so on, 'Oh, let's have a beer to it,' and so on, yeah.

Can you just explain to us what a scarecrow is?

A scarecrow is fired from the ground, at the same height as a bomber stream, it explodes at say twenty-four thousand feet or thereabouts, or could be any height for that matter. And when it explodes, it looks like an aircraft going down in flames, though arms come out like wings, and the body of the scarecrow

19:00 is like the fuselage of it and it looks like an aircraft going down in flames. So as it's endeavouring to demoralise the crew, say, 'There goes another kite down.' They don't, wouldn't do any damage. If it hit us, which, I'm not sure, we're never sure, but it certainly put us into a dive, cause maybe the explosion was just big enough to put the tail up and nose down.

And

19:30 **when the Lancaster's in a dive, what's going through your mind?**

I don't know, it happened so quickly, I always said I would never jump from an aircraft, I wouldn't trust a parachute. But when Ken Fillingham, our skipper, said to us, "Prepare to abandon aircraft," I never thought about jumping. I found myself by the door waiting for the order, hanging on grim death, cause in a dive there, your

20:00 feet are up there in the air and you're hanging on, otherwise you'd be hitting the roof of the aircraft , at the speed you're going down. And I was just ready to pull the handle and jump. But anyway we didn't have to, and that was a big sigh of relief too I can assure you.

Can you talk about fear?

Fear. Yeah. I think, in my part,

20:30 I wouldn't have seen as much as the other guys in the aircraft because as I said, I could see through the slats in the floor, but I couldn't see round like the pilot and navigator, or the pilot and bomb aimer and the gunners. They'd have seen a lot of aircraft shot down. I happened to be, at one stage, and I can't think why at the moment, up talking to the pilot, and I did

21:00 see, which raid it was I don't know, but I did witness for the one and only time, an aircraft, Lancaster was above us on our port side, oh, maybe a hundred feet above us. And the rear gunner opened fire on the Lancaster behind and the Lancaster returned fire and shot that aircraft down. And we, it was so close to us the, we were able to get the registration number of the Lancaster and we got back to base

we reported that this aircraft we saw was shot down.

21:30 Now whether they parachuted from it, I've no idea. But yeah, I'd imagine that I could've been a bit more scared by seeing what they saw and I didn't, I couldn't see it. It was the only time I actually saw something.

But not seeing, has its own fears doesn't it?

Oh possibly, but you know, you're so busy and okay, you might be on a,

22:00 a raid, the longest one was nine hours and forty minutes which was a long time to be sitting on a seat, your bum gets very tired I can assure you. But you're working, so that nine hours forty, you'd be working for eight and a half hours, you don't do any work crossing the Channel and when you come in to land, but you're working like hell the whole time. So you don't have a lot of time to be scared, the scary part is

22:30 before you take off, you're wondering what you're going to strike on the way across. You never know if you're going to be, strike anti-aircraft or predicted anti-aircraft fire or night fighters. And that, to my way of thinking, when you go into the briefing room and you suddenly find the target, let's say this particular one, Nuremberg, that was a long, long way into

23:00 Germany, and I thought, 'Gee, what's going to happen here.' But you work your butt off, like everyone does on the aircraft, I think you haven't got a lot of time to have a lot of fear, you'd be scared, but I think scared makes you more alert. I'm sure of it. But I don't know about fear.

A couple blokes have mentioned the use of wakey, wakey pills.

Yes, we used to take wakey, wakey pills,

23:30 if you felt you were gonna doze off yeah.

Do you know what they were exactly?

I don't know, they were only little white tablets that you carried with you every time you flew. If you felt you were gonna, if you felt tired, you were only allowed to fly two nights in succession. You flew two nights in a row, you had to have a week off, that, you didn't realise, you were young, but it obviously took a lot out of you. The, oh, I suppose a little bit of

24:00 being frightened I suppose, you worked hard, you sometimes get back from your raid and it was daylight so you're about thirty-six hours without any sleep, so you were tired. But the wakey, wakey pills, yes they were always, always carried them.

And were they issued by the squadron doctor or...?

I presume so, they were given to us, so if you felt tired, take one. I don't remember taking one, I might've but I don't remember.

24:30 **Was there any other food or beverages on the aircraft at all?**

No. None whatsoever.

So you'd be pretty well starving by the time you returned from an op?

Well I say to people, the Lancasters and Halifaxs were war machines. The Flying Fortress, another big aircraft, but they didn't carry the same weight of bombs by any means, and they, oh, they were better

25:00 equipped for comfort, if you can call a war aircraft for comfort, the Lancasters and Halifaxs were straight-out war machines. The temperature in the aircraft of the Fortress was a bit higher than in the Lanca.... it would get down to forty degrees below, if you put your hand on, without your gloves on, you'd lose a finger, it would just stick to it. So we were warned against that sort of thing. But wearing electrical flying suits and gloves and

25:30 boots, you never felt cold.

Can you tell us exactly what you wore, everything you wore?

Well yeah we used to wear silk underwear, long johns and a singlet. Then you'd wear your normal, ordinary battle dress, just like a tunic and trousers. You had heavy woollen socks to fit into your fly, electric flying boots or heated flying

26:00 boots. Over that you'd have your electrically heated flying suit, which was heated all over, you had your gloves and your boots. Then you had your, I don't know what material it was made of, it was something like a, it was almost like a rubberised material but it probably wasn't, you'd wear that over all. Then you'd have your helmet with your goggles and your oxygen mask on top of that, looked like a man from Mars.

26:30 Particularly when you had your parachute on, strapped to your chest as well, you looked enormous. But

I guess all very necessary.

And you wore your 'chute on every operation?

Oh yes. You had it, you didn't have it alongside you, cause if suddenly the aircraft was hit, it could go anywhere so you had to have it... the pilot, he sat on his, the rest of us had it strapped to our chest. To get to the controls, he couldn't have it on his chest.

27:00 **And had you rehearsed escaping out of an aircraft, on the ground, in case you ever had to bail?**

Never. No, that wasn't part of the scene. We had dinghy drill, this time, in a place called Grimsby, where we had to jump into the water with our full gear on to get an idea of the feel of the weight. You had your Mae West as well so you learned how to inflate your Mae West, otherwise you'd've sunk in the swimming pool.

27:30 But that was all an experience so you got an idea how essential a Mae West was to you, to stay afloat, if you had to ditch.

Can you recall after you did that dinghy training, how long it took you to dry your outfit, your whole flying suit?

Oh we had loan clothes, we had gear that was in the, the RAF had to put on, and, no, your own clothes you put back on when you came out of the pool.

Cause your external flying suit, what's that made of?

I don't

28:00 know, it was something that, to me, it was like a heavy duty canvas, or something like a rubberised sort of canvass, I don't know what it was, but it was quite heavy, and it was reasonably rigid, it wasn't soft. But I don't know what it was made of for sure. It was all zipped up, and it went into your flying boots.

Was there a, anything like a survival kit in the aircraft?

Yeah,

28:30 there was a first aid bench in case somebody got injured by anti-aircraft fire and they were bleeding, yes there was a first aid kit, by the first aid bed. We never had to use that, but yeah, it was there.

And did you have escape silks and compass buttons, things like that?

Yeah, I can show you if you want to have a look at one.

We'll have a look at one later yeah.

Yeah we carried silk maps of Germany and France, we carried a compass which were

29:00 buttons either side of our battle suit. We carried French money and we carried German money, which we had to hand back each time we landed. We carried chocolate, with highly concentrated black chocolate. We carried, oh what's the, oh I'm trying to think of the poison, we carried an ampoule of poison in case we had to

29:30 take if we were being tortured or to get information from us. That was about all.

Did you have a...?

The chocolate was the best.

The which, what?

The chocolate was the best.

What about, did any of the crew have side arms or...?

No, you weren't allowed to. As soon as you carried side arms there, you could be shot and taken POW.

30:00 We had one guy with us, he was Jewish, his parents and most of his relatives had been killed by the Germans in Poland. And he was quite fluent in German, he was doing the same job as I was doing. And he used to carry with him two revolvers in his flying boots. And he reckoned he was gonna kill as many Germans as he could before they shot him, because they'd killed all his family. But he never had to use it.

30:30 And Barbara and I met him at a reunion, we went to in England for our old squadron and he's now frightfully, frightfully... He's now a barrister in the law courts and he has no sign of any Polish accent. But he carried two revolvers.

A lot of the guys we've spoken to have singled out the Poles as very determined in their hatred for Germans during the war.

Well they had reason to.

31:00 Because so many of their people, whether they were Jewish or gypsies or not, they all, if they, Germans didn't like them at all, for any reason, and they didn't seem to like the Catholic church very much either, they take a dislike to you and you disappear. So I think a lot of the Poles lost a lot of their friends and their relatives, so I can understand the Poles being very hostile towards Germans.

31:30 **A couple of blokes have also mentioned going back to sort of that ground crew, air crew discussion about the, a bit of a class system that existed within the army. Did you ever notice that?**

It could've, it could've in this regard, that the, some of the air crew guys thought they were superior to the ground crew. And they sort of, don't say, let it be known

32:00 to the ground crew but they'd talk about it in the mess. So yes, there could've been in that but I, not being aware of it, being directly said to ground crew. But as far as we were concerned with our ground crew, we were very friendly.

Can you recall any stage of your training where there was any sort of decision made about where people would be selected to become officers?

No, the three of us

32:30 were flight sergeants when we went to the, on to the squadron, and after about three or four trips, the wing commander said, "Why don't you people apply for commission, the work you're doing is so important, that you should apply and you should be awarded commissions." So I did and Reg but Snowy Traegar, the other guy, he wouldn't, and so yes we were commissioned on the squadron, both of us. I think it had its advantages

33:00 that if we'd been shot down and taken prisoner you would be, get a little bit more respect from the Germans than you would if you're an NCO. I don't know, that's my feeling, but you got certain other privileges I guess, which weren't very important to you at time. But oh it was pretty good of this guy to say, "I recommend you should be awarded commissions for the work you're doing," so it went through.

33:30 It meant more pay too.

Were there any sort of stories coming back to the squadrons about guys that'd bailed and been caught and things like that?

No. No, I didn't know any at that stage. I subsequently, I knew one, but that's the fella to be interviewed shortly in Sydney. But no, not while I was flying.

What about at the time, when you're going out on ops and aircraft, certain aircraft mightn't have been returning. What sort of impact did that have on the squadron and the crews?

34:00 Yeah, you'd say, "Gee we lost four aircraft tonight, that means thirty-two guys," or "We lost seven tonight," and that meant a few more, yeah. You would drink their health in the mess and you'd probably get a bit plastered in doing it, it was very sad. Some of these guys you'd befriended, not quite as close as your crew, but befriended, yeah,

34:30 it was sad but you got used to it. That was the name of the game, it's going to happen every night, you're going to lose one or more aircraft, so after the first once or twice, so what? Might be me next time, they'll have a drink in the mess for, so that's how it was looked upon.

Do you become fatalistic?

Yes. I was fatalistic before going onto the squadron. I felt, 'What will be, will be.'

35:00 And that's how I faced it. I wasn't worried about it.

Were there any superstitions?

The only superstition we had, our entire crew, we carried a Golliwog in our crew, and I wore a scarf that my girlfriend in Sydney had knitted and sent over to me, and I wouldn't fly without it. And I think I've still got it.

35:30 That was, I guess, superstitious, as far as I was concerned, but the crew wouldn't fly without the Golliwog. And the ground crew had to look after it, and they had to put it inside the aircraft.

And where was his special spot on the aircraft?

He was just oh beyond the pilot, just in front of the navigator, hanging from the ceiling of the aircraft, the roof of the aircraft. It was red pants, green shirt, stripe pants, red stripe pants, jet black

36:00 hair, white eyes.

And where does he live these days?

I've no idea, no idea. Wasn't very big, only about that size. There's a photo of him, of the crew finished, he's now on the side of the aircraft of our crew in our flying gear, after our last op.

Can you perhaps talk us through the aircraft from where you enter the aircraft, just talk us through as if you're a camera and explain

36:30 **what the inside of the aircraft looks like?**

Okay. To get into the aircraft no matter which, where you were going to sit, there was about a five step up on a ladder to the rear door. To the left was the rear gunner's compartment, it was a door, he really had to sort of climb into it, he didn't have much room, then he'd shut the door behind him. Next would be the mid-upper gunner,

37:00 pardon me, he also had a ladder to get into and he'd take up with him into the mid upper gunner where he sat, so when he wanted to get out he could put it down. That's why we couldn't get him cause the ladder was up in the turret with him. So he would sit there. Then would come me and I wasn't facing front or forward, I was facing to the left or port side. Then there was the main spar

37:30 and that was to keep the, make the aircraft strong, it was near the wings, the back of the wings. And was very important, this main spar, was a damn nuisance to get over it was about two feet high, with flying gear on it was one hell of a job. But anyway, then there was the wireless operator, and he was facing forward, next to him was the navigator, he was facing forward. And then on the port side,

38:00 standing up all the time, there was a seat you could fold down, was the engineer. To his immediate left was the pilot and then down the stairs in front was the bomb aimer, and that made the eight of us.

So as you all went into the aircraft, would it just be natural that you would climb aboard in certain order?

No, you just climb in and go and sit where you're supposed to be, no order at all,

38:30 didn't make any difference.

And what sort of communication was there between the crew in the aircraft during an operation?

We used to communicate with one another, not excessively over the target, in case... For example, when you had the Pathfinder force marking targets, you never got on the intercom because you were receiving instructions from the master bomber as to which coloured markers you're supposed to bomb on.

39:00 And if they weren't, for some reason, the wind was blowing them off, he'd say, "Go round again chaps," we'll re-mark, which was a bit hairy because you're just going around in a great big circle while they re-mark the target. So there was strict silence at that stage, and I suppose that would last about oh, ten minutes, fifteen minutes. No more.

Was there, besides the Pathfinders, was there any other inter aircraft communications?

39:30 No, none whatsoever. There was from the master bomber and he was the one who gave instructions to the Pathfinder force and he'd tell them, 'Okay, you're so many degrees off target, bring your red markers up,' or whatever they were, 'A bit further,' something like that, whatever he was saying. There was complete silence while that was going on because if you start talking over it, you could be forced to go round again

40:00 because the instructions had been missed. So everyone shut up.

You mentioned a case earlier on where the two Lancasters they were firing at each other.

Yeah.

Were there any other instances where flying in such close formation was a danger?

There was always a danger but you had your exhausts... Oh you had your exhaust, you could see the ones in front of you, see the exhaust, same as the night fighters could,

40:30 but you couldn't see what was below you and you couldn't see what was above you. We had, I mentioned to you a while ago, that we were the only bomber over a target at one stage, and that was on necessity.

Actually we'll just, yeah we'll stop you...

Tape 7

00:31 **You were just about to tell us about when you ended up the lone bomber?**

Yeah. We, our aircraft, G George, was in for service so we flew in another aircraft, the crew were on leave, and so we flew their aircraft J for Joy. It was okay on take off, we were briefed as normal, the target was Nuremberg, a long way into Germany. And we were told

01:00 that we're gonna have a lot of cloud cover on the way, over the target would be almost ten tenths cloud and we'd be bombing on markers. As we got nearer the target of course, no cloud, bright moonlight and everything else. It was a real, we call it a "bomber's moon," that was, mean, terrible. Anyway we took off in this aircraft, and we were given a speed you've got to follow so we can bring our aircraft, mix em up into the bomber's

01:30 stream all together, so we take off at intervals for that reason. And we found that we couldn't maintain speed we're supposed to fly at, and gain height we're supposed to fly at. And coming up towards the English, the French coast we decided we're oh, so many thousand, I've forgotten now, some thousands of feet below our height we should be at. And we thought, 'What's the point of going over to this target, there's probably round

02:00 about eight hundred aircraft on this raid and we're gonna have them all falling on us perhaps or around us. So we had a conference and we all agreed that be far better to gain height and be late over the target. So we were able to climb to our normal height of about twenty-four thousand feet, by which time we're at least a half an hour behind the rest of the bombers, we're on our own.

02:30 We arrived over the target, I didn't see it of course I could see through the slats, right over the target, it was burning fiercely. No anti-aircraft fire, no German night fighters, no German night fighters on the way to the target and none on the way home. But what was interesting about oh, I guess it was more than half an hour before the target, I picked up on my equipment, directions to the German night fighters

03:00 to go to Nuremberg. So either they guessed it, and they weren't heading for it, the main bomber stream at that stage, or somebody back home had been careless in talking about the target. As a result, there were ninety-seven aircraft shot down on that night and another fourteen either ditched in the Channel or crash landed in England. So there was a lot of people killed on that night. But we had

03:30 a charmed flight, all on our own, flying in bright moonlight, and supposed to be in cloud, a sitting duck for night fighters or anti-aircraft. Nobody fired at us, flew over, drop our bombs, came home, had our meal, had our coffee and rum and that was just extraordinary that this could happened. But I think if we'd stayed with the main bomber stream and been way below we're bound to have been hit by incendiaries or

04:00 some of the five hundred pounders, and we'd have probably been killed.

On an occasion like that... Yep. On an occasion like that where obviously there's such a serious end result for someone being careless, what does that do to you to know that one person saying the wrong thing can put so many lives at risk?

Well you don't know really whether it was careless talk or whether they just guessed right. That's something

04:30 we'll never know. But we're always told that, never discuss any of your raids with anybody on leave. You might, just might let something slip that, and people innocently talk about in a pub or in a restaurant or something like that and there are German spies around, everyone knew that. They might cotton onto something that might

05:00 reveal something, who knows, so you never talked about it. And everywhere in the briefing room, 'Silence is golden,' 'Don't speak to the enemy,' all these sorts of placards up just warning you, you know, shut up. You didn't even tell the ground staff, they had no idea where you were going to on take off, not the faintest. They knew when you came back, but not beforehand,

05:30 just in case there was a Fifth Columnist amongst them. That was all secret.

You mentioned too, on that particular operation, and you've mentioned it in passing on a couple of others, about having a quick conference with the crew before you made your decision about what was, you know, what action you would take. Was that a normal thing for crews to decide things in conference like that?

If you had a, well that, I mean that was a real problem, there. We felt that

06:00 if we couldn't gain height we'd be a target for our own bombs, we could maintain the speed, but we couldn't climb. So again if we're to keep up with the main bomber stream, but down below, we were sitting ducks for our own bombs. So it wasn't a case of aborting it, there, we said, 'Okay, we'll still go to the target, we'll be late over the target, didn't know how late we'd be,

06:30 but at least we won't be, aircraft won't get wrecked by our own bombers falling on it.

But in terms of coming to that decision, my understanding was that, you know, the skipper kind of made those decisions, it seems to be a different experience than what I've heard before of the whole crew having a conversation?

No, we operated entirely as a crew. We had problems, we all talked to another about it, not any length,

07:00 great length of time. But again, I mean the pilot just said, “Okay fellas,” words to this effect, ‘we got a choice, we maintain the speed of the bomber stream and we fly way below our height, so we’ll probably be about three or four thousand feet, probably even more below the bomber stream. Or the alternative is we can gain height but we’ll be late over the

07:30 target. What do you reckon we should do?’ And I think we all answered in one voice or most simultaneously, “Get up.” And so that was normal, and I presume other crews would’ve done the same thing, I don't know. We did consult one another and I think that was one of the things that made us such a good crew. When we finished our last op, we volunteered immediately to do a second, we had so much confidence in each other. And the wing co. said, “No you’ve done yours,

08:00 there’s plenty more waiting, so you’re finished fellas,” that was it. So that’s how we felt about one another. We just, somehow we’re able to co-ordinate, we understood one another, we never did any, said anything behind anyone’s back, just a good crew.

Were you aware of any crews that weren’t as tight as that?

I wasn’t aware of any, but I don't think any of them could’ve been as close as we were, I’m pretty

08:30 sure of it. Even talking to this friend of mine, Reg Hardacre, who was on the same thing as I was doing, another Australian, and we’re on, both wireless operators, supposed to be. And I don't think his crew, from what Reg was saying, was quite as close as what we were, but I’m not too sure.

When you were saying that if one member of the crew had a problem it became everyone’s problem.

Yep.

Was that professionally and personally?

I wouldn’t say

09:00 professionally but I’d say it was personally. If one of the guys had a problem say, with his girlfriend or his wife, or his wife wasn’t well, or somebody’s mother wasn’t well or something like that, yeah, we’d all talk about it and say, ‘Well why don’t you go see the MO or go and see the wing co. and go and tell him what we think you should do.’ We were always sympathetic, we tried to help as much as we could, because can’t always

09:30 get leave. You feel you probably should be been entitled to because Mum’s not well or your wife’s not well, but that’s no problem. It’s like our mid-upper gunner, she’s having birth to a child, that was life threatening and so okay, he immediately got leave, but yeah we’d talk about it. Again, we got to know one another so well that we had confidence in everyone else in our crew. It was just amazing, I’ve never struck it

10:00 anywhere since, never will again.

We’ve spoken to you about what your impressions of the English were, what about your opinion or impressions of the Canadians?

Ah good, good guys. The two on our crew, Stan Licorice, the ex school master and navigator and Ken Connell our bomb aimer. Barbara hasn’t met Stan but she met Ken Connell in Canada. He was a fun

10:30 guy, I won’t repeat one of his pieces of poetry.

Please do, I promise you wont shock me.

Okay. As we approached the target, and he was directing the pilot, left, left, right, right, and all this sort of thing, he’d suddenly burst into this:

\n[Verse follows]\n The game was played on Sunday\n It was played in Christ’s back yard\n Jesus was playing left forward\n And Moses playing left guard\n

I’ve never forgotten that from Ken Connell.

11:00 Now he was concentrating on his bomb aiming equipment as he’s approaching the target, and this must’ve been something that allowed him to concentrate and be alert. But he did it every time, that’s the only time he said it. And I’ve never forgotten it.

Some people we’ve spoken to have likened Canadians to Australians, did you find that?

Very much so, yeah, they’re a big country, same as we are and they’re pretty genuine people.

11:30 That wherever I met any Canadians they were almost the same.

Were there any crews that were all Canadians that you know of?

Oh yes. There were Canadian squadrons in England, there were Australian squadrons in England, more Canadians than Australians because air crew were all in Europe, where we had people out in the Pacific and also in Europe. So they'd have probably had almost twice as many Canadian squadrons

12:00 as they did Australians in England

Would you have had any exposure to Canadians before you went over there?

Never met one, no, first time ever.

Was that an eye opener in any way?

No they were just free and easy people to get along with and talk to. Just the same, I think we are too.

Was there swapping of different things being sent over from home?

Yeah. We used to get

12:30 tins of passion-fruit from my parents and the Poms, the English men they couldn't understand why you call it passion-fruit, what it'd do to you. I said, "No, it's just a name, it's nice to eat." They used to send off tins of condensed milk to us because sugar in England was severely rationed. Condensed milk is very sweet so we'd all take a turn at putting a spoon into the tin and eight of us would finish a tin

13:00 very quickly. And also we used to get fruitcakes from the family and from friends and so on and so the Canadians got the same basically. So we'd, when it arrived, we'd have a party, and but it wouldn't last long though.

From either the English or the Canadians, was there different food and drink that you'd never tried before?

Well I couldn't say Canadians, but again I knew them in England.

13:30 The only English thing was, on New Year's Eve up in Scotland was haggis, which I thought was terrible, but they seemed to like it for some funny reason. Didn't think very much of their beer but you got used to it. Not really.

Back to your crew, did you always fly in the same aircraft?

Most times, the, out of the thirty-one trips, I guess there were probably, be about three or four

14:00 times we didn't fly, mainly because the aircraft was in for maintenance. And it could be out for maintenance for two or three days, while they went over everything. We once flew with the wing commander, CO of the squadron and he was our second pilot. He said to us that he was, "Sick and tired of sitting on the ground

14:30 and he wanted to come and have some fun with us." That was his words. So he went along as second dickey, and he stood all the way. He's a pretty good sort of a guy.

So for him to do that, one of the normal crew didn't go on that flight or just took a night off?

No, we carried, there were nine that night, the nine of us. I don't, I could look in my logbook, I could tell you which aircraft and which attack it was on, but I don't remember.

What

15:00 **was your relationship to your aeroplane?**

You loved it. Yeah, you reckon it would perform miracles. The Lancaster was basically a very good aircraft, very safe aircraft to fly in. It could take a lot of punishment, it was superior to the other four-engine aircraft, the Sterling, which was a bit old hat, and the Halifax which wasn't

15:30 as good an aircraft as the Lancaster. The Lancaster was just a very, very good aircraft, well designed, better designed than the Halifax. But they're both good aircraft nevertheless.

Your particular aircraft that you would normally fly on though, is it regarded almost like a living thing, like a...?

Yeah I guess like sailors, they regard their ship there with adoration and that sort of thing, yeah,

16:00 we looked upon George as the same thing, as an aircraft. We reckon that it would take us anywhere and bring us back, that's what we thought of it. But obviously at one stage - it did survive the war by the way, it never got shot down. But no, I guess it was just luck. A lot of good aircraft were shot down, whatever they were.

And you've just recently seen G for George again haven't you?

Yes, down

16:30 in Canberra yes, they've brought it out again. It's, it doesn't look like a war machine now because it

looks too pretty, it's all shiny and everything else, different to when they were flying, they didn't look as they do now, George in Canberra now in pristine. But anyway it's nice to see it.

How many years would it have been since you had last seen it?

Well Barbara and I about, I suppose around about six or seven years ago,

17:00 we were, I was able to organise for us to go through G George as it was then with tail resting on the ground. That would be the last time until I saw George down here in December of last year. And I didn't realise how small the aircraft was until I saw her for the first time down in Canberra.

17:30 **What was it like seeing it again?**

One of admiration I guess. Brought back lots of memories to the days of actual flying operations. But you know, it looked like the aircraft, we thought it was so good. I wouldn't have gone up and hugged her or anything like that, but again it was admiration for the people who designed it I guess,

18:00 put it together. And I guess for the crew who flew it and flew in it I suppose. It wasn't our aircraft, the one that's down in Canberra, there's another G George, but that was a different one, that was on 460 Squadron.

Earlier when you were talking about, when you were preparing to take off for an operation, that that was one of the, I guess, scariest moments. Was there fear coming

18:30 **back? Someone else we had spoken to was telling us that sometimes the Germans would come and attack while you were waiting to land at the end of the operation?**

Oh yes, coming home at night. Yeah, that happened a few times. You had to be alert, the German night fighters would follow in the bomber stream and as your aircraft was very vulnerable, as it's circling around slowly to come in and land, yeah a few aircraft were shot down by the German night fighters.

19:00 But you were alert for it, the gunners were very alert, for that reason, just in case of. I couldn't do anything about it and nor could anybody else, but it never happened to us.

When you were telling us about the sort of good luck mascot that you crew had, was there a particular song or anything that the crew would sing?

No. No, we didn't have anything painted, painted on the nose except the number of raids went on, on the side of the aircraft after each one was completed,

19:30 that was done by the ground crew. No there was no song at all, we just had our Golli as we called it, our Golli.

Can you explain what a Mae West is?

Yeah a Mae West is a, you wear it at all times when you're flying and if you have to ditch in the ocean it's inflatable, so you just pull the string and the air bottle is there, inflates the Mae

20:00 West, and that'll keep you afloat, even with your flying gear on.

And how much extra weight would that add to you?

Oh very little. I presume that it was made of some sort of plastic because the air couldn't escape from it. So what it was made of, I really don't know, probably could've been like a PVC or something like that. But when it was inflated it was, oh, come out this far and it was about that long

20:30 and it kept you upright in the water, your feet dangled down and kept your head above water.

When you were talking earlier too about when you were awarded a commission, and one of the benefits of that for you was that you'd heard that if you were shot down that you'd be regarded slightly better by the Germans if you're an officer. We've heard some stories of officers giving some of their uniforms to

21:00 **non commissioned officers to try and protect them if they were…?**

Never heard that but again, I haven't spoken, the only person I know that you're going to shortly interview in Sydney when he was shot down, Ian was an officer as well. I don't know what happened in those circumstances, I've never heard that before. It's possible, anything's possible.

The work that you were doing

21:30 **on the radio, how, like what sort of duration during the raid would you actually be doing that?**

I start working my equipment as soon as we neared the French coast and I'd still be working on it til we got to the French coast or probably closer to the English coast, so it would depend upon the duration of the raid. I mean the longest one was nine hours forty minutes and I'd have been doing it

22:00 for I guess eight and a half hours, or longer. You never thought of it as being long because you were, time went very quickly when you're working it, so you couldn't afford not to, once you were over enemy

territory. Be the same as the wireless operator, he had to be listening in all the time in case any messages were intended for the bomber stream, for whatever reason, I don't know.

22:30 So he was always listening, not doing his Morse code or anything like that unless he really had to, and I don't think, I don't think Phil ever had to use it.

How often and in what circumstances did you use your German?

I couldn't speak German, I had no way of speaking German, I had no means of broadcasting, all I could do was pick up the German,

23:00 the, from the ground to air and vice versa. And then the jamming equipment sent out the two, through the two port engines, and was a sound, very loud sound, and it's like da, diddly da, diddly da, and a high pitch sound, to try and drown the people on the ground, the men and the women who were trying to direct the night fighters. But I couldn't speak it. I've read books and it said that, 'There were German speaking operators and we

23:30 contradicted the instructions given from ground to air.' That is completely unfounded and untrue, we had no way of doing it, all we could do was jam.

How long would you say an average operation would be for?

Oh probably about five and a half to six hours about on average. Some were, the Ruhr Valley was around about

24:00 oh five to five and a half hours. Some targets, one I remember where they, the RAF lost the greatest percentage ever of night bombers, they lost forty-nine bombers and they, that was in France, and that was probably round about four hours, and that was a disaster. I've got a book about it.

24:30 **How long before a mission would you have to scramble or like get ready for it?**

You're told that briefing would be at fourteen hundred hours so you go across to briefing and they tell you where you were going. And then you go back to your

25:00 quarters and you're not allowed to tell anybody, your own crew would know, not allowed to tell anybody where you were going, for obvious reasons. Weren't allowed to tell them anything about take off time, anything like that. The ground crews, I'd imagine they'd have been told that, 'The fuel load tonight is two-one-five, two thousand one hundred and fifty-four gallons,' maximum capacity, or 'you're carrying fifteen hundred gallons tonight,' so they'd load up the aircraft appropriately,

25:30 but they wouldn't know the target. You go down and you have your Last Supper in the mess then you'd be taken over to the squadron, you then pick up your gear, you had a locker, each person had a locker. You pick up your parachute, you pick up your anti pash [?] pants and what not, put those on, and that would be

26:00 an hour before take off at least. Give you time to get dressed, have any further questions of the, your briefing officer, and then taken out by truck to your aircraft at disposal, dispersal. And then you'd wait until the flare went up that meant that the raid was on and you board your aircraft. But there was no point going up before because sometimes you get to dispersal

26:30 and the raid'd be cancelled and the red flare'd go up. So you just wait for the white flare to go up and raid's on and so you board. So you have your briefing, could be seven or eight hours before we take off, wasn't always that much, but anything up to seven or eight hours. You go and have your last meal, the Last Supper, I guess around about two hours before take off.

27:00 Go across, I guess fill in time, pick up your gear then go out to the aircraft then take off.

How, like what kind of notice did you have though of what would be happening, say in a week?

None. You, your crews were on, not all crews, you were told you were on stand by, which meant that you could be called upon to fly, which meant you didn't drink any alcohol.

27:30 And sometimes you weren't called upon to fly, sometimes you were called upon because something happened to one crew so you flew in their stead. But you never knew when you're gonna be put on stand by. They tell you in the morning that you're on stand by for the next twenty-four hours, so that meant you had no alcohol or you couldn't go to town

28:00 in to the pub, it was a funny old town, only two pubs in it, you couldn't go. But again you never knew where you were going until you went to briefing. I can tell you another experience, and you talked about fog earlier. The British in their wisdom, they developed a system to defeat fogs, and they called it FIDO,

28:30 Fog Intensive Dispersal Of. Which meant that either side of the runway, the whole length of the runway, they had these big pipes and into which they fed diesel fuel and a mixture of petrol, could've been Avgas, I don't know. And the idea was behind it that if a fog ever descended on the aerodrome, they would set this alight and the heat would

29:00 go up and it would clear the fog. The only trouble was they forgot you had to come in and land blind until you got through the fog. And one night we had that experience and in fact it was our very last trip, and, no, second last trip. And we were coming in to land and they were using FIDO, they told us, the wireless operator, we're using FIDO, land on FIDO. Well that was okay.

29:30 You'd come in, but you had to go through this intensive fog. Now first time, no radar, we were I think to port of the runway quite a bit and we couldn't land. So we tried it again and this time we over shot and I don't know how close it was to the church steeple but all I heard the bomber saying, the bomber was saying, "God, we just missed the steeple," so it was, must have been pretty close. So FIDO wasn't

30:00 as good as it was cracked up to be. So we then decided, we told the air controller, 'We're going to find another aerodrome, where could we land?' So we landed at an aerodrome nearby where there's no fog. But FIDO must've been very, very costly to install and to use. But when you're flying through pea-soup fog there, you don't know where you are, you haven't got any idea and they can't tell you, you just gotta try and gauge it, know your country

30:30 side. As soon as you get over the runway, sure, you can see the runway perfectly but you may be too high to lower, come down low enough to get on the runway, or you could be either side of it. So somebody's bright idea but it didn't work, but it almost cost us the church steeple.

Did you find any other really trying weather conditions?

Oh yeah. The, on D Day [first day of the Invasion of Europe] we were flying and

31:00 we had to land away from the aerodrome because of fog. They just said the drome wasn't use-able and that we land at a Polish squadron. That was quite an experience, the D Day. That, we didn't carry any bombs at all, every aircraft that could fly and that was twenty-four or twenty-seven, I've forgotten now, that was the maximum.

31:30 And we're to fly at twenty-four thousand or, no, twenty-seven thousand feet, cause we had no bombs and we'd go higher. And our job was to fly from the French coast to about a hundred miles east of Paris, flying in a box formation and jamming everything we heard from the ground to air and vice versa. It was very, very successful, we did this for six and a half hours. At the briefing, normally you have a group captain,

32:00 or below, doing the briefing, telling you where you're going and so on, but this time we had an air commodore which was unusual. And he was, what we were doing was unusual, this carrying no bombs at all and flying the maximum height, that's all the aircraft could get to, twenty-seven. And he said, "You'll see a lot of strange lights and so on." So somebody... "Is this the invasion sir?" And he said, "Think what you think it might be. I can't tell you."

32:30 But it was, you know, again it was a wink was as good as a nod but we didn't know until well into the next day. It was very successful and the General Eisenhower sent a, I don't know what he sent, a letter or telegram or something to our CO, congratulating on the squadron, how successful the jamming had been, and how the Germans had lost all contact with their night fighters, so that made us feel rather pleased.

33:00 But we landed at a Polish squadron round about six in the morning, we were de-briefed by some Poles but they didn't speak very good English and they didn't understand us, so we decided we'd be de-briefed when we flew back to our squadron. Which we did later that afternoon, after we went to sleep and got up and flew back to our own squadron, then we were de-briefed.

Knowing that you'd, finding out later that you'd been

33:30 **part of D Day in a, you know, a very real way, what did you think afterwards?**

That's about the only time I could say we felt excited, we felt, 'Okay, we've really done something there to confuse the Germans.' Yeah we really were very pleased with ourselves, by which time we had been given to wear S wings.

34:00 We were the only ones who were wearing them, in the RAAF. And I can remember on leave at one stage in London, and an American came up and said, "Say guy, what's an 'S' stand for?" I thought, 'Oh I'll have him on.' I said, "I'm a stoker." He looked at me, he said, "What do you do as a stoker?" I said, "Oh I'm a stoker on the aircraft and I shovel compressed air in tubes into the engines, makes em go faster." "Gee, I never heard of that." And I thought, 'That's one of my achievements too.' Oh yeah, I'll have a bit of fun.

34:30 **What were the 'S' wings?**

Signals. That's the only thing that they put on, our half wing. That it was still, as I said earlier, it was secret until 1956, supposedly secret, but I think it was.

Flying that night without any bombs, did that make you feel defenceless in any way, or you knew, being as high as you were, you were...?

No, no, we didn't feel any more defenceless then, than in any other raid.

35:00 We're, as I said a moment ago, either twenty-four or twenty-seven aircraft flying in a reasonably close box formation and jamming anything and everything we heard. And I guess the gunners were just as keen on that night as the, it would've been if we were going deep into Germany. No, didn't feel any different. You just, everyone just worked their butts off to do what they had to do.

Apart from on your,

35:30 **on any of the raids that you flew, apart from dropping bombs, were you involved in dropping propaganda at all?**

Yes. When this is finished I can show you, I've kept them here. They were telling the Germans how the Brits were winning the war and how the Germans were losing the war. I could've probably read that, I can't do it now, but if you're interested I can show you one of these leaflets. A friend of my wife,

36:00 he could speak German, only a couple of years ago, and he took it back to Sydney and translated it, but it took him about six months to do it, he said it was very hard to understand because they were talking in war-like terms, he didn't quite understand it. But yes we used to drop these over the, every raid, they were dropped, just saying, 'It's about time you kicked out the Germans and declared peace,' or asked for peace, some-

36:30 thing like that.

And whose job specifically was it to drop those?

The bomb aimer. Again they were tied in bundles, like the 'Window', and he dropped them out through the bomb chute, oh the, well the Window'chute if you like. And when they got in the slipstream the tie just broke and they went everywhere, just all over the countryside. I don't know whether they were ever read or whether the people were going to read them in case they were caught, I've no idea.

In that five and a,

37:00 **was it five and a half months or six months where you were flying those...?**

About five and a half months.

Were you getting leave at all during that time?

Oh yes. I don't know how many leaves but we as a crew bought an old Riley, 1929 car, and we painted our names on the side. I couldn't drive but the two Canadians could, particularly Stan Licorice who was much older, as I said, he was our father, and

37:30 so he said he would drive. So my name's painted on the side, the name of 'Digger' on the side of the car and we all had nicknames and they were on the side of the car too. We shouldn't have got it but we were very pally with a WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] in the transport section, and we organised through her to buy transport fuel, which, we'd been caught, we'd have been court marshalled. It was painted, not painted, it was coloured pink to distinguish it from ordinary

38:00 petrol which is sort of champagne-y colour. That's how they got around in the car, we used the car. It was owned by a police sergeant, he put it on chocks in 1939 and we bought it in 194..., beginning of 1944. It was a beautiful car.

Did you get to London at all?

Yep. Used to go mainly, not always, to London. Went up once to,

38:30 into Scotland up to Inverness. A couple of us went up and we met up with some New Zealanders in the army. Once or twice I got down to my aunt and uncle at a place called Weston Super-Mare out of Bristol and other times you go down to London.

Were you in London while there were air raids?

Yeah. I was down in London when the flying bombs were there and when they used the V2 rockets. And you'd hear the, like a lawn

39:00 mower, the motor would stop and then you'd wait, then you hear the explosion. With the V2 rockets, you had no chance of doing anything about those. And I can remember exactly where I was in Leicester Square and suddenly, this was, this rush of air and followed by the explosion. And nobody seemed to know what it was all about.

39:30 It turned out it's the first V2 I'd heard, I had a couple more later on. But they were aimed at London, just blasting London, no target, just London.

Can you describe exactly what went on in Leicester Square when that happened?

Yeah it was a bit of panic. The, they didn't know what it was, particularly this rush of air, it was quite extraordinary. It was like suddenly there was a huge cyclone, didn't last

40:00 long, followed up by a couple of seconds later by the noise of the explosion. Yeah people started wonder what it was, I can't remember what they were actually saying but there was certainly no question it

bought people out of shops and cinemas and everywhere else. The noise of the explosion would've brought them out of the cinemas. Those that were in cafes, such as they were in wartime, sitting out in the open, yeah people couldn't quite work out what it was.

40:30 **Was anyone killed?**

Oh no, well there might've been where it exploded, where it landed, but not in Leicester Square, yeah, Leicester Square, no. No.

Tape 8

00:31 **We might start with that story you were telling me before about how you actually met your uncle and aunty by, almost by, accident?**

It was by accident. As I mentioned previously, we were told, we're down in Melbourne to change our money into pounds sterling and so we're, I knew we're going to England. I'd rung my parents and said, 'Oh we're gonna see my uncle and aunt shortly.' And so they immediately wrote to them in England so they were

01:00 expecting me sometime, didn't know when. But somehow or other they must've found out that we're at Brighton, and that's where all Australians went to when they first arrived in the UK. And so they wrote to me if I remember correctly saying, 'When you have your leave, we'd love to see you.' And I probably replied and said, 'Yes, thank you very much,' I've only got eight pounds in my pocket, that won't go very far. So yeah. So I got the train up from Brighton,

01:30 up to London, London down to Bristol and then changed into the, another train to go to Weston Super-Mare, where my uncle and aunt were living during war time, and their two daughters. I'd never met them, they'd never met me. I didn't know what Uncle John, all I knew he was tall, and he was about six feet three, I knew he was tall, his wife Trixie was short, that's all I knew. They'd never seen me, but they realised I'd be wearing

02:00 an army uniform. I don't think they knew I had the Australia shoulder patches on, they might've, but I don't know that. Anyway we decided by correspondence we'd look for one another and as best we could. Now a lot of people were wandering round on the railway station at Super-Mare, Weston Super-Mare, and I's just looking around for a tall man who had a Scots brogue, hoping I'd find

02:30 him. And I suddenly turned round and I bumped into somebody and it was my uncle and he recognised the Australia patches on my uniform and the Australian Air Force uniform and he said, "You must be Adrian Marks." I said, "You're Uncle John." He said, "Yes." So, "Come and meet Aunt Trixie," and my two cousins, Betty and Peggy. So that's how we met there on the railway station at Weston Super-Mare.

03:00 They were living in a hotel at that stage, a very nice one, and they, the taxi that took us back to the hotel. And they'd saved their coupons, I don't know what time it was, it was certainly way past dinner time, but they'd saved their coupons, and the kitchen of the hotel had agreed that when I arrived they'd cook me dinner. And I thought it was fantastic because their meat

03:30 rationing was very, very small, but they must've saved it up and not eaten any meat, oh I don't know for some weeks. And there's a great big splurge, all the things you couldn't get normally, or you could get, short supply. We had a wonderful meal that night, I've never forgotten it. And the first time that I had drunk whisky. Strange as it might seem, my uncle had drunk gin, drank gin, and my aunt whisky, and I preferred to

04:00 have a whisky. I thought, 'Oh gee, this is horrible stuff,' but I've changed my mind since. But that's how I met them. And I had a very pleasant, I think it was three or four days with them. My cousins, they were, one was in the ambulance service, and other one was in the NES, that was National Emergency Services. There were air raids on when we were there, course the Bristol aircraft factory's not far away, and so they were called

04:30 out to duty quite often while I was there, my two cousins. And but we had a game of golf one day with my uncle at the local bowling club and we found all the German 'Window', they were dropping the same thing, but it was pretty poor stuff by comparison, you could rub it off with your finger, not like the British made one. I went to several shows with my cousins and with my aunt and uncle, different shows. There wasn't a dull moment for those three

05:00 or four days and then of course the time came back, to go back to Brighton.

Besides the buzz bombs, were there any other times where you had to shelter from an air raid?

I never had to shelter at any time. The buzz bombs were in London, where we were on the squadron and where we were training up in Scotland, there was no worry about that sort of thing at all. But in London, there was always the buzz bombs, they were

05:30 coming over quite regularly. The Spitfire and Hurricane pilots and the Tempest pilots, the fighters of the day of the RAF - they weren't very quick the buzz bombs in flight - so they [fighters] used to try and fly alongside them over the Channel and tip their wing. And of course as soon as it did that, the gyroscopic compass in the buzz bomb would lose control of the buzz bomb and it'd crash into the water, so didn't all reach London. But there's no way with the V2 rockets,

06:00 they were too quick, they were quicker than the speed of sound.

And what does it do to you when you go into London and you see the devastation that's there?

It's not as, my first reaction, my first leave in London, 'Where's all the damage?' I couldn't believe it. But when you got down around the dockside area, that's where the damage was horrific. But the actual, if you like to go round Regent Street or Bond Street or any

06:30 of these main areas in London during the wartime, there was no damage, there was no sign of any damage. But you go a bit further, down around Saint Paul's Cathedral and there was a lot of damage round that area, but not right in the centre of London. That surprised me.

You mentioned that your aircraft, G for George, did it actually have any other nickname that the crew called it?

No.

It was just called George?

Yep. Just called

07:00 George.

And while you're talking about alcohol, do you remember when your first beer was?

Oh yeah first beer was a shandy, there in Sydney. That would be, oh crikey, about 1938 or 1939. Oh big time, those days, having a beer. We used to, a group of us, these guys, we were friends, we would meet every Friday at Usher's Hotel in Sydney,

07:30 it's now no longer there, Usher's Hotel. We were a group that would go to dances together, most of us in the cricket team, junior cricket team. And they were the nine guys I said all went into the army, I was one of those nine and only four, five of the nine were killed. So yeah, that would've been on my first beer.

What was the legal drinking age back then?

Twenty-one, I think. I wasn't twenty-one, it might've been eighteen,

08:00 I don't remember now. But no, it must've been eighteen because there was no queries, I remember on, 'How old are you?' so it was probably eighteen.

What about your first smoke?

Oh that goes back to school day. Yeah, Mum and Dad were out, they were smokers. And I'd, my father used to roll his own, my mother used to smoke Capstans and so we invited some of our friends round and we'd roll our own and smoke Mum's Capstans. Because,

08:30 we got caught out because they came home early one night and we hadn't got rid of all the smoke in the house. We used to go round with paper you know, fanning, get rid of the smoke, cause a draft. They came home early one night and caught us, they... 'If you want to smoke, smoke in front of us, not behind our backs,' so, the excitement disappeared.

Can you tell us about Australia House?

Yeah that was in The Strand. And in

09:00 Australia House there's the Boomerang Club. That's where people used to go, cause very often they had their mail addressed to the Boomerang Club, cause they were moving around from squadron to squadron, they, sometimes the mail never caught up with them. So, they'd address it care of Australia House where it'd be held and you could pick it up when you're on leave. Always Australian newspapers and you'd always meet some guys you would know, some at school, going back to school days, some

09:30 after school and that sort of thing, so it was always a bit of a beeline to go to first and catch up on Australian newspapers. And then you'd, oh you'd decide where you were going to have a few beers or if you're gonna see a show or wherever it might be. We had, this guy, Reg Hardacre and I, at one stage we're on leave together in London, we're still in the squadron. And his crew had leave the same time as we did. I met Reg in London

10:00 and we went to see a show, the name I don't remember, and we thought, 'Gee I wonder if we can take a chorus girl each out for dinner.' So we bought front row seats, in the front stalls, the very front row in fact, and these girls in the chorus and saying, 'Oh gee she looks pretty and she looks nice,' and so on. And so we worked out the number they were in the chorus from left to right, and we went and saw the

guy

10:30 at the stage door and said, “Is there any chance of taking a couple of the chorus girls out for supper after the show, we’d just like to meet a chorus girl, we haven’t met a pretty girl over here in England,” and all that sort of jazz. And so he said, “Yes,” he will pass the message on, he knew their names, who they were. And so after the show and so we went round to the stage door and these two girls came out and they said, “Oh we’re frightfully sorry

11:00 but we have a prior engagement.” And there behind was a guy, one of them had evening dress on, even in wartime, evening dress on, and he took her by the arm and he took her out to this magnificent car, I don't know what it was, probably a Rolls or a Bentley or something or other. And we weren’t in the race there, so we’d wasted our money, but we enjoyed the show just the same. But that was a great disappointment.

Getting back to the drinking and the smoking, did those things, did that become

11:30 **a bigger thing, once you were in the army?**

Yeah, I think it did. The, you had a, particularly when you’re on the squadron you had a lot of days where you didn’t fly because of the weather. You could go as close as being, oh, could be briefed, the weather would close over, ‘No op tonight.’ There was a certain amount of tension.

12:00 You couldn’t drink, there’s no way, but smoking yes, and it seemed one way of relieving tension. So it got to the, almost the stage on occasion where you’d smoke almost anything that was available, and some of the stuff in wartime wasn’t that great I can assure you. But yeah, if you were not on standby and you knew you weren’t going to fly, yeah, like it,

12:30 it filled in the time, you relaxed, you had a bit of fun in the pub. The publicans were typical country publicans and I think they enjoyed the company in there but the place was generally pretty crowded and full of smoke, but oh no, you all survived and enjoyed it. So I think it helped but medically or otherwise, I can’t comment.

Was there any ration of alcohol?

Not as far as we were concerned while in camp.

13:00 And in the, for civilians yes, there was, the pubs had to close certain times during the afternoon and they had to close at a certain time at night. So beer was virtually rationed by the clubs closing.

And what about, was their any ration of cigarettes given to you blokes?

Yeah we had a ration for the, getting cigarettes in the mess. We also had cigarettes sent to us from the Australian Comforts

13:30 Fund, they were American cigarettes. We used to get four hundred cigarettes a month, which didn’t last very long. When you smoked your ration you start smoking what we used to call, ‘roadside specials,’ they were Wild Woodbines, and they were pretty horrible, but anyway you smoked. They became, I guess you became addicted at that stage, but you’d smoke anything.

Have you continued to smoke since the war?

Haven’t smoked, yeah, initially after the war I

14:00 smoked, til I met Barbara and I gave smoking away. Barbara wasn’t very keen that I should be smoking and I should’ve realised long before that because playing sport at one stage I collapsed because of, I just lost all my oxygen, I was running too hard, and that was stupid. So I haven’t smoked now for oh, fifty years.

14:30 **Were you fellows finding out any news of what was happening in the Pacific while you were in England?**

The only news you got from the newspapers, and I’ve got some of those to show you too if you want to look at em. They talk about, they dealt mainly with the European scene but there’s always happening against the Japanese in the Pacific. So you caught up with it then, but otherwise no. Maybe a bit of news on the radio about Burma or something like that but not much.

Was there a feeling amongst any of the

15:00 **Australians that they were keen to get home to fight in the Pacific campaign?**

No, I think we’d had enough quite frankly. The, I think we’re just keen to get home, if you’re not gonna fly anymore, what’s the use of being over here, might as well go back home. We had no idea if we did get back, what would happen, you’re guessing, your guess is as good as mine, we’d be

15:30 talking about it. When we got back in 1945, this was in, the end of February, the war in the Pacific was drawing towards its close, the atomic bomb, the first one hadn’t been dropped at that stage, but it was drawing to its close. And as far as I was concerned, I was bored stiff just reporting, I think it was once or twice a week at Bradfield

16:00 Park, every fortnight picking up your beer ration and your cigarette ration, and then going home, and it was boring. And so before the war finished in the Pacific I applied for my discharge, you know, what was the point of it? So I got out just be, no, just after the first atomic bomb in about August '45.

If I can go back to when you first went to 101,

16:30 **how many of the ABC sets did you actually have for training?**

Ah there was only one, there was one receiver and three transmitters. That's all, so you had to, the three of us we had to, well, we sat in there and watched and listened what was being told and what you'd done wrong. Then your turn would come on and the other two guys would stand and, or sit and wait til you finished and listen to the comments by this guy Wilksman.

17:00 'Oh you're improving,' or, 'You've done something wrong today,' or 'You gotta get a bit quicker than what you are at the moment.' But that's all there was in this room, it was like Fort Knox, I'm not kidding you, to get anywhere near it you had to get a bomb to blow it up.

And what were your instructors like?

He was the only one. Yeah, he was a very pleasant man, but I tell you, he was a German but he must've gone to Canada at a very young age, he spoke with a very pronounced Canadian

17:30 accent. And obviously he'd kept up his German cause his parents probably still spoke German, I don't know. But he was a very pleasant person, he didn't fly anymore, he had flown at one stage but didn't fly anymore. Very pleasant guy to, he never was using the heavy hand or anything like that. Okay he was another airman and he, 'Okay these poor goats are gonna try and use this stuff, I've gotta try and help em as best I can.' So it was a very

18:00 easy relationship with this guy.

So how many operational ABC sets were there in the squadron?

Well the, I think the maximum aircraft was twenty-seven, and so in every one of those there were three transmitters and one receiver. So that's what, three times twenty-seven, what is it seventy, that's eighty-one isn't it, and there being twenty-seven receivers.

To your knowledge was each aircraft set up the same

18:30 **or were they still experimenting with different techniques?**

Oh no, they were all set up the same, exactly the same. The, you sat in the same position in the aircraft, they all worked exactly the same. And I guess the reason being, for example on about three occasions, we didn't use our own aircraft, George, we flew another one. And I just sat at same spot and the equipment exactly the same, so there's no difference at all.

And how many squadrons like 101 were operating in that capacity?

Only one. There

19:00 was only one squadron in the entire RAF. That's why, I think, they were called the XYZ squadron, not by 101, to try and confuse people who would like to know what the squadron was and what they did, and again, as I said, it was very secret. And I don't think, I've even spoken to groups

19:30 in Sydney and up here and they're all ex army, they had never heard of it, and yet they were flying. So that's how secret it was.

How long, before you start did an operation, your first operation in Lancasters, how long had you actually spent in Lancasters?

It was at Lancaster Finishing School, about four hours, probably a bit less.

20:00 It was a waste of time, we were sitting on our butts while they flew this aircraft all over the UK. And they obviously had another crew who'd finished their OTU and they were preparing to get used to flying in a Lancaster before they went to a squadron. But I was just sitting there doing nothing, talking.

Did you ever hear Lord Haw Haw?

Yeah, he, that was

20:30 Joyce wasn't it, he used to call the British, 'Run Rabbit Run.' Yeah I heard him. I think his name was Joyce, his real name. Yeah I heard him on the radio. The BBC would broadcast it or pick it up and re-broadcast it, but sometimes you, I've forgotten where I was, I remember picking it up, or somebody picking it up

21:00 and say, 'Listen, here's Haw Haw.' And he used to start his commentary by the song, 'Run Rabbit Run,' and he referred to the Brits as rabbits. Yeah I heard him on it once or twice.

And what did you think of his broadcasting?

I thought it was comical, yeah I think the British did too, I think they took no notice of it. The, I, they put up with so much. When you would go to an

21:30 underground station at night, when we're on leave in London, to go back where we're staying. And we'd be walking over people who had brought their beds down with their children and their pets, their canaries and cats and what not, no dogs. And their food, and some of them carried little kerosene stoves, little things you, like a Primus stove, and put their food on so they have hot food before they went to bed and that sort of thing. And they'd stay there all night

22:00 then go back when the bombing stopped or the threat of bombing stopped, go up in the morning, back to the, where they normally live. So I think they took that, also Lord Haw Haw with a grain of salt and thought it was rather a bit of a comedy.

And you mentioned that G for George in Canberra looks like a brand spanking new aircraft.

It's shiny.

What sort of state

22:30 **was your aircraft in when you'd come back on ops, would you walk around the aircraft and have a look?**

No, I don't think so. The, I think the only time that we'd walk around when we were hit with anti-aircraft fire to see how badly the aircraft was hit, it didn't affect the motors or anything like that, but it wasn't flyable so we had to fly another aircraft for oh, a couple of trips while they repaired it. But that's about the only time.

23:00 **Is that the time after you went into the dive? When you thought you got hit by the scarecrow?**

No, no, this is another one entirely. This happened to be a daylight over to, oh fairly deep into France to a railway yards, where they were shunting goods down to the front near Normandy. And went across there to bomb the rail yards in daylight, I don't know why daylight. It was quite odd, it was our first daylight

23:30 and we were told by the station commander, 'Do what the Americans do when one aircraft gets shot down, close up, keep in formation.' And that was alright til the anti-aircraft fire into our bomber stream, and we were flying in reasonably good formation, then the aircraft fire starting up in between our... we went all over the place, didn't hold formation I can assure you. But that's the only time we

24:00 got hit with anti-aircraft fire.

The time after you went into the dive and you thought you were gonna have to bail, do you remember ever having a look at the aircraft when you landed on that occasion?

I think we did, we couldn't... yeah I'm pretty sure we did. We looked to see where we'd been hit, but we couldn't even find a dent in the fuselage. So we thought, 'Okay, if we were hit, it didn't cause any damage, or it could've been the explosion of the scarecrow

24:30 that made the noise and put our tail down and, tail up and the nose down.'

Cause you mentioned having a piece of shrapnel that'd hit the aircraft at one stage?

Yeah, that was this daylight yeah, and it came through as close as I am to you, probably closer, and it was a piece about that long. It was armour piercing, because it was painted yellow, so I was told when I got back and I asked them what sort of shell was it, they said it was armour piercing.

25:00 So, I wish I hadn't lost it, but anyway it's gone now.

What sort of noise is going on during a raid like that?

Well you have headphones on but you wouldn't have been able to speak to anybody and hear them, the noise of the engines, they were noisy, there's no question about it. But then again, as I said, it was a war machine and you weren't supposed to be wandering around talking to other people, you communicate with your RT [radio transmitter], which was in your,

25:30 in your oxygen mask. But yeah, it was noisy I can assure you.

And you had a secondary role as a mid upper as well, did you?

No.

Did you ever fire any of the guns?

Never, we never, our crew never had to fire one shot in anger. It was close once when I, the guy in, the rear gunner couldn't identify the aircraft coming up on us but it turned out to be a Mosquito and he recognised it so, but he was ready to fire. But no, never fired a shot.

26:00 **Can you tell us why there was a Mosquito in with the bomber stream?**

Yeah the, they didn't tell us, at our briefing that, 'You would probably find some Mosquitos in the bomber stream tonight to attack the JU-88s,' the German night fighters, which was a very good night fighter. And they were there to protect the bomber stream, pure and simple. The Mosquito was a magnificent aircraft, could out-manoeuvre and out-speed

26:30 the German night fighter. And our rear gunner reported over the intercom that there was, he called it, 'An unidentified aircraft coming up behind,' and he's getting ready to shoot, or whatever words he used. And then he said, "Oh no, it's a Mosquito, I've identified it." So we got back to base, we reported this and they said, "Oh yes, they're in the bomber stream, we forgot to tell you." .

27:00 So there was one lucky Mosquito. Or maybe one lucky Lancaster, I don't know.

You mentioned earlier that if you flew two ops in a row you would have a week off.

Yep.

What was the norm if you were just flying one?

You could fly one and then you'd miss one or two. You had to, they generally... well that's not quite right because sometimes we did fly two nights in a row, in which time you had a week

27:30 off. Most times you only fly one op and then have a night or two nights off, that was generally the case. It wasn't, it depends how many, how big the bomber stream would be, if you had a thousand bomber stream as I said earlier to you, our aircraft had to take part in every raid because of our ABC gear. So if you only had three hundred aircraft, bombers flying,

28:00 which was quite often, you have a lesser number of ABC aircraft. They have a thousand bomber raid, you have every available aircraft flying in the bomber stream, to protect the length of the stream.

Was there, was it preferred maybe to fly two and then have that week off or...?

I think you, you did what you were told to do, you had no say. And I can't remember now whether it was... during that week you had off from flying

28:30 you'd be often on stand by, so you couldn't go on leave, you couldn't go to the pub and have a drink. So I think that the idea was when you started a tour, I think this was a pretty general feeling, 'Let's get it done and over as quick as you can.'

And you knew what the sort of tour of operations was?

It varied. Could vary between twenty-eight to about, oh I suppose about thirty-four, thirty-five, something like...

29:00 depend on the types of targets that you had to bomb. The more difficult ones... I say, we never went to Berlin, we were briefed a couple of times but the raid was called off and there was a great sigh of relief I can tell you. But those that bombed Berlin, probably oh, four or five, six times, their tour was shortened by a couple of operations, cause they were tough ones.

29:30 And as I say we did thirty-one, we didn't, we had some pretty tough ones too but again these later ones, after the invasion, they weren't as long duration except as I say, our last one was nine hours forty minutes, that was right down at the Italian border. But mainly they were shorter duration, probably five to six hours at the most. And so

30:00 okay, they reckoned you probably had to do a few more ops to qualify. But I know some crews they did around about thirty-four, thirty-five, because the targets they were going to were shorter duration and weren't as dangerous.

And what were the least popular destinations?

The, without doubt, the Ruhr Valley, it was the most heavily defended part of Germany, cause that was their heavy industries, the, Krupps were there. It was like

30:30 searchlight alley, I really mean that, and that was called "Search Light Alley," cause the amount of searchlights and anti-aircraft guns. And as I mentioned earlier, they had this predicted flak, and with the searchlights and the anti-aircraft guns, they worked in unison, and it was sheer bedlam. And that's where the most nighters, night fighters would congregate over the Ruhr Valley and that's where the greatest number, all told, would've been lost in aircraft. That was no picnic over there.

31:00 **And in your opinion what would've been the worst position to have in a Lancaster crew?**

I reckon the rear gunner. If he needed to go to the toot he couldn't. I don't, I can't remember anybody in our crew ever having to use the toilet, but it was called a Nelson, and it was like this pan system sort of thing, but I think nobody ever used it. But the rear gunner

31:30 was all by himself, it was probably the coldest part in the aircraft, because they had the same gear as we did on to keeping warm. The German night fighters would generally attack the rear of the aircraft, the rear gunner or come up underneath where the aircraft was vulnerable. I'd say that'd be the worst

position.

Did you ever notice that perhaps the personality or the, maybe even the sanity of the rear gunner

32:00 **changed throughout that time?**

No. No, Jock was still, when he wasn't down to fly at all, he was the only man who could drink a pint down without swallowing. And we used to, in the local pubs we used to bet on him with other people, they didn't know how good he was. And we won quite a few bets cause he could outlast them drinking this pint, oh, he was unbelievable. No he's, he'd never change, Jock Law.

32:30 **What was your opinion of Bomber Harris?**

I think he was a magnificent person, I have the highest regard of, I know a lot of people don't, they say he sacrificed people. That's war. He did all he could to protect people flying in Bomber Command, he was an outstanding person in my book. And I have not spoken to any guy in Bomber Command who would denigrate Bomber Harris. I know he

33:00 has been by people who have written books about him and I think they should go back to school and try and learn what he did. He was an outstanding person.

And you'll perhaps find some people, I'm not sure whether you've had any personal experience where people have questioned the fact that you guys were bombing civilians, people would say. Obviously by the large you would've had

33:30 **military targets but just by the pure nature of war, the possibility that civilians were being bombed.**

Oh yeah. The, with French targets in particular, if the, you know, the Pathfinder force couldn't identify the target, the raid was aborted, that happened a few times, and so as far as we're concerned two or three times we just went back. And then we had to drop our bombs in the North

34:00 Sea and then land bomb free in England, and they were very particular about French targets, not quite so with the Germans. That, oh, I've forgotten the raid now, the master bomber couldn't identify the target, so he went to a place called Schweinfurt which is a long way into Germany, no I'm wrong there, it wasn't Schweinfurt, I can't remember now. But anyway he said, "Oh well we've got an alternative

34:30 target, we'll go to that and we'll bomb that," which we did, rather than take the bombs back. So we bombed a, I don't know, some sort of ammunition factory or a tank factory or something, I can't remember. But the other one I was talking about, Schweinfurt, this is interesting. The, we're coming back, our route was back over Switzerland, and somebody queried the CO of our squadron, "But sir, we're flying over friendly territory." He said,

35:00 "Oh don't worry, a letter of apology has already been sent to the Swiss authorities." Flying back over it, the Germans didn't regard as being neutral territory, they chased us over Switzerland so I guess they also apologised to the Swiss Government for violating their neutral territory. And this must've happened, oh God, a few times. But I couldn't help but chuckle, 'Don't worry, a letter of apology's already on its way to the Swiss Government.'

35:30 **I mean, a lot of the Bomber Command guys, guys like yourself, would have a completely different perspective of what they do, to obviously an infantry soldier. How do you look at what you were doing during the war?**

We looked upon it as being very specialised, we were very highly trained. I say, the people who are in the submarines and so on, extremely well trained. They were specialists.

36:00 And I think we're, certainly in the army there were certain, just bomb disposal people and that sort of thing, were specialists. But I think the, all people who are flying, whether be in fighter aircraft or not, were very, very well trained people. I mean it took me, let's see there's, it took me the whole, over two years, from first going

36:30 in to the army to start flying, you know, actually flying on Bomber Command. So they were, all that time was spent on training. And I've forgotten, they used to say, 'Oh you're worth so much, you've cost the government, the country so much money,' I don't know how much it was now but it was some thousands of pounds. And so yeah, I think we looked upon it as being specialists, which we probably were in our field.

But is it, is it

37:00 **peculiar that when you're fighting the enemy you're twenty-two thousand feet in the air?**

You don't think of being up in the air really, you're confident you're gonna land back at base. If at any time our aircraft had been very badly damaged and they managed to limp back to base on a wing and a prayer, then you might think about it. But see, we were never attacked by a night fighter and we were

37:30 only once holed, with anti-aircraft fire, so we're almost sure that we're gonna come back and land at

base. Never thought about being up twenty-two or twenty-four thousand feet, never thought about it.

Can you remember the feeling in the aircraft when you finally let all your bombs go?

Yeah, and you couldn't mistake it because the aircraft would suddenly do that, it'd go up like an express lift for about, I don't know how many feet, five or six feet, maybe more. Yeah there was always relief to do

38:00 that, when you hear the bomber saying, "Bombs gone, skipper." And the skipper'd say, "Okay, let's get home in a hurry." So yeah, that's what we, used to happen.

Before you did that operation on D Day, were you aware of the build up for D Day, like obviously you didn't know what it was called, gonna be called or anything?

Oh yeah, it was very obvious. At one stage we went to have a look the Brighton

38:30 what it was like, we're on leave in London, 'Let's go down, it's only a short trip on the train,' so we went down. And it was amazing that all the streets were clogged with military vehicles, tanks, you name it, armoured carriers, there were thousands of them. So we knew that, okay, they could embark from around that area, I'm not sure whether they ever did or not, they could've moved them. The Germans were

39:00 also apparently aware of it too because they used to attack the trucks and other vehicles that were there, tanks, attack them with gunfire from their aircraft. They wouldn't have done much damage and they never dropped any bombs as far as I know, I don't think they ever were carrying them, the daylight fighters. But yeah it was so obvious that it was coming but you didn't know when. It could've been

39:30 the following day or could've been six months later.

Besides Bomber Harris, what was your opinion of other sort of ranking officers in the army?

He was probably the only guy that as far as I can remember could, really stood out. There were probably guys under him whose names, oh I think one was Air Marshall Tedder, he was under Bomber Harris but he was under,

40:00 he was Tactical Command of Bomber Command, something like that. Yeah he was probably well, very well thought of. Harris got the most publicity in the media. I think that's about all I can say about that.

Are there any films that you've seen that give a sort of accurate portrayal of what it was like to fly in operations?

Not one. Not one. The, they've even

40:30 gone, they've transgressed to the extent that they change aircraft, you know, have a four-engine aircraft and suddenly there's only two, you know, this is just common sense to me. All the, even the American films about their bombing of targets, it's not right, they always miss on something. And the same as the British films. No, I haven't seen one that I would say

41:00 is fair dinkum.

Rightyo.

Tape 9

00:32 **Can you tell us about the, after D Day, the commendation from Eisenhower?**

Yes, the group captain who was the CO of our squadron, I think it was probably two or three days after the D Day, and said he had received a communication or letter or something, whatever it was, from General Eisenhower

01:00 who congratulated him on the work that the squadron had done on the night of D Day, and how effective... I don't think he talked about jamming, I'm sure he didn't, he talked about how effective our patrol had been on D Day, but obviously there's not too much he could say about it because it was still pretty secret. I don't even know whether Eisenhower knew about what we did, could have been told to

01:30 him by somebody, I don't know. But anyway, it was nice for the squadron to get it.

Did it make a big difference for the guys to have that?

No, I don't think it made any difference to them, they probably could've turned round to Eisenhower and said, 'I told you so.' I think they felt pleased and proud perhaps that, cause you've got no idea how good your jamming has

02:00 been, you'll never know. And for somebody to say it was excellent, how well it had worked, the, well I'm

sure he didn't use the word "jamming," but anyway it made you feel, 'Okay, I'm pretty good aren't I?' But no, life went on.

When you were talking just a little earlier about the day, one of the first daytime operations that you flew, did you

02:30 **prefer the daytime or the night time?**

Night time thank you. The, you must [(UNCLEAR)] say in the daytime. The American aircraft, they had twice the fire power that a Lancaster or Halifax would have. We had tiny little guns and great big bombs and they had tiny little bombs and great big guns, and they needed it, in day time they needed to have the more powerful guns than

03:00 what we had. So we were seen at night time by the flames coming from the engine at night, and there's no question about it, but you did have some protection of cloud, where in day time might even be cloud you'd still be seen, see you going through cloud. So yeah, I think every person that flew at night time would prefer to fly at night because those that had experienced day light flying

03:30 they didn't like it. I didn't.

Do you know if it was the same for people that flew more daytime missions, did they prefer day to night?

I don't know. I would think so.

Was there ever a time during that sort of five and a half months, that you just didn't want to fly?

No. I would fly every night if I'd been allowed and I think our crew would've too. The idea was, 'Okay, we're here, let's do it, get it over with as soon as we can.'

04:00 And then you develop, I think, quite wrongly, some sort of immortality, you think 'Nothing's gonna happen to me.' In fact it never did as it turned out, but you grow in confidence as you progress through the number of bombing raids you partake in, you grow in confidence and, 'Okay, let's fly tomorrow and the day after and

04:30 every day if you like.' It didn't worry, you could never have done it, you wouldn't have performed up to your capabilities, you'd just too tired. But okay, you'd fly as often as you could anyway.

Apart from the Germans, did you see any aircraft from any other nationalities?

Only American. As we were coming back in the early morning, beautiful sight on occasions, you'd see the Flying Fortresses going out with the

05:00 fighter escort, the, mainly Mustang fighters, with long range tanks. And we were coming down in height and they were going up in height, as we're going over the English Channel, crossing back over the French coast. Beautiful sight early morning.

Being that yours was a very specialised role, could you, if you wanted to talk about the actual work that you were doing, who would you talk to?

05:30 What, when I was flying?

Well, like say, if you got back from a mission and you wanted to discuss, you know, get advice or something on the actual jamming that you were doing, would you talk to other...?

No, I couldn't tell anybody there. And my uncle and aunt and two cousins they never asked. Whether I told them, 'I can't talk about what I'm doing when I'm flying,' I don't know, I don't remember, but no, I couldn't discuss it.

What about the other guys in the squadron that were doing the same job, but on different crews?

06:00 No. No, they were all, you were bound to secrecy. When we first arrived you were told you weren't to discuss it. Your own crew, they knew what you were doing but you didn't discuss it, but they knew what you were doing, there's no question, they had to, it was in the same aircraft, they had to walk past it, most of them.

Was there ever a time that you wished you could've been able to speak to someone?

I don't remember, I don't remember, no I don't think so.

06:30 **So at the end of that five and a half months, when you'd done your thirty-one operations, what happened then?**

We volunteered as a crew to do another op but we're knocked back, said, 'No way.' Which was a very sad moment because we realised then that we were gonna be dispersed all over the UK to very different training groups, we'd become instructors.

07:00 So that was sad. I was posted to an Australian OTU [Operational Training Unit] at Lichfield in, I think it's in Yorkshire, I'm not too sure. I was really wasted being there as a wireless instructor because I never finished my course, I was taken off in Dumfries. So I went along virtually just to

07:30 listen in to the radio, and if I knew a guy was doing something obviously wrong, I'd tell him, but I was not in a position really to instruct, which was absurd really. And I think the powers that be should've realised that because, although maybe they didn't realise I was an ABC operator, I don't know. But I acted like an instructor. That was a come down, it was on two engine aircraft on Wellingtons. And they had

08:00 been a very good aircraft in the early part of the war but they were now training aircraft. I saw bombers, but much smaller.

When you said to us earlier that, you know, you started training as a boy but it made you grow up, did you notice that when you started training other people, how young they seemed?

No, I was, at the time I was discharged, I was only just twenty-four so I wasn't getting on in years.

08:30 And as a, these guys were, well, within say, twenty-three at that stage, me twenty-three, they could've been anywhere between twenty and twenty-one or even older than me. No, I didn't find any problems with age disparity.

I just wondered if you felt older than them having flown your thirty-one missions and they hadn't?

Oh, I see what you mean. Yeah probably I did, I'd been there and done that,

09:00 and you haven't been there and done that. I might've felt that, I probably did, but I don't remember. But I think most of us probably would. Even with the guys when we're training in Australia with the pilots who'd been in the Middle East, they let it be known how bored they were doing, flying us around while we're training, so yeah, I suppose I probably did.

A lot of army guys that we've spoken to have told us about crossing, you know, when they're the new guys, crossing paths like that

09:30 **with the old guys coming back, a lot of the, that, 'You'll be sorry,' stuff going on?**

I can imagine that happening, no, I never said that sort of thing. I just couldn't say that to people, I mean, why in the hell frighten anybody? But I can understand some people saying it.

So…?

I never heard of it.

How long were you at the operational training unit for?

About probably three months, something like that.

10:00 Then I was posted to another unit, called Brackla, right in the very north of Scotland. The only good thing about it was the smell of the malt whisky. They had a distillery there, they had the bottling plant, oh, a couple of miles apart. Horse drawn dray and they had armed guards on the horse drawn dray, just in case somebody wanted to get hold of one of their casks,

10:30 and probably sample their whisky, which would've been so strong. I don't know why I was posted there because there was no flying, it was supposed to have been an aerodrome for protecting convoys in the North Atlantic. That meant they were quite heavy aircraft that landed to do it, and, but the runway sank, it was all cracked, so there was no flying.

11:00 I did nothing up there but play cards, read books and I thought, 'This is ridiculous,' so I applied to come home. I wasn't gonna fly again, that was pretty obvious, applied to come home and, which was granted. So home I came and got home in February '45, end of February.

Was that a disappointing way for it all to finish for you?

11:30 It was a bit of a non-event there. It, even when I was instructing there, it became boring and I pity who went to the pilots who flew when I was training. Yeah, it became boring. It wasn't a case of, 'Oh gee, I wish I could be flying today or tomorrow,' you'd say, "Oh God, I got to fly again tomorrow." It became a bore. Back in Australia,

12:00 even worse, and there was no way was I going to fly again. Because at one stage they said, "We're going to send you down," this is in Sydney, "send you down to Victoria to a…" I've forgotten the aircraft now, it was, anyway it's pretty old hat, "…onto those." And I said, "What for?." And I think the answer was,

12:30 "Oh, you can do a bit more flying training." I said, "Well why would I want to do anymore flying training? I'm supposed to be a wireless operator, if I'm going to do anything at all, this is what I will do." And they said, "Oh well those aircraft are no good, there." So waited and waited and no other posting came, so then I applied for my discharge in Sydney. It was boring. I wished I hadn't. Two things:

13:00 I hadn't applied to come to Australia because a couple of my friends, I was at school with one of them, and they stayed over and then they became part of the crews that flew into Holland and Germany and so on, taking food into those countries and bringing back POWs. And that would've been a wonderful experience, so I missed out on that. And likewise when the Japanese surrender came, a lot of the people went up and brought back POWs, they were able to come back,

13:30 they weren't too bad. So I wished I'd been able to do that and go up to Japan and other occupied territories by the Japanese, but I missed out on that one too.

At the time when you were flying the operations, what was your attitude towards the Germans?

I thought a good German was a dead German quite frankly. I didn't feel, I knew that it was obvious that our bombing was, in those days wasn't as precise

14:00 as it is now. I knew some of the marking was wrong, the wind'd cause a drift in the markers. I knew some crews were obviously anxious to get their bombs dropped and get the hell out and they'd drop them not on target but before the targets. So, you'd hear this because when you take, when you drop your bombs there's a photograph taken, automatically. And it shows the bomb's

14:30 trajectory towards the target, the target identified, and they get a pretty rough idea whether your bombs will hit target or not, or they'll miss. And then the bomb aimers, when these come back they're developed, and they're developed on the squadron, they point it out, 'Okay, your bombs missed the target.' So I knew people were killed, innocent people, but so they were in England. I thought, 'Okay a dead German's a good German.'

The,

15:00 **in the instances where you say you know people dropped their bombs early, were there repercussions for that?**

No. No. The, I'd imagine when they de-briefed they might've said that, 'We think we might've dropped our bombs prematurely, we'll have to wait and see when the photograph's developed.' But I'm sure that

15:30 did happen with some crews. I don't know of any specific incidents but you hear people talking about it, so I guess it must've happened.

At the time that you were sent to OTU, do you know what happened to the other seven guys in your crew?

No, the Canadians went back to Canada and the other people went, our pilot, he went, a pilot instructor.

16:00 The engineer was an engineer instructor, they didn't go to, they all went to different aerodromes for training, to OTUs. And I'm not sure which aerodromes they went to but we never met up again. We've met up in England, we've met up in, I went back to one reunion with Barbara to Winnipeg to an air crew reunion, that was for all people who were in The Empire Air

16:30 Training Scheme, and there were something like five thousand there. Met up a couple of guys I met too, but I met up with the crew, only one had died before that. I believe there's only two other crew members left now and I'm three, I'm the third one. The others have gone up, up above somewhere. So there won't be, meeting any crew members now really.

17:00 **Had you stayed in touch though over the years, apart from those times?**

One guy, Denis Goodlet yes. Barbara and I, I think on one or two occasions we've stayed with them. I've been back to three or four reunions at (Lafford Main… [(UNCLEAR)] where aero operations drome was for a reunion. And I think we've stayed with Denis once or twice, otherwise we've stayed elsewhere. What was the question again?

17:30 **Just of how much contact you've had with them over the years?**

Oh yeah, and so those that were still hail and hearty, yeah, I've met them. Certainly in one of those reunions, I think the remaining Canadian who was then alive who died, he died last year, he came over, that was Ken Connell. And I think we had, of the eight, I think we had around about six of us there,

18:00 at that stage, so but we keep in contact. The only one I write to now is Denis Goodlet, our engineer and he was once in Australia and he stayed with us, and his wife. If we go back to the UK I'll certainly be in contact with Denis, but that's problematical now, whether we will or we won't. I just sent him something the other day I got from Canberra, when I was down there, for George. I've been very lax in sending

18:30 it to him, I'm sure he would enjoy it. It's a magnificent photo of a Lancaster and the history of Lancasters, which he probably all knows about it but he wouldn't have this one, and if he needs to he can get it framed. So that went away about two weeks ago, so yeah, we keep in contact.

At the time that you applied to come back to Australia, were, like did you still have to stay in service or you knew that once you got home you would be…?

Oh no, you were still in the service.

19:00 I fully expected that I'd be a wireless operator but I'd've needed to have done a refresher course. What sort of equipment they had in Australia I have no idea, they probably had Marconi but I don't know. But I visualised myself doing a refresher course on wireless and then being posted up somewhere in the Pacific, I didn't know where. But that wasn't happening there. And

19:30 this thing down in Victoria they wanted to send me to a, I said, "I won't go down there, there's no way." No, when I came back, yeah, I think all the guys that came back, they expected to go up in the Pacific somewhere. Whatever they might've been doing, I don't know.

How did they bring you home?

Came home by ship, on a troopship, the, called the Dominion Monarch, it was quite a big ship, it was twenty-four thousand tons. It was loaded with royal marines

20:00 and New Zealand Navy guys and army people like me. New Zealanders were returning home and I was returning home. The others, marines, were to go in the Pacific, as part of the British Invasion Forces they thought would invade Japan proper. So it was a lot of, it was a very crowded ship. We, again, it was fast enough to go on it's own, we were only in convoy

20:30 for the first day in the Atlantic, the next morning we woke up, we were on our own. So, yeah, unfortunately we came back through the Panama Canal, like to have gone the Suez for a change. Anyway. And when we arrived in Sydney, we were in Sydney Harbour, I remember very clearly, we arrived late afternoon, the sun was going down and we're told there'd be no going ashore that night, we mightn't even go ashore the following day,

21:00 because there had to be medical inspections, which I understand is why they had to have them. But the next morning on a couple of ferries they had these great big placards, "Jap Dodgers Return." The New Zealanders couldn't, they were very forthright, we couldn't understand it. Why? These were army guys that'd been in the British Navy and coming back to New Zealand to

21:30 join the New Zealand Navy somewhere in the Pacific, which they probably did. And yet we had these two ferries with, 'Jap Dodgers Return.' Don't know why.

What were your feelings about that at the time?

Very annoyed. Very, I think everybody on the boat were very, very annoyed. Now whether they did it for fun, I don't know, but it was a funny way of showing their fun. Cause the war was still on in Europe and in the Pacific.

22:00 **Do you know who those people were?**

No idea. Wouldn't have a clue. I came back on the same boat with this friend of mine, Ian Inness, who you're going to interview. Ian was livid about these signs on the side of a boat, but what can you do about it? Do nothing.

I was gonna say, what did you do?

You couldn't do anything. I mean

22:30 people wouldn't own up to it, probably the people on the boat, the passengers on the ferry wouldn't have known, it was probably coming, wouldn't come from Watsons Bay because that was behind the boom on Sydney Harbour, so it must've been one of the closer wharves to Sydney, ah, to Circular Quay. But who knows? So anyway, they got away with it.

Having been in, you know, Bomber Command had a fairly high casualty

23:00 **rate...**

Very high.

what must've that done to your thoughts about your service, you'd just been risking your life for your country and...?

Well that, but just annoyed at these people, they obviously weren't service personnel and for some reason, I can only deduce, that they thought that the war in Europe was easy and fighting the Japs was hard. That's all I can put it down to. Otherwise I couldn't think of any reason why they would put these signs, "Jap Dodgers

23:30 Return." Yeah the casualty rate in the Bomber Command was very high, about two in five finished the tour, it was a very high casualty rate. But plenty more where they came from.

So how long were you back in Australia before you were discharged?

About seven months, yeah about seven months.

Long seven months?

A very long, tedious

24:00 seven months. At time didn't, I think, when you're training the days go so quickly, when you're flying, they go so quickly, your expectations of a tomorrow, everything seems to come quickly to you. But those seven months back in Sydney were boring, absolutely boring. The only good thing about it, I was drawing pay, that was about it. But I couldn't stick it any longer. And

24:30 I remember going into the shipping company where I had worked, and at the time I was thinking of asking to be released from the army, get my discharge. He says, "Well, if you don't we'll apply for it because we're a protected industry..." and which shipping was, "...so if you don't apply we'll apply to get you discharged." So I went ahead and applied.

So that was before the war had finished?

25:00 Yeah, must've been, yeah it must've been, it was still... I really can't remember. Yeah I think it was still on, yeah, it was, but they'd already exploded the first atomic bomb, yeah, something like that.

Do you recall hearing about the atomic bomb?

Yeah, I remember in the newspapers, no, probably came over the radio too. But I remember

25:30 they had trials in the desert in America somewhere in the south of America in the desert, and they had photos of what the mushroom cloud looked like after the bomb exploded, but there wasn't very much detail, obviously they didn't know much about it at all but I remember photos and all the talk about it.

Having been that you served in the sort of Europe campaigns,

26:00 **did Victory in Europe mean more to you than Victory in the Pacific?**

Yes I think it probably does for the simple reason I lost so many of my mates over in Europe. And there's only one of those people who was killed in the Middle East. And nobody I knew was killed in the Pacific, but some were taken POWs,

26:30 but nobody was killed.

Do you remember hearing about Victory in Europe?

Oh yeah, that was in May of '45, yes, very much so. It was going to happen, it was only a matter of when, the way things were going, but oh yeah. And then I was sorry I wasn't there to celebrate. Cause again, the people in Australia were still very concerned about

27:00 the Pacific war and frankly it didn't mean very much to them. You know, Europe, the Victory in Europe, VE Day, it didn't mean very much. And I could understand that too but again it hurt a little bit because okay, we're part of the forces that eventually brought down the German Nazi Army, Air Force, Navy sort of thing, we're part of it. So we

27:30 felt pretty proud of it but oh we're disappointed at the people out here, they didn't sort of recognise VE Day.

Did you have any kind of personal celebration or do anything to mark the event?

Probably did, I can't remember. No I'm sure I would've. Probably with the guys that had also applied for their discharges.

28:00 I can't, I really can't remember that day, to be honest.

How did you go, after you'd been discharged, settling down into civilian life?

Very hard. Very, very hard. After a few months, probably three or four months, I went back to try and study accounting and I just couldn't settle down and I'd be thinking of flying and things that happened. I just found it very, very

28:30 hard, I was very unsettled. This guy you're going to, or people from your organisation meeting next week, Ian Inness, he was the same kettle of fish as I was, he couldn't settle down either. Very, very difficult, but okay, gradually you do. But you meet up then with your friends who have been discharged from the army and we'd meet and we'd have a few beers at a pub, oh probably of a Friday night

29:00 or something like that. I think everyone found it very difficult. Yeah, because when you look at it, in my life, that on and off in 1940 I was in and out of camp, then permanently in a camp from December '41 until the end of, well, say about August, September '45 something around that period,

29:30 and it's a totally different life. And all those years, those four and a bit years, were basically wasted years when you're growing up. I didn't have a twenty-first birthday or anything like that and I guess you miss those sort of things. But anyway, that's water under the bridge now.

But if you could do it all over again, would you do it the same?

I see no reason why I wouldn't, none whatsoever. I think

30:00 if problems arose, like it was then and it was far more serious than, you know, Vietnam and those smaller skirmishes. But I feel that people would, if asked to answer the call, I'm sure they would, I can't see any reason why they wouldn't.

Had you come home to a girlfriend?

Yeah but it didn't work out. You know, while you're away and you're corresponding,

30:30 you're writing letters to one another and that sort of thing, but when you get back reality bites. And I remember my parents coming to me one stage, the trouble was she was a daughter of a very good friend of my mother, this made it a bit more difficult. I remember one day my father came to me and he said, "What are you going to do about Pat? It's not fair. Are you going to continue with Pat or are you going to tell her there that it's all off."

31:00 We weren't engaged or anything like that. So I thought, 'Okay, probably the best thing.' So I met her in town and told her that, 'Okay, sorry, it was all off,' and that was it.

Do you think a lot of blokes went through that as, just as part of that coming home and life being different?

I don't know, I suppose so, I don't know that I was exceptional in any way at all, so maybe they did. Some of them, they had girl

31:30 friends before they went away and like two of them they married shortly... like Rossco I think was still in the services at that stage, and he was married. He was also in the army. And another guy, Don Purdy, he married very shortly after he was discharged. The rest of us were in our group, like freelancers a bit. One of them,

32:00 this guy Ian Inness, when he left to go overseas the family who'd been living next door to him, in Vaucluse in Sydney, they weren't there, they'd moved during the war. And she's a very nice girl, Gwen, and Ian eventually married her and they're very happily married today, living in Sydney. So he married quite early in the piece. I was a late starter,

32:30 and another couple of guys were too. But anyway…

Where were you and what do you recall of the war eventually finishing?

When the war in the Pacific finished, there were really big celebrations in Sydney. And at that stage I was still in the army reserve, I couldn't be discharged from the

33:00 service, I had to remain, all officers had to remain in the army for, I've forgotten how many years, I think it was three or four years, five years, something like that. So I had to stay in the reserve and at that stage... that's right I'd just been discharged and I was up with a couple of other guys in the army and we went to the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba. And the war was announced was all over so they had celebrations in

33:30 Sydney so we caught the train down to Sydney. I still had, I was still in uniform cause I had no civvy clothes I could wear at that stage. And so we went down and Sydney was wild with people dancing in the streets and paper floating out of buildings and all sorts of concerts going on round the city and the Domain in Sydney and so on. That was quite an exciting

34:00 day because that was the end of everything. And then I, we didn't go back to the Carrington that night, I went home, my home in Sydney, and the following day we went back up to Katoomba to resume my discharge leave, that's what it was.

How had it been coming home and seeing your Mum and Dad?

It was very interesting. I had acquired, and I didn't know it, acquired an English accent.

34:30 And I couldn't believe it when I heard my mother, and particularly my mother and two of my aunts who were invited to Bradfield Park in Sydney to meet me officially, that was about three days after we landed in Sydney. And I thought, 'Blimey, the nasal accent of my mother and a couple of my aunts, my father wasn't so bad.'

35:00 But I just couldn't believe it and I, this friend of mine, Ian Inness, was also there, his family, and he made the same comment to me, when I met him a few days later. We had unwittingly acquired some sort of English accents, a little bit 'rather,' and it just so happened. We didn't know.

How do you think that those war years and your wartime service

35:30 **have affected the rest of your life?**

Probably in various ways. One, I think I probably missed the, some of the best years of my life as far as sport was concerned. Secondly, it took me a long time to settle down, a couple of years. I was injured

36:00 while training in Scotland and I've got a pension for it, a disability pension, that's affected me quite a lot now. Certainly this leg is numb permanently now, so that's had an effect on me. I think I might've had

an affect on Barbara, on occasions, I think my temper might've been a bit on the short side. I put it down to

36:30 the discomfort I suffer. And also sometimes you, I wake up during the night and, not flying, but talking to these guys who've, were killed. And, excuse me...

37:00 ...somebody, help me please. Where do you want to start?

Do you want to just start from just what you were saying, you were telling about...?

Yeah, the, I had one very good friend, his name was Alan Astol and he was a partly trained in Canada, and in fact he was an instructor in Canada for twelve, twelve to eighteen months, and then came over to UK, he trained on multi-engine aircraft. And so he formed up a

37:30 crew, flying Lancasters, and he was coming back from a raid, I don't know which one it was, and I'd finished my tour by then. And his aircraft was very badly shot up and he felt that it was no way could he land the aircraft , he'd endanger the people living around the aircraft ['s crash point], he felt he couldn't land it, it would probably, crashed into houses. And so he ordered his crew

38:00 to bail out over England, which they did. And then he turned the aircraft out to sea and crashed it into the English Channel and died with the aircraft. That's sad. I reckon he deserved the VC [Victoria Cross], which he didn't get. But these are the sort of things you think of at times. And it's, the good times we had,

38:30 pre war, they were, if it hadn't happened, he'd have grown up like me and enjoyed life and been married and had children and grandchildren and so on. His life was cut very short. But anyway he wasn't the only one that did those sorts of things, I'm sure of. There's this guy, Middleton, who was the first Australian VC in the army, he did much the same sort of thing.

39:00 **So with everything you've experienced during the war and in the years since, for the purposes of an archive like this, what is it that you'd like young people now and future generations to know?**

I think it's, whether they'll ever see the light of day in the years to come, I don't know, but I think it's something that is available both to people in the army, army and army, no matter where they

39:30 were. I think that's some sort of record that one day will probably be available for people to get on a video and be able to either buy it or rent it, something from the shop at the war memorial at Canberra, I don't know, but I feel that's something probably will happen. There could be one on the

40:00 army, one on the army, one on the army, one dealing with the European theatre of war, some in the Pacific, maybe Vietnam, all these things people forget. The young people today, and I'd say my grandson, or our grandson, who's eighteen and a half roughly, he's just currently at uni. He wanted to go into the army but they found out he was colour blind,

40:30 which he didn't know, so that's the end of service things for him. But when he's down here or up there he's always pestering me, you know, 'Tell me a bit more what it was like flying,' he calls me "Adey," 'What was it like flying, Adey?' And he gives me magazines with, if he sees a Lancaster in them, there's one on the side of my bed now that he brought down, I think the last time but one he was down here. I think it's good for the,

41:00 particularly the people who have come from other countries, now nationalised, they've gone through that ceremony and now Australian citizens and their children are Australian citizens. But I don't think they realised exactly the sacrifices made by Australians in all theatres of war and including the, if you like, the Boer War and the First World War and the Second World War and the skirmishes since, Korea and Vietnam.

41:30 I think they should be made to realise exactly what the Australians did and why the country is where it is today because the sacrifice of so many men and women, nurses in particular, that lost their lives in the various wars. And I think it wouldn't do any harm for these people to be told these films are available and they recommend

42:00 they should have a look at them. Ah...

Tape 10

00:31 **What are your thoughts on Anzac Day?**

I think Anzac Day is a very important day in the Australian calendar. And I think as much publicity could be given to Anzac Day as it could possibly be given. Again, I go back to the people who became migrants in this country, most of whom are now naturalised Australians and their children. I feel that it should be so important that in every day

01:00 at school there should be an Australian flag for the children to know what it stands for, like the Americans do. Anzac Day should be a day that is important in the school calendar and children know what Anzac Day means. I feel very strongly that Anzac Day should be celebrated on the day in which it falls. Not in this case, this years, it's on a Sunday but they're having Monday as a holiday,

01:30 I don't think it's a holiday, I think it's a day of remembrance for the New Zealanders and the Australians who've been killed in all theatres of war. I admire the RSL [Returned and Services League] what they're doing right round Australia, getting groups to go round and talk to school children about the experiences, whatever service they might've been in. Just give them an inkling what it's all about and probably finish off with the words, 'Well are you proud to be an

02:00 Australian?' So Anzac Day to me is really a very special day. Although this year I won't be marching, I'll be with our family up in, north of Brisbane. So, and I think these days, that if you look what's happening now, the number of people who go over to Gallipoli, they're, these are groups of school children, young people in their teens or their early twenties.

02:30 Both, you know, ladies and men go across, and I think it's having a tremendous influence on their feeling of being proud to be an Australian, which I am certainly.

How do you commemorate Anzac Day?

How do I? I must admit I've been probably a bit lazy. I did march last year. If I'd been here I'd have either gone to the dawn service or marched. I won't be here so I won't be doing either.

03:00 In past years in Sydney I used to go to the Anzac Day march, catch up with a lot of guys I knew. But my only trouble was that I couldn't march with the squadron because I wasn't with any of the Australian squadrons that marched in Sydney so you tend to lose interest. But I always caught up with guys, and we'd have a few beers and maybe have lunch and that sort of thing.

03:30 I gave up marching in Sydney for that reason, I didn't know, I marched with the Desert Rats, that was in the army, I marched with a army contingent, it just wasn't the same. But now I'm a lot older and wiser, I'll march with anybody.

As you've pointed out, the numbers of guys that've served in World War II are getting less, what are your feelings on younger generations of descendants marching with, you know, grandparents' medals?

I'm all for it.

04:00 I think that it's showing their gratitude of what their father or their grandfather did. I think it gives them a pride, I keep going back to being an Australian, and what Australia has done and how good this country is to live in. I feel that those who, parents have migrated and their children are born here but they probably

04:30 more towards the country of where their parents were born, I think that's changing with the kids at school, with people being addressed by ex-service personnel. And I would imagine that all this other country business, will gradually disappear and that we'll be true dinky di Australians. That's just my feeling now, that may not happen, but I hope it does happen.

Are you a member of the RSL?

Yes. I'm a life member of the

05:00 RAAF Association and a member of the RSL and I'm also a welfare officer with the RSL. So I help people who are less fortunate than I am.

Would you say that you feel you've been well looked after?

In what way?

In terms of, you know, like your disability pension and generally by Vet Affairs?

Initially the, I applied for a

05:30 disability pension and that was shortly after I was married in 1954. I was having back problems then. And so I applied, and I feel sorry now for the people who are interviewing people, cause honestly there were a lot of bludgers, people claiming something they had no right to claim, and you couldn't tell the sheep from the lamb. And they knocked it back, so I thought,

06:00 'Oh I can't be bothered.' Til event, when I was getting treatment for my back from our local doctor he said, "You know, this is ridiculous, you've got to re-apply." So I did, and he gave a very lengthy resume as to why this, how this injury was caused. And that got knocked back so he said, "You've got to appeal." I appealed and that got knocked back, so I thought, 'I can't be, couldn't be bothered.'

06:30 And it wasn't til about, what, ten years ago, before we were in Sydney, moved up here, a local doctor said, "You're crazy, you just got to apply." So this time I went to the Air Force Association, and I had become a life member of it. And they said, "You are crazy, you should've been here years ago," and I gave them the reason why I hadn't. So they lodged an application, and which was accepted

07:00 by the DVA [Department of Veterans Affairs]. I had several increases by application to DVA and coming up here from Sydney they said, “You’ve got to go to the RSL, not to the Air Force Association, they’re not very strong up here.” So I went and saw them here and I’m now on a hundred percent disability pension. And I’m going to, it’s causing me

07:30 more problems now, it’s getting, not better but getting worse. So shortly I’m going to make an application again to have it reviewed and have it increased. If you don’t do it, okay, you don’t get any thanks. They might knock it back, I don't know, but I think they’ll accept it. But you won’t get any thanks, I say to these people, I visit as a welfare officer, ‘If you don’t apply for these things which you’re entitled to, you’re not going to get a letter from the Prime Minister or the Leader of

08:00 the Opposition, whoever it may be, to say thank you for not applying. Apply for it. If you haven’t got this in your house, why haven’t you?’ So, that’s what I’m doing now, probably is the pot calling the kettle black, I don't know.

Being that the specifics of your job were protected by secrecy for a good, more than twenty years after the war?

Well it was a protected

08:30 industry, the shipping industry is protected right through the war.

Oh no, no, I mean the, by the secrecy of the jamming work that you were doing.

Oh okay, right, okay yeah.

Being that that was under a veil of secrecy, you couldn’t talk about it at all until the late ‘50’s was it?

No. 1956 it was released, and mainly because they kept it secret, they didn’t know whether they’d have to use it again, because Russia wasn’t very friendly at that stage. And then whatever happened in 1956 or thereabouts,

09:00 they decided they wouldn’t be needing it, so it was then released, and then they’re able to write books about it. And some of the books I’ve read are so wrong, talk about us talking to the Germans and you couldn’t talk, but we’re supposed to have been talking. They talk about we never flew above nine and a half thousand feet, oh once or twice we did, but mainly it was around about twenty-two, twenty-four thousand, they’re so wrong some of these books.

Are there

09:30 **any other things that they’ve got wrong, that you recall?**

Well certainly with some of the targets that we went to. There’s a book written purely on the Nuremberg raid and it was written by a very respected author, aviation historical author, and he’s so wrong in so many

10:00 things he’s saying in the book. I even wrote to the publishers in England and pointed out all the mistakes that were in the book. I never got an acknowledgement. So either they didn’t get the letter or they couldn’t be bothered replying. Don’t know.

In those, say from ‘45 through to ‘56 when you were legally allowed to speak about it, was it difficult

10:30 **during that time to not be able to tell anyone?**

I just gave my parents and my brother, I guess, the faintest idea of what I was doing, but, and I probably told Barbara what I was doing, I can’t remember now. It, in my opinion, by 1956 the Russians

11:00 would’ve known about it, the Germans I think at the end of the war knew about it, from aircraft that crashed. But the, this, the equipment was, they had a detonator attached to them, so if you landed in the aircraft, you had to blow it up, soon as you got out, you had to set the fuse and blow it up. Some of them mightn’t have done that and the Germans might’ve been able to resurrect it, I don't know. But I’m pretty sure they were found out somehow.

11:30 **Have you spoken about it with friends or family?**

Oh yeah, the, I’ve done more so in Sydney, quite a number of lectures, so I’ve been asked to go to, well up here to the Probus meeting, I was asked to talk about it. The museum at Bankstown in Sydney, to go and talk to them about it. At the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. I’ve talked to other groups, at the army

12:00 groups, to go and talk about it. As I said earlier to you, most of them I spoke to knew nothing about it.

You mentioned before, off tape, that some of your flying gear is at a museum in Bankstown?

Yes, at Bankstown, yes.

Do you want to, just so we get it on tape, tell us what's out there?

I would have somewhere the curator, his name, I can get back to you and give it to you, I'm not sure where it is. Yes my army uniform,

12:30 my flying, well the inner flying suit which is the heated one, my heated gloves and my heated shoes. That's about all. The rest I wasn't allowed to take and bring back from England.

So looking back on it all now, with the value of hindsight, what is it that you're most proud of?

Oh, I guess I was part of the scene

13:00 that, I guess what happened in Europe had some detrimental effect on the Japanese, I don't know what way. But I got a feeling somewhere that every guy who was, no matter what service it happened to be, would've had some contribution to the cessation of war in Europe and in the Pacific. That's probably the proudest thing that I can think of that I was a very small part of it.

13:30 **Did you consider your actions to be brave?**

No. No, you did what you thought you had to do. I'll be honest. I don't think anyone was, the only ones who were brave were like my friend who flew the Channel and crashed into the, flew his aircraft into the Channel, those sort of guys were brave, very brave. No, I wasn't. I did a job.

Do you have any final message for the archive?

14:00 I'd like to congratulate them on what they're doing, I think it's a very, very worthwhile project. I would like to think maybe down the track in a year or two's time, and I still aim to be alive then, if I can get some sort of abbreviated or abridged copy of what has been done today. Now I don't expect, it's taken now around about five hours or something, I don't expect anything that length but any, something in abridged form I'd be happy to have,

14:30 and also to be able to show my grandson, or our grandson and also my son. So I don't think... I've got a tape in that radiogram, I don't think he's ever heard, I made in 1984, so he would've been just about married at that time. And that is much shorter, it's only thirty minutes, it's all about really flying.

15:00 And that was in there, as I understood at the time from the, what, the archives in Canberra, but I don't know. Anyway I've got it down there somewhere and I've got a copy of it here. But I'd very much like to get a copy if I could of what's transpired during the day, but in abridged form.

I think that's it, thank you for your time.

Okay, well thank you for coming.

INTERVEIW ENDS