Australians at War Film Archive

Frank Beadle - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 27th April 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1927

Tape 1

00:36 **Ok Frank let's talk about your life overview, we'll start with your full name and when you were born?**

Will I start?

Yeah, start now.

My name is Francis Thomas Beadle. I was born at Croydon, north Queensland on the 12th of April, 1916. There's

01:00 six in the family, four boys and two girls. And Dad was killed fighting a bushfire outside the Normanton on the 8th of November, 1919. And it was the Depression years and Mum looked after all of us and one lubra [Aboriginal woman] came along and said, "I'll look after the kids missy." And Mum said, "Righto." And when we asked her her name she said

01:30 her name was Edie the same as Mum's. Well that lubra looked after us and we left Croydon on Paddy's Day [Saint Patrick's Day] 1929 to go to Brisbane. Mum thought us lads would have a better chance of a job in Brisbane. On the 4th of January 1930 Mum passed away and the four youngest went to Cairns to relations and I went to Home Hill

02:00 to relations there and the other lad, the eldest lad went to Boatman's Station, Morven. When I was in Home Hill I went to school up river at Home Hill, Osborne School and I sat for a scholarship and I got a little over eighty-six percent of a pass and I wanted to go to high school to be an architect or a draftsman and the guardian said, "No, you'll go out to work." So being

02:30 the Depression years there was hardly any work. I might get a couple of weeks in planting time and a little bit in cane cutting time. Anyway early in 1931 a chap came on the farm with a camp oven and I asked him if he wanted to sell it. I said, "How much?" He said, "Five bob." In other words five shillings. So I bought the camp oven and I

03:00 went back bacheloring that was on my fifteenth birthday. I didn't have much at all and battled along, 1934 no work, no money. I was living off the land on bandicoot and wallaby tail and now and again speared barramundi. And then when war broke out I was called into the 31st Battalion, Don Company, we were stationed at the showgrounds in Townsville. My regimental number was three

03:30 double four eight six. And in '42 they released me to go cane cutting as cane cutters were short and when I came back they sent me to do work at the Garbutt aerodrome and then up to Cairns on an airstrip and then on the road between Cairns and Kuranda. They built that road because they were frightened that the Japs [Japanese] would bomb the Gillies side-road [Gillies Highway], the only road up to the

04:00 [Atherton] Tablelands. When I was about halfway up, where the lookout is at the present day, the CCC [Civil Construction Corps], the 7th Construction Corps came into being, they wanted to give me a number and send me up to Portland Road's nine range where the Japs were bombing. I shot through and I joined the air force on the fifth of the sixth, '43. I done my initial training at Sandgate and then I was posted to Canberra to do my basic training there.

04:30 From there I was posted to Ascot Vale Melbourne to be trained as a flight mechanic. When I finished that I was posted to Bundaberg. I was working on the Avro Ansons and I was placed with the 2E which is one step higher than the flight mechanic and we were assembling Cheetah aeroplane engines, installing them, putting them in the Avro Anson and when everything was all

05:00 tuned up synchronised I used to go up on all the test flights. Then they sent a couple of Ansons down to Maryborough and I was posted there to look after them for a while. They posted me back to Bundaberg after about four months then early in 1945 I was posted to 93 Beaufighter Squadron former other Kingaroy on the 22nd of January,

05:30 1945. While I was on leave I went down to Brisbane and my fiancé, Jean Barclay was there with her mother. I told Jean that I was posted to a squadron so she went and we'll get married before I went overseas and I finished up then doing the course at Kingaroy. And when we were

06:00 called on parade the CO [Commanding Officer], Squadron Leader Keith Gulliver picked me out as his mechanic to be on his plane. About the middle of April three Beaufighters were sent to Oakey to escort twenty-one Spitfires up to Morotai. We had a very eventful trip up, in fact we had an incident nearly at every place we landed to. When we left Morotai, that's New Guinea the flight ought to have been on

06:30 the north coast, two Spitfires got into a spin over the rangers, one pulled out and the other poor chap went in and I don't know if they ever got him it was a very wild country. Then the plane I was in, we were taking off from Middleburg Island, we blew a tyre on the metal strip and we flew for one and a half hours to Morotai and then we belly landed. The pilot coming in his name was Ken

07:00 Shirley, came in a little bit steep and a little bit fast and when he hit I was thrown up against the cartridge box that runs the full length inside the fuselage. It was about two foot wide and about two foot high and I hit the sharp edge with my right side but I was in so much of a hurry to get out of the plane I thought it would go up in flames. Anyway the plane was a write-off,

07:30 it never flew again. And I'll extend a bit further now, in 19, in 2001 I had to have the right knee fully replaced. I had a chest X-ray for the anaesthetist. When he looked at it he said, "When did this happen?" I said, "What doctor?" He said, "Have a look." I've had four broken ribs and a fracture to the spine and they were all joined together again

08:00 and lumps on them. I was a bit sore at the time but I didn't realise I had that much damage done. That was on the 1st of May, 1945. I stayed there with six officers until the rest of the squadron came up and we left Morotai by convoy of forty-four boats for the invasion of Labuan Island, Borneo. I was on the ten thousand tonne Liberty boat, the

08:30 Simon Bamburger and it was a steel boat made by the Americans early in the war to cater for transport for personnel. There were no portholes or anything on it. The latrines and the kitchen were on the top deck, we ate all on the top deck, everyone got dysentery. We were about six days, on the 10th of June, '45

09:00 a Sunday morning we arrived at Labuan Island, we stood off shore and the army bombarded the foreshore in Victoria town and a lot of us lads were up on the top deck watching the invasion. The army, the 9th Divvy [Division] went in about quarter past ten, and to see the boys go in, it was war but to see them go in barge after barge it was something I'll

09:30 never forget. When that was going on a Jap plane was shot down and it fell in the water between our boat and the shore. When that happened the captain ordered us all down below, he closed the hatch on us, you couldn't see your hand in front of you. And there I am sitting there wondering at that particular time the Japs were flying their planes into the ships and I thought if that happened or a bomb hit us,

10:00 there was around a thousand odd men on the boat, none of us would have got off this. When everything was alright and the army had pushed the Japanese back as far as the [aero] drome and a lot of them went to one retreat they had prepared and we called that the pontit[?]. Then when everything was quiet we went ashore the next day on the 11th of June, a working party

10:30 and we were to put up tents etcetera. WO [Warrant Officer] Beattie called us on parade, he told us what he was going to do and he said, "Has anyone got anything to volunteer for?" I put my hand up. He said, "What do you want to do flight?" I said, "Dig the latrines." He said, "You're being mad. You don't volunteer for that job." I said, "If you were like me you would." He said, "Righto, do you know anything about timbering up?" I said, "I come

11:00 from the goldmining town." He said, "Right." I was in charge. When that was completed we were on a twelve hour shift, six hours on the boats out in the bay and loading them, six hours on the beachhead and loading the docks, the sea land gun vessels as we came ashore. I came ashore at two o'clock in the morning; it was a pitch dark night. I was enjoying

11:30 a cup of tea at the Salvation Army tent when all hell broke lose. Approximately one hundred suicidal Japs had left the pontit at midnight and came through the swamp and hit the beach-head and I was in the middle of it, no rifle, no bayonet, nothing. As soon as they struck all lights were put out, there was machine-gun fire, rifle gunfire

12:00 and hand grenades going off all around me. I landed a piece of shrapnel above the left knee. When that happened I got down lower to the ground, I thought any missiles would go over the top. And when I was down there a bullet hit a carburettor of a truck and it burst into flames for a few seconds. When it did it lit up the countryside. A Jap was

12:30 standing only a few feet from me. I was thankful he didn't have a revolver, he made one swing at me with his sword and he missed. At that time the flame went out again, it was pitch dark, I turned and I was made it for the water, I was going to get out into the sea, I was safer there. And I was moving fairly fast and I fell at full force into a trench. I injured both knees and the back

13:00 and I just laid there. For approximately five hours the shooting went on and screaming and yelling going on all around me. And when everything was quite, there was no more shooting or yelling I got out and I was standing there and to see these dead bodies around was terrible. The army sergeant drove up in the jeep with a private and he said, “Will you give my man a hand?”

13:30 I said, “Doing what Sarge?” “Throwing the dead Japs up on the back of the jeep.” There was a plane work there where they used to put their ticket maids. I waddled around the best I could, throwing them up. Some of them had hand grenades strapped to their bodies, they were blowing themselves up and they were in a mess. After a while the knee started to give me trouble. I told the sarge I couldn’t carry on. He said, “Well there’s

14:00 enough spectators around now I could get a dozen or so.” So I went back to my tent. My tent mate Ken Baird from Brisbane was the only one in the tent with me. As soon as I walked in he said, “You look damn terrible Beadle.” He said, “What’s wrong?” I said, “Oh nothing.” He said, “Were you up in the beachhead this morning?” I said, “I was in the thick of it.” He said, “Have a smoke.” I said, “I don’t smoke.” He said, “Come on.”

14:30 So I had a cigarette. I said, “I don’t know if it done any good or not.” I bought another few packets of Capstan cigarettes. I think I was the best chain-smoker on the island for a while. Anyway when the engineers, the army engineers had repaired the airstrip of all bomb craters and everything and our planes were coming in we were kept busy keeping the planes flying. They were

15:00 bombing Kuching and other places around Sarawak. When war finished in August ’45 the commanding officer, Squadron Leader Keith Gulliver decided to go to Sidon for a week. Being his mechanic I naturally went with him, there were a couple of LAC’s [Leading aircraftsmen], the navigator, Gulliver and myself. We had a wonderful week in Sidon. I met a French family and made

15:30 friends with them and they invited me out to their place to have the evening meal which consisted mainly of buffalo meat. Then on the 9th of December, ’45 Squadron Leader Gulliver came to my tent, we were talking about our wives and his two little boys, the youngest one was only a baby in a pram and about the prospect of being home for Christmas

16:00 when he said, “I’m going to Sidon in the morning.” I said, “Oh Keith, I just wrote home to Jean and told her I’m not flying to Sidon or flying anymore until I come home.” He said, “Good, there’s a couple that want to come with me.” I asked him what time was he leaving. He said, “Eight o’clock.” I got down to the strip early, serviced the plane, I was up in the

16:30 cockpit, I heard the motors running and I tested the motors, cut the motors and two officers came by. They stopped under the starboard main plane, the starboard wing. I could hear every word they said. One said to the other, “Did we have a party last night. It was terrific, the best party you’ve had and ever been too. All the nurses were there.” He said, “I only wish we

17:00 could have one every night in the week.” The other chap said, “Weren’t some of the lads full. Gee, they were full, they were falling over everywhere.” And he raved on about that. When they left I thought for a while, I knew that Squadron Leader Gulliver enjoyed a drink but I knew he wouldn’t be drinking because he had to fly over two and a half hours over water to Sidon. And

17:30 of course I thought well in case he was I’ll make the plane unserviceable. I got down, I took out the two oil filters and put them on a piece of canvas under the plane and went up to the engineer, Ernie [Earnest] Childs and asked him for the logbook on A8184 [plane number]. He said, “What do you want that for Frank?” I said, “I’m US-ing a kite Ernie.”[making it unserviceable] He said, “What?” I said, “I’m

18:00 US-ing a kite.” He said, “I just heard you running that up, it was perfect.” I had to make some excuse, I said the oil pressure was no good, so I made the plane unserviceable, I went back. Well he had to tell Gulliver that his plane was unserviceable, he must have went straight away because I’d only been back at the plane a short while sitting underneath with the filters in front of me when another

18:30 officer walked up. And I didn’t look up at him, I just looked at him from under the brim of the hat, he stopped a few feet from me and the first words he said were, “Are you worried about Squadron Leader Gulliver?” I didn’t answer him but I thought he’s awake up to why I made the plane unserviceable. He said, “He’s okay, I just left him. He’s telling me all about Sidon and what the place

19:00 looked like and the hotel you were in with the sweeping roofs and everything. And I’m looking forward to seeing it and I’ll be flying with him.” The next breath he said, “I’m the doctor.” And he turned and walked away. When he did I thought, “Well if he’s the doctor and he’s just left Keith he must be okay.” So I put the filters back, made the plane serviceable, went up and signed it off.

19:30 And then just before eight o’clock my two corporals came along that was with us before, Donny Nash and Shortie Garret and they had met some Pom [British] sailors on the previous trip. They went up the river and got some lovely silk. And I said to Don, “You going with the Poms again Don?” He said, “Yes Frank.” I said, “Go up the river after silk?” He said, “There’s some lovely sheilas

20:00 up there.” I said, “You be careful Don, you don’t get burned.” And he laughed; I can still hear that laugh. Then Donny [Donald] Seekamp, the navigator came.

20:30 Is that okay?

Yeah that's okay. I'll just pause for a second there. Sorry Frank.

Right.

Yeah.

As I said Donny Seekamp came along the navigator, passed the time of day and then went up. Then the group captain, the doctor, the army officer walked up. They stopped talking for a while and the army officer left, another two went up, then

21:00 Squadron Leader Keith Gulliver came along just on eight o'clock. He had one foot on the bottom rung of the ladder ready to climb up, he turned to me and he said, "How's the plane Frank, did you have some trouble with it?" I said, "Yes Keith, the oil pressure was no good." I said, "It's okay now." I said, "Have a good trip, I only wish I was going with you." And

21:30 he didn't have any beer, no liquor, nothing on him at all he was just the same as he left me at seven-thirty the night before. He got up into the plane and I went to the starboard side, I was watching him through the starboard window and he checked his instruments and he must have looked and seen me and he put his hand up. I gave him the thumbs up to let him know everything was clear and he started

22:00 to taxi to the end of the runway. When he did and I turned around and there were two chaps in a jeep. I asked them if they were going to watch the take off and they said "Yes." So I jumped in the jeep and we got half way down the airstrip to watch the take off. Gulliver had done his usual check on the end and he started to roll off and the Beaufighter it's notorious for swinging

22:30 on take-off. You have to be very careful with it. He hadn't gone too far when he swung to starboard. He straightened it up, he got down a bit further and it swung to port, he came back again, by then he was down past us, he must have had airspeed up and he started to take off. He was only off the ground a few feet when his starboard wing dipped down and started making the starboard

23:00 which is what they generally do, when he hit two Mustang fighters. He shot into the air a few feet, burst into flames, the end of the tail fell off and a gentle flame came out and with it came a flying helmet which I think belonged to Donny Seekamp. When the plane fell to the ground it was still burning and Squadron Leader Gulliver walked through

23:30 on the left hand side. We shot down to him in the jeep. I think I must have leapt in a flying leap, I was first to him. He had no hair on him and I won't describe exactly what he looked like, it was terrible. I grabbed him by the left shoulder to put him in the jeep and his uniform crumbled to dust and he was muffling all the time,

24:00 "Get the others. Get the others." I think I went into shock then. I don't know who put him in the jeep or who took him to hospital and I think I shook all day and all night. He passed away at eleven o'clock that night. Next day when we buried him wrapped in canvas the odour of the bodies was terrible. They told me that a salute was fired over the graves, I don't even remember

24:30 that so I think I was still in shock. And of course the squadron was in mourning for a fair while. It was terrible to see six young blokes burnt to death. Then Curtin, Flying Officer Curtin was put in charge, two days after they came to me, Curtin and Ernie Childs, they said, "We're going to give you corporal stripes

25:00 Frank." I didn't know at the time I could accept them. I said, "I'm only a flight mechanic." All they wanted to know then was how did I get on the plane as Gulliver's mechanic. They more or less accused me of putting myself in that position. Anyway just before Christmas most of the squadron started to disband, some of the boys went to other

25:30 units and a lot of them came home for Christmas. I was left there with two officers to wait for the new commanding officer to come up. Squadron Leader Cyril Stark arrived there on the 4th of January of 1946. When we met him he said, "I'm staying for a week or so." He asked me if I was married and I said, "Yes." He said, "Where's you wife?" I said, "Bundaberg." He said, "I'll leave you off there

26:00 on the way home." And I couldn't thank him enough, I thought, "Gee that would be wonderful". I was only married four days when I went into camp to go overseas and I thought, "Gee, twelves months it will be wonderful." We left Labuan Island about the middle of January. And I was in the plane with him standing behind him, we were half way over Borneo and the starboard motor started running very rough, and I mean rough. The old plane was

26:30 vibrating so much, I couldn't stand up in it and the way it was I thought, any minute the wings would fall off. Anyway the throttled it back to idling and the starboard wing was still waving to them in the distance. We turned north to Tarawa, when we arrived there he flew the loop to the short narrow strip with the sea on one side, swamp on the other, three or four planes with their noses in the

27:00 swamp where they ran off the strip, so he decided against landing there. He turned for Morotai, we flew over possibly seven hundred miles of water on one motor. I'm sorry.

That's ok Frank. Are you ok to continue?

27:30 I didn't have Mae West the life jacket with me, I said a prayer on that trip. When we were a little way of course I asked him how is the oil pressure. He said, "It's twice as high as it should be." So I asked him if any there was any chance they had left the logbook in the plane, seeing we were disbanded. So he said, "Yes, it's here." He gave it to me and when I checked it, I

28:00 seen where two mechanics had installed a brand new starboard motor and I thought, "Well why is it playing up so much?" So I worked it out then where the trouble was. When we got along a bit further he said, "I'm going to feather the motor." In other words stop it. I said, "No Sir, keep it going." I said, "I think I know where the trouble is, I want to make sure." So when

28:30 we were approaching Morotai I could detect a different beat in the motor. I asked him again how was the oil pressure and he said, "It's fallen." And I said, "Good." I said, "That's ok now." I said, "I know where the trouble is." So when we landed I took the oil filters off and they were full of sludge. When I showed it to him he said, "You can make a report on that LAC [leading aircraftsman]." I said, "No Sir, I don't make reports, that's up to you."

29:00 All he done was turn on his heel and off he went. Well I cleaned the filters out and everything, filled the petrol up and checked the oil and I ran the motor up fifteen hundred revs for about an hour. Then I cleaned the filters again and I kept on that until the filters were clean. Then I serviced the plane. And I don't know where I slept, whether I slept up in the cockpit or whether I was on the

29:30 ground in the morning but next morning I didn't have any breakfast and we left for Cape York, Higgins Field. And on the way we had to fly around an air spout, very much similar to a water spout, you can see the black funnel going up into the sky miles ahead. When we left Cape York the following day I

30:00 thought I would see Jean in two hours and when I checked the sun and I seen we were flying more or less southwest. So I crawled through the fuselage to the navigator and I asked where were we going. And he said, "Charleville." So my opinion of Squadron Leader Stark dropped a bit further. Five and a quarter hours flying time to Charleville when we reached there we hit a severe dust storm. You couldn't

30:30 see the drome, you couldn't see the town. We circled and circles and then he said, "I've got to put her down." He said, "I'm running out of juice." First little opening he seen in the dust cloud down he went, we landed, we ran the length of the strip, we turned around to taxi back, we didn't make it we ran out of petrol. The next day we went to Narromine. When we were at

31:00 Narromine for a few weeks our squadron rebuilt, we were escorting the Mustang fighters up to Japan for the occupation. When we were ready to leave he called us on parade, gave us a lecture and I got the shock of my life. He called for volunteers for Japan, I couldn't believe my ears. All the new recruits stepped forward, I stepped backwards. He spotted me. We were dismissed. I went

31:30 back to where I was working in the tool shed next minute he came storming in. The air was black and blue, the best swearing ever I'd heard from a commanding officer and I wouldn't repeat what he called me but I had to just stand there and take it. I was itching to hit him any minutes but couldn't do it. I knew he wanted me to because he wanted to put me on a charge for sure. Anyway I asked him when he stopped, "When would I be posted?" He said,

32:00 "In two days." It was up to Amberley on strength. I was at Amberley for three weeks, my knee started giving me trouble every time I sat on my haunches the right knee especially, I had to wobble it around a bit to get it in position to stand up. So I went on sick parade and I thought I'd show the doctor what happened and the blooming knee wouldn't go back in. So I finished up on a stretcher down at Greenslopes. My right knee was operated on by

32:30 Colonel Nean. Then I was listed to go before three doctors. When my name was called at the door one of them said, "We don't want to see you." So I done about turn, I went and got my discharge, went up to Bundaberg, decided to take Jean up to Cairns to meet the rest of the family, brothers and sisters whom she had never met. When we got to Cairns

33:00 I went paralysed down one side for three months. I lost three and a half stone in weight. I didn't work for twelve months and I was in a bad way. And then at the end of September that year I got word from Repat [Department of Repatriation] that the pension was granted on the right knee and disallowed on the left knee and back and that I could appeal. I didn't appeal. I used

33:30 to leave the bed of a night time in one leap looking for the Japs. Poor Jeannie must have had a hell of a fight nearly every night. I still have trouble at night-time, especially Anzac Day and that whenever I talk about it. I lay for hours thinking about the six that got burned to death. And anyway after a while - let me finish –

34:00 and then my usual life came in then after that.

Great. Alright, that's our overview done. So we'll go right back to the beginning and we'll explore some of your early life Frank. You did a great job mate on doing the overview. So I'll start with a question like, do you have any memories of your father?

No, I don't remember Dad except

34:30 Mum and Dad worked at the general hospital in Croydon. And he was wardsman and Mum was chief cook. He was getting eight pounds a month wages, Mum was getting four pound a month wages. And when Mum resigned the new lady put in, they jumped their wages up to eight pound a month. Well I don't know why Dad

35:00 left there because the doctor he used to go on and drink a lot of rum and go on the bender. And Dad used to examine the patients, diagnose what they had, mixed the medicine and all you know. But he left there to work on the cattle station and I still don't know why. But I don't quite remember Dad at all. But he was on the station when he was killed. He

35:30 jumped in the, I don't know what it was, in the backboard or something and he got thrown out and internal injuries and they had to go from sixty miles from Normanton to him with the doctor and they took him back to Normanton on a backboard and being rough roads shook him up. He didn't last but Mum…

What exactly happened to him?

Well there was a bushfire and he went to fight the

36:00 fire and of course this accident happened and he was killed.

And what kind of injuries did he have, do you know? What kind of injuries did he have?

Internal injuries he had. And then Mum had to look after us then.

What was she like, what was your mother like?

Oh she was good. We used to, as

36:30 kids we used to get up early. We had about two hundred head of goats and we lived on goat milk and we lived on goats. We would sell them. If we bought any meat from the butcher, if ever I went to the butcher he used to say, "What side of the meat do you want today Frank, silverside or topside?" There were only two sides as far as I was concerned. Anyway we used to get mangoes and everything.

37:00 There were Chinese gardens all around Croydon in the hay day when the gold mining was on and they were still around the area but the Chinese had left. And there were plenty of fruit trees around and we used to go out with the goat and cart and get mangoes. Then we used to get wild gooseberries, big round tub full of those and make jam. We used to make our own

37:30 kerosene soap, that's the only soap we'd use. Mum made all of our own bread and then on Good Friday she'd be up all night cooking buns on a little wood stove and I'd be sitting in the corner of the room supposed to be keeping her company but half the time I was asleep by ten. And then we used to supply Croydon with hot

38:00 cross buns on Good Friday and all of us kids would be out delivering them on Good Friday morning. Instead of the dozen it used to be thirteen for a shilling in those days. Mum used to sweep the school out and us kids used to go there and stay at school in Croydon and then come home with her. Then Christmas Eve night, well we didn't have any

38:30 money, are you recording it?

Yeah, yeah.

We didn't have any money and we used to go up town and we used to look at all the shops with all the toys in and Mum used to buy us a penny packet of sandcrackers. I think they call them throwdowns now. And then when we were coming home us kids, six of us, used to get around her and form a ring and torment Mum. When

39:00 we got as far as the house, next door which was a fair way away there was a road between our place and the next place, as soon as we'd turn the corner our old piano would be going, there would be a sing song on. And the room out the back was the full width of the house, they used to have tables set with lollies and cakes and ham and everything on it and there would be a sing-song there Christmas Eve night until midnight. And when they left

39:30 Mum used to sit on the steps going down to the laundry, there was three steps going down and she'd have a little cry and us kids would be all around her. And I realised later on why the people of Croydon was doing it. After Dad left there was enough food for us kids for about two or three weeks after and we used to look forward to Christmas Eve night I can tell you. It was wonderful. But that was the way Croydon was, there was

40:00 only one hundred and thirty five of the population there then.

We'll just have to pause there because we're at the end of the tape.

Tape 2

00:37 **Just describe for me what your house was like in Croydon?**

The house in Croydon. Well the first house we had in Croydon was corrugated iron and it was on the road up to the hospital. There were only three wooden homes in

01:00 Croydon on account of the white-ants. And the chap by the name of Greg was leaving Croydon and he had one wooden home there so Mum bought it, thirty odd pounds I think it was in those days. And there was a front veranda and one front room and a bedroom. Then there was long room the width of the

01:30 house, then the kitchen was off a bit, then three flight of stairs down into the laundry. And all of us kids, all the boys four of us used to sleep on one bed on the front veranda and the two girls were with Mum in the main bedroom. We had a piano there and a chandelier, it was a lovely old chandelier that was in it. I learned the piano until I was about thirteen until we left Croydon and I could play any dance tune.

02:00 And whenever I would play the tune a couple of times Mum could sit down and play it. She could play by ear, she was very good. And the old piano, I don't know if it's still the one in the council hall in Croydon at the present day but when I went back with Jean in 1974, the first time since 1929. And we camped,

02:30 we went in and we pulled in to the council chambers and we asked the chap there where we could pitch a tent. He said, "Over on the reserve." I said "Where's the reserve?" And he told me. "Oh", I said, "I know where that is". He said, "Why, have you been here before?" I said, "I went to school here." He said, "You'll know more about the place then I do." So we pitched the tent on the reserve, there was no hot or cold water

03:00 it was all cold water. And that night in the town hall was a mannequin parade. All the clothes I think came from Cairns and the Aborigine girls and all that were all models and that. And they had a spread after. And the apple tarts on some of the biggest enamel plates that Jean and a lady that was with us had ever seen. They got the shock of their lives the size of the plates you know.

03:30 Then the next day was kids' sports at the racecourse. It was all barrow sheds and a lot of wood stoves and all pies piled up on the wood stove. And all the kids from Forsyth, Gilbert River, Georgetown, Croydon, they all run and it put me in mind of our early days when we used to have the school sports there. And…

Well tell me about those

04:00 **early days with the school sports?**

Well we used to do a lot of racing. I could run, I was a long distance runner, I was no good over short distance I think the legs were too short anyway. We used to compete against all the schools around the area and then apart from that like the kids we used to do the maypole and everything like that at the school and enjoy ourselves.

04:30 But I used to stutter. No-one could understand me until I was about nine years of age and I think I was the best little fighter around the place because they used to mimic me and I used to be into them. I used to be fighting every afternoon, down to the ironbark trees where we used to fight, I'd be the main one every afternoon. Anyway every school I went to after that

05:00 I used to always ask the head teacher who pulled me up and let me start all over again. The last school I went to at Osborne, Bill Gordon was the head teacher and I asked him to do that, he said, "You're the first lad to ask me to ever do that." So we were on lunch break, when we got up on the blackboard was 'Swim swan swim. Well swam swan'. And he started at the top of

05:30 the class and he said, "Will you read what's on the blackboard?" And they all just said the words. I thought well he's looking for something. When it came to me I said, "Swim, swan, swim. Well swam swan." He just shook his head, he said, "You're not the bloke I've got to chastise. I've got to teach the others." So that's the way it went. And then late in 1970's I was in Townsville with Aunty Allie and one of my first school

06:00 teachers, Miss Kessell lived only a couple of streets away she told me and I said, "Well I'm going to see her." And Allie said, "Well, when you knock on the door tell her who you are, she's blind." So when I knocked on the door the radio was going. She turned it off and I could hear this pitter patter coming up the hallway with the walking stick. When she got to the door

06:30 she said, "Who's there?" I said, "Frank Beadle." She said, "Who?" I said, "Frank Beadle from Croydon Miss Kessell." She couldn't open the door quick enough. When she did my heart missed a beat, she was so small and frail. I grabbed her picked her up and kissed her. She said, "Put me down. Put me down." Anyway I put her down and when we were talking she kept on saying, "I can't get over it."

07:00 At last I said, "What is it you can't get over Miss Kessell?" She said, "You Frank. Every time the inspector came and he asked a question, your hand used to go up and you'd answer and he'd look at me

and I'd say whatever he said would be right." She said, "Nobody could understand you and here you are here, you're talking to me as though nothing had ever happened." And I said, "Well I made up for lost time haven't I."

What was your stutter like,

07:30 **what sort of?**

Well when it first started a Chinaman in Croydon he said the tissue under the tongue wouldn't let the tongue reach the roof of the mouth and the Chinese bloke wanted to cut that little tissue underneath and Mum wouldn't let him. But he said, "That's what's causing it misses." But Mum wouldn't let him.

What sort of words would you make mistakes on?

Oh

08:00 a lot of words I'd stutter all the time. I was bad. I can't remember what I used to say it's so many years ago you know. Anyone in Croydon that's later in life seen me they can't believe the way it's changed altogether.

Could your mother and brothers and sisters understand you?

They could always understand me. Oh yes, they knew what I was talking about.

08:30 **And you said that it made you a good fighter.**

Oh yes.

What sort of ways would other kids pick on you?

Only mock me you know. Mock me when I was stuttering and that. Of course I was only small but I could fight. If my brothers got into a fight with anyone I used to push them to one side and say, "No. It's mine." I'd never forget

09:00 I was in Brisbane, we came to Brisbane 1929 and we were at Coorparoo living for a while and I went to Coorparoo School. We were at Camp Hill really, Aston Street, Camp Hill and anyway at Coorparoo School we went there and then we went to Grovely, we were in the station store at Grovely.

09:30 And there was a great friend of ours from Croydon, he owned the station store there and he said to Mum, "Come out and live here and cook for me and that." And of course he had a paper run and there was a lad about sixteen years of age, a tall bloke. He picked on me one day and I started into him, he laid down on the ground and I laid down beside him to finish it off. Oh I was a devil.

10:00 But…

And you mentioned in Croydon that you'd go down the ironbark trees.

Yeah.

Well what was the sort of, were there any rules or?

Well there was a big clump of ironbark trees nearly in the middle of Croydon. Like Croydon, there was only the one, there were three hotels there before we left when we went back in 1974 there was only one. That was the

10:30 club hotel, it's the only one there now and there was a store that used to line the Freddy Cuthbert. And Freddy Cuthbert was one of the millionaires of Croydon and he left Croydon to New Guinea and he started gold mining at the Misima mines in New Guinea. He came back to Croydon again in the 1930's to try and start it off again but it wasn't any success at all. But he was a great friend

11:00 of our family and of course in those days there was a few shops around before he left Croydon. Well in the early days there were ten thousand people in Croydon and it finished up, well at the present time in 1974 when we went up there was only about one hundred and thirty odd left then and most of those were Aborigines then.

11:30 But they started doing, digging test holes even in the main street of Croydon looking for gold and they reckon it couldn't survive again. I don't know if it ever will. But in the early days it used to be a rail motor run between Normanton to Croydon. A Panhard it was, it was a truck converted to go on the railway line.

12:00 And my Uncle George, my mother's brother George Young used to drive it. And we used to go to Normanton with him when it was our turn to go for a trip and coming back he'll give us a stick about six feet long and we'd bowled over playing turkey alongside the line and take it home for Mum to cook. Well when we left Croydon then, well later on in the

12:30 thirties the first Gulflander came on and then the second Gulflander after that. But on channel seven here once Frank Wright did say about the Gulflander between Normanton and Croydon, the rail motor, the Gulflander he called it. And I phoned him up and told him he was wrong, that was the first rail motor was the Panhard but he didn't know anything about it.

13:00 And I did write up all about Croydon in that book anyway one part.

What was the school like in Croydon that you went to?

Fairly big school, oh gee it was two rings like that, one like that and one like here. And on high blocks and underneath it used to be a big old post of trees

13:30 left there and all the kids coming in from outside they used to all ride horses. And then one family, Bells they used to always come in on a backboard, there was about half a dozen of them. And they'll come in the school then at lunchtime the eldest girl used to get out a loaf of bread and a lump of corned beef and make sandwiches for them. Oh it was life on it's own you know. First

14:00 head teacher was a chap by the name of Grey then there was Eric Walton and McFail. And then there was Dolce Jewel she was a young teacher, as soon as she passed scholarship they put her on teaching the school and that. And then when Golden Gate, five mile away, when that school closed there in

14:30 1926 well all the pupils came into Croydon then. It was a fairly big school, used to be a few teachers there in Croydon. Where at Osborne school there was only one head teacher and one lady teacher at Osborne. And when we sat for a scholarship, when we sat for a scholarship there was three of us, we were out on the veranda because little Gordon couldn't attend to us and we had to teach

15:00 ourselves. Well I was the only one that passed that year but they put algebra in on the test and the other boys never ever learned algebra they knew nothing about algebra whereas I learned it in Croydon and in those days it was fifth class first half of year and second half year and so on. And when I came to Brisbane at Coorparoo I told them I was in fifth class first half of year then I got

15:30 up at fifth class second half year here and then when I went to Home Hill I put myself back a year. I went through that area about three times. But I totally enjoyed it all the same school. I used to play tennis and that and cricket and soccer but not now.

And how did your brothers and sisters get along?

Well there was two

16:00 younger brothers and two sisters went to Cairns. Arthur finished up in the railway works office as a fitter and turner. Ernie finished up in a garage as a mechanic. When he joined the air force before I did he came out as a flight rigger. In other words he was on the airplane part and I was on the motors. And at the last he was posted to the number 1

16:30 Squadron, Mosquitoes and they were with us. We were number one Mosquitoes and number 93 Beaufighter squadron. We formed 86 Attack Wing. And our mission was either the coast of China or Japan and we were told that we wouldn't be granted leave until we had done that. And we were thankful war finished when it did. We were in

17:00 what they called first tactical air force, it comprised of three Spitfire squadrons, one Liberator squadron, our attack wing and I think there was another squadron in first tactical air force. And it was formed up there to either you know land in China or Japan but it didn't get that far.

17:30 One of our planes that went over bombing Kuching one day was shot down and Vern Simms and Ray Farrell was the navigator and they dodged the Japs for fourteen days or more and they came across a 17-year-old lad of mixed nationalities, Philippino, he had five or six different bloods in him, he could speak

18:00 good English and he was on the sampan, he had them hid under the canvas. The Japs pulled him up and he said, "Oh I'm going to get you some fish." So they let him go and he took them out to the open and put them on shore further up and when they came to an army camp just south of Brunei they said, "Oh we just go here from the Japs." They

18:30 said, "Oh the war's been over for three days." They couldn't believe it they were still dodging the Japs. Vern Simms has passed on. Ray Farrell, I seen him in 1988 for the first time, he didn't look one hundred percent. I didn't meet any of the squadron until somewhere around 1998, 1999 when I first received a

19:00 newsletter from Sydney, a fellow by the name of Ken Rowland, a navigator he put it out and I received this newsletter and it had 93 Beaufighter Squadron headline. And he had, "Dear Mr Beadle. If the above letterhead doesn't ring a bell the following is of no benefit to you." And he thanked me and everything for reading it and he gave me

19:30 a list, three lists of names one lot he knew where they were, a lot he didn't know where they were and the others had passed on. Then on the bottom he wrote, "The Frank Beadle I knew many years ago was a strapping young bloke, he'd be about seventy-two years of age now" and so on. So I phoned him up and he said, "Ken Rowland's here." I said, "Yes Ken, flattery won't get you anywhere." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Flattery won't get you anywhere." He

20:00 said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I'm not seventy-two, I'm eighty-two." He said, "Who are you?" I said, "Frank Beadle." "Oh my gosh", he said, "Got you at last." He wrote to every Frank Beadle in every

telephone book until he got me. And the names he supplied, one of them Gordon Blaine, he's in the photo in there, he' was on the plane with me, working on the plane with me and he was only a nineteen year old lad and I used to call him a clinch kin, he never shaved.

20:30 And there was Les Harris the harmine and Peter Shepherd, Henry Mordon, another chap Lloyd Taylor, they all live in Brisbane. And then youngest son of Gulliver, the baby that was in the pram he lives at,

21:00 going into Brisbane anyway he lives there. And of course I met all of them since, we have a barbie every year. I've met the wives, we have a good old chin wag. When I first went in would be about 1999 or 2000 I phoned up Gordon Blaine and he said, "We having a barbie at Peter Shepherd's at Jindalee.

21:30 So I went down there and as soon as I walked in of course this Les Howard, the armway he's a bit of a hard doer and he spotted me straight away he said, "Gee, here's the old fellow coming." Granddad they used to call me.

That's great that you've kept in contact with them.

Oh yes. Peter Shepherd he's got Alzheimer's fairly bad and

22:00 Henry Morgan he's got Parkinson's very bad, you can hardly understand him, he lives at Grovely. Peter lives at Jindalee, well he's at Greenslopes at the present time. He's not the best. I went down to one of their re-unions and I met a bloke by the name of Weir Williams, Howard Williams and he lived at Merewether

22:30 outside of Newcastle. So I went down there to him and Margaret and he was one of the three pilots that flew the Beaufighters over at the Spitfires when we first went up to Morotai. And I used to fly with him from Morotai to Biak [Island] to pickup passengers. I couldn't remember that and he pulled out his logbook and he said, "Here's your name here, here's your name there." Where I'd flown with him, he used to

23:00 pick me every time to go with him.

Just going back again, just to the time in Croydon before we talked more about…

Yes.

Your time in the air force. I was just wondering when your brothers and sisters and you were little kids how you all got along together?

We got along really well together, all of us. Well the boys used to always

23:30 be together and we used to go out around the countryside a fair bit, we were always around you know. In those days we were bad boys, we all had shanghais. Oh there was parrots and finches and there were hundreds all around Croydon. All the different types of parrots, all bar the rosellas. There wasn't a rosella parrot, they weren't over the range but all the other types of rosellas and galahs and that and

24:00 pigeons, different types of pigeons and that. We used to always be around the countryside you know. We used to do a lot of scouting around everywhere, we were never home. And of course the two girls well they stayed together most of the time.

And you mentioned that there were lots of Chinese market gardens around Croydon.

Yeah well

24:30 in the early days when the gold mining first started, back in the late 1980's 1880's I should say, Chinese used to always be around everywhere in those days. The same with the Palmer Gold Fields they came out there in hundreds around the palmer and of course I don't think they used to say how much gold they really got, I think most of it was sent home to China.

25:00 But around, getting back around the Palmer way well there used to be wild natives around there in those days and they reckoned the Chinese tasted well. They used to eat them, tie them over at their pig tails and that. Of course Uncle Dick, Aunty Ellie's husband, his father went to the Palmer when it was first found, he's name Rogers

25:30 and he saw a goanna robbing a bird's nest. He went over and chased the goanna away and there were nuggets of gold everywhere. Well he had a broach made out of raw gold with a nest and a pearl in the centre of it and a goanna going up the side. And then all of his watch chains were all nuggets of gold joined together. And

26:00 1973 when the cyclone hit Townsville or '72 Jean and I went up and Aunty Ellie was in a little home there then. When we got to her place the roof was down flat and Dick Rogers had lost his only son, he went fishing and never came home and they never ever found him. And I said to Aunty Ellie,

26:30 he was more or less had a stroke. I said, "What happened?" She said, "Well I pulled him inside to the main bedroom and the roof started to come down and I put him into the other bedroom so we got under the bed and the roof came down. And she was with her daughter then living and her husband, Billy

Nelson. And Jean and I was there and all chance I would say

27:00 to Aunty Ellie, “What did she do with the jewellery?” See, and Billy Nelson said, “What jewellery?” “Oh,” I said, “Aunty Ellie I’m sorry.” She said, “That’s alright.” I said, “What happened anyway?” She said, “Oh I put it down in the fowl house. They don’t rob the fowl houses they rob the homes”, see. And Billy Nelson said,

27:30 “I’ve never ever heard of this jewellery.” So she went inside and pulled it out. Well his eyes nearly popped out. She said, “Don’t you value it while I’m alive.” She died just a couple of years ago well up in her nineties. And of course he said, “Well I’m going to put it in the bank.” So I don’t know what’s happened to that jewellery since then but oh it was nice to see. And then…

And, I’m

28:00 **sorry.**

Yeah.

I was just wondering if you could tell me what these Chinese gardens were like?

Well the Chinese gardens around Croydon they used to have little wells, they’d be about six feet across here to there in the garden and they’d have those full of water. They used to have their watering cans made out of

28:30 kerosene tins and the spout, there used to be a kind of a lip over it and they used to have a fruit tin on a stick and they’d have the water there and they’ll have another place with horse manure or cow manure in a liquid form and put so much in and away they’d go with that and they’d go up and down the rows. Well they used to supply Croydon with all the vegies and everything and

29:00 they were everywhere around Croydon. And us kids, when we were kids we used to go out and they’d light their josh sticks up and that and of course the four of us boys would go out, two of us would go in and keep them occupied while the watermelons were ripe and the other two would go to the watermelon patch with a watermelon under each arm. And then they had a Chinese

29:30 bakehouse and they used to put on a Chinese meal. Well the older brother used to always go and have a good old Chinese meal with them, I never ever did. But they were you know they were a few around Croydon, Chinese gardens and that. And then when the gold pitted out well they left and the gardens were still left there but they had gone wild but there was still

30:00 mango trees and pawpaw trees and everything like that still going.

And how did the Chinamen get along with the rest of the population of Croydon?

Alright, they got on real good. It was just with Frank Beadle, they didn’t get on too well with me.

Why not?

Well, well one of them especially, he’d be gone now but I had a goat given to me by Grandma Young, of a big goat and I had it in a cart with three foot wheels and the cart was given to us

30:30 by Grandma Young too and it was more or less a spring cart, the shafts were no thicker then my finger I suppose the end of the shafts. And I’m going up the main street of Croydon with this goat and it was fairly hard to hold and I was going past a Chinaman and he said, “Shhh shhh.” And off went the

31:00 goat. Well the goat turned for home and I couldn’t stop him. And when we were going past the back of our place the copper was outside and one wheel hit the copper and over went the cart and I’m underneath it and the goats on its back. So I thought well blow this. When I got sorted out the Aunty was there with her pushbike so I grabbed her pushbike and down I went down the road and he was still chattling to his

31:30 place to himself. He had a bamboo rod on and two big baskets of stuff going down and when I rode by I grabbed one basked and spun it. He went around and around and around, down he went vegies everywhere. I don’t know what he said but by golly he did say a lot in Chinese. I’ve ridden down wells on

32:00 pushbikes and broken the forks and taken them home to Aunty Florry and just put them up against the fence and clear off again. But there were wells everywhere around Croydon you had to be careful.

When did the gold dry up in Croydon?

Well it died out, oh it must have died out fairly early in the twenties, early twenties I think

32:30 it died out. But there is still fossicking going on. They opened one mine there back in the 1970’s or ‘60’s I think they opened one up and all the machinery’s there still. But they still reckon there’s gold around Croydon they’ve put down test holes everywhere, through the main street and everywhere now and they reckon it will eventually open up again. But where they had the, where they’ve

33:00 got the caravan park now, where the reserve is there was a well there, a mine there, it was crushing

thirteen ounces to the tonne. There were a lot of mines around that were crushing thirty ounces to the tonne which is very good, a good supply of gold. But it wasn't any alluvial gold on top it was all riff gold mainly around Croydon.

33:30 **And do you remember any changes in Croydon when the gold dried up, anything that happened to the town or the people?**

Well most of them left but in the early days, back in the eighteen hundreds there was two main streets, Sircom Street and Samuel Street. Well Sircom Street came in from Normanton right

34:00 through, right up to the hospital. Then Samuel Street comes off of that and it comes south, you've got to come out at Lauren there to come to Little River and Gilbert River. And back in the eighteen hundreds there was a big fire that started in Samuel Street and just down from our place was one of the biggest hotels and a lot of glass in it and the molten glass is still there. And the fire went

34:30 right through the street nearly. All the shops and everything they used to be close together and the same thing happened in Sircom Street too. The fire started there, somewhere around the late eighteen hundreds, 1890 or so. And there wasn't, you know a lot of shops and everything were all burnt all around Croydon but they used to, a

35:00 population around ten thousand you know. You'll see there, are you reading the book? Yeah. There's a lot of notes there at the last that will be interesting for you. I've written up all about Croydon in its early days. I've written up about the Depression years, what they were like and everything like that in the book.

And how did your Mum tell you that she

35:30 **decided to move from Croydon?**

Well this friend of ours, Bert Hall he owned a station there with his brother Norman. And they were great friends with Mum and Dad and when Dad was killed well Bert and Norman were very good to us. They made sure you know that nothing happened. I remember

36:00 once Bert sent away down south for a case of jam and it came up, IXL jam and at that time for so many labels you got a little tin of jam. He came over one day and he said, "Send one of the boys over Edie and get a couple of tins of jam." So who should they send, it was me. They made a mistake.

36:30 I went over and I took ever label off and sent them away to get these little tins of jam. They didn't know what jam they were opening. I never owned up to it. And then when it was mustering time around August it was school holidays, I used to go out with them and I'd be with Norman and we'd go to the main station

37:00 and Bert and the other drovers would go out and muster in the cattle and I'd go with Norman to the main station and we used to do up the fences. The main paddock was eleven mile by nine mile and we had to go across a lagoon sometimes and there were wild ducks at that time and it was breeding season. And there were a lot of young ones, I caught two young ones.

37:30 I took them back to camp. I didn't know where to put them so I put them in my riding boots. In the morning they were such a mess they went back to their mother quick and lively. I didn't keep them too long. But I used to enjoy going out with Norman and Bert. And then when we came to live here in 1951 I worked in the railway workshops. Then

38:00 1965 I went down to Manchester Unity in George Street to be in charge of a section there, central oversee, and I'm lead to believe that Norman and Bert, well then they lived out at Grovely and they lived up on Bunya Mountains there and

38:30 they bought a dairy farm each. They sold the shop and they used to come up past Manchester Unity in George Street, there was a little newsagency on the corner of George and Queen Street there on the corner and buy a caster tither every Monday morning, I didn't know or I would have went and met them. But in 1943 when I joined the air force I was at Central Station

39:00 and Bert owned a blue Ford utility, Betsy we used to call it, model B or model A. Anyway I'm standing in front of the Central Station there and I looked across and I seen this blue utility. I though, "Gee that looks like Bert or Norman". And this bloke came along and stood beside it. I said, "That's him." So I went over. I said, "How are

39:30 you Bert?" He looked at me and he said, "I don't know you." I said, "Yes you do." He said, "Who are you?" I said, "Frank Beadle." He said, "Oh my gosh, jump in." So I don't know where he took me but I think it was out to the dairy farm somewhere. And then I found out later on in life that his son was a policeman, John. And John wanted to find out more about his family tree.

40:00 So he found out Ralph was living in Toowoomba, not far from his aunty's place. So he went to Ralph and enquired about Bert and what they're life was like and up on Croydon and the station and everything. Ralph said, "You better go and see Frank he'll remember more than any of us." So he got on the phone to me and he's been here three times since.

40:30 And anyway I told him all I knew and I said, “Well there’s two papers or three papers that were printed in Croydon in the early days.” I said, “They’d be at the library in South Street there, the main library.” He said, “We’ll go there one day and go through it.” I said, “Righto.” And I got out one of the early papers of Croydon dated back before

41:00 1914. And I was going through it and I came across where Mum and Dad were married and all the people that was at the wedding, what they wore, what they gave and everything. There was a column like this long. And you put fifty cents in the slot and you get a copy of that page.

Wonderful.

And it’s in that book.

Oh excellent. We’ll just have to pause there because

Tape 3

00:36 **Ok, I was interest to know about your impressions as you grew up of the Aboriginal people? Of the aboriginal people…**

Yes.

At Croydon. Tell us about the kind of interactions you had as you grew up.

Well when we grew up well the Aborigines, there was one lad I’ve just forgot his

01:00 name but I was great friends with the Aborigines around Croydon, always have been I respected them. And Edie, the Aborigine woman that came to Mum and said she would look after the kids, well in 1974 when we went up to Croydon first since then there was one lady

01:30 sitting there on the chair, she was dressed up to kill gee she looked well. She wasn’t a full blooded Aborigine, she was. Anyway she kept on looking at me and I said to one chap, “Who’s that lady there?” He said, “Ethel Marshall.” I said, “Do I know her?” He said, “Yes, Ethel

02:00 Thompson.” “Oh my gosh, no,” I said. When we left Croydon she was at the Queens Hotel working, she’d be about seventeen years of age. She was one of the prettiest aboriginal girls I’d ever seen. And I went over to her and I kissed her and she said, “Oh Frankie, I though you weren’t going to speak to me.” I said, “Oh I didn’t know who you were, you’re all dolled up to kill.” And she laughed.

02:30 I said, “And how have you been?” She said, “Real good.” I said, “Can you tell me anything about Edie?” She said, “Edie, when youse left Croydon, wouldn’t eat or anything. She just pined away and died.” Starved herself to death. Wouldn’t eat nothing at all as soon as we left Croydon. And she was a very faithful Aborigine woman

03:00 and I used to go walkabout with them and there were two camps in Croydon, Waratah and Island Mary. The Waratah mob they were more or less half civilised. They had wind up gramophones and pedal sewing machines and that and they used to be on the main road coming out of Croydon.

03:30 The Island Mary mob you couldn’t get within their camp for yapping dogs and that and they were more or less near the, you know half miles or that. And there was one of them that we used to call Flash Gilbert, he used to wear a bowler hat, have a walking stick and a lawn cloth on. He looked a spectacle but we weren’t

04:00 game to go near him, he used to snarl like anything. I came across him and his lubra having a fight one day with a nulla nulla [heavy headed hunting, fighting or ceremonial tool], they were taking turns about with hitting one another. I think their heads must have been made of cast iron. We didn’t stay to see how it finished, we cleared off home. But Edie and the other camp they were different altogether.

04:30 They were good. They used to come into town and Edie used to help Mum and then Tommy, one of the black boys used to come in, he used to cut the wood. If you had a big pile of wood you knew he’d stack it hollow so I used to go and pick a stick out and a whole heap would collapse and he used to go crook. Mum got him one day to scrub the kitchen floor and

05:00 in those days you got the butter in a square box and the tea was in big cases like that. And anyway this butter box was on the centre of the floor and Tommy scrubbed around it and Mum went crook at him. He said, “Missy, you no speak a lot of me like that. You no bossy, you no bossy.” And he’s going for Mum. So I heard it and I came up from the goat yard and I went passed the wood heap and a grabbed a stick and a

05:30 couple of pieces on, two inches through and I walked up behind Tommy and he didn’t hear me and he’s still going crook at Mum and I thought well he’s getting a little bit serious here. So I picked up the stick in both hands and I hit him fair behind the ear. He dropped, he looked up at me and he said, “You bossy, you bossy.” And that was the best we ever seen, Tommy after that was very good he used to work like anything after that.

06:00 But I thought well you haven't got to let them get the upper hand but treat them with respect. I always did with the Aborigines I got a lot of respect for them because I've seen them there come in from Normanton, they'd capture the young bucks up past Normanton, up by the rivers further up from Normanton and they'd fetch them down to Croydon in

06:30 the H wagon, which is an oblong wagon. And they'd be chained to each corner of the wagon and when they got to Croydon they'd be in a straight jacket and they used to take them to Palm Island [Indigenous settlement from 1918, for 'problem cases']. And the young bucks, the young men and they'd snarl and spit at you all the time you know. A lot of them did escape from Palm Island. I've just forgot there's

07:00 a couple of islands there, I just forgot which one they were put onto. But even in the 1930's they were still escaping and they could find them in the scrub behind Cardwell and that area, you know still wild Aborigines or semi-wild. But I don't think that is the case today, I think its different altogether today but that's back in the 1920's of course.

Well what did you think about them being chained

07:30 **up and straight jacketed?**

Well I don't reckon its right that they should have taken the young bucks from the tribe. What did they do to deserve it in the first place, just because they were wild Aborigines, why? I couldn't see any sense in it myself, why they done it because they were doing you no harm. They might kill a bullock or something like that for meat well who wouldn't,

08:00 who wouldn't kill a bullock for meat? I wouldn't say that the cattle owners around Croydon or anywhere else as far as that's concerned are one hundred percent pure. How many other station cattle have they killed for meat in their days. They don't kill your own bee,, you go and kill someone else's meat.

What would people say about the Aboriginal people like around the town?

Well they didn't mind them at all.

08:30 They used to come through there and they wouldn't, they never hurt anyone. I haven't known them to steal anything anyway. And all they got paid was a stick of black 'nitter truce' tobacco, a bit of salt or a bit of sugar, they didn't have anything else. But Edie and Tommy we might have treated them different because if we killed

09:00 a goat, a little wither say, and they were there we'd cut it in two and give them half. And you know we used to, they treated us well, they always you know worked well with us but Mum couldn't afford to pay them anything, they never got money, we didn't have money anyway.

So why did they work for you, how did that work?

Oh

09:30 well they used to come through the town and ask you if you'd got any work and all they'd want was a bit of tucker and a bit of tobacco or something like that or salt. That's all they were interesting in because they used to kill their own stuff out you know out where they were. There were a few Aborigines around Croydon in those days,

10:00 like there were two camps there and.

Did you learn anything yourself from the Aboriginal people, like how to hunt or anything like that?

Too right and how to live and how to sneak onto anything. When we came to Brisbane we were at Camp Hill there, Aston Street, Camp Hill. Behind our place then where Bennetts Road comes down onto Cleveland Road, across from

10:30 there was all swamp. There was nothing there, there was a couple of tennis courts just there then. And of course there used to be a curlew and birds and everything and one day there I was sneaking up onto it, onto a curlew and I wasn't that far from him and one bloke yelled out, "Do you want to put some bloody salt on his tail." I was so close to him. Then with fish like,

11:00 little fish wrap them up in clay, never scale them or gut them, wrap them up in clay, throw them in the ashes. When you take them out and take the clay off the skin would come off and the gut was in a little round ball, they used to be sweet. The same with pigeons and doves and that. That's all you done was you wrapped it up in clay and around Croydon then was a lot of mussels and that around Croydon.

11:30 And then the blue crayfish, a lot of blue crayfish about nine inches long. And Croydon in the early days, there was wild berries everywhere, blackberries, river berries, red berries, everything around everywhere and you could have a feed anytime. And then the old Chinese apple trees, the Jujubes they were plenty around there.

12:00 1974 flood went through early in the year, when we went up around July there was nothing there and I said to one chap, "Where's all the Jujube trees and everything?" The flood took the whole lot. It was all

underwater. Well you could always go and get a decent feed and there was only, if you watch your birds, the robin redbreast especially, if he didn't land on a certain berry

12:30 tree you knew it was poison, so it didn't go near that tree. The Aborigines they would teach you a lot you know on preservation and everything like that, what to eat and what not to eat. And then up there well 1926 there was a young bloke by the name of Joe Tongue, he

13:00 used to work outside the Cloncurry and his mother was by herself in Croydon and he used to come home every Christmas. And this Christmas he was a bit late coming home and Mrs Tongue knew that we used to go walkabout. So she said to us, "Keep an eye out and see if you can see Joe anywhere." When we did we found him, he was

13:30 in the foot of a boxwood tree that had been one limb cut off and he was sitting there and he had died of thirst, his tongue was about down here. And we re-tracked him and we found his saddle and bridle, he had left his horse go and his horse was in a lagoon only about half a mile away. If he had let the horses head go he would have taken him to water. Instead of that he must have been delirious

14:00 and Joe perished. Well we didn't go back to Mrs Tongue's but there were relations, Priestley's, we went to them and told them and they got the police and went out and got Joe. But around Croydon, well if you went out into the bush there and you came across a sandy creek and there was a nice green gumtree growing on the bank all you need

14:30 to do is dig in the sand underneath that about two feet and you'll have nice fresh water. And then also in the creeks themselves was a tree that used to grow, a Geebung tree and it had a fruit on it like a kidney shape, it would be a couple of inches long and about an inch wide and about so thick, maybe half an inch think, full of water. You never got a thirst if you knew what to look for in the bush.

15:00 **So tell me how hard was it for you and your brothers and your sisters to leave the bush and go to the city, or the town?**

Well when we left Croydon in the early days the old Cobb and Co. [Company] coach, I can still remember the Cobb and Co. coach and Durian stables and they were over the creek from our place. And if Mum lost me she knew where to find me, I was always over there to watch Joe

15:30 Hershberg and Mick Carr harness up the horses on the Cobb and Co. coach. And there was Grandad Botwell we used to call him, he had a team of twenty odd horses and he used to haul stuff to Forsyth and he used to be away for weeks at a time. Well that was the early days and then Greens

16:00 brought in motor trucks, mainly Chevs [Chevrolets] and they had them all painted green, they were all Chevs. And they used to take us then from Croydon to Forsyth to the end of the railway line. Well the day we left Croydon, Paddy's Day 1929, I think we all had a little cry we didn't want to

16:30 leave Croydon. Ralph was offered a job in the post office but he didn't want to leave us. So we left, we came from there and we got as far as the Little River and there was a steel boat there, it was in flood. So we had to go of course on the steel boat and there was a truck on the other side. We stopped at Hamens for morning tea.

17:00 Then when we got to the Gilbert River it was in flood and they used to join everything together with the canvas and load everything in and let it go across the river to the other side and get on another truck and go to Forsyth. Well from Forsyth to Omsley was a rail motor and at Omsley where we stayed in the pub there, out the back of the pub

17:30 was aviaries. Oh gee, talk about birds, they had birds everywhere. And in the pub itself used to be black cockatoos and all the top of the chairs were all chewed to pieces where they used to go around chewing the chairs. From Omsley we went to Cairns and I remember we got off a Cairns at the station and we stayed in a motel opposite the station and Mum took us up town

18:00 and decided to buy ice-cream each. And we were opposite the Imperial Hotel in Cairns on the corner of Lake and…oh dear, Abbott Street. Anyway I turned mine upside down to see what it looked like, I lost my ice-cream on the footpath, first and last time I ever done that. But it was a sad day to leave Croydon in a way because we

18:30 knew the place so well you know we knew everyone and that. Then you get through to Brisbane. When we got through to Brisbane we went to this place in Aston Street, Camp Hill, it must have been an old dairy farm and outside were strawberries growing, first time we ever seen strawberries and I tell you what they were raided. Then we made friends with

19:00 people, not next door, Lou Cunny he was from Croydon he lived next door. I met him a few years later up here at Kings Beach up at Caloundra. The Turpin boys lived the next house to them, Dick and Jack Turpin and we used to go fishing at Kangaroo Point. We used to fish off the barges, there was no bridge there then,

19:30 it used to be mainly perch and that. I remember once we went fishing, we didn't do too good and we were coming home through stones corner and of course Dick used to give me a double on his pushbike and that and a policeman pulled us up and he wanted to know what we had in the sugarbag. And before

we could say anything the bloke that had the

20:00 sugarbag with all dead rotten prawns in it, he pushed it up into his face and off we went. We never went through Stones Corner a long time after that, we weren't game too. We knew quite well if we did and that policeman was there we would have copped it. I don't know leaving Croydon it was sad in a way because we weren't in Brisbane twelve months

20:30 and on a Saturday afternoon Mum's nose started to bleed and I was putting cold packs and everything onto her. Nothing would stop it so she went into hospital and about eleven o'clock that night, it was a very hot night, the 4th of January, 1930 and she was sitting on a chair and Mum used to have a joke with everyone, you

21:00 know she was a happy go lucky all the time and she was having a joke and next minute she was gone, suffocation, fluid on the lungs took her. Well that was on the Saturday night at eleven o'clock. On the Sunday we had to deliver papers and everything and then we all split up then. Aunty Florry and Uncle Ted had just got married in Brisbane they finished up with four kids,

21:30 just married. And I went up to Home Hill life. But, oh it wasn't a bad life.

How did you all cope with this sudden event with your mother dying like, the kids?

Well we had to there was nothing else we could do. We didn't meet again, we all got together again in 1936 in Cairns. And Ralph came up, he was out at Boatman's station [a sheep station] he was

22:00 out at Charleville, he came up to Cairns. And I went up to Cairns in 1936. And that's the first time we were all together. And of course I landed the job of ironing all the shirts. There was up to sixteen shirts sometimes I used to iron. We all enjoyed dancing and I used to enter into all the waltzing competitions around Cairns and that.

22:30 **Why did you and your brother not, why had they split into four and you two separately?**

Well they couldn't take us all together I don't think, it would have been too much. See in fact I think in the early part of it, I think they were talking about putting us in a home but Grandma Beadle she was blind and cripple. She wouldn't hear of that, no way in the

23:00 wide world she said, "I'll look after them." So that's the way they got separated up. See there were too many of us to go to one place. I was pleased we didn't go in a home.

Where did Ralph go again?

He went out, he stayed with Bert for a while and then he went with Bert's brother out to Boatman's Station, Morven out from Charleville and then he married a girl

23:30 from Charleville. But he used to go droving right up the north, down south and then he took on the job as shearers cook and a funny thing about Ralph he never ever drank tea. I still can't make out, he was doing droving, I took on cane cutting and I used to drink five big billies of tea, black tea everyday

24:00 but he never ever drank tea. But the Italians up around Home Hill they used to put a bottle of wine or half a bottle of wine into their black tea. And then they used to get a keg of wine up from down south and bottle it and have a little enamel plate and put a bottle in the centre of it and fill up their

24:30 wine and just pour it in. Well what overflowed didn't matter because the little kids around five or six years of age used to have little pannikins, they used to go and dip out a cup of wine. And they used to kill a pig and make salami the same day. But I remember once there was two cane cutters on McIntyre's farm, they went over and bought a kerosene tin full of wine,

25:00 went back to the barracks. One was on one bud, one was on the other and the tin between them, and they sat all the weekend drinking wine, didn't take their boots off and by Monday morning their ankles were so swollen they couldn't take their boots off, they still went out cane cutting. They were a tough mob.

You told Naomi [interviewer] about finishing school but tell us

25:30 **how old were you and what sparked your decision to go cane cutting?**

Oh well I finished school when I was fourteen when I sat for a scholarship but I didn't cane cut until later on. I worked on cane farms and I used to do a lot of, at planting time I used to drill out, there would be drills ten chain long and you'd have four horses and a drill plough, you'll put up about four sticks

26:00 with a white cloth on the top, line up and you'd pull out a drill ten chain long and you'd drill up one drill and you'd mark over two and then you'd come back to that one. You do so many and then you put one horse in one drill and one in the other and you just split them. And many a time I've seen the farmer go to look along to see if I had a kink in the drill. I used to drop the cane plants and

26:30 you had to drop them five to six inches apart. If you dropped them any further the farmer would pull the

cart up and put a plant in there so, or you'd go irrigating. One of my best collars went to Bundaberg to work at Ferryme and he must have told them about me, they wrote to me and wanted me to come down and do the irrigating on Ferryme.

27:00 And at that time George Holsworthy he was boarding at a house next door to where my wife back was a girl going to school. So I would have seen her when she was a schoolgirl then. But I was, the night I met Jean I was in Bundaberg for a while

27:30 and I came into town and I was at the service hut. And I was playing, billiards all day I was fairly filthy and I had my evening meal and I went to get the bus somewhere around eight o'clock that night to go out to the drome and it was up the road, it had gone. There was a dance going on upstairs where I was, I went up and it was mainly all jazz. Well I enjoyed

28:00 jazz, I learned jazz but I enjoyed old time better. So I asked him was there were any old time dances around. He said, "The Home Renters". I said, "Where's that?" He said, "Up at the Rowers Hall." I said, "Where's that?" He said, "Top end of Key Street." I said, "Righto, where's that?" He said, "Gee you must be a stranger." I got there about nine o'clock and these two girls came along. I stepped back I thought

28:30 I'll let them go first, one was a fairly tall girl the other one was a short girl. So up they went and up I went and when I got up the shorter one of the two were up dancing so I went over and asked the other one for a dance and I only got about, it wouldn't be ten yards and the dance finished. And I thought, "Gee she's a good dancer I'll book up the next one." So I booked up the next dance, that was a barn dance, I

29:00 lost her again. I thought, "Oh my gosh." So I booked up the next one then, tap waltz, I lost her again. And then after 59 years I've still got her, I haven't lost her at all. No, it was Jeanie. I took her home and we had to go past a sawmill and her father was in the First World War, he was a night watchman there and he was leaning over the front

29:30 gate and when we came up opposite this elderly gentleman Jeanie said, "Oh Dad, how are you?" Well I nearly fell over I thought, "Oh my gosh I'm going to meet the old fella now." So introduced me and I took Jeanie home and I thought well I better not stay too long. So I kissed her goodnight and I came back and he was still there. Stopped talking for a while and he said, "Do you feel like a cup of tea?" I said, "I'd love one."

30:00 So we went in down below and boiled up, five o'clock when I got home, I walked home five miles to the drome that morning. Got home late.

How did you get on with her father?

Good, yeah lovely, lovely. He was in the First World War, he was a Scotsman. Every time I went there he had the head of a man cut out of bark. And if I

30:30 lost my beret or cap I knew where it was, it was on this head all the time. And if you went there at all and you had your boots off he'd put them at quarter past nine or something you know. He passed away on the 1st of April, 1945 just after we were married. He seen his only daughter marry.

And what was it about Jeanie that attracted you?

Well she was a good dancer and

31:00 she always had a nice smile but I was lucky to meet her because she had joined the air force and she was home to take her clothes home and go back again. Her and her friend decided to go to the dance on the Friday night otherwise you know she would have been gone from there. She was sent out to Oakey, she was posted to Oakey.

31:30 I think she was number of 21 or 22 girls that went to Oakey and there were about a thousand men there. And I used to jump the train from, when I was Maryborough, jump the train from Maryborough to Brisbane and show a wait ticket at the gate in Brisbane and go up to Oakey, see her for a couple of hours and then I'd have to catch the train back again then. And the dance hall, I used

32:00 to always get her in the dance hall there and it wouldn't be any bigger than this room the dance hall and you're all just there in the corner and when she was waltzing by or dancing by I used to just touch her and she knew I was there.

And just before we move on I was interested to know about, you were talking about the Depression off camera, how hard was it for you as a young fellow?

32:30 Well for myself, being by myself you know it didn't worry me. I never had any money and I could always be with Aborigines and that I could always get a meal and on the farm where I was they had a wonderful veggie garden, they had everything in it, white turnips, green turnips, lettuce, carrots,

33:00 everything. Well that meant I had plenty of veggies so all I had to do was have a bit of meat. Well on the farm was a foxie, a little fox terrier dog and a kangaroo dog and I used to go walking all around the river and everywhere with them and all around the paddocks. Well the foxie used to chase the wallabies out of the cane, the kangaroo dog would catch

33:30 them or attack them. I always carried the cane knives with me just in case of snakes and I used to just cut a tail off and they used to be nice fresh meat for me. All you had to do was skin it and cut it up and put it in the camp oven, plenty of veggies, so good old stew you know that would last for a couple of days. Well you couldn't last any longer because

34:00 I had no fridge or anything like that. I made myself a Kalgoorlie safe, I don't know if you know what they are. They are a framework of four legs and a top and you use the side of a kerosene case or the end of a kerosene case, which was about that long and that wide. That was the top and the bottom and you had four legs on it,

34:30 and you had one down there and one up there. You cut a kerosene tin the full length and about that deep and put it on top, fill it with water and put a piece of flannel around. Well on the framework you put hessian around there and you put a flannel around there and it used to siphon the water out and it used to run down the sides of the hessian and any cool breeze would keep anything cool inside. But I didn't have anything

35:00 to keep cool because I didn't have any butter, I couldn't afford butter. Any bread that went stale I used to fry it up in the frypan with the dripping or you know with the fat. I made this, and I also made a cupboard out of kerosene tins in the case and the kerosene tins I used to cut

35:30 longways and then clip them both together, that was my drawers. Oh you make do you know, there was always something to do. But around Home Hill there it used to be very, there were snakes everywhere there too and I used to keep a length of heavy fishing wire it would be about four feet long,

36:00 I'll have it all around the camp. It was the best thing if a snake was there and that and you wanted to kill it well what ever shape the land was the wire used to go with it, bend with it. But one night I came home and I lit the kerosene lamp and in the barracks themselves one was cemented one floor and there was a window in it that you pushed up with a stick,

36:30 one of those windows. And I had this kerosene lamp and I got home one night and I went to light the lamp and I had a feeling there was something behind me so I couldn't light the lamp quick enough. When I looked behind there was a big king brown [snake] up on his tail between the door and me. And I had the stick in my hand, that was done and I

37:00 swung it and I just about took his head off. But he was in behind me and there was a door into that part of the humpy, it was about that high off the floor the bottom of the door and he must have came in because my shoes had come into the kitchen you know and come in different places and that especially around the cane farms and there was always plenty of snakes

37:30 around the place.

And you mentioned in '36 was the first time you saw your siblings.

Yeah.

What was that like to see them again?

Oh wonderful, wonderful. You know we were all together again and we used to go around everywhere, go fishing and everything like that.

38:00 Arthur well he used to love fishing, he worked in the railway workshops as a fitter and turner in Cairns. And to see him rowing the boat he was just flat out all the time he was a devil, we used to always go fishing up around the Barron River and everywhere and that or to dances. But we thoroughly enjoyed the time we had

38:30 together because it was only two or three weeks that Ralph could stay with us before he had to go back again to Charleville. And Arthur and Ernie, well I could stay there a bit longer I could stay there from about Christmas time I could stay until about April. Well what I used to do then was look around for a job if I could get one in Cairns and one year there I got a job

39:00 there out at Redlynch managing a cane farm. A chap by the name of Bowden in Cairns had, he used to sell homes at the estate agent and he owned this cane farm at what they called the intake. And I went on managing it and there was

39:30 four working there. There was a chap from New Guinea, Neddo from New Guinea. There was an Italian. There were all different nationalities working there you know and it was rough country too, you were up on the side of a hill and that. And I was ploughing there one day with the disk plough and four horses and it was nothing to be going along and you'd hit a stone and over would go

40:00 the plough and away you'd fly you know. And I went walking around like I used to in Croydon, go on walkabout and I went through one lot of scrub and I came across a paddock of cane that should have been harvested. And when I went into the town on the weekend I went and seen Bowden and I told him about it.

40:30 He said, "That devil." He said the bloke that was on there before must have had this paddock of cane just for himself and used to harvest it for himself. It should have been harvested before but…

We're going to have to pause there because we're at the end of the tape sorry.

Tape 4

00:36 **You were telling me about your memories of Armistice Day?**

Yes.

Can you just tell me that story again?

Yeah, well in Croydon when we were living in the first place going up to the hospital, the corrugated iron place. There were about three boys, Ralph, Arthur and myself, we were standing in Mum's bedroom

01:00 with the old iron beds, bedspread and Mum was pinning this medallion onto our little waistcoat. We had a waistcoat with a black stripe on it and white shorts on and sandals and a red ribbon about an inch wide tied as a bow around our neck. And I can still see Mum doing that to us. But that old place was sold for about

01:30 thirty odd pound and it was shifted out to a station. And when we bought this other place of Greg's, when we left there we sold that for thirty odd pound when we left Croydon. When Jean and I went back in 1974 I said to Jean, "I'll show you where we used to live." So we went to, down

02:00 onto Seymour Street and when I walked up, there used to be a little creek with a bridge over it and I think the old miners used to sit there to yarn of a night time and us kids used to find pennies and that under the bridge a fair bit. Well that bridge was gone and the oleander trees were all washed away in the '74 flood

02:30 and I couldn't make out where our place was. And all of a sudden I spotted it and I said to Jean, "Oh there it is over there." So we went over and we went up, they had put a side-veranda on it and we went up and there was a chap sitting on a squatter's chair. I asked him his name

03:00 and he, oh gee. He told me his name and I knew him and I knew who he had married, a girl by the name of Lilly Cuff and she used to stay with Grandma Beadle and go to school with us. Well she came out to stand behind Paddy Hughes.

03:30 And I thought, "Well I've got the better of you." I looked up and I said, "Hello Lilly." She just looked at me up and she said, "Oh my gosh, Frankie Beadle." You could have knocked me over with a feather she remembered me straight away. So she invited us inside. When I got into the little lounge room we used to have I looked up and she said, "What are you looking for Frank?" I said, "A chandelier". She said, "Oh

04:00 I gave it to the daughter Maria. If I left it there all the times we were travelling backwards and forwards it wouldn't be there by the time we came back, someone would have pinched it." So we had a good old yarn and then I said to her, "There used to be a fig tree out in the front yard, is it still there?" She said, "Yes." Well it would have been about a hundred years old the old fig tree in the corner.

Gosh.

It was still there.

04:30 We had a good old yarn and then Paddy said, "Righto, on Monday I'll take you for a drive around the countryside." So he picked us up and we went out where Grandma Young used to be. And we pulled up there and he said, "Do you know where this place is?" I said, "Yes. Grandma Young's

05:00 place. There's the pussycat tree there." It was a tree that had a kind of a thing on it, oval and it had a kind of a little twisted tail so we used to put four matchsticks in it and it looked like a cat so we called the tree a pussycat tree. And I said, "And the walkway down to the front of the house all the bottles are turned upside down. There used to be a round yard

05:30 over there for breaking in. Paddy looked at me and he said to Jean, "How the hell does he remember all of that, that's taken me back years. I came from Golden Gate when I was sixteen to live with them and here he is telling me about the whole place and what it looked like." Well I said, "The junkyard was out the back and there was a little shed there, it wouldn't be four foot high, it wouldn't be six foot square

06:00 and the Aborigine boy that used to look after the goats had so many goat skins in there, I don't know how he got in but we weren't game to go near him because he looked so wild. And over a bit further was a well they used to put all their rubbish in, castor oil bottles etcetera." So I went over and I couldn't find any castor oil bottles, someone had been through with trucks after the war and collected all the

06:30 bottles. And all the soft drink bottles had marbles in the neck of them and I could only find one little piece. Well later on in life Jean and I, we used to go up to the Sapphire fields every year fossicking in central Queensland and I'd do my own faceting. So I brought home a piece of blue castor oil bottle and I cut it. I'll show it to you after you'll be surprised what it looks like.

Okay.

07:00 Anyway Paddy then took us around different other places out the Cook Creek and up where all the mines were and everything at Golden Gate. We had a good old trip around and we thoroughly enjoyed the trip around Croydon.

Excellent. You were telling me about Armistice Day, what sort of memories do you have of the

07:30 **impact that World War I had had on Croydon?**

Well I think I'd be too young to remember what impact, it was just after the war see and with the population of Croydon at that time there was only about one hundred and thirty odd people there. Of course I don't think it had that much impact on it because well there was one, Edgerton Hall was a big

08:00 hall where they used to have dances and they used to have silent pictures and [Charlie] Chaplin was my favourite. Of course us kids, they used to have a table at the doorway where the people used to pay to go in and us kids used to sneak through under the table. We never ever paid. But Charlie Chaplin was my favourite and

08:30 it was all silent pictures in those days. Well the Edgerton hall is gone. The post office was two flights of stairs, two separate stairs high going up into the post office, well now at the present time there is only one. Well in those days when the Cobb and Co coach used to come from Georgetown, even if it got there at midnight and you were there, the postman would give you any mail

09:00 that was yours, he always handed out the mail. And when Jean and I went back Dale, I gave Dale an itinerary where we'll be on certain days but the people we were with they wanted to move on, move on so we always reckon from now on we'll go by ourselves. So we got to Croydon fairly early, so we phoned Dale to see where we

09:30 were and I went over to the post office and we booked up at the girl and I don't know how long Jean spoke to Dale, it didn't cost us a cent. When she found out who we were, and I found out later who she was. When we first landed at Croydon we pitched a tent, there was a chap there with a utility from the council and he was unloading a

10:00 drum or something. And I went over to him and I asked him what was his name and he said, "Stumpy Houston." I said, "It wouldn't be Jackie would it?" He looked at said, "You bright sparks from the city you find out who we are and then you came up and try and take us down a peg or two." Oh he went for me. I said, "Hey, hold on, hold on. You haven't asked me who I am." He said, "Who are you?" I said, "Frank Beadle." Oh my

10:30 gosh. Well I think within half an hour all of Croydon knew Frank Beadle was back in town. And when I'd booked up the phone call and I'd came back to the tent Jean said, "There's a chap in there that wants to see you Frank." I said, "I know who it is." She said, "Who?" I said, "Frankie Houston, my best cobber." It was, it was him.

Wonderful.

Yeah. And of course we had a good old yarn then.

11:00 He's gone. And then when I went to school in Croydon, Ralph the eldest boy, I was in the same class as Ralph he was always top of the class, always. I used to come second or fourth, you know you wonder why the two places. There was two girls, Gladys Altharty and Jean Priestley they got the same marks. If they beat me they came second and third, if I beat them they came third and

11:30 fourth. I think they cheated on one another but I don't know. In those days we had the old desks at the school with the inkwell and the slot for the pencils and everything. I used to take carbine to school and when they weren't looking I used to drop a piece of carbine into the inkwell. It used to come up all over, oh I was a devil.

You were talking to Kiernan [interviewer]before about your time on the farm, I was wondering

12:00 **if you could explain to me how you started cane cutting?**

Oh well I done a lot of cutting of cane for planting time but not on contract work until I was in the army and they released me and the cane farmer was short of cane cutters. So he put in for me to be released and when they called me up to the

12:30 office at Townsville showgrounds they said to me, "There's a cane farmer up at Home Hill by the name of McIntyre he's put in for you to come and cane cut, they're short of cane cutters." And at that time the government that was classed as essential work so they released me to go cane cutting. And I went up there cane cutting, it was

13:00 a one man, what they call a one man cane cut. I was cutting and loading sixty tonne a week in five days, twelve tonne a day cut and load.

Well describe the equipment that you used to cut cane.

A big cane knife. I've got one down stairs I'll show it to you. Wait.

Hold on, hold on.

No, I can't go. I know where it is.

Ok that's alright you can show it to me but for the people who, for the camera can you explain it for me?

13:30 Well it's a blade about, what would you say twelve, thirteen inches, fifteen inches long and it had a hook on the top and the blade would be about four inches wide and a wooden handle. Well there were two types of handle, one was a short handle it would be about six inches long, the other was a long handle. Well most of the

14:00 cane cutters further north around Innisfail and those places where you were cutting up the sides of hills and everything you were nearly bent on one knee doing it. Well where I was cutting at Home Hill it was all fairly level ground and all hilled up. And of course the cane knife well we used to sharpen it only on one side

14:30 and once you've bent down at the end of the drill to start off I never used to straighten up. In those days they started, they were burning the cane on account of the wheels disease which was caused by rats and it was compulsory then to burn cane. Sometimes the farmer would want you to cut a bit of clean cane. In other words don't burn

15:00 it, they used to use the top for horse feed, chop, chop and put it through the chop, chop machine. And of course you had to cut it low to the ground, in fact some of the farmers wanted it below the ground if you can. I know one farmer who took one cane cutter to court and the stumps were a bit high,

15:30 about that high off the ground and when he gave evidence he said, "Every time I walked along it would tear the seat of my pants they were so high." You know he used to expand it. And then the top of it if you left them, what they called the bullseye on top, well the density of the cane, the sweetness, the CCS [commercial cane sugar] of the cane used to drop

16:00 and you had to cut down into the colour of the cane itself because the mill in those days, if your density was under eleven CC [cubic centimetres] they wouldn't crush it for you and for every seven tonne of cane made one tonne of sugar in those days. And burnt cane was six and six a tonne and if you cut it in the clean leaf

16:30 it was eight and threepence a tonne. Just after the war burnt cane, if you cut, was two pound a tonne. I would have made one hundred and twenty dollars a week just after the war if I, but my wife wouldn't let me go back to the cane farms. And 1957 we decided to go up to Magnetic Island for me I was working at the Ipswich railway workshops and

17:00 anyway we got there - where was I – oh yeah, and the two chaps I was with from Ipswich were going fishing and one of them Jack Higgerty he said, "I've got a cobber coming Frank, do you mind?" I said, "I don't care who comes Jack, as long as he doesn't throw his line over mine." And him and this chap was walking ahead of us.

17:30 He said to Jack, "Who's that bloke back there?" He said, "Frank Beadle from Ipswich." "I'll be blowed", he said, "Frank Beadle from Home Hill." He came back, he was a cane farmer Ernie Evans I used to work for.

Wow.

He said, "Where did you get to when war finished?" I told him. He said, "Five of us were waiting for you." I said, "What for Ernie?" He said, "We were going to buy a cane farm and put you on it." I said, "I didn't have any money." He said, "I knew that."

18:00 He said, "We knew that but we know damn well you would work." He said, "We weren't worried about that." I said, "How could I pay for it?" He said, "Well, when you first buy a farm there's a crop of cane on it. You give us seventy-five percent of the first crop then the next year you give us fifty percent of that crop, then the third year you give us twenty-five percent and you keep seventy-five and keep it that way until the farms paid

18:30 for." So I could have been a cane cocky. Instead of that when I was discharged I couldn't work for twelve months so I went to Cairns in '47 and my uncle up there had an old maple leaf truck, thirty underweight maple leaf. So we built a back on it, put steps on it, covered it all in the back and put shelves on each side. And then I went

19:00 up around Mareeba, Bilwon and around those places to see the farmers to get vegetables. We came onto one farm about midday and they were all sitting down for a meal and we apologised, Jean and I and they said, "No, come on join us." So they had beans and peas and cabbages and everything so I made an

19:30 agreement with them. In those days it was price fixing, I was paying four pence a pound for peas and beans. You were allowed to make four pence a pound. I was then delivering them around Cairns and selling them for eight pence a pound, making one hundred percent profit. The shops in town went to the markets and they had to pay six pence a pound

20:00 and they were selling them for ten pence and I was travelling around selling them for eight pence. So my business was a goldmine but I wasn't in it that long and my nerves went again. So I came home on the Friday I had about forty pounds worth of produce on the truck, I gave it away I put the truck in my uncles backyard, boy did he storm.

20:30 He said, "Why didn't you sell it as the going concern." I said, "I'm not interested in money". We packed up. We left there on the Monday and came back to Bundaberg. I didn't know what we would do so I wrote to repat [Department of Repatriation] and they said, "What you went through first and what we questioned you on, how about taking a selection out west?"

21:00 I said, "No." They said, "Righto, how about cabinet making?" I said, "Right." So I went to the college at Bundaberg. I learnt cabinet making, I was cabinet making in Bundaberg there until 1951. And then we got a letter one day, Jean must have wrote away, we had just moved into a brand new war service home, I don't think I seen the inside of it that much and this

21:30 letter came from the Ipswich railway workshops telling me there was a job here as a carriage builder. Well I said to Jean, "If you're prepared to leave a new home I'm prepared to leave this job to get a job that's going to be permanent." I said, "Where we are now anything could happen. Men are leaving like anything from the factory. We're not getting satisfaction where we are." So I came down here and done the test.

22:00 They wanted me to start straight away and I said, "No, I've got to give a weeks notice at least." So I went back to Bundaberg and gave a weeks notice and at that time we bought a little, what they called a little Morris, it was a little Morris Utility and I put a cover on the back of it and we only had Ian at that time, he was only a little

22:30 boy. We packed up to come down to Ipswich. Well I don't know, we got lost at Gympie couldn't find our way out of Gympie. We couldn't find anywhere to eat, we got to Eumundi and a little café there we had one of the best meals we ever had at a café I think. Then when we were coming through to Redcliffe and all the little pine trees were along the road I though "Gee we're getting near to Ipswich."

23:00 I didn't realise we had to go through Brisbane yet to come to Ipswich. I still don't know it was a little Morris Utility and we had that little utility for a fair while until we came to Ipswich and I started here as a carriage builder.

What had made your nerves go to stop you selling the fruit and vegetables?

Again.

You mentioned that when you stopped selling the fruit and vegetables your nerves had

23:30 **gone?**

Well did I say when I was discharged I went paralysed? No.

You mentioned that.

Yeah I went paralysed for three months and it just came back again. See it was getting on about that time when there was a few accidents up on the islands and that and my mind started going back to different things

24:00 which I should not have let it I suppose but still you can't help it.

How long did your nerves go for the second time?

Not for long, I knew I had to get out of Cairns because what we were doing was, it was a good fruit run, it was a goldmine but we were making nothing out of it

24:30 and that's what was rolling me because I was working and Jean used to be with me of a night-time, I used to sort out the tomatoes and things like that. If I bought two or three cases of bananas from the cod where I used to get the bananas from, whoever was selling them I'd buy them by the bunch off the farmer. Well if they got ripe too many I'd just phone the hospital and say, "Righto, I've got a spare case of bananas." They'd say, "Righto,

25:00 drop them off." Well I never lost a banana or anything see and then the fruit run was good, I was renting the truck paying five pound a week, I was paying for the petrol, I was paying board for Jean and I and I was supplying fruit and vegetables for about nine mouths. Well I couldn't do it. Instead of making a profit I was working for nothing and I couldn't see.

25:30 And we tried to rent a place, I thought if we got out on our own in a rented house we'd be alright. They wanted two hundred pound key money in those days and we had to buy the old fridge which wasn't worth two shillings I don't think. Well it couldn't be done because I didn't have the money. When we left

Bundaberg to come here, we'd be lucky if we had thirty pounds in our pocket.

26:00 In 1954 we came, I came here in '51, we rented a place in Ipswich here a big place but we only had half of it. So we moved out to Saddlers Crossing and it had a thatched roof on it to start with and some kids threw a cracker up and burnt the roof off. Then we moved into

26:30 Railway Street here and we were paying a pound a week rent on it while I was. Well in 1954 Jean and I went looking for a piece of land and we were coming up Jacaranda Street and Jean said, she was carrying at that time, no she said, "I think I'll go home and have something to eat love." I said, "Righto." So I took her home and I said, "Righto, I'll go back and start off from there." I came down two streets

27:00 and I seen this block of land, there used to be a pig sty here and there was all barbed wire and everything, big coil of barbed wire and everything here and I looked at it and I visualised, I already had the plan and specifications. This is a war service home, by the way, I changed it I put five windows there and I put the patio here and we got a patio and a barbie out the back and all. And everything's all done up different altogether. And

27:30 I went and I seen the agent and I asked him how much it was, it was two hundred and fifty pound. I said, "Righto, all I've got on me is fifty pound. That is all I own." So I put that down in front of him. He said, "Righto." So I went and got Jeanie bought her out here. She said, "Alright, let's do that." So I said, "A small blocks here. " I said, "A six foot odd blocks on this corner here if I did that for a garage and everything."

28:00 It looked good, so I went back to the agent and he said, "I've made a mistake, it's two hundred and seventy-five." I said, "No way in the wide world, John. John Wild no way in the wide world." I said, "Two hundred and fifty." So he signed it up and I'm at the workshops on the Monday morning and sitting on the bench I was taking my disk of the wall, like you know you had to take your disk off to say that you were at work

28:30 and I'm sitting down and this Scotsman came along. He said, "What's wrong boy, what's wrong lad?" I said, "I've just bought a piece of land. I've put down fifty pound I've got another two hundred to pay for it and I'm trying to work out what I'll do. I've got war service arm in Bundy [Bundaberg] I won't get much out of that. We only just moved into it and it will be fairly hard to shift." He said,

29:00 "Nothing to worry about. Nothing to worry about." And off he went, well I didn't know him. The next day he came by and he said, "Come down here, I want to show you something." So I went down and he opened up the cupboard where they generally put their Glassdon Bay you know in Coke. He opened up his Glassdon Bay and handed me two hundred pound, an old Scotsman.

Why did he give it to you?

Why, I don't know.

29:30 I said, "You don't know me." He said, "I know you, I know you." I said, "What interest?" He said, "None." I said, "Well I'll pay you each pay day so much." He said, "Well give it to my Solicitor instead of giving it to me." He said, "Give it to my Solicitor." So he told me who his Solicitor was. So when we sold the home up there and I had the money, I paid him off and I gave

30:00 him a bit of interest on top of it, old Jock McKenzie. They said, "What, did that old fella give you money?" I said, "Yes." And then a couple of years after I'm paying this place off, I only owed a couple of thousand on it, dollars I suppose. But it was the way I built it, I got the money and I got the land and Jean helped me with the first cementing lot. We put in all the blocks

30:30 then that Christmas I went to a chap not far from where we were in Railway Street, he had a sawmill. I told him of the position I was in, so I gave him the order for all my framework. So before Christmas I told him I couldn't pay him. He bought all the framework here and a cobber of mine

31:00 from work he used to go to Noosa every year for holidays and we only had two weeks holidays in those days. He went up for the first week then he came back, Reggie Jones and by that time I had all the framework cut out, the roof cut out, everything cut out just to put together. That week we put

31:30 the whole lot together, put the facia boards on, put the sills around and I went into Wes Morton Building Society, I asked them could I get a loan. They said, "What on?" I said, "A home." They said, "What are you going to do first?" They said, "What?" I said, "All the frameworks up." So they came out, checked it and they gave me so much money.

32:00 From what I got I went and paid the sawmill. So I wanted weatherboards then, six inch dressed weatherboards and there was a sawmill on the north side owned by Bert Warren. I went over to Bert and asked him for weatherboards and everything. And I said, "I can't pay you." He said, "Oh finish, I don't want anything to do with you."

32:30 I said, "Oh that's a bit tough." He said, "No it's not. I don't supply anything to strangers." I said, "Righto." I said, "When I see Vince and Robert and Elma I'll tell them how you treated me." Well that was his brother and his niece and nephew. He looked at me and he said, "Are you from Home Hill?" I said, "Yes, up river Home Hill." He said, "What do you want?" So I got my weatherboards, he got paid when Wes Morton paid me because that's the way I

33:00 worked it all.

That was good of him to do that.

Oh yeah.

Just going back a bit to the cane cutting days.

Yeah.

I was just wondering if, to help me understand it a bit more, you could describe what you would do on a typical day cutting cane, like from the morning to the evening.

Righto. You get up bright and early, I was batching and there were two blokes, yeah there were another

33:30 two blokes working on another, no I was on my own then at McIntyre's. I used to get up, have my breakfast, go out early in the morning and load up early in the morning because burnt cane it gets juice on it later on with the sun and you'll have bees everywhere. And when you pick up a bundle of cane and you throw it on your shoulder and you pinch a bee in between your neck and

34:00 a bunch and they sting you, you know it. So I used to go out early in the morning, I used to load five trucks of cane, two tonne five in each one by eleven o'clock. Come home, get under the open shower, clothes and all and wash yourself and drop your clothes down and stamp on them and everything and hang them out to dry. There were there for next

34:30 morning, you'd put on clean clothes. Then I used to start cutting about one o'clock or so, cutting until around five or half past five and I'd have twelve tonne of cane on the ground. Well when you're cutting, the night previous or so well you put a fire break through and you'll burn so much that would only last for two or three days

35:00 because if you leave it stand any further and the juice goes out of it, the weight drops and the sweetness drops. That means you've got less weight when you cut your cane and the farmers get less pay because the sweetness is not there, the CCS isn't there for them see. So you have a, I used to have a little two inch spare stick in the

35:30 end with a piece of tin on it and they have a file in there and one on the other end. Well I'll sharpen the cane knife on this end and as soon as I bent down and started cutting, if it was four chain or whatever it was, I'd go the full length before I straighten up and then I used to have a billy of tea at both ends. Well I'd have a drink then and something and off again and then I'd come back on the next one. And what you generally do is, we

36:00 were loading onto motor lorries with the truck up on the motor lorry. Well you had to leave a roadway going through for the truck to go so you used to throw three, there'd be three rows of cane thrown onto the one heap on each side. Well that meant you can hand load so much and then you had a ladder that you had to climb up to top it off. And

36:30 you put a chain over it to tighten it down and take it down to the mill and with the truck well you drive over the tram line where the locos used to come and there used to be a hole on each side, well it used to go down low enough so as the back of the truck was nearly on the line. Then you had what they called a set of points you used to put up and put on the line to push your truck off and put an empty one

37:00 back on. That's the way you done it. It was hard work but still.

And when you said you were batching, was this a lonely kind of life?

Oh, well it wasn't I didn't notice it lonely you know. Well I think I got used to being on my own most of the time but the old farmer there, the old McIntyre, old Harry McIntyre an old

37:30 Irish man he was a funny old fella. He used to have a moe [mustache] on and a big stem pipe and spit out the side of the mouth and so forth. But he used to enjoy a game of drafts or a game of crib and he used to come down now and again for a game of crib. You had to watch him he could crib alright that old devil or a game of drafts. And then I was having trouble with the cat

38:00 and it used to always be in the kitchen part and there wasn't anything there for it but it always tormented me. Anyway I had a good Remington tapered barrel twenty-six inch tapered barrel beaded sight rifle, single shot. One night I disturbed the cat and it went out into the grass and I got the torch and lined him up, ping over he went. I went over and I was looking at him and old

38:30 McIntyre came around the corner and he said, "Did you get him Frank?" I said, "Yes Matt, I got him." When I looked and turned the torch off it was his cat, I shot his own cat for him. He said, after he said, "I've been looking everywhere for my cat Frank, have you seen him?" I said, "I haven't seen him." I'd shot him. I buried him quick and lively. Old Matt was funny but his son, Ervin, he only had

39:00 the one boy and I used to walk three and a half miles to school from where I was and Ervin used the ride the creamy mare and now and again I'd get up behind him and we got to know his other so well he's still, he's a millionaire twice over Ervin but we're still like brothers you know. He came down when

we were in this home here and he said, “You need

39:30 a new car Frank.” I said, “No.” I said, “I should pay the home off first.” He said, “What do you owe on it?” I said, “Two thousand something.” Next minute he hands me a cheque for two thousand odd. He said, “Here are, pay me back when you can.” I said, “Righto.” That’s the way it’s happened to me all through my life you know. You know I got help all along the way.

40:00 **Well we’ll just pause there.**

Tape 5

00:37 **To your story of being called up to the Militia [Citizen’s Military Force].**

Yeah.

Tell us what happened.

Well I was working on the farm and when war broke out and my age group was ready to be called up I got word to say that I was called up and to report to

01:00 Townsville, 31st Battalion and I was put into Don Company. There was Roy Darwin was the captain in charge of us and then a chap by the name Rose. We went into Townsville at the Townsville showgrounds like I said to you earlier, regimental number 34486. And we done all manoeuvres

01:30 all around Ross River and everywhere there and then when they called me up well. We used to go out on manoeuvres and that and one night it rained. We got soaking wet. We came back to came and they said, “Get dry clothes on and come on parade.” And they gave us a nip of rum. And we no

02:00 sooner got back to our tents and we were called out again on, to go on another manoeuvre, we got soaking wet again, we’d finished up with no dry clothes at all. And here we are in camp with just the blankets wrapped around us. It was a cold night too. And of course I suppose they tried to toughen us up. And then there wasn’t much I done in the army because then in

02:30 1942 well they released me to go cane cutting. Well that was the last of my army days until I enlisted on the 5th when CCC came through and I was on the road between Cairns and Kuranda and they came into being. Like we were in the AWC, the Allied Works Council before then and when the civil, the CCC, the Civil Construction Corps came

03:00 in well they were more or less interested in giving us numbers to go further north. Well that’s when I shot through.

Well tell us more, like what happened from being trained and then suddenly out of the army? Tell us the story there.

Well we only done manoeuvres all the time. And like one bloke here reckoned he had broomsticks. We didn’t, we had the old Martini-Henry [Lee- Metford rifle], the

03:30 old First World War weapons, we were using those marching around with, we had the .303’s. But it was all manoeuvres all the time, that’s all or drills there was nothing else at all. Like we only went on guard duties around the camp and that and I think there must have been special guards that were in the army at the time but when I

04:00 shot through to Brisbane to join the air force from up there I went for my exam to be entered and the officer said, “Are you in the army?” I said, “No, I don’t know anything about being in the army.” He got word through to Townsville and he came in and he said, “You were in the army.” I said, “I thought I wasn’t, I was released to go cane cutting.” He said, “You weren’t

04:30 discharged at all.” I tried to make out I was dumb. Anyway I got into the air force.

Well before we get to the air force lets talk a bit more about some of this army life, like did you expect to go anywhere in a fight overseas in the army at the time?

Well I’ll tell you what happened with the 31st.

What about you though, what were your expectations?

Well I knew we would be sent overseas

05:00 I knew that New Guinea for sure but I wasn’t there long enough to be sent anywhere and of course it didn’t enter my mind at that time whether I’d go or not. I was just in the army and I was more or less disappointed in the way I was caught up because I had just had a permanent job which I didn’t have before. I was on a farm where he put me on permanent where most of the other

05:30 farmers once the wet weather started or the cane cutting season finished you were paid off. But with

this farm Frank Swinley he kept me on all the time and if it rained we were in the shed painting instruments or putting extra oil on the harness and fixing up everything like that. So in the army I wasn't in there long enough to realise you know where I'd go. But

06:00 the 31st did join up with the 51st from Cairns and they went to Morotai and then they finished up on Bougainville. Well when they went to Bougainville I'm lead to believe one landing craft that was going in got stuck on the reef and out of the platoon of one hundred and twenty odd men or so only six got out of it. The Japs were calling out to them they're not Australian

06:30 and as soon as they put their head up over the side, ping they were gone. So…

Well how long all up were you training before you were back doing cane cutting again?

I never went back to cane cutting again when I was discharged from the air force. Jean wouldn't let me.

No not the air force, I mean in between. You said that you went from the army back to cane cutting before you joined the air force.

No I went

07:00 back cane cutting in 1942. I was called back.

Well tell us about that, what was the story there?

That was on account of, that was because they were short of cane cutters and I was released for the season, full stop. That's all I done was that one season and I had to go back again into the army see. That's all I was released for

07:30 because at that time there was a shortage of cane cutters, they were all enlisted most of them anyway.

And were the other men who were called back were they also in the army, in the forces?

Well I don't know. I knew I was and I was the only cutter on that particular farm, it was a one man cut except rather at the last minute we put a young lad on.

And what was it like to go from the forces back to the farm?

08:00 All right. You could go out every night of the week if you wanted to and you had no restrictions. I could go to dances and I used to be MC [master of ceremonies] at dances, at Osborne School it was an open shed and I used to. I started doing that when I was only sixteen. I used to be a master of ceremonies at the dances there and we used to always put on the first sets and all the dances, old time dances and that

08:30 and boil up after and have a cup of tea and so forth and we used to thoroughly enjoy ourselves. Then if we weren't there we used to jump on the big open truck with just the trap part on the back and there would be all of us on the back and we'd drive eleven mile down to Inkerman and we'd go to a dance down there. So that's the way life was, even when I was to leave from the army to do cane cutting. We started doing

09:00 that again, well I did. The others were doing it all the time but I wasn't but it was good we used to thoroughly enjoy ourselves.

And tell us how you used to get involved with some of this Civil Construction Corps work?

Well see, well when I was on the road between Cairns and Kuranda and they came into being well they could allocate a number to you and

09:30 transfer you to wherever they wanted you to go, wherever was the most essential work. Well at that particular time essential work was up around Portland Roads and Iron Range. Like they were building fortifications and I don't know what up there. It could have been airstrips I don't know. It was very likely there was an airstrip there at Portland Road, they land there now. Because that case the other day

10:00 with the bottle of wine they landed there at Portland Roads. Well they had the authority to send you wherever they liked but I wouldn't accept the number. I didn't want any number.

Why not?

And I didn't want to go up there so.

Why not?

I put my heels in and shot through.

Why didn't you want to?

Well I reckon if I was going to go up there where the Japs were bombing, I'll

10:30 go up under my own steam not being told to go there. I would not have been able to say that if the army said, "Righto you're going to New Guinea." That would have been full stop. The same as the 39th they had no option, bingo you're going to Port Moresby and that's all there was to it. Whereas I didn't want

to do that, not when I was in civvy [civilian] clothes I wasn't in uniform or anything.

11:00 I was in civilian clothes and I though well, you're not going to order me around. Being on your own, caring since you were fifteen or so well you get a little bit independent. You might take an order and let it go in one ear and out the other, but if you don't want to do it, you don't do it and that's all there is to it. So…

How did you

11:30 **come to be working on the road, how had you got the work on the road from Cairns to Kuranda?**

Well with the Allied Works Council, when I went back to camp in Townsville and they said there's essential work to be done and you are allocated out to the AWC, the Allied Works Council. And at that particular time they were building

12:00 buildings at Garbutt aerodrome in Townsville and they were more or less bombproof. They ha the straight sides and everything but coming out from there were two more sides coming up on a slant so if a bomb hit and they hit there it would go over the top of the building. And when we finished the building we were on well they sent me to Cairns then because the

12:30 Cobra, a fighter plane from America was coming in and they needed a longer airstrip to land on. So I was with the bloke with the theodolite doing all the levels on the airstrip. And when we had finished that they said, "Well the next important job is a road between Cairns and Kuranda in case the Gillies [Highway] is bombed." And they said, "We'll have to build a road from there

13:00 up." Well it was a road and you were going up so many bends and up the mountain and on the weekends it would rain and when you come back Monday you got landslides everywhere and by the time you cleared your road again on the Monday you'd be flat out being up to where you finished on the Friday before. And it was a slow job to do it. But we got as

13:30 far as the lookout is at the present day and you can lookout over Browns Plain over to Green Island and down over the Barron River to Redlynch and all around that. It's very nice to look at that from the lookout. I came down there when it was completed in 1974 with Jean and I hadn't seen it completed before then because I only got half way up, I didn't

14:00 get all the way up. So it was a road that had to be built but there was so many bends in it. But the Gillies Highway it was worse then that, from the bottom gate in the Gillies Highway from the bottom gate to the top gate straight across was two miles, by road it was twelve miles. There was six hundred and eighty odd bends on that road and in the early days it was only a one-way traffic. If you were booked

14:30 in at the bottom gate at such a time you had to be at the top gate at a certain time. If you're not there and they sent someone down to look for you and they found you loitering, you were fined but now it's two-way traffic down the Gillies Highway.

Well tell us about making the road, what was it like your day to day work?

Day to day work. Hard work because we used to gravel,

15:00 sometimes we'd be on the Barron River shovelling gravel all day long. Four metre trucks I think they were and you were throwing gravel up onto them all day long and then when I got on the roadway well you had to dig down. There wasn't that much, there was some machinery but most of it was

15:30 pick and shovel work going up. And you levelled off so much and you might have a bulldozer that would push it over and level it to a certain extent but it was all hard work until you got up. And then when you'd go back on a Monday morning the landslides are everywhere and it's all sloppy and wet and you know mud everywhere. You were slipping and sliding and.

Well how did you

16:00 **avoid things like landslides, how did you stop the structure of the road from collapsing?**

Well you couldn't. You had to, well later on, well you built so back out and then they put up, I think at the present time, we didn't do it but at the present I think there is a guard wall to stop any slides coming down. But the roads now, it's a bit wider because it's

16:30 two vehicle wide now. When we were doing it we were only making one way vehicle at that time we weren't doing it two-way, so they done a lot of work on it.

And how did you know what to do?

Pick and shovel, there was nothing, you had to know what to do. You didn't need brains to do it. All you done was put your head down and work. But in those days even cane cutting and that I used to wear the old Ipswich flannel.

17:00 I don't know if you ever heard of it. Never mind how hot it is, at the start of a cane season or even if I

was working on the farm I'll buy two Ipswich flannels in the wintertime and then by summertime they were thin enough for me to wear during the summer. Then next winter I'd buy two more new ones and that's the way we used to work it because with a flannel

17:30 and you sweated you never got a cold, you never got a chill with it.

And what were the other blokes like on the road works?

Oh they were alright. I can't even remember their names to tell you the truth because you were set in one position to do a certain job and you stayed there, you never wondered off anywhere. You didn't have time to wonder off. Only in an emergency you could slip into a paddock somewhere, in the

18:00 scrub but apart from that you weren't allowed to go anywhere.

So what were your hours, how long would you work for?

Well they used to only work for the, oh I don't know. I though we left around seven o'clock and then we had lunch, I reckon we worked more than the eight hours a day because I think in those days even before the war there was a forty-four

18:30 hour week. And even when I first started work at fifteen the union blokes used to get onto you. I think I've still got my first union ticket, seven and six pence. Seventy-five cents for a union ticket for twelve months and there's little square pieces on it that you tear off whenever you vote for anyone. And every time you got a union ticket from the rep there was always half a dozen or so missing. I

19:00 think they used to keep them to vote for, who they wanted to vote for.

And tell us where were you living when you were working on these roads? Where did you live?

In Cairns?

Well when you were working on the road?

On the road. No, well I was with the aunty and uncle in Cairns where I went to after I came back from the war. Where the other four went to, I went there.

During this time working on the roads?

Yes.

What about if

19:30 **you worked till late, how would you get back to Cairns?**

Oh the trucks always came back into town. There was trucks coming back into the city all the time into Cairns, down Sheridan Street. They were always coming down.

And tell us, what other kind of work did you do, did you work on an airfield?

Only at Cairns I worked there on the airstrip in Cairns.

What did this involve, what did you have to do here?

Airstrip.

20:00 Airstrip like I said before for the Cobras.

What work would you do, was it pick and shovel or what?

No, I wasn't I had an easy job there. I had a fencing about that long and a hammer. And I used to go along the side and a bloke would be up on the centre of the strip with a theodolite and he would take levels and I had to put the peg in up a certain level. And when I was up on that level he says,

20:30 "Right." And then we will move to the next one. And we marked out the airstrip, what the rise was, camber was they called it, the camber going up like that, an airstrip's not flat it's on the camber. And the one in Cairns when the CO [Commanding Officer] was talking off that morning I made a remark to him then. I said, "The camber's too high Keith."

21:00 And he said, "What do you know about it?" And I told him I've already worked on airstrips and I said, "The one I done in Cairns for the Cobra wasn't as high as this one." And the camber on the airstrip at Labuan Island was too high. And you only had to just move off the top a little bit and you were gone. So…

Why do they have a camber?

Leave the water drain off.

21:30 No water can't stay on it and that. That's why when a plane takes off, if he's veering to port on taking off he'll make around to port. If he's veering to starboard, he'll go up and come around to starboard because they run it more or less down when they take off. Sometimes some of the pilots, well on the

fighter planes and that,

22:00 they seem to be able to keep them right in the centre.

And so tell us the story about them wanting you for the Civil Construction Corps, like how did you receive the news that they wanted you for the Civil Construction Corps?

Not too good. No, well they only advise you. They called us together and we had a meeting and they said, “Well a lot of this work

22:30 is being taken over by the CCC from the AWC.” And they would call out a list of names who was going over. Of course my name was amongst them and like I said earlier I didn’t intend to go anyway so. Same when Squadron Leader Cyril Stark called us on parade at Narromine

23:00 they took the Mosquitoes and took the Mustangs up to Japan. I didn’t want to go up there either.

Did you, when they called you up for the CCC did you say anything?

No. Well it was only your own blokes that were there, none of the members of the CCC was there that day. It was only your foreman again in charge that would tell you what’s on the

23:30 go. He would get correspondence of course, he would get word. That’s all there was to it. And then later on well they would have allocated me a number and say righto number so and so, it might belong to Francis Thomas Beadle well your project is on range whatever the case may be.

Well tell us, what did you immediately do after you heard your name called out?

Well I knocked off work

24:00 that evening and I didn’t go back. I just shot through, I got the train and I came down and I joined up the air force and that’s all there was to it.

What interest did you have in the air force?

Nothing, nothing at all. Only I didn’t want to go in the army and my younger brother was in the air force before me and I thought, “Well,

24:30 that’s mine. I’ll be in the air force instead.”

Did you have any interest in planes before?

No. The only plane I seen was in 1928, oh well that was my first plane. I went to Normanton with Uncle George on the railmotor and a little plane flew in there and it had apricots and that on it and I can remember

25:00 they were three and sixpence a pound for apricots at that time, back in 1928. And that’s the nearest I got to it but apart from that plane I didn’t see another one until I was in the air force.

And tell us what news were you hearing of Japan attacking Australia at the time when you joined the air force?

25:30 Oh well it was news that was taken all around the country as though you know. It was things that should never have happened and I think the Japanese had it all planned out long before what they intended doing. They were in China fighting I think before then and that’s why Singapore fell and everything because Japan hit first before

26:00 they declared war you know.

Yeah but what news were you hearing yourself, like was there something inspiring you about how close Japan was coming to join up the forces?

No, no, I never gave that a thought about Japan. Well I knew there was risks because we were told you know we always heard about the Brisbane line and of course you had a fair

26:30 idea they wanted to come here but I didn’t think you know there was that much danger at the time. But when you read what they done at Kokoda Track and all of that, French Haven and Milne Bay and all of those and the Bismarck Sea. On there is a list of the Bismarck Sea Battle and they reckon there was only so many planes in it and one

27:00 bloke writing out reckons there must have been about three hundred planes in it. But the boats and that they sank was terrific.

But at the time that wasn’t an inspiration to you?

No, no it wasn’t.

What was?

Well I had to be in a force, some force, full stop. Whether it was army, air force or navy because my age

was that was that I could be conscripted into the

27:30 militia or I could please myself where I went. If I didn't enlist in the air force or the navy they would have conscripted me into the militia and that's all there was to it because there was nothing I could do about it.

Well you were telling us about how you had joined up and they said, "You're already in the army." How did you get the clearance do you know like?

No,

28:00 well when I went for the medical in Brisbane and I had to go before an officer there and he enquired on what you where, what status you were in and he asked me if I was in the army well I didn't know, I made out I didn't know anything about it. And he said, "Where about are you from?" I told him Home Hill well he new then to get in touch with Townsville so he got in touch with Townsville, the army

28:30 in Townsville, and they told him then that I was in the 31st Battalion. And of course he said, "I'll get a clearance for you." Well that's all you can do, I couldn't do anything else about it. If he would have said, "No, you can't get a clearance." Well I would have been back in the army.

Well tell us then once you got your clearance what happened then?

Well I went down the Sandgate,

29:00 that's where we were doing our foot sliding all the time. We used to walk over the causeway there at the Margate I don't know how often with your pack on and we'd be marching all around over on the other side of Margate. And we done all of our drill and marching and everything there at Sandgate. When that was finished

29:30 I was sent to Williamtown aerodrome outside of Newcastle to wait for my course to start at the technical college in Canberra. And while I was at Newcastle all I done, I was in the library there and I was doing amendments and everything like that on the books and then I went to Canberra.

Well tell us,

30:00 **how were you being allotted to what section and unit of the air force, like how did you know to be on this course?**

Well the point is this, once you get in the army or the air force your life is not your own. Whatever an officer tells you to do you do, you can't turn around and tell him to jump in the lake or you know where you'll finish up, in the guardhouse somewhere. So you just go and do

30:30 what you were told. You learn about discipline straight away. You don't try and butt against it because if you do you'll finish up on the wrong side all the time and you'll get all the dirty jobs there is possible to be thrown at you. Whereas if you do your job and you obey orders you keep on, you've just got to make yourself you know satisfied with it. Well when we left the,

31:00 when I left Newcastle to go to Canberra and I went to college there I was doing all training you were making joints, steel joints and female joints and everything with steel, your filing, and your draw filing, you were working on steel all the time, doing joints and different things and that. Then you were

31:30 tested, you were examined and then after three months you were allocated into whatever section there may be, flight mechanic, flight riggers there might be an electrician, be a fitter, be a armourer, be a instrument maker, whatever the case may be you might go into. So I thought I was doing fairly well with all my exams and I finished up I got

32:00 mumps and I was in hospital for two weeks or so. When I went back to the college the principal called me up and he said, "What do you want to be Frank?" I said, "An electrician." He said, "If you go back a flight, go back a course I'll guarantee you to come out at an electrician but at the present time you'll either be a flight mechanic or a flight rigger. Everyone has been allocated

32:30 already." So I didn't go back. See I had three months and I thought well I'll move on. So I went to Melbourne, Ascot Vale to do my flight mechanics course down there and we landed at Melbourne on Melbourne Cup Day 1943 and the officer in charge said, "Can anyone climb a

33:00 windmill?" I said, "I come from the town of windmills, Home Hill there. Every home and every farm has a windmill there." He said, "Righto, there's one there you can climb it and watch the Melbourne Cup." And I seen Dark Felt win the Melbourne Cup in 1943 he just about lead all the way. That was my first Melbourne Cup that year. And then we done our training there and when I finished my training there

33:30 I was posted to Bundaberg.

Well lets ask you a couple of questions about training and the kind of things you were learning, especially in Canberra, you mentioned you were learning steel and all that?

All steelwork, your filing and draw filing and cutting. And you cut kind of a horse shoe affair and then you cut a square in there and then you cut one to fit into there and it's got to be a real neat fit.

34:00 It's right down to a thousand of an inch. If it's sloppy it's no good, you were told to do it all over again and all different jobs like that, well they take a bit of time to d, you can't hurry them up. And then you draw file it and make it nice and shiny and that. It's all steelwork that's all it is. It's all different joints and that with steel.

34:30 **What was the name of this course, what did they call this course?**

I don't know what they really called the course except I knew you had to go to Canberra to do this course and that. And I don't know what bearing it had whatever it has on working on aeroplane engines. I couldn't see any connection whatever but still the army and all the forces tell you what to do and

35:00 that's all there is to it.

And what was your life like along the way, like what was life like in Canberra?

Canberra, it was a good life. There was a services hut there and when you had leave you could go there. You could get a nice meal for I think it was a shilling or one and sixpence a meal. There was one girl I knew there

35:30 Heather Bruce, she was a scotch girl by the name too. But Heather was very good and when I was there I was friends with a chap from Tasmania and Heather got us two passes to go to the opening of Parliament and we seen Dame Enid Lyons and Nurse Tangy and all of them speaking and going on, all

36:00 lying down on sofa's about six feet long out of solid leather, red and one to each member. Lying all over it and hardening the point and that all the time and we were up in the gallery of course. And in the hallway was all bus to different ones. There was one there Billy Hughes and underneath it was presented by Billy Hughes. It was funny you know but you could go

36:30 there and get your feet attended to and there was a billiard table there and a little dance hall and it was real good, Canberra. I was there in wintertime and of course of a morning there was ice on the bitumen road and of course walking from there to the college a couple of miles the seat of my overalls was always wet. I always seemed to find the way down. And then

37:00 it was so cold and ice was on the ground and it was still there in the shadow of the huts, they were still there until midday before the sun melted the ice but apart from that one dance hall there was not bad.

Well tell us, you mentioned that you got sick, you mentioned that you got sick in Canberra.

Yeah,

37:30 mumps. I got very sick in Canberra. They put me into hospital for two weeks and of course I missed the course by two weeks and the one in charge of the college wanted me to come back to the next course and go through with them, which I think I should've done. Well if I would have done that I would not have met Jean

38:00 so what's to be will be I suppose. That chap up there he sets out what your life is going to be and that's all there is too it.

What about if you had not got sick, where would you have been sent, what would have happened with you?

Well I don't know what would have happened then because it all depends on the principal of the college and that where we are being allocated to see and you don't know until you are finishing your course.

38:30 And of course you wouldn't know what you are going to do. You're only open, you'll get what you want.

You wanted to be an electrician, why?

Well I had ideas later on in civvy life, electric refrigeration, everything like that I reckon would be coming in. Because

39:00 in those days, early days they used to have the gas and before that was the old ice box. In fact I've still got a Morson ice-chest downstairs, the original. Well I looked at it in this light that if I was an electrician I got a better chance of setting myself up after war had finished instead of going back to hard work if I had a trade I could

39:30 continue in because if you learned to be an electrician and you were doing lights and everything like that all the time and you know what to do well in civvy life then well you can start up your own business, go out as an electrician. Electric refrigeration was my idea. At that time too I was studying

40:00 [by] correspondence on diesels because I was thinking of diesel engineering in those days. See I was a bit concerned because when I passed scholarship and I couldn't go up to high school and do my junior and senior, if I would have done that I wouldn't have been on the ground staff, I would have been on the aircrew for sure but seeing I didn't do those well I was keen on learning whatever I could.

40:30 **We better just pause there. It's a good point to pause because we've got to change tapes again.**

Tape 6

00:36 **The course that you did in Melbourne, tell me about where you were based while you were doing this course.**

We were based at Ascot Vale that was the air force base and it was just over the fence from Flemington Racecourse at Ascot. And we were all billeted there

01:00 and we done the mechanical course, a flight mechanic or a flight rigger. We had instructors there that were engineers instructor and we worked on mainly the inline motor, that's the one on the Spitfires the straight V8 cylinder motors or whatever the case may

01:30 be or on a Gypsy Moth motor which was an inline motor and some of the Gypsy Moth motor, I've just forgot what model now is inverted, the pistons are on the bottom, not on top. And we used to work on them adjusting the clearances and everything on the valves and everything like that, that was our job and we learnt that but

02:00 not so much on radial and that's the round motor. And the radial motor they have an uneven number of cylinders because if you've got even cylinders in the radial motor they'd run off balance. Whereas uneven, like number one piston mark fire and down here I've just forgot what piston fire opposite it, whereas on the inline motors

02:30 well they fire alternatively like that but on the radial they don't so the radial motor doesn't go lopsided more or less what I call it but the Bristol Bentleys radial engine is a sleigh valve and it was made in England as a silent motor, very silent. The Japs called us the whispering death because flying low

03:00 you could be on them and they wouldn't hear you and the Beaufighter it was a faster plane then the Zero was down on ground level. And of course our squadron, the green ghost squadron, well Squadron Leader Keith Gulliver he made up the insignia to go on the tail and it was a green ghost on the rocket with a shanghai. And that was his favourite

03:30 weapon on the ground. I'll be bending over the motor, working on the motor and the next minute I'd be stung on the seat of the overalls with this blooming shanghai. And he used to shoot under the plane and laugh. I'd say, "I'll get you one day." And he'd say, "You'll never catch me." These shanghais, you'll see on my insignia there the green ghost on a rocket with a shanghai. Well the Beaufighter it had

04:00 four twenty millimetre, I think they were twenty millimetre cannons in the nose and they used to carry eight rockets, four on each side and three fifty or so pound bomb underneath. And the broadside hit from a Beaufighter just about compared to a six-inch navel vessel broadside, they were terrific.

And the radial and

04:30 **the inline engine, apart from the uneven…**

Yeah.

Things…

Uneven yeah.

Yes, what are the other main differences between these two types of engines?

Oh well there wasn't that much difference at all because they were all on the same principal as the piston and the valves and the you know plugs and everything except for the Bristol Bentleys sleigh valve, there was no spark plugs on that motor

05:00 at all.

Well if I were looking at an inline motor.

Yeah.

Can you describe for me the different parts that I'd be seeing?

You'd be looking at a motor that's very much similar in your car down below, full stop.

I don't look at the motor in my car very much.

Oh you don't. No well it's built up the same, exactly the same as an ordinary car motor, that's all it is.

Well can you sort of describe the different

05:30 **components of that motor?**

Oh well you asked, well I'll get the book out. No, well there's only the pistons and the valves and the

spark plugs and the big end, the con rods, and everything like that all inside. Of course once you kick your motor over and the main shaft starts working

06:00 you've got con rods that's going up and down all the time. Well they move your pistons up and down the cylinder blocks and then the pressure from them creates a spark on the top and then the spark you know it fires and that's what keeps the motor going, kicking the motor over all the time.

Well what sort of size are these inline

06:30 **motors?**

Pardon?

What size are these inline motors?

What size are they? Well most of them, well the Spitfire is fairly I think it's an eight cylinder and there's four pistons on each side or. I've just forgotten now for sure what the size they are. But there was, all I worked on when I left Melbourne was radial motors.

07:00 On the Avro Anson planes, that's a trainer plane in Bundaberg well they did have them over New Guinea well it was an SFTS [Secondary Flight Training School], training school and that's where most of the pilots got their training was up at Bundaberg on the Avro Anson. And of course I used to help to assemble one motor and the 2E

07:30 was on the other one, he was [an] advanced stage to me. I never ever got back to Ascot Vale to do the advance course which I was wishing I could have done. But apart from that well the old Avro Anson it was only a nine cylinder motor and these others were eleven. It was an odd number all the

08:00 time. The Beaufighter motor it stood higher then me, it used to be.

Physically when you look at an inline motor and a radial motor what are the main physical, visual differences between them?

Well the only difference is that one is a long motor and ones just a round motor and that's the only difference you'll see because they've both got pistons and everything. They've all got pistons and plugs and everything like that cylinders.

08:30 They are all built over the same but composition of it together, the firing order of the pistons are different. One of the, the radial motor well I've just forgot the firing order on them but they've got to be in a certain rhythm so as to keep the motor turning perfectly smooth whereas on the inline motor well they fire

09:00 similar to a motor car. Whatever it is, it might be a number one and it might be a number three on the other side, I don't know I've just forgot.

Is one motor more powerful than the other?

I don't think so. The Spitfires, the Merlin motor it was in the Mosquito fighters, they were inline motors and they were good and they could travel a terrific speed.

09:30 In fact there was one write up in one here where they first started to make the Mosquito motor, its ply bonded together. It's interesting to read too just quietly on it. How they done it and they were supposed to do it to carry a one thousand tonne bomb and when they went up on the test flight they didn't realise it, they had a ten thousand pound bomb on

10:00 board and it made no different to them. Over in England they done a lot of work on them. It was interesting reading I was very surprised what I read in there on it.

And at Ascot Vale when you had these two different motors to work on, what sort of things were they teaching you?

Well only teaching us mechanical work but they didn't have a radial to my

10:30 knowledge. It was all inline motors there they didn't have a radial motor there to my knowledge. I don't remember one anyway because all I worked on was an inline motor.

Well what was their method of teaching?

Well you only went there everyday and you fooled around the same as mechanical work, pulling out spark plugs and doing everything like that, you know putting pistons

11:00 in and con rods and main shafts and everything. You know you were working on the motor all the time doing different things and that.

How much work had you done with motors previously?

None. I'd done no work whatever. And I finished up cane cutting, from there I went on aeroplane engines, from there I went cabinet

11:30 making, I built my own home, cut sapphires, done oil painting. Anything at all.

Well what was the learning curve like on working with a motor?

What do you mean?

I mean was it something that came naturally to you or did you require a bit more concentration or?

No,

12:00 well on the cane farm.

I mean working with engines?

Yeah, working with engines getting back, on the cane farm they have the tractors and you have a truck and you learn a little bit of the principle of it but you don't learn how to assemble the inside, the interior. Like you learn different things about a tractor, say a tractor

12:30 engine. On the farm where I was, they had an International truck and all you done was spark plugs or something like that and you done nothing else but when you got to Ascot Vale and they had the engines all bisected and that, then you could see where everything went and you started to learn well that's when you, they'll help you if you don't learn because if you put on a motor

13:00 and you don't know what you were doing well it's too bad. That's why I couldn't make out why Gulliver picked me as his mechanic. But the chap working with me reckons I was the best one in the squadron and I said, "No, I wasn't." I was only a flight mechanic but I used to always make sure I done a job properly. I never done a job, half

13:30 done a job that's all there was too it. When we had that plane I reckon it was the best plane in the rank. That was that one there A884 but he belly-landed it on Morotai, he wiped it off on Morotai that one.

And at Ascot Vale what was the, was it just the motors or the engines that you were working on? Were they…

They weren't working

14:00 models. You didn't start them or anything like that.

So how did you know that you'd fixed them properly?

You didn't you just had to do the job properly, make sure it fitted firm and everything and that. You'd have an instructor there and he kept an eye on you and you just made sure that what you'd done you know the principle of it is the thing or the basic training and you do it

14:30 and just go through it well that's all they wanted because to my knowledge there is no motor at Ascot Vale that started because there is none with a propeller on it to my knowledge. It would be too risky if they had a propeller on it and they started a motor there that revved up to sixteen hundred revs. You'd be in trouble. Because the Beaufighter you had to run that up to fifteen hundred revs to

15:00 check the maggies, the magnetos on the plane and when you switch off one motor well it would drop fifty revs [revolutions]. Well if it didn't drop fifty revs well or over that well then you're in trouble.

Why?

Well there's something wrong with the motor and of course with my grade as a flight mechanic well I wasn't in that position to pull those motors to pieces, it had

15:30 to go into the workshop where there was 2E's and corporals and that and they done engine changes and major repairs and we used to just do the running part of it, what we call the daily to make sure the motor was running and check your petrol for condensation and different things like that. We never ever had to pull a motor to pieces.

How do you check the petrol for condensation?

16:00 Well under the back of the petrol tank is a little tap and of a morning there is water on the bottom. You turn it on put your hand underneath and you can tell if there is water in the petrol and you let it run until there is no more water coming out then you turn it off and that's the condensation. It's surprising you know you wouldn't think water would form from

16:30 petrol but it does. And once you do that you check the maggies and that. Whereas the bloke on the airframe he's got to check the a-lines and things, he got to check all the working parts of the tail and everything whereas I've only just got to check to motor and the engine, the oil, condensation and the maggies and I'm finished. I've got the little job to do

17:00 compared to, I reckon the bloke on the airframe has got more work than I have because he's got to check the tyres, he's got to check everything, the flaps, everything on the plane.

Well take me through when you're doing a check of the engine, take me through that right

from the beginning, what's the procedure?

Well the first procedure is you check for condensation in the fuel.

17:30 And once that's finished you check you're petrol supply, make sure the tanks full make sure your oil is full and then you get up into the plane and kick the motors over, run them up to fifteen hundred revs, sixteen hundred revs, cut one motor and check the maggie to see if it drops fifty

18:00 revs and then you switch that back on again and then you check your other motor and then if they're both correct you cut your motors and all you do is sit there and wait for your pilot to come along. You don't do anything else except when the pilot gets up and he can't see what's at the front of him or what's underneath him, you get out so as you can see him and when everything's clear you just give him the thumbs up to say

18:30 everything's clear and then he'll taxi off then. Or if there's chocs under the wheel, there's the airplane fitter that's got to pull those out from under the wheel and as a rule if you're running a plane up you've got chocs under the wheel to stop it from moving forward otherwise you're going to take off again. You'd be a devil if you took off.

And when you

19:00 **check the oil what sort of things are you looking for?**

Only the level, the level in the oil tank the same as the petrol to make sure. The Beaufighter carries seven hundred and thirteen gallons of fuel on a Beaufighter and that's five and a half hours flight, approximately five and a half hours. That's why we ran out of petrol over at Charleville. I wish he would of went to Bundaberg.

19:30 **Well just going back again to Ascot Vale, what was the general sort of social life like on this base?**

Well if you got leave on a weekend, there was two of us then, Jackie Hurd and myself we were always cobbers together. And we used to go to one hotel there, the old Haymarket

20:00 and I would only drink light shandies, very light shandies but we used to go there if we had the Saturday off and that. And we'd have a couple of drinks, that's all we would have and we used to have the evening meal at the pub, never ever paid for it the owners of the pub, we used to go there all the time and they got to know us. In fact when we were

20:30 leaving Melbourne they put on a party for us and told us to invite some many but if you didn't do that you went into town and opposite the Town Hall, I think its College Street is what they called the Dug Out. And you went downstairs and downstairs you could get a meal and everything, you could get your feet attended to,

21:00 everything you'd like to have you could have down there but you couldn't walk outside the front door with a girl, full stop. If you wanted to take a girl home you had to wait for her until she finished work and she came out the back door. You weren't allowed to walk out of that front door with a girl. So as to put a stop I think mainly to the Americans because they'd pick up a girl and just walk out with her, that's taboo, you

21:30 can't do it. That's the Dug Out in Melbourne for you.

When you say you could get your feet attended to, what does that mean?

Well if you had sore feet or blisters or that. Even now I go to a chap here with my feet, my right foot especially even now it cracks all the time underneath, oh gee that gets sore. And they reckon it's in the body that's doing

22:00 it, I don't know the left foots ok but the right foot no, it will crack all the time. I go here. That's why I wear these boots they've got kangaroo uppers. You feel them, gee they are soft.

Oh they are.

Are they.

Wow.

Kangaroo uppers.

Wow.

Uppers I mean. They are nice and soft.

Yeah they're lovely. What sort of, how would you describe the atmosphere of Melbourne during

22:30 **the war?**

Well I don't know. Jack and I, we found it alright but a lot of the blokes you know they were up against the Americans from the word go. I think the Americans used to palaver a fair bit, more than what the Aussie boy did. But I don't know, the Melbourne atmosphere

23:00 was alright because we used to go down to the Gardens, the Queen Elizabeth Gardens and there was Cooks cottage there and all that you know down at the garden and we could go through there and it was real good. We could go over the Princess Bridge there. 'Chloe' was on the wall at the pub [the Young and Jackson Hotel] there until they

23:30 started to disfigure her and then they took her down. I seen in the paper the other day they were restoring her, she was starting to fade a bit.

Who is she?

'Chloe' is the nude painting of the girl they done years ago [19th century French academic nude by the Jules Lefebvre, purchased by Young and Jackson's in 1909, a favourite with WW1 and WW2 servicemen]. It was on the wall at this pub by Princess Bridge in Melbourne and they used to scribble on it and everything and they took it down.

Well what did the painting look like?

Well it was a big painting.

24:00 It would be about, I reckon four feet or more, yeah a fairly big painting, a very big painting. 'Chloe', haven't you heard of 'Chloe'? No.

What kind of, what style of painting?

Natural oil painting. It was in the nude, a nude painting. It was terrific but they took it down. I don't think it went back. I've just forgot the name of the pub

24:30 now I did know it. You come over the Princess Bridge over the Yarra River to the gardens, Queen Elizabeth Gardens and Captain Cook's cottage was there and that. And the river that runs upside down, mud on top of the water. But we used to enjoy ourselves in Melbourne getting around to different places

25:00 you know Jack and I. They also had places in Melbourne you could go to, any service personnel, and they will arrange for you to go to someone's place, it might be a party on or something like that and you just go to this place and they'd say right there's a party on at such and such a place. You get a train say out to a certain place and there would be two girls leading a fox terrier

25:30 pup around well those are the two that you've got to connect to. Well when you get there you'd have a look and if you don't like the look of them then you'd keep on going. It was good Melbourne we had a lot of fun in Melbourne.

And you mentioned a little bit about the Americans, what did you really think of the Americans?

Well I don't know. Only for them we wouldn't be here today talking. They can please themselves what they say,

26:00 it might not have been the American man himself but the material and that they supplied, the Aussies showed them how to fly a Kittyhawk and that. They couldn't fly a Kittyhawk at Port Moresby, the Aussies had to show them how to fly them. But they went into battle yes and they done a lot of work up around the islands and that but we needed them, we needed their support and

26:30 we needed their machinery and everything because for that we had nothing. The Japs would have been here and gone through and two-ups, we had nothing to stop them.

But what about when you sort of would meet American servicemen on the streets of Melbourne or Bundaberg or Townsville, what did you think of the way they were then?

Well to tell you the truth I never ever met too many. I used to try and avoid them.

Why?

Well

27:00 I don't know I used to just keep to ourselves and that and let them carry on. If we passed them we'll pass the time of day and just keep on going. I don't remember ever pulling up to have a yarn with an American. But I can tell you their machinery done us well but it was all lend lease and to see the machinery and the tools and everything that was still wrapped up

27:30 in plastic, dumped onto barges and then the planes go out after war finished and just bombed them and sent them. There was thousands and thousand of dollars, brand new jeeps and everything, all loaded onto barges and bomb practice after the war. And then the latrines around Labuan Island it was all wet you couldn't dig,

28:00 most of them were, the Japanese had them up high, a platform up high and that, well the tools that were

thrown in there and bulldozed in. I had a little toolbox I went to load it up with tools to fetch it back with me and be on the plane and I wasn't allowed, I wasn't allowed to put them in my toolbox. I was a bit annoyed about that because those still

28:30 had kind of a plastic covering over all of them, big shifting spanners and everything, callipers and everything was there but still.

What was the level of equipment and tools like that you had to work with at Ascot Vale?

Oh well it was only just the ordinary. It wasn't any lend lease material and there was only the basic tools there like these shifting spanners and fixed spanners and that but

29:00 only some that would work on that motor and that's all. You didn't have anything extra and you didn't need that much because you got lectures most of the time on different parts and different things and workings and how they worked and so forth. You got a lot of lectures on it.

How would the lectures be structured?

Well I don't know

29:30 to be an electrician I wish I would. I don't know it would have been different very likely. I don't know what instructions they were given.

So there were no lectures given about the mechanics?

Electricity no, only mechanics stuff.

Right.

No electric fitting or anything like that it was only mechanical work that's all you were taught and that, full stop.

And how long did you spend at Ascot Vale?

Three months. You learn a lot in three months.

30:00 I had to anyway because being a cane cutter there was nothing else I could do. When I came back and discharged I worked on a little Morris Major I had or a Morris Convertible. No, no on a utility that's right I'd done

30:30 the pistons up and new plugs and everything on that but that's the only mechanical work I'd done. I don't touch my car now. I've got an old '76 Falcon, XB Falcon and I put power steering on it, ex police car and she's running like a top. Well it used to go up to the sapphire fields every year since 1974 until a couple of years

31:00 ago and I've been to Croydon a few times and I've been down to Sydney a few times in her, never ever stopped on me once.

Excellent. And was there some kind of a passing out parade or something from Ascot Vale, any sort of?

No, you were just posted. I was posted to 8SFTS Bundaberg. Well all I'd done was go and get

31:30 my clearance from all the sections, clothes section and everything like that, you had to get you clearance. And then you were given a railway pass to get on the train and then off you go. When I was discharged I went to the discharge office and I had to hand in, supposed to hand in my clothes and everything. I gave the bloke my kitbag with

32:00 all my clothes and that in, the green clothes and everything I had in the islands. When he came back he threw it at me, there was all new clothes in it. I don't know if he was supposed to do it or not but he gave me all new clothes singlets, underpants, shirts, everything brand new.

Well what did you think of being sent to Bundaberg?

Oh I

32:30 don't mind. I didn't mind. Well when you finish your course they ask you where you'd like to go and I wanted to come back to Queensland, so I said Queensland. Well Bundaberg was the training school so they sent me there, 8SFTS. Well I didn't mind Bundaberg to tell you the truth. I don't know if you've been there or not. Out at Bargara and Bunda Edge [Bunda Cliffs] and

33:00 fishing and everything, Elliot Heads. It's good you can shoot out there and have a good old sit around. Good fishing too at winter time plenty of bream. Old wacko rod and the copper wire and try. Sometimes I wish I was back there. We brought a block of land there of the Vet Affairs [Department of Veteran Affairs] off repat for fifty pounds, a lovely corner

33:30 block. I could have had a tennis court in the back of it the size of it. In fact I think there is three homes built on it now. And I had a home, this one we had the plans and specification of this home to be build as brick veneer, fibres plaster and everything and a picture rail around in the lounge here and everything

and it was fourteen hundred and

34:00 something pounds the builder gave us a contract for. And by the time repat had finalised anything, it was only six months, he jumped the price up another four hundred pound. Well we wiped it. I only wish I would have gone through with it myself but too late now. Well we wiped it, well we had to let the block of land go back to them for fifty pound and then

34:30 they were building more service homes up there but they turned out to be two thousand pounds. They was going to cost us another couple of hundred pound more than what we would have got for our own home. Oh no there was the land included in that too so it wouldn't have been that much dearer. And we didn't carry on so.

Well tell me about the training school at Bundaberg, what

35:00 **was the main sorts of planes that you were working on?**

On the Avro Ansons they were radial motors, what they call a Cheetah motor and twin engines plane, two engines. They were fairly slower plane, they weren't a fast plane. They were used mainly for the pilots. And a lot of them crashed around the place you know around,

35:30 around on the beaches and that. They were fairly slow plane they weren't a fast plane by any means. But I'm lead to believe they had then in New Guinea, I don't know when.

What are the engines like to work on?

The radial motor, the cheetah, they were alright it was a nice engine to work on, a very simple motor.

What makes it simple?

Oh there wasn't,

36:00 like the sleigh valve Bristol Bentleys motor there was more components in that motor then what the old Cheetah motor is. The Cheetah motor it was down to, more or less the bedrock that you wanted and it was very easy to work on, very simple to work on. With them well you worked out your, you adjust.

36:30 your motors and everything, tune them up and then you adjust your throttles so as, your throttles is on the side and whenever the pilot grabs the throttle and the two of them aren't together and when he moves them together well you've got to adjust the throttle so as each motor is revving at the same speed otherwise you'll have one going, you'll be going zigzag down the course. So you've got to synchronise the throttles and everything

37:00 No a good motor to work on. But the Bristol Bentleys there was nothing on them to work on. I didn't have much at all to work on Bristol Bentleys because I didn't have to assemble them.

You mentioned that in the Avros there was a few accidents, can you tell me about some of these training accidents?

Oh well there was a few pilots came down, they were killed around Bundaberg. They smashed on

37:30 flying.

Did you see any of these?

No, I never ever seen any at all. When I was at Maryborough I used to go back to Bundaberg whenever I could get a lift and of course the Avro Ansons they used to be ferried up from down south sometimes and they would be pommy pilots on them. I don't know where they came from and when they landed at the drome at Maryborough,

38:00 and I knew they were coming, I would be ready. I mightn't have my coat on or my shirt done up but I'd just grab an (UNCLEAR) or the wing flap. "Are you going to Bundy?" "Yes." "Jump in." So in I'd jump and fly up to Bundaberg. There was a WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] on board one day and she was in the second pilot seat and he gave her the controls and we were like that all the way

38:30 to Bundaberg, up and down. Gee it was funny. Like on the nose of the Avro Anson there is a round one and a cross and a P, and you've got to keep that level and she couldn't keep it level. Gee it was funny, going up and down.

When was your first flight up in a plane?

Oh that would have been the first flight

39:00 out at Bundaberg. Test flights, yeah I went up in every test flight. Every plane we fixed up, I went up on every test flight. That was my first flight and then when I was on a Beaufighter well I just about flew everywhere but on a mission. They wouldn't let me fly on a bombing mission. I asked them a couple of times but they wouldn't. I don't mind

39:30 flying in planes. Once upon a time when you were taking off your tummy used to come up a bit. No, landing, taking off was always the worst with the Beauy [Beaufighter], they used to swing on take off.

They weren't bad landing but I used to stand behind the pilot. I reckon I landed more planes than what he did.

40:00 He used to come in and I used to just hold the back of the seat you know.

Well we'll just pause there.

Tape 7

00:38 **Were there any particular problems that would come up with some of the work you were doing, the engines on the Avro Ansons?**

Well the only trouble that would come up was on the motors was the flap, the different flats that fitted around the cowling

01:00 on the motor. And I used to always make it my practice to put them on and make sure they were locked on properly because if they flew off in a test flight you copped a bit of a wrap on the knuckles. So there was only once I relented. I was up in the plane ready,

01:30 we were ready to take off and the engineer down on the ground wanted to check something under one flap and I went to get down and he said, "No need to get down, I'll fix it up." So I stayed up in the plane and he done it and put it up. We were flying over Bargara Beach and it blew off. I copped a bit of a

02:00 belting in the ears over that issue so I reckon from then on I'll do my own flaps and panels and that on the plane. I don't think they would have done that much damage except if they had have gone through the wing or something or busted the a-line at the back and that. I didn't see it blow off to tell you the truth it must have went all of a

02:30 sudden. The pilot spotted it, he went crook.

What was life like in Bundaberg during this period?

Well it's alright, I had my fiancé there. I met her the first night I went out. They reckoned I was always at the back door but still I had somewhere to go. Whereas if I didn't have anywhere to

03:00 go and I was out at the drome all the time I don't know what it would have been, it would have been a gruesome life you know unless you had company or you could go out to dances and that. I had an interest there and I was always invited home. The first night I met her, her younger brother was there and he said to his mother, "Gee

03:30 you want to see the dirty looking demon that Jean was with last night." I was playing billiards all day and leaning over a billiard table I was filthy. She said, "He better not turn up here filthy." And next day when I turned up, the next afternoon to take her to the pictures all done up in khaki all starched up and everything. Bill said, "No that's not the bloke that was with Jean last night."

How did

04:00 **your romance develop over this period?**

Oh well a lot of tipping around. She was stationed at Oakey and I was up in Bundaberg. Then most of the time when her mother had a big operation on her foot Jean got compassionate posting back home and then she got a discharge to be with her mother when her father died. He passed away on the 1st

04:30 of April, '45 well see she got a compassionate discharge then to be home with her parents but I was overseas then.

So what was it that made you get from just meeting her to getting serious?

Oh I don't know. When you get invited to a home and you thoroughly enjoy it and you know the front door is open to you and that. And you get on well with her parents and so forth well

05:00 and you get on well with Jean, well I got on real well with Jean. She was a good dancer but she used to go crook because I didn't teach her jazz and I learned jazz but I never ever taught her how to jazz.

Why not?

I enjoyed old time best. So I used to keep on old time.

Well you told us before earlier in the day about how you decided to get married, tell us about your wedding?

05:30 Our wedding, well Jean was in Brisbane and her mother just was out of hospital and her eldest brother was in Brisbane, so Jean went down to fetch her mother home and in the meantime I got posted to 93 Beaufighter squadron so I went down to Brisbane because there was

06:00 a little while before I had to report so when I got to Brisbane, I didn't tell Jean for a while and then I finished up telling her. We were engaged on her nineteenth birthday the September before. I said, "We'll get married when I come home." "No", she said, "Before you go." So she bought that little frock

06:30 and little hat and went up town, went up to Bundy and there was only her parents, Jean and I and her younger brother at the wedding and the minister of course. Jean said to her father, "Gee Dad, there's only five here." He said, "No, there's seven." "No, there's only five Dad, that's all that's here." "No," he said, "There's seven." She said, "I

07:00 can't see seven." He said, "There's two peewee's up on the fence looking in." And that's the type of bloke he was, he was always you know chafer. So very quiet wedding. No, didn't go on a honeymoon, didn't have any wedding breakfast. Had my evening meal at her parents place. Well I was only with her four days and then I had to leave to go into camp

07:30 so. Then they complained some of these blokes you know what life is like, they don't know what life is like. And the young lads today if they went through what I went through in the Depressions years they'd know what life was like.

So tell us, did you marry in uniform?

Yeah. Where is it? Up here.

We'll get a photo later but just tell us what you were wearing?

08:00 I was in the brown uniform, khaki. I was in the khaki uniform and all done up to kill, cap on and that.

What about Jean?

White, a little white, you have a look behind your screen.

Yeah, I'll get a photo later I'm just getting you to describe it.

She had a little white

08:30 hat perched on the side of her head. A white dress of hers. She's still got the white dress in there, she's still got that. The uniform I wore, my granddaughter a few years back, it was all the rage then you know the big coat with the big pockets and everything. I don't know what they've done with them but they borrowed them for something. I haven't seen them since, it's gone.

So tell me what was the

09:00 **ceremony like, where was it held and what was said?**

Christ Church Bundaberg, the big Church of England in Bundaberg. The main one, the main Church of England in Bundaberg. The minister before he was the elderly chap, he passed away and the young cohort that was there couldn't perform a marriage and we had to get Reverend Swan from Monto about forty mile away to come to do the wedding. Oh it's a big church,

09:30 it's a nice church, the Church of Christ in Bundaberg, very big church. Only about five in it, it looked tremendous that day.

And what did it feel like to be a married man?

Oh it was alright except for going away straight away and you didn't see her for so long.

10:00 Like I didn't get back here until our wedding anniversary that day when I landed back here. Narromine and she came down there I got her to come down there. When that smash was and the six burnt to death it was written up in the Courier Mail [newspaper] and she seen it and she went cold, she thought I'd be on the plane. I flew everywhere with him

10:30 except on a mission. And her mother told her then that they would have advised her if I was on the plane. It was close for me going on it because I flew all the time and the French family I met they were in Sidon. When I was over there I was bartering with the natives with the cigarettes and I had powder and soap and everything with me

11:00 and these two girls came along, one was about sixteen and the other one would have been a little girl about so high. Gee she was pretty and I pulled her up and I pulled her little arms out and I filled it up with soap and powder and that. And when I stood up and her parents happened to come along and the mother grabbed me and kissed me and started to cry. The father could talk English,

11:30 the others couldn't. And I said, "What have I done wrong?" He said, "You're an Aussie?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I thought so." He said, "She was born under Japanese occupation, never ever seen powder or that and that's the first time she's ever had that." And of course, he said, "Well come around with us will you to home and have the evening meal with us." So

12:00 everyday after that I used to go and have the evening meal. I wrote home and I told Jean I met a couple of French girls and that. When she wrote back she wanted to know how old they were. Oh gee women

are jealous aren't they? Yeah, you needn't laugh.

How important were letters from Jeannie when you were over there?

Very, very important. I used to write

12:30 nearly every day. The mailman had a constant job, he had to deliver a letter nearly everyday for home. I used to sit down. Jean said, "Oh you want to listen to some of what you wrote." I said, "I've forgotten that."

Well what kind of things would you write do you think?

Oh anything at all. Tell her how much you love her and so forth and so on and you miss her and you wish you were with her and all that. Well you would too all that

13:00 now wouldn't you just sitting there. The tent I was in there was only the two of us there and the ground, if you dug the ground up like we did, Kenny Biard and I, he was from Brisbane, B I A R D. I met him once in 1960 odd, that's the only time. And anyway we dug up this bed to plant flowers in and the Malayan chap

13:30 came along and he said, "No, no, no, no, no." I said, "Why, what's wrong?" He said, "Next year, yes." He said, "Nothing grows this year." I said, "Why?" He said, "You don't turn over ground." He got a stick and he said, "All you do is." And he scraped a stick along and he said, "You put your seeds in there." You never dug up the ground it's all sour underneath, too wet. So we didn't have any flowers and

14:00 of course we were up on the rise and down below us was the picture show, the screen. And we could sit in our tent and look out the flap of the tent at the show whenever it was on at the pictures. And it was nothing for Malayan girls to come along and claim the bunks. You couldn't get near your bunk for Malayan girls, they were watching the pictures.

14:30 We used to walk around the island, plenty of coconut palms and that but where the Japs were cornered, the foxholes and that well the mixer bombers used to strafe them. Well you will see a photo of the dugout, of the foxholes there. Not the foxholes but where they were but there was no leaves or anything left on the trees they were only just stalks up

15:00 where the mixer bombers had blasted them. Patrols used to go through, there used to be booby traps everywhere and they used to ask us air force blokes to come with them and if we went with them they used to always put whoever went in the place where they were likely to cop the blast before they would. But I never went on any of those marches, I wouldn't go

15:30 in to where they were. I seen enough of them when they raided the beach that morning that was enough for me.

We might come to that a bit later but I might just finish up with Bundaberg. Where there any significant events or incidents that occurred during your time there with the planes?

No. Well there wasn't any smashes when

16:00 I was there and it was before my time when there were smashes and pilots were killed but not when I was there, there wasn't too many. But Bundaberg in itself around Bargara and Burnett Heads and Elliot Heads and all of that a wonderful town to be in because the furthest you had to go was eleven mile to Elliot Heads all

16:30 the rest was seven mile closer or something like that. You know you didn't have far to go and of an evening when the little fellow was born, Ian was born we used to get in the Morris Z and shoot out there and have our tea on the beach and give him a swim, there was one little hole there were the kids used to swim he used to enjoy that and the rocks were all around it and no sharks could get

17:00 into it. It was one of the safest, I've just forgot what they cal it now. We used to go out there well we thoroughly enjoyed it. But when we left in 1951 and came to Ipswich and there was no beach or anything to go to we well and truly missed Bundaberg.

Well tell us, how long all up during your wartime service were you in Bundaberg before you were posted to 93 Squadron?

I'll

17:30 say twelve months. I got there early in 1944 and I left early in 1945.

And what did you think of being posted to 93 Squadron and the possibility of going overseas?

Well I'd never gave it that much thought at that time because I knew once I was posted it

18:00 was a case of you had to go or clear off somewhere and hide yourself. There was nothing you could do about it, you just take your orders and that's all there is to it and you hope for the best. But I didn't expect to go through what I went through. And not too many have I don't think what I went through.

Well lets start talking about it, where were you

18:30 **posted to go, where did you know you were going?**

Well I knew two weeks before I had to report. I had to report at Kingaroy on the 22nd of January, 1945 and I knew about two weeks before that and that's when I went to Brisbane. I left Bundaberg then, I must have left on the 20th I must have left

19:00 some time then, yes on the evening of the 20th I think because I had to come down to Maryborough. Baddow outside of Maryborough was a station you had to get off at if you wanted to go into Maryborough but you went from there through to Kingaroy then by train from there. I had to report out at the drome on the 22nd of

19:30 January. Well when we got there well they lined us all up and the commanding officer picked out who he wanted on his plane and so forth and then all they done at Kingaroy then the planes they done a lot of bomb practice and that. I've just forgot where the bombing range was, it was done near somewhere. And they used to

20:00 go you know targets with the rockets and things like that. Then one lot of planes flew over Brisbane for the war effort. I've just forgot how much money they raised on that, they flew over Brisbane a few of them. When three planes were sent to Oakey I didn't expect to be sent with them

20:30 being the mechanic for the commanding officer I thought, "Well I'll stay with his plane." But they had other ideas on that. They sent me with the three Beaufighters to look after them. Sometimes I wonder if I should have made a few mistakes in the early training I might have still been in Kingaroy. I don't know but

21:00 they sent me to be with the planes.

And so where were these planes to go?

Up to Morotai. They were escorting like the Spitfires, twenty-one of them up to Morotai. And when we left out here Oakey there was a WAAAF that wanted a lift

21:30 up to Rockhampton she was going on holidays to Mount Morgan and as soon as we, she was in the plane I was in, as soon as we took off she got airsick. And I was making paper planes out of the pilots maps he had to go north with, by the time we reached Rockhampton I had used up all of his maps. Gee she was sick. I don't know what's

22:00 happened to her. When we got to Mackay one of the Spitfires had a bit of engine trouble, he went up to test the motor and the Spitfire's got a fairly long nose and you can't see the airstrip when you come into land and what they generally do is they bank and come around the strip and turn and come straight in. Well they done

22:30 that and when he was coming straight in DC3, Douglas was coming in underneath him and he was nearly on top of the plane and the bloke in the duty pilots tower shot a varied pistol between the two of them and he shot away otherwise he would have landed on top of the DC3, the Douglas plane coming in to land underneath him. Then when we left Mackay we went out to sea and you could see Townsville

23:00 on the port side, on the left side and when we got to Cooktown you come in facing towards the sea between two mountains and there was a cross wind and when you landed your starboard wing was nearly on the ground like that to land. And one of the planes coming, the bloke that was shot down over Kuching, he swung off the strip heading for the duty pilots tower. Well that's

23:30 the best ever I've seen anyone leave that duty pilots tower but the mug pulled him up so he put him back on then. And then when we left there to go to Higgins Field, Cape York, Weir Williams' plane had a faulty tyre or something so Bern Simms who was senior to him commandeered his plane

24:00 and we were left there to wait for a spare to come up. Well we flew from there to Morotai and then from Morotai we went to Aitape on the north coast and two Spitty's shot into a spin going over the ranges there, one pulled out and the other poor devil went in. I think his

24:30 name was McDonald from Airds [?] and I've been thinking ever since if they found him or not or whether they ever got his plane. But when we at Aitape on the north coast number one Beaufort Bombers were there, number one, was it number one or one hundred, one of them I think it was 100 Beaufort Bomber Squadron and our boys used to go with them when they were bombing

25:00 Wewak. We stayed at Aitape for about a week I suppose waiting for Weir Williams to catch us up. And we used to go down, there was one Japanese in one hill going down by Wewak and they christened him one shot Charlie. He used to fetch his machine-gun out when the planes were going by, one burst and then back

25:30 into the hill. But they got him after the war and they christened him one-shot Charlie. But Aitape you could go out into the sea I reckon about three quarters of a mile and it wouldn't be any deeper than up around your chest. You could go out a long way there. And when you look around out to sea you see all these little islands like that and they weren't

26:00 they were boats camouflaged and they would look like little islands out in the open. But Aitape, well I don't know if you read it in the paper, a few years back when the tidal wave came in well it was no wonder if there was an eruption out there and each wave hit one another and the depth of the sea there, it was all flat country it would come right through.

26:30 When we left there we flew over Hollandia, well it's all on the hillside and it's a natural harbour and it comes around, a lovely harbour and just the entrance into it and all the town is on the hill. Gee, it looked nice but we only flew over Hollandia to Biak [Island]. It's a coral atoll, you need sunglasses all the time,

27:00 its just white coral the island, glary. From there like to Middleburg Island, well Middleburg is a small island. If you undershot the drome you finished in the sea, if you overshot the drome you finished in the sea and at the foot of the duty pilots tower was a Japanese plane where he flew in and he missed the target and he just hit the bottom of

27:30 the flight going up to the duty pilot's tower and whenever you took off from Middleburg Island and you banked to port you, you go over the top of Sandsapore and you're looking down on the Japs down below, you can see them down below when you take off there. But its surprising Middleburg Island. You can go about three or four feet from the edge of the saltwater and dig a hold and

28:00 get fresh water in the sand. A funny island and that's the way it is. And of course from there we went to Morotai. And done our belly landing there.

Why was that?

We blew a tyre taking off from Middleburg Island and blew a tyre. When we got to Morotai the bloke on the duty pilot's tower

28:30 was telling the pilot of the plane Ken Shirley and Smokey Douglas was the navigator, telling Ken to land with his wheels down and Weir Williams heard it so he got on the intercom to Ken, "Don't you damn well land with your wheels down you'll have a hell of a smash if you do with a flat wheel you've got no control, land

29:00 with it up, both up." So that's the way we came in, we belly-landed. It was the write off after all the same anyway, it didn't fly again.

How did you feel as you approached the islands?

Not too good. Everything goes through your mind when you're coming in like that. You know you have to belly land. They took all the sights and everything off so at they couldn't hit anything that

29:30 would hurt them and I was holding the back of the seat as tight as I could. And it's not a nice sensation when you know you've got to belly land and you're flying for one and a half hours before you do it. That's what makes it worse still. If it happens all of a sudden and you come down it's over with but when you know you've got to do it after the flight well,

30:00 but still I thought I got out of it alright until I found out in 2001 that I had four broken ribs and a fracture to the spine.

Well tell us about the landing, what happened?

Well he came in a bit steep, a bit fast and when he hit he didn't go that far like it bent the props up and everything and bent the prop up and that and

30:30 it done a bit of damage underneath and that. But after he hit and it went, it was a full ride. It was worth going but when he hit, he should have came in a little bit, on a bit more of a slant instead of coming down a bit fast and a bit steep. But I don't think anything would have stopped me from being flung to one side

31:00 anyway because the momentum of the plane once it hit and it isn't smooth sailing once you do hit.

So what exactly happened to you as you hit the airstrip?

Oh well I was standing behind the pilot and on the inside of the fuselage there is his long box about that wide and that high and it takes two belts of cartridges to the

31:30 cannons in the nose and it's steel and we used to use it. There's one on each side because there's four cannons. This one will feed two cannons and this one the other two and we used to sit on there as a seat if we were flying any distance and when it hit, I was thrown up against there with the right side and I hit that corner real hard with this right side here. Well

32:00 I must have hit it hard to break four ribs. All I thought about was the plane going up in flames because if they go up in flames and where you are in behind the pilot and that, you know and the only way out once you belly land is through the canopy on the top whereas to get into a Beaufighter underneath

32:30 the belly of the plane is a ladder that will open down and the ladder goes up. Well when you belly land

that is closed and you can't get out that way so the only way out is through the pilot's canopy on top. Well he's got to go first and you've got to wait until he gets out. Well the navigators got his own blister, he can get out and slide down onto the main plane, onto the wing and jump off there. No

33:00 we had to climb through the top.

How quickly did you get out?

Fairly quick I can tell you. I'll tell you what I moved, I didn't waist time. But the poor devils that went up on flames couldn't get out.

And did your plane go up in flames on this occasion after you got out?

No, no, it didn't go up. They used it for spare

33:30 parts I think.

And what was this airstrip like on Morotai?

Morotai airstrip. There's eleven airstrips side by side and they take different planes, Spitfires, Liberators, Kittyhawks, the Bostons were all up on the top end but they were bombed a little while before by the Japs and they wiped out twenty-five

34:00 Bostons up on the top end, they were all smashed up. And there was nightfighters and they was strips for different squadrons and there was eleven of them. And on the front of it, on the seaside part of the drome was a high wall built to stop the water from coming in on the far

34:30 side. And of course it was an island, well the perimeter there the Japs they pushed back, it was eleven miles to the perimeter where the Japs were and there was a few squadrons on the island. In fact there was, I think there was three Spitfire squadrons. We were, we went to 457

35:00 and we finished up at 457 on Labuan Island and one of the blokes in 457 I finished up working with over in the Ipswich railway workshops. I didn't mind Morotai.

What did you do there once you got there?

I didn't do anything for the month except, oh well Weir Williams

35:30 flew to Biak a couple of times and he took me with him as a mechanic. I don't remember going with him to tell you the truth and then he showed me his logbook when I seen him back a couple of years ago and my name was in it so I must have been with him. We went down and fetch a couple of blokes back from Biak, from Morotai but

36:00 apart from that there was nothing I done only walk around. There was an American negro camp there they were confined to the island for so long after the war because they turned in battle, they wouldn't go into fight so they put them there. One Kittyhawk was taking off with a bomb and it fell off and exploded, that was the end of the Kittyhawk. A Liberator taking off hit

36:30 the wall taking off, wasn't high enough, they had a load of bombs onboard, well there was nothing left of that plane either. But apart from those two incidents there was nothing else that happened on the island. But there was American servicewoman driving around in a jeep with soft drink and that for the personnel and

37:00 they did eventually do away with it. I think the Australian Army boys were not treating them too good so they just stopped coming to wherever the Aussies were I think. But they came around the first or second day we were on the island. I was there from the 1st of May until the 4th of June on the island.

What did you do during this period?

Just walked around sticky-beaking, looking at

37:30 different parts of the island and that seeing what's there. Well there was nothing that I could do really because our planes weren't doing any missions or anything and there was only two left, one was a write off so.

Well what did you occupy your time with apart from walking around?

That's all walking around, eating and sleeping.

38:00 **Do you know what the Australian army guys did to the American women to?**

Oh no, but I think they used to abuse, not the women but they would come around with soft drink and they would just about drink the whole lot and there was nothing left for anyone else and you know just being GG's.

And what about the Japanese did you see or hear of them ever?

38:30 Well at the pictures they were there. There was some little short trees behind us at the picture show and all picture shows up in the islands generally the screen is down in a hollow and you'd sit up around

the hill part looking down you know. It's nothing unusual when pictures were over to turn around and there was a couple of Japs standing behind you, they came in to surrender. It happened once when I was there

39:00 and then another chap was shot on the meal-line. He had his khaki clothes on, he bleached them so much they looked nearly white and he stood out like nobody's business and I think a sniper got him. But of a night-time if anyone is on guard and there's a

39:30 rustle at all well next minute there is a blast of machinegun and they're going off everywhere well it might be a monkey or a buffalo or something like that moving around but they didn't wait to see who it was they used to just give it the blast. I was never on any night duty or that.

We'll just pause there because we're at the end of the tape, again.

Oh no.

Tape 8

00:40 **And so when did you get the news that you would be heading to Borneo?**

It would be about, what you mean leaving Kingaroy or being appointed to the squadron? It all depends

01:00 what you want to know.

That you would be leaving Morotai and that you would be heading to Borneo?

Oh, we left there on the 4th of June, 1945. Well the only thing we knew we were going was the rest of the squadron was a little bit late coming up and they came up by boat from down here in Brisbane.

01:30 I don't know the name of the boat they came on. But when they got to Morotai well we assembled on the wharf early that morning of the 4th and we boarded the Simon Bamburger, the Liberty boat. Well there were forty-four boats in the convoy. There was transport boats and the 9th Divvy, [Division] less the

02:00 26th Brigade, they were taken boarded [HMAS] Tarakan two weeks before, they were on some of the boats and then there was other air force personnel and that on boats, I don't know how many transport boats were there. There was corvettes, there was a minelayer, there was a warship and

02:30 different other boats. And the corvettes I think it was that used to go up and down, up and down all the time around us, you think they were looking after a lot of chicks or something, you know they were going backwards and forwards. And in the front was a minelayer and now and again whenever we got an alert that a sub was in the vicinity they would start throwing depth

03:00 charges and you would hear them going off all of the time. And most of the time we were up on the top deck, I was with a bloke by the name of Trevor Astbury, 'Aspro' I christened him and we used to play two-up, sudden death, and I was full of dysentery. Anyway in the morning we were playing it was dice, three dice, sudden

03:30 death heads and tails.

How does that work?

Well you've got heads on one dice and tails on the other side right. And when you roll them if two heads come up well its heads and it all depends what you bet on. Well we used to bet on tails. Well that morning I won fifty pound and he won fifty I think and then I was so crook he said, "I'll

04:00 go to the other school after lunch." I wanted him to take some of my money and he wouldn't and I think he won a hundred pound up the next school in the afternoon. But we used to put in time there. If I wasn't playing heads and tails I used to be at the stern of the boat looking out over the back looking at the flying fishes. Oh gee they were flying everywhere, I used to enjoy watching them you know coming out of the water the flying fish, they were all

04:30 around you. But…

How did you get dysentery?

Hey?

How did you get dysentery?

Well the latrines in the kitchen were on the top deck. We ate on the top deck beside the latrines and once someone gets dysentery and you're eating your meals not far from the toilet it's not nice. And we all got dysentery and I got it

05:00 very bad.

Were there any close calls while you were on this ship, any near attacks or scares?

No. No we did, it was the 10th of June before we reached Labuan Island on the morning, it was Sunday morning and I remember coming in to Labuan and we were all up on the top deck watching

05:30 and the warships and that they were bombarding the foreshore and Victoria Town. And of course at quarter past ten or a little after quarter past ten the 9th Divvy went in and to see them go in, it was terrific you always remember it. I can still see them going in you know, barge after barge,

06:00 landing barges. And of course a plane was shot down and when it fell in the water between our boat and the shore, well then the captain ordered us all down below. Well we didn't see anymore of the fighting then until the Japs were pushed back far enough for us to be allowed to come out on deck. But that day later on I think

06:30 it was a Diner [? Dina], one of the Japs war planes came over and it was shot down then we were tormented by a couple of fighters during the night apart from that there was hardly any air battles at all going on. But when we were going in the Beaufighters from 31 Squadron were strafing the airstrip, they flew from Paga Point it's a little island out

07:00 on the east side of Borneo and they strafed the ship and the strip and the Liberators were bombed and bombing. And one Beaufighter he did the best flying I've ever seen a plane do, he just about when straight up and I thought, "Gee, what happened?" But three

07:30 years ago I was out at Amberley and we were sitting in a bus with a few from Bristol Beaufighter Association and we were going up the officers mess for lunch and I was talking to him and I was telling him about this Beaufighter climbing up. He had a bit of a grin on his face and he said, "That was me." I said, "What happened?" Charlie King

08:00 he said, "The Liberator was bombing under me and I was copping his flack and I got the hell out of it." He flew up, well Charlie now I seen him on Anzac Day he's had a couple of strokes he's not the best now Charlie but he was a pilot.

What did it feel like for you to be watching this kind of a battle?

Hey?

What did it feel like for you to be watching this kind

08:30 **of a battle?**

Well, I thought you know it was war but to watch the boys go in and that well I always like to watch what was going on. I'm a bit of a sticky beak in a way but I like to watch what's going on and of course when they were going in and that well

09:00 it was terrific to see the army go in.

Well describe it a bit more for me the landing?

Well when the landing barges go in they're going in barge after barge and you see the boys leave the barge and wade through the water it was only up around the knees or so and with their packs on and everything. Well you know you think, "Gee,

09:30 aren't they brave, wonderful." To see them they don't hesitate they just go straight in and of course the Japanese were softened up a bit with the broad cut side from the boats out in the bay before they went ashore I'll admit that, but still there were still Japs around. And there was one lookout

10:00 but I don't know where he got to you'll see a photo I've got here of his lookout, I'm still wondering how he got up to it because the first step up is so high and the Japs, most of them, well there was some big ones on the island mind you, some of them were very big men but as a rule the average Japanese is a short bloke he's not big at all. And when we went ashore well they were pushed back so

10:30 far well we weren't in any danger until this mob came through, the suicide mob and they knew they couldn't do any damage. Well they could do damage and that's what they came for is to do damage and to kill as many as they could. Well there was a few of the boys killed I've just forgot what the number was, somewhere around twenty or so I think but they got all the Japs bar one and they got

11:00 him up on the airstrip the next morning later on. And he was the only one that got away from there but most of them was suicidal. If they knew they were done they used to just pull the plug on the thing and explode them, blow themselves up.

How long

11:30 **did you spend on the boat before you landed?**

Next day, landed the next day. The army went in on the 10th and we went in on the 11th.

How did they get you to shore?

By boat, we got ashore by boat.

Take me through from there step by step what happened once you got ashore?

Oh once we got ashore well we were working party and we more or less

12:00 went ashore and WO Beattie, Warrant Officer Beattie was in charge, he was a little thick-set bloke. We had to dig latrines and put up tents and everything like that, get the camp all set up. Put up all those army things, canteen. Well one big building on the place I thought was a canteen but I found out later it wasn't it was some

12:30 place to put their materials and everything, it wasn't a canteen. Oh it wasn't bad like we didn't seem to worry that much because with the army between us and the Japs and we knew they were pushed back a bit you didn't worry.

Well when did this group of a hundred Japanese attack you?

About

13:00 ten days after. They were in foxholes for ten days in what we called the pontit. I don't know if they had food or anything. See they hardly had anything, they might have had food stored there we don't know but they left there, they were supposed to have left there about midnight and came through the swamp about waist deep and hit the beachhead.

13:30 Well I don't, they hit the beach end about, well I left the boat at two o'clock and I came ashore, I suppose it would have been a quarter of an hour they hit the beachhead. I was a bit unlucky because my mate that was on the boat with me and a couple more from the squadron they were out in the sea

14:00 in the landing craft and as soon as the firing started well they stayed out there, they didn't come in. See well they seen what was going on until the lights were put out or when the flares, the bullet hit the carburettor of the truck and it burst into flames well it lit up the countryside then they could see what was going on.

14:30 But the landing craft they just stayed on them they didn't come in.

Well when were you first aware that something was happening?

When the shooting started. When you get rifle fire, machinegun fire and hand grenades going off all around you, you wonder what's going on.

What was the first thing that you did?

Me? Well I just stood there. See they put

15:00 all the lights out, you couldn't see anything. Once they started shooting all the lights were put out. Well you couldn't see anything. You could hear everything. You could hear the yelling and that going on. But once I, I've still got the shrapnel above the knee, but once I landed that well I got down low. I reckon bullets were going over the top of me.

15:30 I just stayed there. Once the bullet hit the carburettor of the truck and it burst into flames for a few seconds. They tell another story, they reckon that the Japs pulled a lead off the truck and set alight to it but that wasn't the case, a bullet hit a carbie and it blew up for a few seconds and of course that's when I seen the Jap. He would have been about from here to your case

16:00 over there from me. Well he was a little bit too far from me to hit me and he made a swipe straight away, I can still hear the 'swip' as it went by the sword, it went fast. And of course as soon as that happened and the lights and the flame went out and it was pitch dark he wouldn't have been able to see me, I turned and I went and I was going to swim out in the bay, get out in the water.

16:30 And I pulled up of a sudden when I fell in the trench. It was a bit eerie lying in a trench for about five hours and shooting going on all around you and yelling and that. You couldn't see anything only flashes of gunfire and that or you'd hear a hand grenade explode. I made friends with a

17:00 chap from the engineers, the army engineers and they were at camp on the beach and when the Japs came through they opened up on their tents. And this bloke said they went through a bit low and then as soon as the first burst went through well it was alright with rifle fire but with the wood pepper what they used to call their machineguns

17:30 I think it only done one burst when they put it out of action, blew him up. And the next lot of fire well the men had jumped out of their bunks and down on the floor and the next lot of fire went over the top of them. But he got a bullet through under the right arm here but it only scarred the flesh on him. It was close.

How did you feel not having any weapons?

18:00 Terrible but…

Can you describe what that feeling is like in the middle of a battle with nothing?

Well with an unloading party we weren't given any weapons to carry being air force. We weren't given any weapons at all to carry. And I reckon it's foolish in a way because you're in enemy territory and you haven't got a weapon to defend yourself at all.

18:30 Not that they would do much good I suppose because I was in such a hurry to get out of the place. It wasn't nice lying there for about five hours I can tell you that.

And right back when the shooting first started, what kind of thoughts went through your head?

Nothing. You just wonder what's going to happen next. There was nothing you could do, you had no rifle, you didn't

19:00 know, you couldn't do anything and when they put the lights out you couldn't see anything so there was nothing you could do. You couldn't say oh well I can get away from that chap or something like that, you couldn't do anything like that. The only preservation you got is to try and get down low or something like that.

Did you feel frightened?

Oh, I think, well not in a way,

19:30 in one sense I suppose you would be frightened a little bit but it's no use being frightened because if you've got frightened and your nerves got you and you just stood there well it was goodbye.

Well how do you stop yourself feeling frightened?

I don't know. I don't know. You just had to try and keep calm if you can. You might feel like you

20:00 know your nerves are going up but you just, preservation well, you just go for yourself, go for your life.

And can you describe what the gunfire sounded like?

Well the exploding of rifles and then our boys with their Tommy guns, with the machineguns going off and the hand grenades going off, you can picture Christmas

20:30 Eve night with all the crackers going off all around you. A hell of a noise, like you don't know where they were shooting or what they were shooting.

And you said that there was shouting, what short of things were being shouted?

The Japs were yelling. More or less whatever they were yelling I don't know but more or less I suppose their war cry or something

21:00 like that. Cry of fighting the enemy or something to that extent. But there wasn't that extra much yelling going on, a lot of it was silent for a while once the lights went out because if you start yelling then well you are giving your position away and I think they went quiet for a while until the planes went up,

21:30 then it was a different story, they start yelling then because the countryside was lit up. It's surprising how much that one carburettor will light up the countryside. It was only for a few seconds but still.

What kind of light does it give off?

Oh a bit white light. It just flared straight up. It lit up the countryside, just one flare up until the petrol was gone and then

22:00 it went out as quick as it started.

And can you describe what this Japanese man looked like who was next to you?

No, I didn't have a good look at him. I just seen him as a Jap and a sword and I didn't have time to look to see what he was like, I went, as soon as the flame went out. As soon as the flame, as soon as he made a go at me the flame went out, well we couldn't see each other

22:30 then but he was moving fast. It was only a second or two and you don't look.

Was he standing up?

Yes, he was standing up.

Can you describe the movement that he made with the sword?

Well he only just turned, I don't know what way he was facing, I think he was facing a bit away from me. And he seen me and he turned and he swung at the same time. Well by then the flame had gone out and he was too far away. If he could have,

23:00 if he was facing me and he could take a couple of steps towards me it would have been a different thing, I think it would have been but still that's gone now.

Well obviously it would have happened very fast but…

Oh yes.

What does it feel like when someone swings a sword at you?

No too good. Better still when they miss. No,

23:30 if he would have been closer and he'd got me I wouldn't be here today. And there was another Jap he went in the tent, there was an American in the tent and he was sitting at the table, sitting on a chair at the table with his feet up on the table. He had a feeling someone walked in behind him, when he

24:00 looked a Jap was there with his sword up, he rolled to one side the Jap missed him and hit the table but by the time he got out the tent he was close enough to the Jap for the Jap get him about the knee. And when he got out the side of the tent he fell to the ground and when he did the Aussies opened up on the Jap and riddled him.

24:30 But he was the only other close shave I knew of at that particular time except for this cobber of mine with a bullet there. Then another chap he jumped into a slip trench with a machine gun and a couple of chaps were there. He said, "Move up." He said, "Give me a bit of room." When he looked they were two Japs, they weren't Aussies at all but he said, "They didn't last

25:00 too long." So he must have turned the machinegun on them straight away.

And you got hit, can you describe what?

Just a burning sensation that's all it is. Like someone had burnt you. It was only a small piece of shrapnel but it's still there. I went to a doctor, I put in for a rise in disability pension in 1978 and I went to a

25:30 Doctor Rye here with an X-rays of both knees. He wanted to know the history of the case and I told him. He said, "You only put in for the right knee." I said, "That's all I'm getting the pension for." He said, "Well you should have put in for both knees and the back." When he gets out the X-ray on the left knee he said, "You've got a piece of shrapnel here." I said, "Yes Doctor, it's been there a while now." He said, "It's not near the bone no need to remove it."

26:00 He wrote out a foolscap page on the report, when I got the result back they rose the pension on the right knee for up to forty percent, gave me a ten percent on the left knee and listed the left knee as a non-war course disability, now you work that one out. I got shrapnel above the knee and it's a non-war course disability. And I thought right that gave

26:30 me fifty percent. So in the year 2000 or just before then I put in again and they put the pension up to sixty percent but nothing on the left knee. And when I phoned up the lady down there said, "Oh they don't give for the second limb any more." So I just forget it, I don't worry about it. But what I tell you today I only wish I can go before a tribunal

27:00 because I never ever reported anything, only four times I've reported. Once for dysentery but before that when I had mumps down in Canberra and then at Bundaberg, Anna [? and the] doors that are five tonne each I closed them on my middle finger. I squashed that they were going to take the top off but they straightened the bone and filled it up with penicillin

27:30 powder and for months after I used to get a splinter of bone through the top, I reported that. And I reported dysentery and I reported the knee when I got to Amberley so I only report four times. So they wouldn't have a record down there at Vet Affairs on me.

Why didn't you report the shrapnel?

I don't know. Well my life as a young lad, I had a tough life,

28:00 I could take a bit of a belting around and that was nothing as far as I was concerned.

The shrapnel hit you fairly early on in the battle.

On that suicide mob, yes.

And so how did that wound start to hurt or affect you as the night went on?

Nothing, nothing.

28:30 See well the piece of shrapnel I don't know where it came from. It could have came from a bit of a distance because it didn't go in that far. It didn't go in near the bone. So it only more or less went in under, a little bit under the skin, a little bit deeper. Well that meant it might have been nearly spent when it hit me. But when there's bombs, when there's hand grenades exploding or bullets going off and

29:00 hitting anything and splintering and that you know you don't know what you're going to get.

Tell me about his trench that you fell into?

It was damn hard. I was moving fast when I fell into it and I done both knees and the back. Well I just laid there, I didn't move and then with fighting going on

29:30 all around me well I wasn't game to move.

How did the sounds of fighting change or increase during the night while you laid there?

It was constant all the time until, until towards the end eventually it got less and less but I suppose there was so many killed there was hardly anything to go on because it was, some of the

30:00 worst fighting done, they reckon according to the write up it's on my life history there raised on Labuan Island and they got it stated as some of the fiercest fighting done in the southwest Pacific that particular morning. Well it was it was very severe.

And when did you stand up out of the trench?

When everything was quiet. I waited for a while and there was no more shooting or anything,

30:30 nothing and I could hear men talking and I though, "Righto, I'll get out now." A good relief.

Did you have to build your nerve up to stand up?

Yeah, a good relief.

What did you see when you stood up?

Dead bodies, that's all, dead bodies all around. And when the army sergeant drove up in the jeep with a private and asked me to, will I

31:00 give his man a hand? I didn't know what he was going to say but when he said just throw the dead Japs up on the back of the jeep. I don't know why he picked on me I wish he would have picked on someone else but you couldn't say no, you had to do what you can.

What happened to the Japanese bodies?

I don't know exactly

31:30 what happened. They should have taken their tags off of them and made sure who they were and made a record of them who they were so as to let the family know or let the Japanese Army know. I don't know what they done with the bodies. I went to the war crimes when it was all over, the Japanese flew in from Kuching when war finished and they came in with two planes.

32:00 And the red rising sun that was painted on the Japanese plane they had a white cross painted in the centre of it to say you know that they are coming in, they're coming in to surrender. Well when they came in the Australian army boys were there and they still had their swords and the boys tried to grab them but

32:30 they missed out. I went to the war crimes for about eight days but by the time they translated everything I got sick of it. There was one head Japanese he committed hurry curry that night, killed himself. The other bloke cut his throat one of the officers and the nurses and the sisters from the hospital saved him and at the war crimes they found him

33:00 guilty and executed him. So I think they should have let him die in the first place but that's the way it went. But sitting in at the war crimes, you know you sit there and by the time the translation and everything went on well after a while, especially eight days it got a bit dreary on me. I didn't go anymore so I didn't know what happened to this bloke. I knew he was

33:30 on trial when I was there but I didn't see what happened to him. But I got photos of the two planes that come in, I got those and the Japanese that came in with them with their swords on and all.

And back at Labuan when you first stood up out of the trench did anyone say anything to you or surprised that you were there or?

No, no. Well none of my, none of

34:00 the blokes I knew were on land at that time. I was the only 93 Beaufighter Squadron bloke on the land. I came ashore a bit too soon I think. I finished at two o'clock and I was always punctual. And the duck I loaded, a land and sea going vessel I loaded must have finished first that I was on and we came ashore see. Well

34:30 I don't know who helped me on the loading in the boat, there must have been others there but I came ashore. Well Gordon Blaine the chap that was on the plane with me well he was nearly into the shore when the shooting started and Les Harris the armourer he was the same. And I think one of them got under the wharf and the other bloke on their duck went back further

35:00 away from the shore. See they missed it but I was ashore and I must have been in a hurry to get a cup

of tea I think, the Salvation Army tent. I should have stayed on the boat a bit longer I would have missed the whole lot then.

What was it like when you saw all the bodies all around you, what sort of feeling did this give you?

A terrible feeling to see dead bodies around, a waste of life. What did

35:30 we fight for? The Japanese made more out of after the war than we did I think. Didn't they? They did in a way like they expanded and went ahead further then we did. No, war, I don't think war is a good thing myself.

Did seeing so many or seeing any Japanese bodies

36:00 **change your opinion of the Japanese?**

Hey?

Did seeing Japanese dead bodies and having to load them onto a truck, did this change your opinion of the Japanese?

No, no. No, I didn't change at all because all I though was if they were to come over those Stanley's [Owen Stanley Ranges] and got to Port Moresby what would they have done with our women and that? See they didn't treat their prisoners any good at all.

36:30 The Boston [Douglas Boston A28-8, light bomber] there was one chap shot down off New Guinea well they executed him, well he was Bill Newtown [Flight Lieutenant W. E Newton, 22nd Squadron RAAF]. Well he was the only Australian in the southwest Pacific to receive a Victoria Cross. Now his navigator that was with him, John Lyons about three weeks back we had a memorial service

37:00 out at Amberley for him and his widow and two daughters, a granddaughter and a grandson was there for the ceremony. Well we put a plaque up in the memorial gardens out at Amberley on behalf of John but all they done for John was put a bayonet through him, left him. They found his body in 1948 and he's buried up there in the war cemetery up at, I

37:30 think it's up in New Guinea, a big war cemetery up there. His widow was there and his two daughters. Jean and I we had a good old talk to them, they were nice and they said, "We'll see you again." But it was a very sad occasion all the same that. The Boston-Beaufighter mob seen fit to give him some recognition like

38:00 they had never ever recognised him at all, they gave Bill Newton a VC [Victoria Cross] and nothing about John. But they done over the same area the day before and they were very badly shot up and they were hoping to get back to base then the next day they went on another plane and they were shot down. That's the way life goes I suppose. There was an army officer with them

38:30 but when the plane shot down it sank so fast I think the army officer, they didn't see him getting ashore so he could have kept with the plane.

And after coming that night on Labuan, after coming close to…

What

Did this change your opinion about what you were fighting

39:00 **for?**

Well we knew we were fighting you know for freedom. We knew we were fighting for our country and to keep it the way it was whereas if we didn't fight and we lost, like we've got to raise our hats to Bill and the likes of him

39:30 on the 39th and that for holding them on the Kokoda Track. If they would have got here and overran up here in Australia what would they have done with our women and that? We had to do something. See the way they treated our POW's [prisoners of war]. Now according to war, prisoners taken during war you're not supposed to do that to them.

40:00 **We're just at the end of this tape.**

Tape 9

00:37 **How do you think this event, this attack and what you went through changed you personally?**

Well it more or less quietened me down in my way, like before that I used to be very aggressive but I've quietened

01:00 down a lot since then. And of course once the family came along and that and I had a son and a

daughter to think about and that, well we think the world of them. And Dale has four daughters so we've got four granddaughters. One's a school teacher, the other one's was a nurse and the two the other two, the

01:30 youngest one will be twenty-one on the 31st of December, she's still at uni [university] doesn't know what she's going to be. Kate the next one she goes to uni, I don't know, she likes the environment I don't know what she's going to do. Rachel…

But on the night, on the night after that event how did you feel when you were finally safe from the attack?

Real relaxed

02:00 I just laid there because it went through my mind all the time but you know you think, "Oh, that's over." And you just lied there and you think, "Oh gee it's wonderful to be alive." I started thinking about Jean, you know Jeannie and that and wondering how she was. And I tried to take my mind off it that way you know go back home and think about your wife and

02:30 how she's going and that. Because you forget the other then, well you try and forget the other but now and again it comes back to you. Anzac Day is my worst day, it will come back to me. I go to a psychiatrist and they go crook at me because I blame myself for the accident. I intended to keep that plane unserviceable for five or six hours and if I would have it is very likely those two Mustang fighters

03:00 would have been shifted by then and everything would have been okay because it was the planes fault and not the pilots fault that that happened. And you know you think back, only if you would have done this. But they say oh well, when the officer said he was a Doctor and he was flying with Squadron Leader Gulliver and that, they said it's taken out of your hands,

03:30 what could you do? But I was still in charge of the plane as far as I was concerned because that was my plane, not the Doctors plane.

What did the Doctor exactly say to you at the time?

Well when he first pulled up the first words he said were, "Are you worried about Squadron Leader Gulliver?" Well see I didn't answer him because I thought right he knows what's

04:00 wrong, why I done it. He said, "He's okay." He said, "I've just left him." He said, and he's telling me all about Sidon and what the hotel looked like, it was a British quarter. Sidon is divided into three sections British, French and the Egyptians and the Amonites and the natives are all on the wall. And the hotel we were in had a roof like that, that type of roof that came down on a sweep.

04:30 And he was telling him all about that and what Sidon looked like. And he said, "I'm looking forward to seeing it." He said, "I'll be flying with him." And then next breath he said, "I'm the Doctor." And he just turned and walked away. I thought, "Well if he's the Doctor and he reckons he's okay. Well that meant he didn't have a drink, he knew he was flying and it was about two and a half hours to fly over water to

05:00 Sidon." I thought, "Good, that's okay." So I'll make the plane serviceable. Well I didn't think, you know I didn't see the Mustang fighters on the side of the strip to tell you the truth. They could have been there but I wasn't watching on the side of the strip I was more or less watching his plane take off. And when he hit these two planes and shot up into the air, well I think

05:30 my heart stopped for a while because as soon as it burst into flames and the end of the tail fell off well I thought I could hear a terrific scream at that time but it could have been the scream of the motors I don't know. But there was five burnt to death in the plane. Then they said after, "Oh there was more than

06:00 six on the plane." But there wasn't there was only the six. I know who had got on and who they were and I told the lads since like I went down to Sydney for our one reunion there and I met the widow and a son down there too. But the two sons came here one day and seen us. Then Russell the youngest one, the baby that was in the pram he lives

06:30 at Traborne, well I know him and his wife and he always wants to know about his father. And last time he bought along a photo, it was of two chaps with a monkey. He said, "Mum had this." She passed away I think it was last year or the year before, time goes. And he said, "Do you know what this photo is?" I said, "Yes,

07:00 that's your Dad and Donny Seekamp, the navigator." I said, "Your Dad had a pet monkey up on the island." They had a monkey between them walking along. "Oh", he said. So there is very little things you know and that. And when we have a barbie [barbeque] he always wants to fetch us home, I never drive down to Brisbane. And Gordon Blaine he lives right on the other side of Brisbane he'll pick me up

07:30 but Russell will always fetch me home.

What kind of man was he?

He was a fairly big man. Nice brownish colour hair and nice crop of hair, lovely big moe [mustache] on him. And he was a man that you could talk to, he was a squadron leader. But I was the only man in the

squadron that used to call him by his first name, by Keith. No-one

08:00 else did, they always called him the boss or something like that. But whenever Squadron Leader Gulliver and I were together and there was no other personnel there, we used to always call each other by our first name. When we first went to Kingaroy and I got Jean there he was living in one flat, two doors down from where Jean and I was. And he used to go for a walk every afternoon and they had a high endless cane pram

08:30 with big wheels and the little fella would be in the pram and the other fella would be about three years of age, Terry he would walk beside it with his hand on the top and they used to stop in front of our place and we'd join them and walk with them up around the peanut silos and that up around Kingaroy. I got to know him real well and of course we got very friendly. One evening

09:00 I seen something unusual and before I realised it I said, "Oh Keith look at this." And when I looked at him he had a grin on his face from ear to ear. I said, "Oh I'm sorry sir, I took advantage there." He laughed and he said, "Frank, whenever we are by ourselves and you just do that you make me feel like at home." You know just the two of us but we used to always you know real like that.

09:30 But I think some of the boys used to think I was you know, I don't know too friendly or what with the commanding officer but still as far as I was concerned he was a gentlemen. But he looked good with his big mo and everything. But I didn't tell you exactly what he really looked

10:00 like and I don't intend to because I don't want it on the script. I'll tell you after I turn that off.

That's fine. So tell us what had caused the accident exactly, do you know?

Swinging on take off. See the Beaufighter it's a devil of a plane to swing on take off. I don't care how good the pilot is, he'll swing on take off and the camber on that

10:30 strip was a little bit high to my knowledge because the strip I had built in Cairns wasn't as high as that the camber. That's visually seeing it and of course once he swung on take off well you were controlling it all the time, you were fighting against it because you'll straighten it up and nine times out of ten it will swing the other way and that's what happened. But before he took off like he must have had

11:00 air speed up and he was more or less veering to the starboard but he was airborne and he was only about as high as this light I suppose when his starboard wing dipped down as though he was banking around to come back around. That's when he hit the two Mustang fighters. But that's the usual way of taking off most of the time because most of the planes I

11:30 was in Beaufighters, I was in and we took off we always seemed to bank to starboard nine times out of ten. I don't know why. But they were a wonderful plane but that was the only trouble with them. Whereas over in Sidon in the squadron of Beaufighters and they had a pin between the navigators blister and the top of the tail, they had a

12:00 pin going and that used to stabilise them and their tail wheel. Their model was A19 ours were A8. Well their tail wheel used to lock whereas our tail wheel used to swing from side to side like that, they didn't lock and we didn't have that thing on them. I reckon that it would have made a big difference if they had a thing on it but these planes, the Aussies at the start, the thirty and

12:30 those squadrons they did have the A19, the endless model up around New Guinea but Australia made their own Beaufighters then and they were A8 model that came out.

And sorry just to establish exactly where it was which strip was it that this happened at?

Labuan Island. It was only a new strip built. The old strip went the other way and

13:00 they built this new strip on an angle and of course it was too high the airstrip. And Labuan, nice island every afternoon about five o'clock you'd get a shower of rain, you could set your watch on it because I don't know whether it was the warm air from Borneo coming over and hitting cold air over Labuan or what it was but we got a shower about five o'clock. And

13:30 there was monkey's all on the island and buffalos, there was no orang-utans they were on the mainland on Borneo but there was none of those on the island. And when we were out in the bay there after the army went ashore and that there were Malayans rowing around in boats talking to you and we were warned not to say anything because we didn't know if they were collaborators.

14:00 And there was bomb craters everywhere and there was one compound with collaborators in it, mainly women. The boys used to get down and watch them having a bath, they used to have a sarong on and they could have a bath and change their sarong and put it back on and you wouldn't see one inch of their body. I think the army boys were disappointed.

14:30 I don't know what happened to them. I got a photo of them here too, the collaborators.

And what kind of work were you doing on Labuan?

I was attending to the plane, keeping the plane in flying condition and then Gordon and I decided that

we didn't know if it made it go any faster of not but we cleaned it down with kerosene and shined it up

15:00 and everything. It didn't make any difference it didn't make it go any faster. We had a lot of work to do after because the dust used to get on it. And a few times the pilots were coming into land, there was one bloke blacked out when he was coming in from Kuching. He swung to port and he was heading for the rest of the Beaufighters that were parked there, he hit the top of a tree, he spun around and when he came down on

15:30 the ground there was a little gully and the body of the plane landed in the gully and the wings were on both sides. And when we got to him he was sitting in the plane, in the cockpit and all he had was a scratch on his shin, left shin. We couldn't see the navigator, we went back to the tree he hit and the navigator was sitting at the foot of the tree, he was knocked out of the plane when he hit the tree. He wasn't hurt at all he was just sitting there at the foot of the

16:00 tree. But the three of them planned on coming back to land.

What kind of operations were they conducting at this time?

Well bombing and strafing operations. And when war finished well we didn't have any length of time up there. And one paper that was published her by Peter White he mentioned about the three Beaufighter

16:30 Squadrons, 22, 30 and 31 so I phoned him up and I said, "Have you lost a squadron?" He said, "No. No, there was only the three." I said, "No, there's four." He said, "Which ones?" I said, "Ninety-three." He said, "Never heard of it." I said, "We didn't go up until the last." I said, "Squadron Leader Keith Gulliver was our CO." He said, "Oh, I know him." He said, "What's your name?" I said, "Frank Beadle." He said, "Right,

17:00 are you a member of the association?" So he put my name straight down. And none of that, when we got to together for the first time at Amberley, Jean and I went out, none of them knew about 93 Beaufighter Squadron but we were the last squadron formed to go overseas. And like I said earlier our mission, we were with first tactical air force, and our mission was either the coast of China or Japan but

17:30 we didn't have time to do much over there. They bombed Kuching, they did a bit of strafing around different places and then when war finished they dropped leaflets, then two of our planes went up to North Borneo and Sandakan where the POW's march was, the death march. They went looking for the survivors, they couldn't find them and a week after half a dozen walked out of the forest, walked out of

18:00 the scrub up there and they couldn't find them. Bill Mutton or I can't think of his first name, he was one of the pilots that went up he was a member of parliament later.

So tell us about hearing that news of the war ending, how did you feel about this?

Hey?

Tell us about the news of the war ending. Tell us how you heard it and how you felt about that?

Well

18:30 it was, not exactly funny but I don't know it seemed like an ordinary day. We still kept on doing our planes until we found out officially that it was over. Then we still worked on the planes after when they started bombing the barges with all the lend lease material on. So you know work just went on as usual. There was

19:00 no celebration at all to my knowledge, not like it was back here or in Sydney or that. I would have like to have been back here when it was all over, it would have been wonderful but still.

So what did you do in the next few proceedings months after the war had officially ended but you were still overseas, what were you doing?

We were still servicing the planes and everything, like they were kept

19:30 busy flying around and that. And then going over Sidon about a month after. Well they were flying around dropping leaflets and flying around bombing barges and different things and that and we were kept busy. And then after September October or so well things started to slacken off a little bit then and then two of our planes were sent

20:00 home after the surrender to deliver the photos back to Melbourne and the CO picked out Weir Williams and his navigator and Ken Shirley and Smokey Douglas and gave them the job of going home early seeing they were the first

20:30 up there. And I though, "Gee, I was the first up there too, why didn't he send me with them?" But he didn't. I had a go at Weir Williams over it, Howard Williams he was a good pilot Howard. He was a pilot flying the Beaufighter at Kingaroy and one thing

21:00 you never do with a barrel fighter is barrel roll her. He did he barrel rolled her. The CO found out so he gave him duties, something to do as a clerk for so long. And then when we were sent down to Oakey well where I was sent with one of the planes, but there has been a little bit of controversy over that

because

21:30 Billy Mutton and another bloke down in Sydney they got together and they wrote a book about 93 Beaufighter Squadron and they mentioned about someone with three Beaufighters going up to Morotai with the Spitfires and they mentioned a blokes name that wasn't anywhere near the plane, wasn't on the

22:00 plane. And of course I had a go at them over it but they were still determined to say that this bloke was on the plane. They said he looped his plane at Cooktown. Well there was no plane looped at Cooktown when the first three Beaufighters went up so he could have come up later, I don't know when he was coming up. He didn't come up with the twenty-one Spitty's.

And

22:30 **what were you doing in Sidon during this time after the war?**

Well I took over cigarettes and different other stuff to barter with the natives. For one packet of ten Capstan cigarettes you got a pair of crepe rubber soled shoes and there was other coffee sets, everything else you could get. And

23:00 I bartered with the natives a bit, I got two or three pairs of shoes I think but I gave most of my stuff away. There was a houseboy at the hotel he used to look after you, make the bed and pull the mosquito net, even dress you if you let him. I was forever kicking him out of the way.

23:30 You were supposed to give him one cigarette, I used to give him a packet of cigarettes a day. I spoilt him altogether and he'd do anything for me. And then when these two French girls came along I gave nearly all my powder and soap I had to them. But in the MP's [military police], the police used to stand outside and leave us to go in to barter with the natives

24:00 and the camp was fairly high. And as soon as we finished bartering with the natives and came out they used to raid them to get the cigarettes but the natives were awake up to them. They used to have a little boy under the counter and as soon as you gave them the cigarettes they would hand it to the little boy under the counter and away he'd go, under the counter. And they never ever got any cigarettes the poms but they didn't wake up to what was going

24:30 on I don't think.

What was post war Sidon like, what was it like as a town?

It was fairly busy with the rickshaws going around and everything, it was something unusual to what I've ever seen. And the picture show was on but it was all French. I couldn't understand it so it was a waste of time me going to the pictures. But the streets there were fairly narrow and they used to barter, have all of their wares out on the

25:00 street and the street, you might have two feet or so just to walk through. And you know it's a different set up altogether and the hotel was on the river and I used to sit down on the river. And I'd taught myself oil painting later on but I wish I would have done a bit of oil painting in those days because with the hotel it was good. But there were machine gun posts on the British

25:30 section on each corner and in between, there was a machinegun post, always. And of course war was over, peace was declared but they still had the machinegun post there. The meals at the hotel I used to have breakfast, the usual type of breakfast and a bit of lunch but the evening

26:00 meal I used to go to the French family. It was mainly buffalo meat and some veggies. And they had wine with their meal, they used to have a little cup about so big and of course at the start I didn't realise you had to sip it and when it was there down it would go in one go. When I looked the sixteen-year-old had filled it up again

26:30 and down it would go again. So I should have woke up to myself, I nearly got drunk every meal for a while. I realised you one sipped the wine.

What work were you doing here, was it more maintenance of planes?

Where at Sidon? No, when we landed at Sidon we landed on the outskirts of Sidon and we came through the paddy fields into the town and I didn't see that plane again until the morning we were leaving.

27:00 And when I got back to the plane I made sure it was serviced and everything and ready to fly back home but in the meantime we didn't go anywhere near the plane.

So what was your reason for being in Sidon?

A trip with the CO to see the town. Like being his mechanic he said to me, "You better come over Frank, it will be an eye opener I think." And we were looking forward to it but

27:30 I didn't think it would take that long flying over water. You know and then of course that was nothing compared to my trip home over seven hundred miles over water.

Tell us about that.

That was nothing. Well when we were coming home and Squadron Leader Cyril Stark, like the starboard motor played up half way over Borneo and running very rough,

28:00 well he decided instead of landing at Tarakan he'll keep on to Morotai on one motor. Well it's a long way, a long hop to go with one motor. I don't care how good the plane is or how good the motor is, there's always that possibility that something could go wrong. I didn't have a Mae West, in other words a life jacket,

28:30 and one thing I should have had on me I think flying over water but when I heard that motor give a different pitch, a different sound altogether I knew it was clearing up as soon as I heard the sound of the motor, I knew it was coming good. And I thought, "Oh good, I know where the trouble is." But I cursed

29:00 the blokes that had done the engine change because they should have cleaned that right out, the pipeline and all. But I don't suppose they thought anything about anyone in England forgetting to put a plug on the oil line and spraying it with inhibitor grease and going into the oil line because you wouldn't think that would happen. But these little

29:30 accidents do happen no matter what you try and do there's always something little bug in the works somewhere. But I was surprised that the amount of sludge that really came through that pipeline because when I first took the filters off they were full. That would be a lot of spray in it.

30:00 **And so then you were headed home? And then you were headed home.**

Yeah.

Tell us about that?

Where from Morotai? Well when we left Morotai, like this air spout, like a water spout it's a black funnel going up into the sky miles ahead.

30:30 And Stark said to me, he said, "Gee, we better not get into there we'll go up to heaven for sure." And I said, "That's a little bit better than what we were doing the day before anyway." I said, "We nearly went to hell the day before." But he didn't see the joke in that either so I didn't try to make any more jokes with him. But we landed alright

31:00 at Higgins Field, Cape York. I was a bit annoyed with him for not you know for not going down the coast to Bundaberg, like he promised me he'd let me off at Bundaberg and I was picturing me flying into Bundaberg and I was going to get him to shoot Jeannie's place up. Where she was was a big playing field opposite all vacant and it would have been a good opportunity

31:30 and viewing sight because their house was right in the middle and he could have shot it up and had a go at it but he didn't go there. But when I met Weir Williams down here at Merewether and we went down to Sydney for the reunion the first time, he was telling me about his flight home. He said…

32:00 **Well I'm just interested actually in your flight coming home, tell us what was it like to finally get back to see your wife?**

Well she came down to Narromine and I wired her from Narromine to tell her we were there and she came down all the way to Narromine to be with me. Then when we were posted up to Bundaberg well then we came up here.

32:30 But at Narromine we used to go into a little café there for a meal and one of the waitresses came along and I looked at her and I said, "I've seen your face before." She said, "You have." And I said, "Yes." She said, "Where about?" I said, "On the front page of the New Guinea Gold." I said, "The paper that's printed in New Guinea in the war years. It was on every

33:00 paper printed. You were in a bikini." She blushed, she said, "Yes." She said she was the first girl in the bikini costume and the chap that took the photo promised he wouldn't publish it. And it was in every paper up in the islands. She couldn't believe it.

What was it like to be back home and away from the overseas service?

Wonderful. Wonderful, I couldn't get out quick enough

33:30 to tell you the truth. But when I came back and the knees went on me at Amberley and I went into Greenslopes well Colonel Mean he was an army Doctor, a little short bloke, he done the operation and he had an assistant with him and he had this leg pulled up you

34:00 know and I seen his hand go down and a squirt of blood go up and he looked around and he spotted me looking at him and he said, "Cover that man's face up will you quick and lively." I said, "Oh Doctor, I wanted to see you do the op [operation]." He said, "No you're not." Anyway next day after the op I'm sitting on the bed and I swung across onto the side of the bed and I had my legs over the side swinging

them on the side of the bed and

34:30 I seen him coming up the passage way and I tried to get back and I couldn't. He put his hand up when he came up to me and he said, "You're leg will never ever be stiff." And he looked at the chap next to me, a chap by the name of Hall that was done the same day, and he said, "If he doesn't soon get out and exercise he'll have a walking stick for the rest of his life." And he did. He was good Colonel Mean.

35:00 Him and two more specialists were shot on the terrace a few years back. I don't think you would know about that. A new Australian went there he wasn't satisfied with their doings and he shot the three of them, Gallagher, Mean and someone else on the terrace.

So tell us after returning to civilian life and settling back into life, did you suffer from any post traumatic stress?

I still do.

35:30 I still suffer a bit with it. When I put in for the last claim the psychiatrist made it real plain, they've still got it on my papers as suffering with it, that was only a couple of years ago in 2000, four years ago now. No the knee was operated on in April 2001, it was before then

36:00 so. And I still suffer with it, it won't leave you Kiernan because if you start thinking about what you've been through and that your life was on the line, you know fairly often and you think well why does it happen to you when you're not doing any fighting or

36:30 you know I've never ever fired a gun in anger yet, so there you are.

Well looking back at your wartime service what do you think it taught you as a person?

In what way?

What do you think you learned? No let me rephrase that, in what kind of ways did you change as a person because of your wartime service?

Well it makes you take stock and listen

37:00 to what others have to say and don't lead your own life as though you're the only person on this earth because there's others that's got their opinions and if you don't listen you'll never learn. And you can't say you're perfect, no mans perfect I don't care who they are and there's always something that you can learn. And if you're going to be self, self all the time you won't go

37:30 anywhere. The way I am now Kiernan I've go so many friends, when I go up here shopping Jean says, "Who have you met today?" It might only take me one hour to do the shopping but it takes me four hours before I get home. And I meet so many friends and they all turn up. Now the last, when they first opened up the Ipswich railway workshops museum I went over the first

38:00 day, I didn't see any exhibit at all. The last seven years they were there or so I was in the ambulance room and I attended to so many patients and I saved so many with heart attacks and that. And one chap I saved he lived for ten years after, his wife, daughter and two sons came here to thank me and I said, "I was only doing my job." And anyway

38:30 we turned out to be best cobbers after that. And when I went over the day they had an opening of the museum all I got was blokes coming along would you take this splinter out, would you take that. You know it was funny in a way but it was great because never mind where I went there was always someone I knew. They always pull up and talk.

Alright we're coming pretty close to the end of

39:00 **the tape so I'll just finish with one question which is, do you have any final words that you want to add to the record?**

No, I only hope that whoever reads or sees it will learn a little bit about someone else's life or what they've gone through. There was nothing, no fighting I done on my part but my

39:30 life I think to some of these lads today they say they get bored and so forth, they had no chance of getting bored in my life. I was kept busy all the time and I don't know. I had a hard life, a tough life but no use complaining. I got a good wife and that.

40:00 What else do you want?

That's it mate I think you've….

And she found out after fifty-six years I can cook. So it took a long time to find out that I can cook and I can make hot water sponges and everything before then.

That's very sneaky.

Yeah. Now she's complaining. She's saying I'm giving her cane cutter meals.

Oh well thank you very much for the interview, you did a terrific job today and we'll just end it there

40:30 **I think.**