

Australians at War Film Archive

Garth Shambrook - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:36 **We will talk about that life overview and just start with where and when you were born?**

I was born in Coolangatta on February 19, 1926 in Dutton Street. I went to school at Coolangatta State School

01:00 and after leaving State School I went to Brisbane to the Church of England Grammar School and boarded there for two years. I came back and worked for my Dad in the soft drink factory in Coolangatta and I joined the air force, or prior to that I was a member of the ATC [Air Training Corps] in Murwillumbah

01:30 and played football with that team quite successfully. I joined up in March 1944 in Brisbane, we were posted, I was on 52 course with the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and we went by train from Brisbane to Kingaroy interestingly enough,

02:00 the carriages that we travelled in were suburban carriages without any toilets on board and we travelled through the night. Somebody got the bright idea that we might tie a blanket together with some rope and stretch it from one side of the carriage to the other and of course that was good, somebody got in it sometime during the night and the luggage rack gave way and down it came.

02:30 I finished the ITS that is the Initial Training School at Kingaroy and we were posted from there, some of us to Tamworth. They actually asked you if you had any choice and every body wanted to go to Western Junction in Tasmania because that was supposed to be the best place to go and Tamworth was second, so I opted for Tamworth.

03:00 We arrived there about one o'clock in the morning on the train and nobody there to meet us and nothing happened and to cut a long story short, finally we phoned the station and they came out and picked us up in a couple of trucks and we slept on the floor of the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] that night and by eleven o'clock the following morning we were put out on thirty one days full leave and paid subsistence

03:30 because nobody knew anything about us, couldn't find how it had happened. From there we were shunted up to Toowoomba to a Stores Depot and from there I was posted to Temora and began EFTS, Elementary Flying Training School. I managed to go solo in six and half hours on Tiger Moths.

04:00 During the time we were there, I was put up for over-confidence by my instructor or pilot officer, I forget his name, Peter Somebody and I was put up before the CFI [Chief Flying Instructor] who was a Flight Lieutenant Mick Mather, who had a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] on Wellingtons from England, and we climbed into the aircraft and he said, "Shambrook,

04:30 my wife is coming in on the limited [service] from Sydney today and I want to be down there waving to her." And this is where my problem was. I was supposed to be over-confident at low flying. His literal words were, "You prang me, you bastard, and I will kill you." We took off and sure as eggs we go out along the railway line and eventually come to the train and I was trying

05:00 to be a little bit careful because I didn't know how low he wanted me to go and he wanted me down there, almost level with the carriage, and when I kept pulling the stick back a little bit he would shove it forward, it was quite frightening I can tell you. I thought, "Oh well, stuff this," so I got the plane down as low as I could and there is Mick waving to his wife down there on the train and eventually we ran out, we came to the town at Temora,

05:30 that was one thing. Another one was 'Black Jack' Walker who was a top pilot in the RAAF in those days, came out there in a Beaufighter and somebody says, "Who wants a flight?" and I said, "Yes, I'll have a go." So we climbed up into the bomb bay and you were just hanging on, you had your feet either side and hang onto the struts and he barrel rolled the thing. It was quite exciting and we flew

06:00 night and day. Night flying was something that really grabbed me you know to imagine going up there

on my own at night and practically with no horizon but the town of Temora was there and you could see when you were climbing or what you were doing. We were hauled out with two weeks flying training to go and told we had to finish it in one week, which we did and on the Sunday,

- 06:30 following that we were hauled out and told that the whole deal was off. We were supposed to be going through to Tokyo with MacArthur in Liberators, that was the talk. From there I was posted to Mallala in South Australia supposedly, but I finished up in Barmera fruit picking, which didn't impress me at all, I wasn't real wrapped in that. I phoned my Dad and not that he had any influence at all, but can you get me out of this
- 07:00 and come home and help you in the factory and he said, "You can't get out, because manpower was still in progress." By this time I was down at Laverton in Victoria and I went to the Orderly Room there and said, "What is the quickest way to get up to the islands?" They said they were short of drivers. I was driving a truck from the age of 15 years, so that is OK, so I did a test around the block. They said, "OK on a troop train"
- 07:30 and I arrived in Brisbane, whistles and bells going, the war is finished. I had to do a hardening course, up at a place called Scarborough and I took ten days to get my clearance. My cousin and I just took off and I just decided that the war was over, so ten days later I came back and got my clearances and this guy, the corporal he said to the sergeant, "Sergeant," he said, "What is the date today?" And he said, "The 25th." And the war finished as you would know on the 15th of August.
- 08:00 He said, "It has taken you ten days to get your clearance." I said, "It is a big station," and he said, "Seven days CB [Confined to Barracks], don't forget to tell the Orderly Sergeant up at Scarborough that you are on CB." I didn't tell them, there was no paperwork changed hands, so I came back jumped on a DC3 out at Archerfield, Townsville, Jackie Jackie right up to the point of Queensland up in the cape
- 08:30 across the straits to Merauke, slept at Merauke overnight, flew up the top to Biak, Morotai and I went to Tarakan and Balikpapan just we called in there on the way around the top to Labuan and that is where I joined the 77 Squadron, which eventually became 81 Wing, with 76, 77 and 82 Squadrons and they changed over from Kittyhawks to
- 09:00 Mustangs at that time. They flew to Japan, I went over on a heavy lift ship the Glendyle and we landed in Kure we were in Kure for maybe a week or ten days or more and from there we went to Iwakuni ,which meant we had to go through Hiroshima
- 09:30 and the devastation was something that had to be seen to be believed. We went to Iwakuni we were there for I don't know how long, I can't remember, and then we moved down to a place called Bofu, Yamaguchi and I was there for the rest of the time in Japan. I came back from Japan in 1947 around about Easter and I was discharged and this
- 10:00 warrant officer flying-type was there and he said, "Shambrook you have got seven days CB here, it has never been signed off." I thought, "What the hell," and I told him the story and he just laughed and said and I was discharged. I joined my father and worked in the factory, I joined the rowing club and stroked a lightweight four, we were undefeated on the eastern
- 10:30 seaboard for a number of years and won two races down at the Royal Hobart Regatta and I gave up. By this time Gwen and I were married, we were married in 1948 and I had three kids. I used to go out training and get home at nine o'clock at night and finally Gwen said, "Give up," so I retired, I said,
- 11:00 "I am finished with the rowing." I got a phone call from the guy who rowed seven in the eight crew, Bob Barrett, and he said, "Shammy, Bill Boyd has pulled out, you've got to come and row," and I said, "Come on, I will be divorced." I went to Gwen and I said, "If we happen to win this race up in Maryborough I will take you to Hobart with me," we didn't have any money in those days I can tell you. To cut a long story short again,
- 11:30 after two and a half weeks training we beat the University by two feet to take the Queensland age championships, so from there we went down to Hobart and I took over, my brother and I took over the factory from my father in 1954 and we formed a partnership we formed a company
- 12:00 in 59, 1960 took on a franchise with Tristrams in Brisbane and built a new factory. I retired in 1986 at the age of 60 and on retirement I was a foundation member of the Lions Club and the Chairman of the P & C [Parents' and Citizens' Association] of the Coolangatta
- 12:30 State School. And I finished up joining the Salvation Army as a fund raiser and on the Board of Management and we shifted them from where they were in five old houses up in Southport in Gardener Street and that was a very good exercise, it was something that we were all very proud of. My Dad always
- 13:00 maintained that you should put something back into where you live. Virtually that is it.

Well done we will just stop. Tell us about your family maybe starting with your father?

My Dad was born in Cooktown in 1899 one of his claims to fame was he was a premi [premature] baby, 3 pound 6½ ounces at birth and

- 13:30 that was the cyclone that year that destroyed Cooktown. My grandfather came out he married out here, my great grandfather was a barrel roller in the gun manufacturing in South Hampton and it always intrigued me how they actually got out here, because we didn't have money because money was very tight during the depression time.
- 14:00 It turns out about ten or fifteen years ago, a guy Bernard Shambrook came out from England and he was a computer expert with Shell and he worked for an eye hospital in London. He came looking for a condition where if you walked out of light into dark and darkness into light you couldn't see and he found two women, elderly ladies up in Charters Towers,
- 14:30 descendants of two brothers that came out and he was telling me that before Wellington, England was very reliant for gun powder and whatever on other countries and they were in the habit of having armourers, as we would call them today or makers of cannons and what not
- 15:00 using them when the war was on. And then they would put them off and when it came to this situation before Wellington got over into Spain and up through France, they kept them on and he was on a wage of something like £3 a month and that was apparently a lot of money in those days and they rented a one room cottage in Enfield, Lock Lane
- 15:30 And I went there in 1970 and I saw where the factory was and the lock actually turned the wheels for the lathes in the factory and he, my great grandfather is buried in Cooktown and there were two families and one family finished up as Roman Catholics and the other one Church of England and I am the Church of England
- 16:00 but there is a whole heap of Shambrooks right up through Cairns and all up there. My Dad was married to my mother in Esk up in the Brisbane River Valley and there were five in the family - my sister was the eldest I was next, then my brother Ray and my sister Elsa who died of peritonitis when she was six and Nancy who is still with us.
- 16:30 Dad was always keen about the town, he was a very strong Rotarian and was responsible for building a holiday home for spastic kiddies down at Rainbow Bay and as a result as I said he always believed that you should put something back in and I became a member of the Lions Club and whatever else and he was
- 17:00 very involved with affairs on the coast.

We will talk about your father, did he have any involvement in World War I at all?

No, he was too young, he was born in 99 the war went from 1914 to 1918, two of his brothers one of them was over in the desert and they both died of the pneumonic plague after the war.

- 17:30 Sam and Arthur, no he wasn't old enough to go to the war.

Tell us about your mother?

My mother was one of a family of ten her mother and father had a dairy farm on Redbank Creek outside of Esk and we used to go up there on holidays, horse and sulky days.

- 18:00 I have wonderful memories of that place. We did get up and milk the cows at one o'clock in the morning and have the cows back in to milk by about 3 and we didn't wear shoes in those days. I went up there on the train. We used to leave Coolangatta at six o'clock in the morning, get the train to Brisbane, which used to take three hours, an auntie used to meet us there and take us over to Central Station
- 18:30 then we would get a train or rail motor over to Ipswich and get the rail motor from there up to Esk itself. I can remember that rail motor going up Mount Esk and it is a pretty stiff climb where all the material they had for the Somerset Dam they used to have two engines to push, one pulling and one pushing to get up the mountain and the driver of the rail motor had the cover off the
- 19:00 motor, which was a diesel. And the manifold was red hot and, it was just red hot, and he would put the billy on the manifold and boil the billy for a cup of tea and make toast. There was only about six or eight people on the rail, it was incredible and then again we would get up again in the morning, bare feet. Kelso, one of the horses, trod on my foot, I hardly felt it because it was
- 19:30 that cold we went out and got the cows and came back and after running around putting the cows in the bails and milking them, with all the crap and everything in the yard and separating the milk, grandma said, "Garth what did you do to your foot?" And I said, "Grandma it wasn't me it was Kelso," and the horse had trodden on my foot like that and taken the skin off. And of course in those days, tetanus, so into
- 20:00 a tin pannikin with Condies Crystals and boiling water, which nearly put me through the roof because my foot was frozen and Sloane's Liniment, which was used for the teats of the cows when they cracked, and tore up an old sheet and wrapped my foot up and it was good as gold. We used to go to town, old grandfather had a Sunshine Sam, it was a chestnut prancer very good
- 20:30 and the other one was the grey pony and the grey pony bolted once and finished up tangled up in

barbed wire. He brought the pony back and strapped it under a pepperina tree with leather straps and they stitched the legs up and put whatever tar and stuff on the horse's leg and a month or so later the pony is good as gold. We used to go shooting kangaroos and they had this old kangaroo

21:00 dog kanga, he was black and they had a little terrier and the terrier would come in and grab the kangaroo from behind and then the kangaroo dog would then knock it over extensively. And this old buck kangaroo would turn around and would be shaking the terrier off and by this time kanga has got the kangaroo, grabbed him and they brought him back in the pommel of his saddle with feet up and he was slit from here to there with the

21:30 finger of the kangaroo. And all they did was put that dog in the barn on straw and sewed him up with horse hair and the dog didn't move and fed him on bread and milk and a couple of weeks later the dog is good as gold. We used to walk three miles to school in bare feet and I got out of the rail motor and auntie Nell said to me, "Garth why are you limping?"

22:00 And I said, "Auntie Nell these shoes are killing me, I had them on the wrong feet because it was dark."

How often were you living out there?

We went up there, Christmas time was always very busy and as kids we were too young to really help I worked for Dad I suppose at eight years of age

22:30 scrubbing off labels on bottles and washing them with bottle brush in a cement tub. One of the funniest things that happened in those days, we used to have Stone's Ginger Beer bottles and the reason why they put ginger beer in stone bottles was to keep the light out, because light kills ginger. And eventually the Health Department banned them because you couldn't

23:00 see what was in them. This particular day we were bottling Stone's Ginger Beer which we used to hand syrup and put them in a flat crate and a little round about machine with six bottles that would fill them up. And there was a fellow by the name of Andy Jones who was a ganger for the council and he had some bees, you weren't supposed to have bees within five miles of the post office, the bees swarmed into the factory,

23:30 this is war time and sugar was at a premium. You had to just use everything that you had and so I said, "Dad what will I do?" and he said, "Just flick them and it will come out and it will be on the top." I filled them up and crowned the bottles and put them out and the next thing the phone is ringing and this bloke by the name of Jack Hammil he had a milk bar and he said, "You have got bees in your ginger beer," and the old man is saying, "I know flick them out."

24:00 We couldn't waste the sugar so that was what they did so if somebody wanted a spider as we used to call them in those days, which was ginger beer and ice cream and they just flicked the bee out. Bees are clean anyhow but that is just one of the things.

How did your father start at this kind of work?

That is something I can't tell you.

24:30 Initially they had a soft drink factory in Cooktown and my brother went up there, it would have been in the 60s and they had a thing where the horse used to walk around the trough to turn the wheels or whatever and in those days it was a single head, what they call a [UNCLEAR]. It used to have

25:00 gas and water and alternatively let some out and put some in and they would fill up and I can remember and I don't know what happened, there was a book which was handwritten with all of these recipes and it was quite incredible the stuff that they used to use with sarsaparilla. You had wintergreen, sassafras

25:30 and aniseed as an oil and you would have to mix them and it was done virtually by hand and I used to go out on a bike and get orders and then come back and then we would manufacture whatever the orders were. It was time consuming as you can imagine but that is the way it was in those days. I think wages were about 10d [10 pence] a week,

26:00 not mine I didn't get paid, top 15d a week or something like that. My grandfather's turnover in 1936 or 1937 was £2,387/14/2d. It is hard to imagine but when we took on the franchise operation,

26:30 we covered from Coomera in the north down to the other side of Murwillumbah at Maveerill and we were turning over something like \$8 million a year and we weren't making an awful lot of money but we worked hard but it was incredible.

What was the name of the company?

Shammy's Soft Drinks the old man coined the phrase, "Drink Shammy's, they are moorish."

27:00 He had a very good product. When the war broke out we were dealing with a firm by the name of Mauri Brothers and Thompson in Brisbane and the manager called him up and said, "George you know you are not going to be able to get supply unless you turn around," and he didn't have that much money. I think my grandfather had died in 37 and

27:30 Dad was running the business but he said, "Don't you worry about that we will carry the account," they

used to come in pine boxes about that big and that deep and all packed in straw. They were essences and I think he bought something like £700 or £800 worth of essence which saw him right through the war.

- 28:00 The way that you did business in those days was by a shake of the hand and it would be expected and if your reputation was there, which obviously he had, we always paid our bills, it was an acceptable situation.

What about the Depression years what was it like?

I can remember that my mother used to make cakes to make money.

- 28:30 She had made the best sponge cakes you could ever come across and whatever cakes she made were very good but we didn't have any money as such. When we used to go up to the farm, grandfather used to pay us a half penny a bale to clean the bales. You would sweep them out, no hose or anything you would just tidy them up and
- 29:00 when I was about ten years of age, in 1936, we would go to the pictures and we would get a shilling, 9d to go in and 3d for a pie or an ice cream. We were fortunate I am sure in that we never ever wanted for food there was always food on the table, but your pennies were very keenly sort after.
- 29:30 I worked for Dad for I wouldn't know how many years and I got 2/-d. at the end of a week if I was lucky. The Depression didn't actually affect us personally, we were fortunate in that regard we always had food on the table but it was a tight time. We had hand me down clothes and we never wore shoes. The only time we wore shoes
- 30:00 was on Sunday maybe to go to Sunday School and that would be about it.

What about the business how did that go?

My grandfather's turnover for the whole year was £2,387 or something or such so business wise you always had to. We had opposition from, we went as far as Miami in those days people by the name of Pretz had Southport,

- 30:30 Skinner's Lowes had Murwillumbah, we used to go as far as Chinderah in the south and as far as Burleigh, Miami in the north and that was about it. When we took over that Tristan's franchise we went from Coomera right through to Mobil and back into Springbrook it was quite a large area.
- 31:00 And we borrowed more money than you could poke a stick at that is the story we sort of run out of borrowings and in those days that was in 1960 leasing was the in thing, so the bank manager who was a very good friend of ours at the old ES&A [English, Scottish and Australian] Bank said, "You had better go and get some leasing money." and I went up to Mercantile Credits and met a man by the name of Mr Mechard
- 31:30 and told him what we were looking for a £18,000 and he said, "Mr Shambrook have you got anything else to do?" and I said, "I have plenty thanks very much trying to put this all together," and he said, "How about you come back here about two o'clock," so I went away and came back at 2 o'clock after seeing Mauri Brothers and Thompsons and some other people and he said, "Yes," he said, "You go ahead and order that
- 32:00 equipment, this is a bottle washing machine a filling machine a steam generator," so I said, "Do you want me to sign?" He said, "No that is quite all right, your bona fides are excellent." Away I go and wrote out the orders to get this equipment and all of a sudden one day all the equipment is sitting on the floor at the factory ready to be put in
- 32:30 and what do I do now? It has got to be paid for, so I ring Mr Mechard, I said, "Mr Mechard we have got all this equipment here." "Good Mr Shambrook, we will come down." He came down in a car and he said, "What is that?" I said, "That is the bottle washer, this is the so-and-so." "What does it add up to?" and I told him and he said, "That is going to cost you this x amount of money," and it took us five years to get square so that
- 33:00 we could pay accounts within 30 days. And we paid virtually cash for everything that we had bought and at the end of the five years, we rang Tristan's up and we said, "You had better get down here, we are going to have a dinner at the pub and that is when we could say we will finish up we can pay you in 30 days." We worked night and day I can tell you we started at six o'clock in the morning and lucky if you got to bed before
- 33:30 two o'clock the next morning. On one occasion there were four of us sitting around, and it didn't matter what time we finished we always had a beer and the four of us were just sitting around on boxes and the four of us were sound asleep, one of us woke up and that is the way it was.

Tell us about Coolangatta in the pre war years?

Coolangatta

- 34:00 in my opinion is the nicest place you could possibly want to live, the beaches are very good, fairly safe the further north you go the more open they get. It was a good town. everybody worked or seemed to

work, every Monday morning we had to go and pick up the 'empties', all the bottles from the pub,

- 34:30 you had branded bottles and you would put them in sacks and the guy used to come down with a horse and cart, would you believe from Brisbane, and pick them up in corn sacks and whatever you had. I think they used to give us about 9d a dozen or something for the branded and a shilling for the plain bottles, 'clean skins', but Coolangatta was
- 35:00 always a goer. We used to get the 4BH and 4BK[Brisbane radio stations] picnics they would come down, there was always something to do we used to surf and in the middle of that, it wasn't in the middle it, it was prior to the war we had the shark tragedy at Kiera, when the tiger shark took Bluey Girban and Jack Brinkley. And
- 35:30 funnily enough, with Coolangatta school being situated the way that it was we looked down on the beach and we had been up there and we saw one day a hammer head shark about eight or ten foot long. There would have only been ten or twenty people in the surf and we are screaming our heads off singing out, "Shark," and they could hardly hear us they were that far away and this bloke jumped on a wave
- 36:00 and ran right over the top of this shark. Well he almost walked on water to get out and it didn't attack anybody it just swam through and went out. I have seen that Lorry Powell and Clarrie Skelton who were killed on the Kokoda Trail ,I've seen he and his brother standing in water up to their knees and a shark twenty or thirty feet away from them just against the tide
- 36:30 and they didn't move and the shark just eventually swam away. That was a terrible business and that afternoon there were six of us that were going down to have a swim and I was quite angry because my father said, "No you can't go I want you to wash some bottles," so I washed some bottles and about 5.15 in the afternoon I go around the corner and the shark tragedy was on. One of the blokes who
- 37:00 had actually gone was Skinny May. Skinny May is still alive, he has his 80th birth in July this year, his father was the Superintendent of the Ambulance here, old Tom May, delightful fellow, and Skinny had a hole in the roof of his mouth and he still does because in those days they didn't have any answer to it they couldn't operate. To cut a long story short again I eventually did my
- 37:30 Bronze {Surf Live Saving medal] with Kiera Surf Club. My Dad was the first boat sweeper in the club and he and my grandfather were both life members of Kiera Surf Club so this particular day Skinny is out on the boat , duty boat which was about ten or fifteen yards behind the buoys and I am swimming out, I have swum out, I am hanging on the buoy and Alan Miller is in the belt, he is coming out to pick me up. Skinny is in the boat and he calls,
- 38:00 "Thers a shark." I said, "Shut up Skinny, it is some seaweed on its way out," and all of a sudden about ten seconds later Skinny says, "There are two sharks." I nearly tipped the boat over getting in, there was one about nine foot and another one about six foot Bronze Whalers in between me and Algie Miller who was coming out because the shark sign in those days was put your oars up in the boat and they could pull him in from shore and he was still trying to come out to the buoy,
- 38:30 he didn't realise the sharks were there. The boats in those days, we had this old Arakoon which was a clinker type boat and it used to take 16 blokes to carry the thing from the boat shed down to the water and I was only about 15 at the time and we had a bloke Jack Duncan he was the boat captain.
- 39:00 He said, "Come on Shammy get up there in the bow we are going for a row." There used to be a lagoon that went right from Kiera right down to Coolangatta Creek. Away we went, got out through the break and we went off Point Danger and he waited and waited and this wave came up and I nearly died, it seems as though you are about fifty feet up in the air, it was a big wave
- 39:30 and you would row like hell and you would get on the boat and you would slam the oars across and if you didn't do it correctly and have the oar flat it would break. I am there in the bow and I couldn't believe that I was there.

Tape 2

- 00:33 We were on this wave and in those days you didn't even take anything to bail out the boat with, and when you got on the wave, the water went down the front, you had to race down the back to counteract it and Duncan is saying, "Get down the back Shammy," and I said I was frozen. I couldn't believe I was up so high in this boat
- 01:00 and roaring down this wave and so eventually I got down the back but we couldn't get off it, it was so big the wave that it just threw us up on the beach in front of the Coolangatta Hotel and then we had to wait for low tide so we could row back to get the boat back to Keira.

At the time what was the link like between Brisbane and Coolangatta or the Gold Coast?

Basically

- 01:30 it was the train. I think I mentioned I used to go to Esk on the train it would take you minimally two hours to go to Brisbane on the train like the slow boat to China and the same thing when you were coming back down. We didn't have any vehicles in those days. I can remember when I was five years of age
- 02:00 in 31, or around about then and I had tonsillitis and I had to go to Southport to get my tonsils taken out. And I can remember lying down with this cloth over my face and something dripping on it and the next thing I knew I am walking out with an ice cream in my hand and the tonsils were gone. We had an old Dodge truck, which Dad had it converted into a bit of a utility which we used to deliver from and it would take us minimally

02:30 an hour to get up to Southport. Things were very slow, nothing happened in a hurry just whenever.

You mentioned that a man used to come down in a horse a cart from Brisbane was this uncommon or?

No he used to come down and he would stay. He had a bit of a yard around Coolangatta somewhere, were he used to

03:00 put his bottles and one thing or another and eventually he came down in an A Model Ford a two ton truck. And he used to get around with those and also the same guy had horses and at one stage I dropped a bottle and it burst and it cut my leg.

03:30 There wasn't enough there for them to stitch it but there was fat, so all they did was taped it up and he had these horses at what used to be Goodwin Park and I went and rode the horse, didn't I and you know what happened to that, it busted open again. He was quite a character the same bloke, they were all characters in those days, everybody that you dealt with

04:00 and you knew who to trust and who not to.

You went to school in Brisbane?

Yes I used to travel up in the train and I was there for two years and the war had really escalated by this time and we had a thirty seven mil anti-aircraft battery right down on the flat at 'Churchie' [Brisbane Church of England Grammar School] because you would be in the classroom and bang these things would go

04:30 off, the whole place would shake and the Yanks had come. One incident I remember they used to bring their planes out on ships and they were Belair Cobras, which weren't the best aircraft in the world. The cannon shot straight through the nose and they had gates on the wharf in Brisbane and they couldn't get the planes out.

05:00 The wharfies told them you can't do any of that you will have to lift them over and get them out, no cross cut saws and cut the posts out and that was it, get out of here. They didn't muck about.

What did the wharfies do?

What could they do? The Yanks would have shot them if they had tried to do, get out of here, Thomson submachine gun or a 45, they used to shoot their own men.

05:30 One guy was found AWL [Absent Without Leave] at the dance at Jazzland in Coolangatta one night and this lieutenant in charge of the shore patrol and we had Yanks that came here, they were up in the islands and they were loaded with malaria and God knows what and they were submarine sailors as well. This bloke took off up the main street,

06:00 the lieutenant said, "Stop or I will shoot," and he went bang just shot this guy, bang up he went in the air threw him in the back of the wagon and away they went and true as I sit here.

I will get you to tell me about how and when you heard the news that World War II had begun?

06:30 We heard it on the radio in the first instance in 1937 or 39, I was only 13 years of age and I reckon it was more excitement than anything. War, OK we

07:00 had not experienced it or whatever and I was thinking, "Am I going to be old enough to get into the war?" I don't know but I think that a lot of men treated it as an adventure and it is no adventure, I mean if you managed to turn around and do the full circuit it is fine but

07:30 I didn't see the war but I saw the results of some of it. And later on there will be something about a prang that happened and I went over to England when my youngest son was getting married in America and we went to an RAF [Royal Air Force] Aircraft Museum and when I looked at some of the aircraft I might have flown in, I was thinking hokey mokus

08:00 how on earth did they ever get out of these things? They were the bare essentials there was nothing that was there to fly and to bomb and to shoot and it is no wonder so many people were lost. It is not a nice situation at all.

How did you hear the news that the war had been declared?

I heard it on the radio, Menzies saying that

08:30 we were committed, that the Germans had invaded Poland and that we were at war, so that was it.

How did hearing that news affect you?

At my age it didn't mean a lot 13 years of age, so we were at war so we just had one down the track a bit no it didn't impress me to that extent,

09:00 I think it was more excitement than anything.

How about in the first year or so of the war how did it or what changes did it bring to Coolangatta?

Very little in the first year of the war because it was a sort of a phony war as you realise. Things didn't really happen until the Pacific War broke out and in the mean time they were looking at rationing and

09:30 whatever so Australia was very fortunate so to speak. Here we are down the bottom of the world so to speak and nobody could get at us we didn't think they could and eventually when the Japanese came into the war the Yanks arrived in force. As I said we had these marines who came from Guadalcanal and they were over at Fingal over the other side of the

10:00 river and they were paying blokes in boats £20 to row them across the river, so they could get to a hotel or whatever because they were marooned out there. They were supposed to be convalescing, no it didn't happen that way it was incredible. They had gun emplacements around point Danger and the Yanks used to practise trying to shoot the sea gulls.

10:30 We honestly thought that the Japanese were going to land here they were coming from everywhere but as a rule of thumb we went on with our daily lives and apart from the rationing and whatever and aircraft started to come in great numbers, Kitty Hawks and Lightnings and AiroCobras and whatever and there was always a high interest as far as I was concerned because I always wanted to fly,

11:00 it didn't really impinge on your life to that extent but you knew that it was all happening.

How did you hear the news that the Japanese had come into the war?

Pearl Harbour. I can remember quite plainly the day that they attacked Pearl Harbour or the day after and the news came through

11:30 and I was at the door of the factory and somebody came around and said, "The Japs have attacked Pearl Harbour." There was no television or anything like that, it was all wireless or whatever and Dad said, "Now the shit has hit the fan." We became involved and

12:00 it amazed me, when we got to Japan, that they managed to wage the war, that they did it with manpower. We didn't have that many people in Australia at that time. They had in Kure, which was a naval base, they had caves drilled through the side of the hill on bare floor with a slab of cement

12:30 and a lathe and the electric light wires would be just running along through these caves. You couldn't imagine, I have seen our factories built in proper sheds and they did this and did that but it was quite amazing and the fact that they lived in little houses made of paper,

13:00 light timber, incredible it really was.

In that first little while when the Japanese had just come into the war what sort of talk would there be about the Japanese what they were like around the area?

We didn't know a lot about them at all but we knew they had taken over into Korea and attacked China and

13:30 the fact that they had a very good naval force and eventually we found their Zeros which were shooting our planes out of the air with no very short fashion. That was the first bloke that died in the war from Coolangatta, was Lance Powell and he was a pilot up in Malaysia and never ever found him, just gone.

14:00 It was his brother was killed later on in the Kokoda Trail and Clarry Skelton he was a corporal and Lorry was a lieutenant.

Coolangatta, did they react to local boys dying?

Everybody wanted to join up if you were old enough whatever service you were going into

14:30 I chose the air force because I wasn't the world's best sailor and I thought I am not going to go into the navy I didn't fancy being out in the middle of the water somewhere and not being able to get back in, the army didn't impress me and I always wanted to fly and I thought if I am going to get killed I want to do it quick. I didn't know any guy of my age that was there that didn't want to join up.

With Coolangatta being a fairly small town

15:00 **when local boys would be killed overseas how did the town react?**

It was terrible to see. Lorry Powell was a guy over six foot tall real good looking bloke and a lovely person. The Powell family were very special people they had the electric light in the town they generated the electric light,

15:30 the Powell boys used to make model aircraft and old AE Powell the father, had a car. I don't think the boys were allowed to drive it, he used to drive his car. I think it was a Hupmobile or some such thing, but they had this Harley Davidson bike and in those days they lived right opposite the Coolangatta school and

16:00 Garrick Street went up into Powell's, Lane as it is now and a pretty steep pinch and the three of them used to jump onto this bike and they used to work at the electric light place and when they got to the last steep pinch, the old Harley wouldn't cop it with the three of them on the bike, so two would jump off and the last bloke would ride it up and they were just real good people.

16:30 It was hard to imagine, Clarrie was a bit of a larrikin it really cast a pall over the town. The Powells seemed to accept it, they were very stoic people they came off the land out the other side of Charleville they had a sheep station out there, and they called the home 'Coolangatta Lumeear' and that was the name of the station that they had out the other side of

17:00 Charleville, no it wasn't nice.

Would the town have any sort of memorial of things like this?

Yes, the memorial is still in Coolangatta over in Goodwin Park. It has shifted it used to be right on the corner of Griffith and Maclean Street because in those days there was practically no cars, they used horse and buggies and they went around it and they shifted it from there down on Marine Parade

17:30 and from Marine Parade they shifted it over to Goodwin Park. And it is still there that was the original memorial, which would have the First World War volunteers and whatnot on it.

When had your interests in aircraft begun to develop?

I guess I always sort of

18:00 was intrigued over to see something. I went for a flip in an old Fokker and I know that this is right because Johnny Griffiths, who is a Greek descendant, had the iceworks and somehow or other he had this bloke come down in this Fokker aircraft and did joy rides off the beach at Coolangatta.

18:30 I can remember my sister, she didn't want to go but my brother Ray was being nursed by my mother and I stood in between the two seats and we went up in this Fokker and came back and landed and it was something, no straps or anything on the seats. Johnny Griffiths, there is a story there, he had a very short temper

19:00 and when the local, the Powells got rid of the electric supply and sold it to the City Electric Light in Brisbane, so Johnny Griffiths gets his first bill. And he had about a 30 horse power motor that used to chew up quite a bit of juice and make his pumps for the ice and he gets his bill and there is a loading of 10% on it, so he rings up this Mr Phil Smith in Brisbane. Mr Smith, "I would like to come up

19:30 and see you." "By all means Mr Griffiths." Johnny goes up to Brisbane and he says, "What is this 10%?" And he said, "That is for line loss between Brisbane and Coolangatta." So he said, "I am paying for something I am not getting." Phil Smith, "Well yes I suppose that is right Mr Griffiths." So he said, "What if I put a line out and took that 10%?" He said, "We will prosecute," and he said, "Of course you will prosecute me."

20:00 Incidentally when my sister was born my mother couldn't feed her, old Mrs Griffiths had Leo the son the same age and she breast fed my sister. She was a nursing mother in those days and Mum used to take Joyce around and Mrs Griffiths would feed her.

Describe the plane that you first went up in?

20:30 It was a radial engine with one seat there and one seat here and the pilot up the front. I can't explain it to you, I think it was a mono plane, a top wing Fokker that is all I can remember about it, I wasn't too old in those days.

What was it like taking off, off a beach?

The same as it is taking off

21:00 after I learnt to fly, there is no difference as long as the sand was hard enough so that the tyres didn't sink, there was always hard sand in low tide.

What sort of impressions did this first flight leave with you?

I sort of just stood there and hung on and I couldn't believe I was up there and looking down on Coolangatta. It was quite amazing

21:30 to have done it, I still don't know where the old man got the money to pay for it.

Would it have been an expensive?

No I think it was £1 or £2 but that was a lot of money in those days.

What year was it you went to Brisbane for school?

1941, 42 I was in Churchie.

What was your living situation in Churchie?

22:00 Very good you never got enough to eat. I mean there was enough to eat but you were always hungry because old Boss Morris used to insist the boys ran at least a mile, every boy in the school had to run at least a mile a day. I will never forget we had this guy Dopey Smith we used to call him and he wasn't a well person and when I look back on it we were

22:30 detailed this Gordon Drysdale to take Dopey around the pocket, which was over a mile very day. And the bloke used to be the colour of purple by the time we got back I'm sure he had a heart condition but it didn't make any difference. Old Boss Morris said every boy had to run a mile and if old Dopey was here tomorrow I would apologise to him, because I think it was terrible what we did to the poor fellow but you exercised a lot, gymnastics, football

23:00 rowing, running, tennis swimming it was all there. And every afternoon this old Sarg who was an expatriate Kiwi [New Zealander], a big man, they used to have what they called bread and scrape which was just bread with jam over it and you would fight to get a piece of this bread, this is before you had your dinner at night

23:30 it was incredible. I had a bloke Earl Smith who eventually became a big noise in the Surf Life Saving movement and he used to give me his sandwiches every day and I would whoop those damn sandwiches down I was so hungry, but you were healthy, it was great.

What was the experience like living away from home?

I got six across the

24:00 backside the first night I was there for pillow fighting. I kind of rubbed my bottom to get it all the one temperature, but it was good it really was you had to learn to stand up. I learnt the piano for about three or four years and played in an eisteddfod in Murwillumbah

24:30 old lady Milly Fraser, the Fraser Drive, the old home is still there. It was a very healthy situation and you again proved that you had to be able to fight and you had to be able to stand up for yourself and it was

25:00 pretty spartan the way we were but it was damn good, it was very character building, and we even tore up the lawn and grew vegetables to supplement whatever. I was in charge of the damn garden even though I haven't got a green thumb I grew this spinach, we had spinach coming out of our ears and every time we would have a meal...

25:30 Spinach, every meal, the boys would say, "Shammy why don't you kill that spinach?"

The vegetable garden was that related to rationing?

Whatever you could do whatever you could grow was a help. We had a dairy on the property I think we had about eight or ten Friesians cows but it kept us in milk

26:00 and whatever. It was good.

What type of an education did Churchie provide?

Full up to what was junior and senior and from there you went to university after doing your senior, I only went to junior, didn't go after that.

Was it a big financial effort for your

26:30 **parents, for you to go to Churchie?**

I don't even know how much it cost him. It always intrigued me because money was always a scarce item, but apparently Dad had been putting money away. He insured my sister, he insured me and he insured Ray and

27:00 her insurance paid for my education, my insurance paid for Ray's because Ailsa died and Nancy went to St Margaret's in Brisbane, so the thing was that when the last one came, it should have gone back to my sister Joyce but later on we squared that up because we bought her a block of land so she could build a house on it.

27:30 It was rather tight.

While you were at Churchie what were your aspirations for the future?

I guess I was going to join the air force that was about it. I must say that I wasn't the most studious character that ever was, I didn't like study it was the same when I was playing the piano I loved to play the piano

- 28:00 and that was as far as it went. I hated theory it was just a damn nuisance and studying was not my forte at all in difference to my son our eldest boy Greg who went to university and got a degree and I used to see him writing to two o'clock in the morning, reading; I don't know where he got it from, but it certainly was not from me.
- 28:30 It was very sort of forming in relation to growing up. This guy, Moondog Chandler was his name, he came from the other side of Charleville and he had this pen, which he had thrown away and the only thing wrong with the pen was that the nib was busted. I said, "You don't want that," and he said, "No
- 29:00 I will get another one," so I went and got a bulb from somewhere and fixed it up and I am writing with this pen and he finds out and he wanted his pen back. And I said, "No you are not having it back," and he said, "I will have you at the next tournament." I said, "All right." The next thing I get a visit from one of the prefects Paul Stump and he said, "Shambrook can you fight?" And I said, "No."
- 29:30 He said, "Up on form five at three o'clock every afternoon straight after school," and he could box and he taught me just how to defend myself. Eventually up comes the tournament and I had this Moondog in the corner and everybody is saying, "Hit him, hit him," and I said, "I can't he is not looking." I got a blood nose out of it.

Did you get to keep the pen?

- 30:00 Yes I got to keep the pen.

How much time would you get to go into Brisbane?

Not a lot, we would have the swimming which would be down at the Valley Baths and we would go there and then there was the athletics which was at the Showgrounds and rowing which was on the

- 30:30 Milton Reach and sometimes we went to plays, the Mikado and some other Gilbert and Sullivan was on at His Majesty's Theatre and we would go to that but we would not go into Brisbane that often.
- 31:00 Old Boss Morris used to keep a pretty firm thumb and we were always having little bits of go in with the day boys. They were 'day boys' and we were boarders, we were better than you are so to speak. They had a cadet corps with the good old 310 rifles that was a single shot rifle with a breech.
- 31:30 I think later on they had an air training corps too.

You mentioned a little bit about the Americans in Brisbane what other sorts of observations did you make about the Americans in Brisbane?

It seemed as though they were very generous people. It seemed that way I don't think any of them had ever had that amount of money

- 32:00 before, they were being very well paid a difference to us at 6/6d a day when you first went in. The navy we went got an old eight oar out and rowed down the river there and we were looking at these destroyers and cruisers and what not and I didn't see any aircraft carriers at that time but it
- 32:30 just seemed to impress with the fact that they had all this equipment. I will give you an instance in that when Greg was over in Iowa training to be a chiropractor, the guy next door to him and his wife before the war started, they were manufacturing
- 33:00 washing machines and the tub of that washing machine was half an oak barrel and that is how and they put all the gear and wringers on top of that. At one stage John and his firm had 18% of the American market, which was good, when the Japs attacked Pearl Harbour their organisation must have been fantastic, because they came to John and said,
- 33:30 "You are going to stop making washing machines, you are going to make aircraft parts." I said, "Gee whiz John that would be some sort of change from making washing machines to aircraft parts." "Yes," he said, "it was." And I said, "How long did it take you to change?" And he said, "It took us about three months."
- 34:00 I am looking at this old fellow. The organisation behind the Americana effort was absolutely huge you couldn't imagine what they did in the time they did it in, it was incredible.

When you came back to Coolangatta after leaving Churchie what was some of the main changes

- 34:30 **that had taken place in Coolangatta?**

Just the fact that there was a blackout, we were blacked out in Brisbane as well and there were Yanks. They had the old Grand Hotel taken over by the American navy, they had a camp over the other side

- 35:00 of Fingore and the Dutch had a camp along the beach in front of Kiera Beach down towards Coolangatta Creek and there was a lot of traffic. All of a sudden we got the big 66GMCs [General Motors' Corporation trucks] and the Jeeps and it just
- 35:30 created an atmosphere, the fact that they had those guns with machine guns on Point Danger and every now and again they would let go at some sea gulls or whatever or a whale way out to sea . It was you realised that things were really happening and there was a war on but not that it be involved but just to be there.
- Was there any hassle with Australians and Americans**
- 36:00 **in Coolangatta?**
- Yes there was not directly in Coolangatta I don't think, because the army didn't have a lot to do, well the Australian Army was not involved, but up in Canungra, that is where all the commandos were trained up there and there was no love lost between the Yanks [Americans] and the Aussies and the Aussies started
- 36:30 I would think most of the time. One particular night at the Jazzland there was a dance on and it was full of Yanks and they came down and they cleaned the town out, the Yanks came down and took all their troops, they were fully armed, they did a forced march from Canungra down to Coolangatta and they took them on in large lumps and just cleaned the whole place out.
- 37:00 **Why exactly?**
- I guess it had something to do with the situation, women and whatever. The Yanks were very free with their money and it was just the fact this is our country, yes it was, I mean grog was not easy to get,
- 37:30 pubs would open for half an hour a day or an hour at the outside with beer and the Yanks would pay anything up to £10 for a bottle of rum or bottle of whisky. They would give you 20 and you would take the 20 and some of the leading citizens in the town, my old man wasn't one of them, entered the sly grog bit, it was
- 38:00 open slather.
- How did the sly grog?**
- I don't know where they made it, I only knew that it was there, it was available, there was not a lot of it and a lot of them made a lot of money, a lot of money.
- You mentioned Jazzland what was this place like?**
- Jazzland was beautiful, a best dance floor you could have anywhere and it is right on the corner if you went down Griffith Street,
- 38:30 the main street, that is where Jazzland was, right in front of you. It used to be an old garage and they pulled it down and this bloke Don McCloud built Jazzland and a fellow by the name of Dick he bought it and it was great. There would be dances say four nights a week, never on Sunday
- 39:00 and you would know who the good dancers were, the girls you would have to book to have a dance. And it was a local band, Bill Smith used to come down from the Trocadero in Brisbane through the Christmas and New Year season and the place was packed. Grog wise the Kirribell was just over there in the corner, there was practically nothing there to be had,
- 39:30 you weren't allowed in those days to have any grog in the vicinity of a dance hall.
- Were you a good dancer?**
- I don't say I was a good dancer but I enjoyed dancing very much.
- Where had you learnt to dance?**
- That is a good question. I think I started up at the farm
- 40:00 they always had a piano up at the farm and my aunties used to teach you how to waltz and they all loved to dance and I think that is where I started originally to learn to dance and eventually went from there. I was playing the piano it was just an involvement with others and at school you possibly learnt
- 40:30 how to dance a bit better.

Tape 3

- 00:37 **Were you meeting any nice girls at these dances?**

Yes. Most of them were locals, very few, the war was on or whatever so there weren't a lot but you

always knew the good dancers and my sister was always

01:00 a good dancer and she didn't have any problem getting any partners. And Joyce Kilburn was very good Ivy Pollock and you would always make sure that you had Diana Monsel and you would have a dance with them and you would know that you would enjoy it, Take them back and thank you very much. The last dance was the medley and normally if it was available you would take the girl home... or escort her home, that would be more like it.

01:30 **Were you having any problems or challenges with the Americans as competition?**

Not really because I wasn't that involved, in any case, we were pretty damn busy, the day was always full and you are tired enough by the time the day was over with what you had to do. It wasn't harmful but

02:00 that was the way it was, yes you always knew the girls were there. My experience with girls didn't start until I was a bit later on in life.

Tell us were you following how the war was going at the same time?

Yes all the time. On the radio, listen to that every night without fail and

02:30 you would be going to the pictures and the Cinesound Movietone News would give you all the 'behind the scenes' news, what was happening, you were pretty well informed as to how things were.

What were some of the distinct memories you had before you joined up of the occurrences in the war?

Of course Pearl Harbour was

03:00 there, Singapore was terrible and when we realised, I didn't know at the time, but my wife's brother Eric he died on the Burma Railway and to imagine that the Japs could have waged the war the way that they did and the intensity and the cruelty that they had was terrible.

03:30 War was war, but you didn't think about the problems about the way they were, and what they did. When they sank the Prince of Wales and the Repulse, the ships that came out to save Singapore and they just bombed them from up there and sank them, the men that died, died because the British didn't acknowledge the power of the

04:00 Japanese.

How real was the threat of the Japanese when you were just say, in Coolangatta?

We were told that they were going to land, we were told that they would definitely land here. This was supposed to be it, in this area, somewhere in this area because of the proximity, so that they had this and that and the rest. The way that they

04:30 took everything in front of them and because nobody was prepared and they just didn't acknowledge that the danger was there. I had a friend of mine he went to Churchie and they had a sheep station and he said Garth, "We will starve the bastards to death if ever they get here because this place is so big they wouldn't be able to encompass it with the lines of communication

05:00 they had," and he was pretty well right there because they stopped at Milne Bay and the Kokoda Trail and that must have been terrible conditions to fight in - shocking.

I am interested in who told you, and what exactly they told you, about the Japanese supposedly going to land in Coolangatta?

We had air raid precautions,

05:30 it was a common talk amongst everybody that the Japs were going to land but unbeknown to us at that time, they created the Brisbane Line, but they were prepared to turn round and leave the whole lot to the Japs - it was amazing. I don't know how far you have travelled around this country but when you realise that from Coolangatta to Jackie Jackie

06:00 is how far, it is a bloody long way and what is in between is incredible. It is just jungle in lots of places and in those days it was too. They might have been able to live off the land for a while, but not for long, they wouldn't have been able to supply their troops, but we were told that everybody knew that they were coming to land. When they had

06:30 that mini submarines, torpedo in Sydney, we thought, where are they, when are they going to get here?

Was there any official people telling you that they were going to land?

The fact that we had blackouts and they had gun emplacements along the beach they weren't very much they would not have stopped anything. It was realistic enough that it could happen,

07:00 the Battle of the Coral Sea. I was out Charleville when that battle was on and they had Liberators at Charleville out and where we were was 42 miles from Charleville and we could hear those planes

warming up, there was a lot of aircraft there, big. As to exactly who told us that they were coming I can't

07:30 pinpoint that.

What kind of preparations did you have for a potential landing that you remember?

We couldn't do a thing, we didn't have anything. We had the Dad's Army was there, all the old guys they had a few rifles between them but there was nothing here. Nothing at all.

What about the presence of all the Americans?

That brought it to

08:00 reality the fact that we were at war and that they possibly thought that the Japs were going to land too. They couldn't cover everything because the coastline of Australia is just so huge, not easy.

How did you feel as a young man under this kind of threat?

I guess it was a sort of a worry

08:30 and we kept a 44 gallon drum of fuel all the time. A mate of us had the Shell agency and he used to get a few spare petrol ration tickets and we always kept at least one drum of petrol there and if they had landed anywhere, we were just going to head for the bush, put the family on the back of the old Ruggles truck

09:00 and where we were going to go I don't know, but we were going to get out of the place. By this time, what the Japs were doing, raping and whatever, so it was just bad news.

Tell us about your inspiration to join up, later on towards the end?

The fact that there were a lot of my

09:30 people that I knew like Smasher and Billy Stafford he was in the air force and as I said, I felt that I always wanted to fly and I felt once again, I am not a good sailor, I used to be on the duty boat at Kiera out on the buoys and I would dive overboard because I would be crook just in the boat. It didn't happen so much in

10:00 aircraft, but it happened with lots of people apparently. I didn't want to be a footslogger, so that is why I joined the air force.

What age were you how soon?

I was in the Air Training Corp at Murwillumbah, when I came back from almost when I came back from Churchie and

10:30 we did Morse code and we did aircraft identification and capabilities and whatever. We didn't get up to fly but the presence of aircraft and aeroplanes was always something that I was very keen to get involved with.

Where exactly would you meet what was the place?

We would travel by bus to Murwillumbah

11:00 and they had a room up there where you used to congregate and you would be marching and doing Morse code and aircraft recognition and then we had a pretty good football team, but in direct involvement and marching with 310 rifles or whatever

11:30 there weren't any to spare anyhow. It wasn't direct involvement at all, and you were a runner for the ARP [Air Raid Precautions] taking messages from one place to another if you were needed on a push bike, all by push bike, it wasn't involvement to that extent except when I got in the air force

12:00 The same thing continued on there. At Kingaroy we were doing Morse code and aircraft identification and fitness, football again.

What was it the Cadet Air?

Air Cadets.

How often would you meet?

We would meet every second week,

12:30 catch the blue and red bus from here to Murwillumbah I used to stay overnight with the Solways and come back the next day down at old Sleepy Hollows we used to call Murwillumbah and the Salvos [Salvation Army] used to play in the street every Saturday night. Jimmy Hitchings used to stand in front of them and suck a lemon.

13:00 I don't know whether you realise this but it causes your saliva, watching him eat, wander around

sucking this lemon and they dry their instruments, but that was just something.

Why would he suck the lemon?

You have tasted a lemon and if you stand in front of somebody and they have also tasted a lemon, you salivate and when you are blowing an instrument or something

- 13:30 you get that much saliva you have got to stop and empty it out and start again. It was one of the tricks Jimmy Hitchings used to get up to, he was a character.

Who were the instructors at this Air Cadets?

They were local guys. Al Jobson he had a tyre place up there and Williamson I don't know what their qualifications

- 14:00 were, they were given the rank of flight lieutenant, Air Training Corps and I can't answer that, I don't really know where they got their experience from .

Tell us about when you turned 18 and you joined up what was the process what you had to do?

You had to go to Creek Street in Brisbane and

- 14:30 the doctors went over you with the fine tooth comb you were in the raw, you might have had a pair of underpants on that is about it and you had to drop them at some stage and they checked you out to make sure you were fit enough to do what you were supposed to do. And from there we were put on that troop train and the thing that intrigues me was about Kingaroy was, that we were on palliasses on the floor
- 15:00 just a hessian bag with straw about this deep and they issued you with five blankets and when you learnt it, you put one blanket half over the other and then you fold that one and this one which give you four folds, two underneath and two on top and then you tucked that up and then you get two blankets
- 15:30 and then you strap that across one at the top and one at the bottom so you are up to six. You have two underneath and four on top and to bind it, you put one blanket around the entirety to hold it and make a cocoon of it. If you got in between the wrong folds the bloody thing used to come to bits and Kingaroy is a nice cold place - the ice buckets used to freeze. If there had of been a fire I don't know what we would have done because
- 16:00 they were all ice. It was good and we were kept very busy with fitness and they were testing you from time to time as to what you might be, a pilot or whatever else. I was fortunate enough to be classified as a pilot.

Tell us about how they did classify you as being a pilot?

With tests

- 16:30 aircraft recognition and they put you in this room with a stick and this light would go and you are supposed to try and follow this I don't know how, it was the most haphazard thing I have ever seen but I don't know I must have along with the education that I had, I think that might have helped to some extent. I got myself involved very heavily with the
- 17:00 sports situation and did a bit of boxing not a lot, football quite a lot of football. The farmers used to come across from the [Darling] Downs and play us football and they were tough blokes, it was like hitting a brick wall when you tackled those fellows. The ground was harder than those tiles and it was black soil
- 17:30 and when you landed you knew that you had been tackled. We had one guy he was the only Victorian in the whole of the course, he had been an AFL[Australian Football League] player and in those days you used to have duels between full backs for the line or try and get them off foot so you could run up and tackle them. This Bluey, some of those blokes were pretty good
- 18:00 and they could kick for the line and he used to jump out and catch the ball before it went out and then we would run and we didn't do too bad. Tug of war, a whole heap of things. You went into town of a weekend and there were a couple of cafes there where you could get a big T bone steak and eggs and what not, really the country was not
- 18:30 short of food and it was good food.

Through those first few days what was it like being part of the military at that point?

I don't think it was that strange in that I had already been in the Air Training Corps and I had been in the cadets at school and slope arms, present arms

- 19:00 and we did quite a bit of shooting and throwing hand grenades what for, I am buggered if I know. There was a bloke and he was alive up until the last couple of years, this bloke froze with a live hand grenade and he grabbed it and it blew his hand off and he was a flight sergeant.
- 19:30 That was a lesson that was very hard to imagine that could happen but I made sure I got rid of mine I

can tell you.

Were you there that day when that happened or do you remember?

No I wasn't there no.

20:00 **Do you remember the fall out from that?**

Yes. I think the guy that froze they just scrubbed him, he was not controlling, if you lose that sort of control in an aeroplane so to speak, and if there was any thoughts of air crew you would have been shot there and then.

You mentioned you got chosen to be a pilot how did you feel hearing this news?

How did I feel?

20:30 **Hearing the news that you had become a pilot?**

Stoked, that was fantastic very good. While we were at Kingaroy G for George came out here, the Lancaster and flew over and we all thought it was incredible. To imagine a thousand of those aircraft bombing and the noise must have been horrendous you would have heard it all over the British Isles.

21:00 They had a Hudson squadron that operated out of Kingaroy, it was an air ambulance squadron not that we ever got up in Hudsons we didn't do any flying at Kingaroy at all, it was all just basic training and aircraft recognition.

With that basic training aircraft recognition what other things did you do?

Morse code,

21:30 navigation, you were given the basics of navigation, to be able to recognise the stars. Be out there on a freezing night and a beautiful clear sky and they would say, well, "Where is Uranus?" Or, "Where is..." we had to do that. I think that's what might have got me over the hump was the fact that I got so much involved in sport.

22:00 The fact that I trained our tug of war team, we had no training in tug of war, but I learned to watch the others when they were not quite right and pull at the right time and I think that helped me quite a bit. I guess Kingaroy

22:30 was another learning place, to become grown up in a short time, and be involved with a whole heap of men. As a rule of thumb we were well fed and looked after while you didn't have anywhere to go at Kingaroy except into town and have a steak and egg or whatever,

23:00 it was good.

What was the next stage after Kingaroy?

The EFTS, the Elementary Flying Training School at Temora. That was where the whole business end of the stick started. Taking off and flying and learning to fly,

23:30 going solo after 6½ hours flying and my instructor found out after I had gone solo and we were told that if you had any doubt at all to go around again, don't if you think you are not right and I thought this is all right so I went around twice anyway. He all of a sudden discovered that we hadn't done spins and the

24:00 spinning with it you have to get out of it quick. And a guy he nearly went white in the face he said, "Are you serious we haven't done spins?" And he said, "No sir we haven't done spins." Tomorrow morning, so up we went and we spun, and the thing was that one of the things, particularly with night flying, you never ever watched your speed, you must keep your speed you must keep your speed because if you spin

24:30 at night time you are gone, you can't see where the horizon is and you don't know what is happening in any case. One particular night I had been up for a couple of times and all that they had was only a dirt strip with just tins with oil in them to light the flight path

25:00 and there was a control point out there somewhere and a bloke sitting on his parachute with an Aldis lamp. And before you took off he would give you your signal and you did RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] or B [Battalion] and down to this in front of your stick to give that sign and I took off and went around and came back and as I turned into my down wind leg to land, this guy has taxied out onto the landing strip.

25:30 And I looked and I have already got the green to come in, I am cleared to land and I am looking at my speed and Tiger Moths stall at 66 if we flew in at night they were excellent, very good motors and very well rigged, and I am watching the 66 and I am trying to put on power and I am thinking, "If this bloke takes off I won't be able to see."

26:00 I thought, "To hell with it," so I put on full power and went straight down over the top of this bloke and waved my wings and say, "I am here for God sake who has stuffed up?" And so I go up and turn across wind and give the sign again and in the mean time there is various lights going off. This bloke he was a

flight sergeant, ex Spitfire pilot, who had been assigned as an instructor,

- 26:30 he didn't fancy it at all and he loved a drink, and he had my mate Donny Williams, who was on the same flight as I was. He said, "Here I am going to sleep you look after them." He missed me on the way around - there was hell to play about that.

Take us through your very first flight what was that like the feeling of that?

You did cockpit check as to test your switches and rev up and

- 27:00 make sure that your rudder and everything is free and just follow you through and that was another thing that happened to me. This particular day my instructor this Peter, he was killed two weeks after I left, funnily enough, not funnily, but he was killed and he said, "We are going to do slow rolls today Shambrook." "Yes sir." He said, "Now you are right follow me through," so you dived down
- 27:30 x amount of speed and you pulled the rudder back, still with speed on and as you tipped it over bank it to the left top rudder so that you don't just drop down and roll over on your back. When we rolled over on the back I thought I was going to fall out and I have got hold of the stick with both hands and I am hanging on for grim death and I can't get to the speaking tube because you had to lean forward, you just spoke into it from here to there.
- 28:00 And I could hear him saying, "Let go of that bloody stick," and I said, "I can't I am going to fall out." He is saying, "Let go of that bloody stick." and I thought, "All right." And I am virtually hanging not out but I am hanging there but I didn't have my straps tight enough. He said, "What the bloody hell happened?" I said, "I didn't have my straps tight enough sir." He said, "Well tighten the bloody things up and we will go again." I tightened up that much I could hardly see over the top
- 28:30 engine cover. It was great just to be there, we used to get up at five o'clock in the morning and on parade at six and down to the tarmac, if you can call it a tarmac. There were quite a few things that happened there, we did cross countries. One particular cross country this dust storm came up and a Tiger Moth stalls at 66
- 29:00 mile per hour or whatever it was and the wind of that dust storm was that strong that they couldn't land, they couldn't get the aircraft down on the ground and we were lined up in threes and these blokes were coming in and we were running alongside of them. The little Tiger Moth was floating through the air two of us one on each wing would grab them the other guy would jump onto the tail plane
- 29:30 to get them on the ground, it was incredible. One bloke he landed down at Gundagai and the CO [Commanding Officer] said to him, "How did you know that you were at Gundagai Thompson?" He said, "I saw the dog on the tuckerbox sir." He was given about seven days CB [Confined to Barracks] about turn, quick march. Certain days we had
- 30:00 you could free fly you could go and do whatever you wanted practice landing, forced landing and we noticed at that time apparently they were getting short of particular plugs for Gypsy Moth engines. They were putting Spitfire plugs in, which were a lot hotter and they used to oil up, and sometimes, it happened to me one day
- 30:30 I force landed and you weren't supposed to touch your wheels down and old smarty, and when I put the power on to take off again in this field, the damn thing coughed and spluttered so it caught, the engine caught again and here is this line of trees coming at me and, "Oh here we go." I just staggered up
- 31:00 and there was a bit of branch and what not where I landed, that was part of the deal but it was very exciting.

What about the first time you went solo what was it like?

I was very pleased with myself as I went around once and came in and I thought bugger it so I went around again so I put on power and it was about six or eight feet off the ground and I took off and came back in again. The

- 31:30 instructor said, "That was good Shamrock are you right?" "Good as gold."

Was it scary at all doing it the first time?

No it was exciting, fantastic to realise that I am up there on my own in an aeroplane and I am the only bloke who can put the thing back down on the deck or whatever and do whatever.

You were just flying Tiger Moths at this stage?

Yes.

How comprehensive was the course that you were doing?

- 32:00 We had to do navigation, we had to do Morse code, we had to know about engines we had to navigation, obviously this entailed the seeing of the stars at night and knowing what they were, but it was comprehensive, in that you flew possibly day and night in the last bit of it and we used to go out to the satellite stations. You would fly out

- 32:30 to the satellite stations and you would do whatever the instructor wanted you to do. Another incident that happened to me this morning they had bacon and eggs on for breakfast and by the time I got mine it was all fat that was congealed and I came into land and just as I came into land I threw up.
- 33:00 I have got my goggles on I was about to land and I wasn't that far off the deck and I can't let go of the control to push them up and I can't let go of the throttle because I am that close to the ground I am either going to, so I pushed the throttle forward and I thought I was going straight and level I was tearing across the field and nearly hit another bloke and I managed then,
- 33:30 I realise that I was flying again that I pushed my goggles up and went around and landed and came in. "What the bloody hell happened there?" I said, "That breakfast we had this morning," and I wasn't the only one, a lot of them were crook, so they said we will have to fix that up. I guess I am lucky to be here but it was quite exciting.

34:00 **Was there talk of the war and what you would be involved with?**

Not literally, no, until such time that you got to an operations squadron or to SFTS, Second Flying Training School I would have been on multi engined aircraft or twin engined aircraft which entailed a lot more than it did with the Tiger Moth.

- 34:30 Nobody told you anything, there was nothing that was forward planned as far as you were concerned, when they decided what they were going to do with you bomber pilot or fighter pilot you were posted to whichever school was appropriate.

Tell us about the advanced schools that you?

I didn't get there, this is the thing, we were scrubbed, we did the last two weeks of training the flying, exams the whole thing in one week night flying

- 35:00 and day flying and we were scrubbed and they said, "Sorry fellows it is all off." That was towards, the atomic bomb had not been dropped at that stage. They realised that the war in Europe was just about over and a lot of the blokes were coming home and I don't think they needed second dickeys [second pilots] for the Liberators

- 35:30 to go to Tokyo with MacArthur so that was that.

What did they mean by Second Dickeys?

Second pilot.

How did you feel about this news?

Devastated particularly when they sent us fruit picking after that, down to Barmera in South Australia, everybody just hated it. What is the point, what are we doing here?

Tell us about how you

- 36:00 **and the other men took the news that the deal was off?**

We just shook our heads and said, "What the hell, where do we go from here?" Again it was a nothing thing but there was still blokes coming behind us. I was on 52 course and I think they went up to 54 or 55 before they stopped. It was

- 36:30 very disappointing.

What did you feel you were missing out on?

Flying faster aeroplanes and getting involved with gunnery and bombing or whatever.

Did you want to fight in the war as well?

Yes you always wanted to fight for what it was worth we did.

- 37:00 **Why was that what was the?**

It is inherent in every man, I don't care who or what but at some stage you have to stand up and do whatever has to be done and I am not sort of blowing my trumpet or anybody's trumpet but the fact that you are in the air force you are doing as you are told whatever they wanted you to do, you did and whatever came up it happened that was it. There was no going backwards

- 37:30 you just kept going forwards whatever they asked of you, you did. I was disappointed very disappointed.

Was there any sense of relief at all that perhaps you wouldn't face danger?

No I don't think, so I don't really think that, that came into it at this stage, no.

- 38:00 The reality of war is something I didn't experience as you know and to realise afterwards how it happened and some of the things that happened, it is terrible but you would have gone and done it.

Everybody did.

Tell us how they told you the news about going fruit picking?

38:30 We were just called out on parade and we were told now you are all going fruit picking you are going over to Barmera, which is not far from Berri, there was a packing shed there. It was real anatomy [boring], it was just no deal as far as we were concerned, it was work we weren't interested in, we were there to be in the air force, not be in a packing shed

39:00 or on a production line with raisins and sultanas and God knows what, so it wasn't good.

What were the first things said amongst the men when they heard this news?

"It gives you the shits, wouldn't it give you the shits?" That is what everybody was saying literally.

Could you quite believe that you had gone from pilot to?

39:30 We were all sort of dazed to realise that it had happened and as I said before I rang Dad up and said, "Get me out of this I can come home and help," but no it wasn't to be and he said, "Why don't you try and get yourself a trip?" And I felt bad about that. I was posted down to Laverton and I walked into the orderly room and said,

40:00 "What is the quickest way to get up to the islands?" They said, "Driver, we are short of drivers." I said, "OK I can drive a truck." Did a grade test and that was it.

Tape 4

00:37 **I was just wondering why there was a need for you to go fruit picking?**

The mere fact that manpower was still in progress, I mean everybody was listed as to what they were doing if they weren't in the forces.

01:00 They were short of manpower, so here we are these sproggs [kids], what are we going to do with them? So they needed some manpower, it was always known where there was a shortage in South Australia in Barmera, so they packed us off over there, simple as that.

Take me through what you were actually doing there?

We were on a production line,

01:30 there was sultanas and whatever and raisins on this belt and you pick out the ones that were no good so to speak and I learnt to drive a forklift, stacking this stuff and later on I was sent to 7 Stores Depot up at Toowoomba.

02:00 And some character before we got there had created this cubby hole down in the middle, it was a huge shed. "What are you doing Shammy?" "Nothing." So you would get up on this forklift and they would jack you up and you would go down amidst all this stuff, with a few blankets and things and have a snooze.

02:30 We could do the same thing down at the packing shed not so obvious as up at the other end. Occasionally you would go out picking things too. The one thing, you were talking about dancing earlier, they used to do some dances that I had never heard of over there, the King's Waltz and something else and something else,

03:00 they used to have dances of a Saturday night in Berri and we used to go to the dances there and stay at the Berri Hotel that was a co-operative hotel very well run, silver service, the whole box and dice. Servicemen could go there and they would charge you next to nothing. At one stage we were floating around, when we had

03:30 the leave on full pay, this old mate of mine, Peter Chumerson he said, "Shammy have you ever been to Tasmania?" And I said, "No I have never been to Tasmania Pete." "How about we go to Tasmania." I had a bit of money in my pay book so we went and got on the old Narana which nearly looped the loop when she went through the rip at Port Phillip and so we went over to Tasmania,

04:00 they didn't even know what rations were over there. You could get pork, this lady Mrs Thaits, my cousin was married to her daughter she nearly smothered me when I brought her a leg of pork. I went into the butchers and said, "What is the chance of getting a leg of pork?" "Got any tickets?" "No I haven't got any tickets." He said, "How big a piece did you want?" And we went and booked into this hotel and we stayed at the same room that the Prince of Wales had

04:30 when he came out there and the bed felt as though it was this thick, it was down, silver service! After we had been there two or three days I said to Peter, "Hey we had better find out how much this is going to cost us?" So we went and asked what the tariff was and they said so-and-so and Pete said, "Can you

wire your mother and get some money?" So I did but we checked out

05:00 to the YMCA around the corner. When we went to pay the guy that was the Manager who had been an ex RAF bloke and had been over in the desert and come back, the bill was say £3 or just under £5, He said, "Give us 30/-d. each or something," so here we are we went around to the YMCA and we could have stayed there because we thought we would have had to pay the full amount. It was incredible.

05:30 **Given that all of you were fairly dissatisfied about being sent fruit picking were there any other sort of slightly rebellious things that you would get up to while you were there?**

We had to fall into parade every morning but you only had khakis on or overalls or whatever. No I think

06:00 as a general rule of thumb, again you were just there to do what they said to do and that was it. For awhile it was quite unbelievable that it was actually happening to us, but it was so we just had to get used to it and do the best we could.

How did you get your transfer to Laverton?

I mentioned that I wanted to re-muster, so there wasn't an

06:30 air force station or anything at Barmera or Berri. We were just there and we paraded of a morning just to get ticked off to see if you were present or what, so to re-muster I had to go to Laverton so that is what I did. I got to Laverton and that was an experience and a half. Have you ever been to Laverton, don't go there in winter time, cold. Once again we had palliasses, straw palliasses

07:00 on a k-wire fence wooden frame and whoever had been there before had put paper under the palliasses. Paper on top of it and you had six blankets and you used to put paper in between them and honestly I am not a cold person but I could not get warm, it was incredible how cold it was. The huts weren't lined they were tin huts

07:30 we were right down near the testing sheds and starting up motors, bloody noisy place. You would go into town and have a drink with 'Chloe' of a Saturday morning at the Young and Jacksons [Hotel]. It is a nude painting, very artistic and you stand there and drink to 'Chloe' and have a beer.

08:00 It is quite good.

Whereabouts is 'Chloe'?

It is a hotel and I don't know whether it still exists, it is just opposite the Flinders Street Station.

What kind of a picture is it?

It is a life size and she is just standing there side on they have taken the painting from across here, beautiful.

08:30 **Was this a popular place to go to?**

It was tradition that you must go and see Chloe and have a drink at Young and Jacksons. Melbourne had what was then called The Dugout, which was run by a lot of ladies and you could go there and if people wanted an airman, an army or navy bloke for the weekend they would direct

09:00 you to go out wherever. They had dances there and the best Peach Melbas you ever tasted in your life, full cream, unbelievable. The food was magnificent and it cost next to nothing.

What exactly were you doing to begin with at Laverton?

I was just transferred there so I could re-muster, I was sent down to Laverton so I could re-muster

09:30 and I didn't know what I was going to do. And I said, "What is the quickest way to get up to the islands?" And they said, "Driver." So I said, "OK I can drive a truck," and did the test around the block and in a couple of days I was on a troop train to Sydney and I used to play pontoon and

10:00 I left Laverton I think with about £20 and by the time I got to Brisbane I had £60. Quite amazing I had an amazing run with cards.

What is pontoon?

,Twenty one. You are dealt two cards, so an ace can be either one or eleven and the dealer,

10:30 he has two cards, so when you look at your two cards it might only add up to eighteen so you might sit on eighteen so this guy turns his cards over and he has twenty one you have lost your money. But by the same token you could get twenty one, so the guy who is dealing he has to either match you or you get your money back.

11:00 It was quite good. Troop trains in those days, it was catch as catch can and you would have to get out at Albury and change trains, because they were all steam trains and by the time you got to Sydney, you used to go to Air Force House and you would have all soot in your hair you would be just filthy with soot

11:30 but there was always characters there. When we left something Bridge over in South Australia to go to Laverton there were two guys there they were sergeants and they told yarns all night you could not believe it and they didn't stop and they didn't repeat themselves once just telling yarns.

12:00 I had a sore stomach laughing at them, that was in between playing cards. It was always a relief when you got to Air Force House just near Central Station there in Sydney to get under a shower and get all this dam stuff out.

How were the card games set up and supervised on the train?

It wasn't supervised at all, no

12:30 does anybody want a game of pontoon or poker or whatever. I can tell you another story with cards. When we left Labuan to go to Japan we started a game of five hundred. Five hundred, you are either winning or losing and you get points, so we played every day and

13:00 we were that close, going out backwards, this mate and I that it didn't matter and we have only got two days to go and we were told we had to get our uniforms out and get our gear, so we said, "Last game this is it." I went nine clubs I had right and left bower and the joker in kitty, and we won that game and won the next game, and the mate wouldn't talk to us, he was spewing [angry].

13:30 It didn't matter, it was just what I picked up. When we came back from Japan, we used Japanese money when we were over there, and when we left to come back we were issued with Australian money. We had to have Australian money to come back so we were playing for Australian money, we used to play blind poker and 6d. blind.

14:00 If you are the dealer OK, it is your prerogative ,and the bloke next to you 6d. and the next bloke is 1/-d. and 2/-d. as you go around and you can double back, to cut a long story short, I was that much in front I think £20 in front and I thought

14:30 this bloke sat pat and I had a pair of twos and I bought another pair of twos, I had four twos and he has a full hand. I am trying to say to him, "Double Shammy." "No," he said, "You are kidding." I said, "Don't do it, double." And I said to him, "Just give up. have you got a full hand?" "Yes of course I have," and I put down four twos,

15:00 he blew up, it was funny and that was Australian money. I think I won about £2 on the hand or something.

Were there ever any fights about?

No even on Labuan they showed pictures every night and all you would do take a tin can or something to sit on and

15:30 we had a cape and a hat if it rained. They always played swy, two up and when we were on Borneo the money was good because it had George's [George VI] head on it, it was Malaysian Straits dollars, which were worth 2/6d. in those days and I didn't play two up,

16:00 I am not capable. I can play cards, a bit more interesting. He used to take \$50 Malaysian straits dollars with him and he didn't back either heads of tails he backed whichever he thought and if he lost the fifty, that is it but most of the time he came back with say two hundred it is a very fair game, two up it really and truly is, if it is run correctly.

You mentioned Air Force House in Sydney?

16:30 In Sydney and there was an Air Force House, Navy House and Army House in every capital city.

What was Air Force House like?

You booked in and you were allocated a bed and that was it. You paid nothing, 2/-d a night but you stayed at Air Force House and you got breakfast,

17:00 I am not sure about the other meals, I think you more or less looked after yourself. You got breakfast a bed and breakfast situation.

How long did you stay there for?

Only a couple of days, until I was allocated to another troop train. I had met the old guy that used to own the Ramsgate Baths in Sydney, Pop Pemberton, delightful bloke, he is an ex-Kiwi

17:30 and I took his daughter Emmie every time she used to come up here I used to take her to dances and one thing or another, so I would ring up Em and say, "I am going to be in Sydney." "Right we will come and pick you up." Pop used to come in his big Dodge car and pick me up and take me out there and feed me up again for a day or whatever and I would jump on the troop train and take off again.

18:00 It was good.

Where about did you head on the next troop train out of Sydney?

Where did I catch it at Central Station.

Where about?

Central Station in Sydney, which is right down the end of George Street from memory. It was just around the corner from the

18:30 emporium, they eventually pulled it down. It wasn't far from the Tivoli, it was just around the corner.

After Sydney whereabouts did you head to?

Brisbane we stopped on the way to pick up water and coal and we went straight through from Sydney. I would imagine we used to leave at about

19:00 sometimes four o'clock in the afternoon and you would get to Brisbane around about mid day the next afternoon. If there were no hold ups on the way.

How long did you spend in Brisbane?

When I got to Brisbane and the bells and everything had gone and the war was over

19:30 I ran into my cousin and he signed my leave pass and I signed his and we took off for ten days. The corporal said to the sergeant, "What is the date today?" "The 25th," and it took me ten days to get my clearance I am gone I am down here enjoying myself and playing football and we, a guy Chris Cunningham, he was the boss of Seagulls and

20:00 he came up to me and he said, "Hey Shammy, we are a bit short. Would you like to play? And I said, "Put me out on the wing," and I said, "I haven't got any boots." "I can get you a pair of boots." We were playing the All Blacks, the local team, and they were pretty good footballers and they were pretty fast. And I was pretty fast and nailed this Bing Leader and he was on the wing and I barrelled him, hard tackle, it was legal, and he come up swinging and I said, "Come on Bing, drop off," you know

20:30 the next thing, I am going down the side line and there is nobody within 'cooee' and I am trying to cut back inside and three of them hit me and they jumped me and they hit me with everything. And I am lying down and thinking holy bloody hell what has happened here and Col my cousin said, "Hey get up you so-and-so we have got to get back to camp." When I went up there I went straight to the hardening course at Scarborough,

21:00 and there was no papers changed hands between there and Scarborough and that was when I came back to get discharged, the pilot officer said to me, "You have seven days CB here that has never been signed off." And I told him, "What have I got to lose?" I told him the story and he just laughed and said, "All right," and gave me my discharge.

What was the hardening course?

Again we

21:30 threw hand grenades, Thompson submachine guns, rifle range and we did a bit of booby trap work and this sergeant I can see his face but I can't remember his name but he used to take a delight in booby trapping. He would send you out somewhere and he would have it booby trapped on the way and the thing would go bang, so we caught him one day,

22:00 and he blew and he really carried on and we laughed our heads off. There is nothing he could do about it, and he said, "Right oh you got me that time."

What did you booby trap?

We booby trapped we knew which way he would go and we put this trip wire and camouflaged it and he tripped it and bang up it went

This hardening course was before you went to the islands?

Before yes, directly

22:30 before I went to the islands I came back to Sandgate and was put on a truck there and driven out to Archerfield climbed in an old DC3 and away we went. Townsville, down to Jackie Jackie, Wewak, Biak and from Morotai we went across on the old Manoora to Balikpapan and Tarakan around the top to Labuan.

23:00 The old Manoora was just about clapped out and nothing worked. You would go down to the mess hall and there would be turds floating around in about this much water, everything was jammed up and you couldn't have a shower, water was very scarce and it took us about three or four days to go

23:30 across to Labuan. We stopped at Balikpapan and Tarakan. We were there this particular day and over came this rain storm, blokes diving everywhere. Down the gun pits they had canvass over the man holes and we are out there and we stripped everything off, nurses and all they didn't strip off but we did, you felt that dirty it was terrible.

24:00 **Just going back a little bit what was the flight like on the DC3?**

Good. We stayed at Merauke in Dutch New Guinea that night and slept in a native hut there.

Can you describe the hut for me?

It was built of bamboo and straw, rather high ceilings and they had sort of bamboo bunks,

24:30 which you had nothing to virtually sleep on and it was too hot anyhow. The next day when we took off, only bucket seats in the old DC3 and there was mail bags and everything else and they got up to nearly about fifteen thousand feet to go over the Owen Stanley Ranges and I am thinking to myself gee I am feeling tired.

25:00 I knew we were up a fair way and it took me fifteen minutes to crawl from here to there over in the corner because we were flying we were over twelve thousand feet and I eventually, I just got there and collapsed and when they came down and coming into Biak and woke us up and away we went. Unreal.

What were your impressions

25:30 **of the heat of the different feel of the place?**

It wasn't that good. Morotai was a terrible island, Labuan was a very pretty island it had a relatively moderate climate, but Morotai was just stinking hot and all the beaches were black sand and you would go for a swim and you would be diving down amongst wrecks

26:00 and I was a pretty good swimmer, reasonably good swimmer. There were still Japs around there we were told to take a forty four gallon drum of diesel in and burn this food dump out, which was all scraps of food that had been thrown there, they were sneaking out of the jungle to eat it. I took this diesel in down there and got it on the back of a truck and

26:30 got a bucket and threw it all over and laid a trail from here to there and lit the dam thing and up it went and burnt all my hair and singed it and whatever, but with the heat and the humidity it made that dieseline very volatile, that was a lesson to learn.

At places like Morotai and I guess Biak what was the atmosphere amongst the troops that were still there?

27:00 Well the war was over and virtually everybody was wanting to get home but we all knew we were heading for Japan and I think a lot of the guys that even though they had been up in the islands for many months, we will go to Japan.

27:30 The 9th Div [Division] was on Labuan and they rightly said, "The war is over," and they had been just left there, it hadn't been over that long, but, "You bloody didn't find any trouble getting us here, now you find a ship and get it here and get us home." They would have cut somebody's throat quick as a wink if they hadn't listened to them.

28:00 I forget who it was the minister of the port I am not sure, Mountbatten came down from Singapore or Burma or wherever he was, delightful man, terrible the way that he died, and he had Gracie Fields with him and they set up a platform on forty four gallon drums and everybody is all lined up to attention with Lord Mountbatten arriving. The first thing he said, "Right-o fellows, just

28:30 gather around," and everybody just went looking at one another. "Come on come on you can't hear me out there." Everybody came around, Gracie sang a couple of songs and it wasn't that long after that they finally found a ship and took the 9th Div back.

What sort of things did Mountbatten say to the troops?

He virtually gave them a morale

29:00 boost that he knew what their situation was and he was quite aware of it and that they would do whatever is humanly possible and he really gave the AIF guys a real big wrap and rightly so. The fact that Gracie was there sort of simmered things down but when the Minister came up there, I can't remember,

29:30 but they didn't want to listen to him at all, you get that bloody boat up here or else. That is the way it was.

What sort of songs did Gracie Fields sing?

Gracie Field songs, I can't remember what she sang but some of the songs that she sang would nearly bring tears to your eyes, beautiful lady but I can't remember what she sang.

30:00 They didn't want her to leave.

Before you had arrived in Labuan how long did you spend in places like Balikpapan?

No we didn't land at places like Balikpapan or Tarakan we just went in there and just picked up some

more troops and changed over or did whatever before we went around the top end to Labuan. We didn't land at Balikpapan

30:30 or Tarakan.

Can you describe Labuan for me?

Labuan is an island off Brunei and I don't know how big it is but it had white sand beaches if you can call it, nothing like we have here but they are small beaches and the climate was hot. You would go to bed at night with just a singlet and a pair of underpants

31:00 or something on and by two o'clock in the morning you might just have to pull a blanket over the top of you it was very pleasant. Not that we have anything much to do with the natives at all because where we were, with 77 Squadron a Professor Wong and his family who lived fifty or one hundred yards down the road.

31:30 And he had his daughter Suzie, it was Suzie Wong and she must have been 16 or 17 I suppose and she used to come and do our washing and ironing and she would bring your clothes back and you paid her for that and Denis, the son, he was only about 7 or 8 and he would come down there, he used to come and see us when we were playing cards. "Hey Mr, you teach me how to play,

32:00 come on." "No." "I would like to know, I want to know." So we taught him how to play pontoon. "Hey Mr Sham, we play pontoon tonight?" And we had to loan him 6d. to start. The little bugger he used to beat us and he used to shuffle like that the cards were that not lengthwise, I am not saying he was a card shark, but

32:30 it was very pleasant.

What was your living area like?

We were in tents with mosquito nets and just a canvas fold up stretcher and virtually there was tents all along one side this side and the mess hall was down there,

33:00 there was a sort of a gate or entry into the camp of 77 Squadron. There was another interesting story. I was on water tanker, so we had to go down near the 2/688 to get this water, and here is this Ghurkha and this tank is filling up next to me and he has got this watch, banging it, and I am thinking 'what is the matter'. He couldn't speak much

33:30 English, to cut a long story short I said if he gave me the watch I would fix it for him, poor bugger. You could talk, but not a lot so he said, "How long?" I said maybe two or three days because we had our own instrument maker who used to repair watches. When I get back the instrument maker has gone over to Saigon he wasn't there and after about a week

34:00 one evening and the bloke came up and he said, "Hey Shammy you had better get down to the guard gate," he said, "there is a couple of Ghurkhas down there looking for you." I went down and I saw this guy I said, "I have still got your watch it is here," I told him the instrument maker was away and this bloke came back the next day and I said, "Jack for Christ sake get that watch fixed"

34:30 and I told him and he said, "Right-o." It cost me two Malaysian straits dollars to get it fixed. I get the watch and I said to Johnny my mate we will duck down to the Ghurkhas camp and give him his watch, so I drive into the middle of this Ghurkhas camp and out he comes and I give him the watch and he is going 'tick, tick',

35:00 there were bloody Ghurkhas going hell ways. They all had watches that didn't work and I said, "Johnny let us get out of here," and we took off. I didn't expect him to pay for it because they only were paid a pittance, I did me two dollars and gave him his watch back.

What were the Ghurkhas doing on Labuan?

They had been fighting on Labuan and

35:30 I don't know where else they were I couldn't comment there. There were pockets there, the smells, I don't know whether you have ever smelt human bodies, terrible, there were still pockets where Japs had been killed and just left and it certainly brought it back to some sort of reality but I

36:00 don't know who fought where or what, I wasn't involved in that.

Were there any other?

Indians, that was another thing. Again I ran into this Indian guy one day and they had an Indian laundry they used to look after the Pommies or whatever and this guy, we had wax matches

36:30 and they had never seen a wax match, they all had striking matches but they had never seen a wax match, you just strike it on your boot or on the side of your head, what is that. We used to roll our own cigarettes, they never would do that, they never rolled cigarettes they would get their cigarettes made, they were cheap enough anyway. A tin used to cost a shilling I think,

- 37:00 so I turned around and I said to this bloke, "Laundry?" "Yes we do this." "Great." So I went back to the blokes and said we had found a laundry bloke. We were issued with blue uniforms on Labuan you had to hang them up or they would get mouldy so for a couple of packs of tobacco and some tins of matches we got all of our
- 37:30 sections laundered before we left Labuan. We were the best dressed when we got off in Kure.
- What was the day to day sort of work that you were doing?**
- It varied. We were trying to get our transport. All the transport that we had they were four by fours
- 38:00 and ambulances and tractors and you name it. Whatever was there had been right through almost the Pacific campaign and we were trying to spray paint these damn things and get them into some semblance of order and somewhere along the line we found out there was 481 Maintenance Squadron, no 4 OBU Operational Base Unit were leaving to go back to Australia with brand new trucks
- 38:30 brand spanking new, had hardly been used at all. We went to our engineering officer and said the 4OBU is going back, why don't we swap the vehicles because they are brand new trucks and it had something to do with lease-lend and you couldn't believe it, they took those trucks out on barges under instruction. We got our adjutant to wire Air Board to suggest that this happen.
- 39:00 They dumped them in one hundred fathoms of water in Victoria Harbour brand new trucks. When we got to Japan in Kure they were on LSTs [Landing Ship Tanks] and we had one tractor and one Jeep that would start. I don't know why they did that because some monkey down in Melbourne said, "No we can't do that," and that is all there is to it, it was incredible.
- 39:30 Trucks with brakes that didn't work. One of the things that was intriguing that we were told very unofficially if you happened to hit a Jap make sure you kill them don't maim them because it cost more to fix them up than it does to bury them. This particular day I had this truck, which had poor brakes and we used to go into town and pick up the workers
- 40:00 who used to work on the station, bring them out and then we would take them back in the afternoon. This afternoon I am going down through this village and I might have been doing about twenty miles per hour and this old Japanese lady started to walk off the footpath and I am looking and thinking holy bloody hell, I am changing gears and pumping this damn brake
- 40:30 and I thought 'I have got to hit her'. And we had all slab nosed vehicles and 'so help me God' I had to get up she was there, she didn't realise what was happening and she put her hand out and touched the truck and wandered off the road, it nearly made me sick I thought I was going to kill her.

Tape 5

- 00:36 **Just on that point how they were putting the trucks in the sea at Labuan, what was the logic behind that exactly?**
- I don't know that it had something to do with lease lend and we know that our adjutant at 77 Squadron definitely sent a signal off asking if we could do that
- 01:00 and we just got the answer back no, why they dumped those brand new trucks I have no idea. They would have to get them back to Australia for whatever reason, I have no idea at all. Another thing that somewhere along the same lines as that, when we changed over from Kitty Hawks to Mustangs all those aircraft had
- 01:30 beautiful electric pumps and God knows what in them and all they did was open up a tent up at 77 Squadron which was on the bank of a bit of a gully and just tipped all the stuff down into the gully and left them there and just put all the Mustang gear in its place. The other thing that happened was before we left Labuan,
- 02:00 the side of the strip was sort of a crater of some description and anything that happened anything that pranged on the strip they just dozed it straight into this ravine. Under instructions we took two tanker loads, which is about 3,000 gallons of fuel and just opened the cocks and turned the pumps on and pumped it down, the locals were warned that this was going to happen
- 02:30 and pumped that 3,000 gallons or whatever that amount of fuel was down into the gully for about 100 yards and they lit it and it burnt for days. I don't know what was down there and why they burnt it I wouldn't know but it would be nice and melted by the time it was finished.
- Describe some of the work that you were doing on a typical day on Labuan?**
- 03:00 A typical day you could be on stand by, I think I mentioned the fact that a Beaufighter pranged and had wiped out a couple of the Mustangs and there were eight blokes on board that plane which went over, turned upside down and wiped off the motors of two Mustangs and that particular day I was on stand by ambulance driver, stand by driver, whatever happened I was it,

- 03:30 so I mean all that happened was when the siren went on the strip, you just jumped into your ambulance and went straight down to the strip which I did. By the time I got there it was all over, they just burnt alive, they couldn't get out. Apart from that we were still trying to get all the trucks and Jeeps and everything that we had into some semblance of decent order
- 04:00 and water, there was always something on and the fact that we were trying to do this maintenance and paint the trucks up and make them look good, kept us pretty busy.
- Describe this event that happened with the crash, what happened exactly?**
- Beaufighters are a very good aircraft in the air, but they have a very small tail plane
- 04:30 and it swung and you can get the wobbles up on takeoff and that is what happened and it ploughed nearly airborne, I can get you the description of exactly what happened, it wasn't good it was terrible.
- It crashed into stationary Mustangs as well?**
- Yes it did it went up in the air and landed
- 05:00 and the pilot was thrown out and he died the next day, Gulliver was his name he was the CO of 93 Squadron and the fire tender came along and got bogged. It was just a comedy of errors it was terrible.
- Describe what exactly happened?**
- 05:30 There is the strip, the Beaufighters are coming, all the Mustangs are parked over here and the Beaufighter is coming down very close proximity 20 or 30 yards and when he has got almost opposite and almost airborne and tried to pull up, he swung and hit these two,
- 06:00 wiped the engines off the Mustangs and bang pancaked into the mud.
- What was the first thing that you saw when you approached the scene?**
- All that was left of it by the time I got down there the thing had been alight and I didn't see much of it at all.
- What did that look like?**
- It was just burnt, the thing melted, it is
- 06:30 only a shell in an aircraft and the Beaufighter wasn't a big aircraft. It was big enough and you could look and see all the bones, human beings that were there just cooked, ashes virtually.
- What was it like for you to see this scene?**
- It was disturbing to the point that
- 07:00 I didn't know any of the guys that were in there, but to imagine that it happened the way that it did and the war is over, bloody bad luck.
- What did the scene smell like?**
- The heat was still there it was still smoldering by the time I got down there and there was no real smell, just fumes from petrol because it was fully laden with petrol.
- 07:30 It killed most of the smell of whatever smell it might have been and there wouldn't have been anyhow because there was only ashes.
- What was the feeling like back at camp after this?**
- We didn't have that many prangs, we had another plane that pranged when I was down the strip that day, and afterwards it was a Ventura, that was 13 Squadron, which
- 08:00 has as its emblem kicking a black cat, lighting a cigarette, three cigarettes, with one match, under a ladder. And I forget what the other one was and they had the lowest incidence of prangs out of the whole of the South Pacific. This Ventura took off this day for Australia and they had some nurses on board heading back
- 08:30 and obviously they knew that they weren't going to get off the ground, so the pilot has dropped his undercarriage in the mud and the plane just kept going until it pulled up. And before it pulled up they had the back door open and even these nurses were going along the top of the mud and nobody was hurt, they all got out of it, it was incredible.
- Were you getting a chance at this stage to go up in planes at all**
- 09:00 **in Labuan?**
- No I didn't not at all.

Were you keen to?

After that Beaufighter prang, not really, there was no other aircraft there apart from DC3s, they were busy. Either doing mail runs or whatever else

09:30 no I wasn't over anxious.

What was the main purpose the forces there were serving in Labuan?

They were the overflow of what was there when the war finished. The three squadrons 76, 77 and 82, there was 93 Squadron Beaufighters and I think there was some Catalinas there too, but I didn't have anything to do with them

10:00 and the decision was made to change them over to Mustangs, all the Kitty Hawks were clapped out they were stuffed. The bloke called Dodderly Dick Wilson he was the CO of 76 Squadron and a friend of mine who lives up Brumby Creek, Bill Freeman, they were flown from Labuan across to

10:30 pick up a couple of Kitty Hawks. When he got inside one of them he said, "This is bloody ridiculous," so they flew them over in a Beaufighter and he said to the guy in a Beaufighter he said, "Don't leave, we are not flying these things they are not worth taking," so Dick Wilson climbed into a Kitty Hawk to bring it back to Australia. You can't imagine why they did these things

11:00 and he crashed landed it in the Gulf of Carpentaria and was picked up by a Catalina so it was just an overrun from the war. Like the guys from the 9th Div mob, they should have been home but they had to get ships to move them out.

Did you notice a sense of resentment out of any of these men who were hanging on and waiting around?

Yes some of them

11:30 the 9th Div crowd were very cranky about it . As I said you didn't have any trouble to get a boat to get us here, so you can get us home. They were really pissed off so to speak.

Would they do any behaviour or anything to let it be shown?

They were very vociferous in their demands and they had a right to be. Absolutely.

12:00 **What were you learning as a younger man from these men?**

I admired them immensely they had been right through the desert and the whole damn box and dice and I had no qualms about what they were saying at all, none whatever.

Did they teach you about your experiences did they tell you?

No they didn't, we hardly saw the army at all. They flew nearly every day for whatever reason,

12:30 we had to fuel aircraft they had to be serviced, I didn't have anything to do with the servicing only the fueling and the fact again that we were trying to get all this transport stuff into gear , it kept us busy enough.

Tell us about what kind of transport you used and what you had?

Four by fours, we had a couple of weapon carriers they were American Dodges

13:00 we had Jeeps, we had tractors I can't remember what sort, I think they were Fords, I am not sure, Ford and General Motors trucks. The Fords were always the favourite because they had V8 motors and while the old General Motors were a straight six and with the V8 motor you had more power

13:30 and that than what you did with the other straight six. There was no such things as staff cars, I mean everybody got around in Jeeps and or weapon carriers.

What did you usually drive?

Everything it didn't matter what it was. Do this, jump in this get that, same difference.

You mentioned standby jobs but what other kinds of jobs would you

14:00 **have to do in the transport?**

We would have to water, I was on petrol tanker, whatever, anything that had to be moved in the camp we did it.

With the petrol tanker was there any quirks that you needed to drive it?

You just had to know how to work the pump at the side, and how to pump out and pump in

14:30 **How does that work?**

It is very simple. You just throw the lever one way or you throw it the other way it pumps in or pumps

out. We got all of our fuel out of drums. There is another story attached to that too, when we get over to Japan because a lot of that fuel had been over in the islands for a long time.

15:00 It wasn't good. We didn't realise. All that we ever did when we were filling was we had this bit of a tube which was put in and throw it into a bottle and look at it and say that is all right but some of the fuel didn't look too good for what our knowledge was worth, it is OK it has to be OK.

15:30 This particular day that we were told, in Japan, we were told to fully fuel all up all three squadrons, bombed up the machine guns the whole dam box and dice, we thought Korea was going to be on then and we filled them up and we were filling them up and we got this fuel and it was a bluey colour with sort of

16:00 granules through it. And we looked at it, this doesn't look too good and they had been cutting out on take off, the CO 77 Squadron was one of them, got up across wind and just managed to get back down. They were amazing aircraft those Mustangs and he landed at the side of the strip and he had the plane back flying within 48 hours, so

16:30 we decided and we were under the instructions of a pilot officer engineering officer, one week wonder as we call them, we just stopped filling, we said, "This is not good." And he said, "I am telling you to refuel those aircraft," and we said, "We are not fuelling it with this fuel it is not good," and he said, "I will court martial you," and we said, "Right-o." We jumped into the Jeep or station wagon or whatever we had

17:00 and went straight back into our boss Wimpy Morris, Flight Lieutenant and we told him what had happened what we considered and he said, "I would not fly in that either." Next thing in comes the pilot officer storming in, Wimpy said, "Out you blokes," and we listened and he pulled this bloke into gear

17:30 he said, "You have been there for five minutes," he said, "these blokes have been here for a long time they know good fuel when they see it and as far as I am concerned I will back them to the hilt they are not filling those aircraft." And sure as eggs the fuel was no good. From then on instead of pumping out of drums I said to a bloke by the name of Ross he was with 82 Squadron, I knew him because he came from out at Chuggan,

18:00 I said to Ross, "How would you like 8 to 10 days off?" He said, "What are you saying Shammy?" And I said, "How would you like to have 8 or 10 days off, the fuel is no good." And he said, "Is that what the trouble is?" So we had to wait then to organise tankers to come from Kure or wherever they came from and pull up at the siding at Bofu, so we could get decent fuel. It was right it was the fuel all right.

What kind of problems could you have if you had used bad fuel?

That is what was happening

18:30 it had no guts in it, there was no guts in it at all and the engine just refused, couldn't cope there was nothing there for it to fire on and that is why they were cutting out on take off, we didn't have any after that.

I will ask you a bit more about Labuan. Tell us about your set up like your living quarters you were staying in tents what were they like?

They were good.

19:00 Two men tents with a bit of an area in between, they were quite good there was no problem with the tents, everybody was in tents officers the whole damn lot, there was nothing else there.

Who did you share your tent with?

I shared my tent with Maurie Windess the guy who was only up here last week. He was in

19:30 he was connected with the mail, postmaster general employee or something or such.

What kind of things would you get up to for fun when you had a little time off?

There was nothing to do, we went on a barge over to Brunei one day but virtually you were there every day all day.

20:00 I suppose we could have gone for a swim if we wanted to but by the time you had to get organised and it wasn't a real good beach and nobody seemed too inclined to go for a swim anyhow. The only thing that you had was the pictures at night, every night, and that was about it. You get two bottles of beer a week

20:30 if you were lucky enough to get Melbourne Bitter or something that would be great but if you got Richmond Tiger you would try and swap it for something else, because it wasn't good beer, so we reckoned anyhow.

What was wrong with the Richmond Tiger beer?

It wasn't as good as the other, it tastes very sour.

Did you get cold beer?

No put it out in a bag with a 400 octane

- 21:00 put it out in the breeze but the petrol took over the taste. It didn't matter because we didn't have anything to drink it out of except the bottle, no we didn't have any refrigeration. If you were lucky enough you would kid to one of the cooks and maybe put it in the fridge but it wasn't good.

You mentioned pictures what kind of pictures were you seeing?

Whatever was there.

- 21:30 We had reasonable release films but that didn't sort of continue on when we went over to Japan for whatever reason I don't know but the only thing that we had to do was virtually the same thing there. You just play cards, we used to play 500 or whatever poker,

- 22:00 you would play for peanuts anyhow and you had a lamp at night and nearly everybody was asleep by nine o'clock and you are up at 'sparrow fart' [early] in the morning, there wasn't a lot to do.

You mentioned earlier about swapping cigarettes and stuff was there a little bit of a black market?

Not on Labuan there wasn't but in Japan it was very good, we lived on black market.

- 22:30 The Kiwis were supposed to have printed their own occupation money which the Japs wouldn't accept and we used to get them down to play us football. We got them down once and we put 500 yen on the bar and said to the blokes behind the bar, "Any Kiwis that come in here tonight the grog is on us," and we went to the driver and we said there are two crates of beer there,
- 23:00 but just keep yourself sober. He didn't mind a drink on a dry day that is why we said these Kiwi fellows have hollow legs and this particular day they came down and played football and we filled them up with beer and put the crates in the back of the truck and away they went. And at two o'clock in the morning the orderly up at Yamaguchi, 18 miles away, was down there trying to find his troops. Where are they? In the middle of the paddy field, they got stuck on the way back, it was hard trying to get them back after that.
- 23:30 They were very strict disciplinarians, as bad as the Poms [British] and they were worse again.

When you went to Japan I am just interested in what different nationalities were occupying on Labuan around the area that you were at?

There was only the Indians the Ghurkhas, there

- 24:00 was some English troops there but very little they were mainly 9th Div, all Australians that were there. That was an Australian effort.

Did you have any contact with the local people?

Very little only this Professor Wong and Suzie and Denis. No we didn't. It always used to intrigue us family wise they used to have these festivals or some such thing and you would see them going down the road

- 24:30 and there would be the daughter, with all the adornment you could imagine and then would come the sons and then the father and who is behind, carrying all the gear? Old Mama-san. It used to intrigue us no end. They were beautiful women Labuanese, Chinese, Eurasian,
- 25:00 but it was a very split situation. We were there and they were over there and that is where it started and finished.

How long all up were you situated in Labuan for?

I was in Labuan from about October to February

- 25:30 when we left to go to Japan.

Tell us about the lead up going to Japan, how did they give you the news that you might be wanted to be part of Beecroft?

We knew when we left Morotai that we were headed to Japan anybody that wanted to go and it was as far as the lead up was concerned we knew when we swapped over to Mustangs that the three squadrons were going.

- 26:00 What the date was we were leaving and when we didn't know, but we knew about ten days before to get everything together and get down to the water to get on board ship. It wasn't a great preamble to it but everybody knew that we were going to Japan. It was quite a large convoy, it took us thirteen days to get there from Labuan. I was on this heavy lift ship

- 26:30 we left Labuan say this afternoon, we were leaving first light in the morning, the three squadrons beat

the convoy up. I went to the butchers in Coolangatta one day and I had this BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Forces] sticker on the side window of my car and

27:00 he said, "Hey what is that BCOF sticker you have got?" "Yes," I said, "I was in Beecroft." He said, "What were you army?" I said, "No air force." He said, "You mad bastards, we thought you were going to kill us." These guys in Mustangs they were down below the deck of the freighters, they beat it up real good, it was fantastic.

What happened exactly?

We just did a general beat up of a convoy of low flying and came up and barrel rolled and did

27:30 beautifully, very good.

What kind of effect did this have on the morale of everyone?

It made us air force blokes feel very good because it was beautiful airmanship the way that they did it and at Christmas time there, both the CO of 82 Squadron who was a bloke by the name of Frank Shafe and Rusty Curtis our CO

28:00 got full as farts if you want to put it that way and went and jumped into a couple of Mustangs and beat the whole camp up, they nearly took the tents with them. They were their own bosses, that is what it amounted to.

Did anyone think this is possibly dangerous?

No, it was great we thought it was excellent...

28:30 **Tell us about those last ten days when you were told the news you were going to Beecroft, tell us about packing up and leaving Labuan what did you have to do and what was it like?**

One thing that we did, we knew that we were going to be in Japan with the tobacco and soap and all that stuff that was scarce and it is not a good story on the merchant navy, but

29:00 we stacked up a Jeep trailer with all our tobacco and all the stuff that we had saved and put it in this trailer and when we got to Kure it was all gone, the whole bloody lot. We had to pack all the gear that we were taking, we didn't take tents, they had an advance party that went over there

29:30 to more or less set it up and get things moving, but they didn't do much good but by the time we got there it was just as bad, it was bombed out. We were just generally packing up whatever stuff you would take out of the kit for a truck or whatever, it all went in the back of the trucks and we tried to make it as waterproof as possible because we didn't know whether it was going

30:00 to be on top deck cargo or down the holds or whatever. Those LSTs, I was very pleased I wasn't on one of them, they have no keel and roll. We pulled up outside Manila Harbour and these damn things I thought they would have tipped over, there was a giant swell on them, it wasn't rough, just a huge swell, gee I am pleased I am not on one of them.

30:30 Just a general thing and when the convoy took off we just stooged along, I think we only averaged about nine or ten knots if we got that much, it took thirteen days to get to Japan from Labuan - it was a fair hike.

What did you do for those thirteen days?

There wasn't much that you could do, we did exercises on board ship to keep reasonably fit and

31:00 played cards, I had my twentieth birthday out in the middle of the China Sea and the adjutant came down with a bottle of rum and we all had a drink for a happy birthday. Squadron life was something akin always to army say a battalion or whatever, the only difference between the army and the air force, was

31:30 the army guys stayed together as a unit like 37th Battalion. they went over as virtually fully armed and one thing to Japan and all those guys in the 37th Battalion would know nearly everybody in the battalion but not like us. We would go I was with 77 Squadron and then I was transferred to 81 Maintenance Squadron,

32:00 which actually took in the whole of the three squadrons' blokes were leaving and coming and going for a lot of the time. I guess I have two very good mates, one of them died about three or four years ago and the other bloke I talk to him Chum, down in Victoria and of course Maurie but you don't see anybody you don't meet anybody

32:30 you can't go to an 81 Wing reunion and expect to find someone that you knew. They just all sort of float away.

What was it like coming into Japan what were your first impressions?

It looked to be a very mountains country and that is all I can say. We came down the Inland Sea we docked at Kure

- 33:00 it was bloody cold as you can imagine, snow and ice all over the place and we were billeted just outside the docks at Kure. I have a photo of the village I forget the name Yoshihara I think it was, for about week to ten days before we could get enough transport mobile to get us down to Iwakuni
- 33:30 and eventually we drove down through Hiroshima to Iwakuni. When we got to Iwakuni we thought this will be good, there wasn't an air strip at Kure and when we got to Iwakuni we will be in barracks and it had been shot up. The showers were up, like the Japs did it,
- 34:00 you have got to be tough in the Japanese air force and they had shower roses up in the ceiling. All the windows were blown out, by the time the hot water, there was steam on it but the hot water by the time it got down to you down here and there was snow and ice out there, it was bloody cold. We went and got packing cases and we would climb up on these packing cases to try and get some warm water until one day a bloke came and said, "Hey Shammy I have found a bath."
- 34:30 So we all grabbed a towel and a bit of soap and jumped into a Jeep and off we go into town and we go into this place unbeknown to us, Japs all bathed together, men, women kids, there is nothing wrong with that. We walked into this bath thing and here is all these women and kids and the blokes and we were all trying to cover up sort of business, it was something we weren't used to at all. We were going to kick this Jap to death. "What have you done to us?"
- 35:00 "No OK." With the Japanese bath you always wash yourself at the side of the bath and then you get into the hot water because most of their baths are made over hot springs and some of them very hot and they have sulfur in the water and you can get cooked to a certain extent. We went and had a bath and that was
- 35:30 lovely, so we did go back but not very often. Eventually they got some windows in the place and you could go and have a decent shower. The thing that used to intrigue us was the RAF blokes that were there, honestly they would stay in their uniforms I don't know how long they used to do it. They would take their boots off, they would leave their socks on because it was cold, they had pants, presumably
- 36:00 had underpants and a singlet and a shirt with a detachable collar which they would take off at night, with a tie, they always wore a tie. We didn't wear ties and then they would roll their sleeves up to about here and a quick wash in a little basin over in the corner of the room and stink, their body odour was something terrible. We used to say, "Get out of here you
- 36:30 Pommie bastards." The lance corporal used to say, "Don't you talk to me like that." "Go and have a bath," we didn't take any notice of them at all. It took a while for the thing to come back to some sort of rationale in that we were the conquerors, here we were with virtually nothing, but it shaped itself up after a while.
- 37:00 They got things going.

How bad did the Poms smell?

Have you ever smelt a bloke who has been in the same uniform for maybe a fortnight, not good. You two would not even know what body odour was and the towels you could just about stand them up they were filthy, it was unbelievable.

Did you have any nicknames for these men?

- 37:30 Pommies that is all. We had 5 Airfield Construction Squadron with us over there and they were a very good tough unit they did a lot of work in the Pacific. The Red Caps, the British Army service police and a couple of blokes, I don't know what they did, I think they pinched a couple of watches or something
- 38:00 and they were jumped in the Jeep or whatever they had and hiked back to camp and went through the gates at the camp said, "The bloody Red Caps are coming," so the sergeant in charge of the guard and the officer closed the gates. And these Red Caps pull up and they were told, "We are running this camp, you are not you dare come through those gates," and they cocked their
- 38:30 rifles and they just turned around and went away. The blokes that got into trouble got into trouble, but it was done by Strip Harrison, he was the CO and that was it. They were tough.

Why were you interacting with the RAF guys exactly?

Because you grabbed a bed and you had a spare bed there, that was it and they would just come and doss in

- 39:00 it didn't matter who it was, we weren't with units we were just there with whatever accommodation we had.

Was it a mix of Commonwealth or?

The only ones that we mixed with were the Poms they were the only ones that we mixed with, it wasn't for that long but it was long enough.

Tape 6

00:36 **What were your expectations when you arrived in Japan?**

We didn't know what to expect. The fact that Yanks were already there I guess and they seemed to be in control of the situation. We didn't really expect it

01:00 to be as simple as it was but the answer was quite simple really, because Hirohito, the Emperor, told the people that that was what was going to happen and that is exactly what happened. We had one bloke with his throat cut, they found him we don't know what happened there it was never brought up and another bloke they found him but apart from that we weren't allowed supposedly to fraternise with the Japanese.

01:30 The situation was such that if you were caught fraternising you possibly got ten days on the rock pile at Kure which was pretty tough detention centre, it was run by the Red Caps so it wasn't good. We were only allowed or supposedly only, allowed to travel on two trains

02:00 the Allied Limited and the other one was the Dixie Limited and they would go from Shimonasaki down in the Kyushu right through to Tokyo and vice versa but you went one way one day and you went the opposite way the next day. If you did go from south to north you had to wait for the next day to get the train back. We didn't really subscribe to that.

02:30 We used to take great delight in getting the Japanese men up to give the ladies a seat, they didn't do that. We went on a black market run there one day and missed the Allied Limited and climbed onto this train and walked through this carriage and we realised when we were half way there that we were in the middle of a return Japanese POWs [Prisoners of War] from China.

03:00 You could have cut the air with a knife and this mate and I said, "Gee what have we done?" The next stop that the train stopped at we just got off there was only two of us and we managed to get a vehicle and get us back to camp it wasn't that far away.

What were these Japanese POW's like?

They were just sitting there stoned faced and just looking, if looks could kill you were dead.

03:30 That was the only incident that I found.

When you first arrived in Japan what were your impressions of the way the Japanese people were behaving?

It was exemplary, they worked for you. I kicked one bloke in the bum one day because he started to give me cheek and I finished up in front of the senior administrative officer

04:00 and was told don't do that again. I am thinking holy bloody hell if he hadn't have been giving me cheek I wouldn't have even thought about it, you didn't kick anybody as a normal state, but he was smart and yes and he reported me and I finished up in front of the SAO [Senior Administrative Officer]. You could be court martialled for that. "Don't do it." "Yes sir," so that was the end of it. Their general

04:30 attitude was so what you are here and we accept the situation and just get on with life.

What was your feelings about being there as the victor in the situation?

I don't recollect that it was so much as a victor that we were there, we knew we were there as an occupation force

05:00 and we didn't know obviously what was going to happen but after you are there for a couple of months what the hell, it is all done with and you drive around and do what you had to do and go where you wanted to go and that is the way it was. I don't have any recollection of, I didn't like the Japanese for some of the

05:30 things they had done. I hated their guts but there was no evidence of that when we were there, there was nothing untoward.

What was your observations on the economic situation that the Japanese were living in post war?

I don't know that interested us to any great extent.

06:00 Except when we wanted to sell our black market goods so to speak, there was always plenty of customers. When we would go on a black market run that was the leave they would say you have a truck next Thursday and we would take off and if I am with you. We are mates and you'd sell your stuff and I would take the money or vice versa and that is how because they used to queue up all over the place to get whatever you had.

06:30 There was no evidence whatever. Even our adjutant Dick Fenton he was teaching Prince Mori who was the big noise in the Yamaguchi prefecture and his wife she was a beautiful lady and their palace as they

called it,

07:00 it was pretty big, everything about it was just absolutely beautiful and they accepted us. I used to take Fenton there and he was teaching them to speak English or whatever and I would just go and pick him up and they would nod their head and bow. There was no evidence of anything at all.

07:30 Nothing.

What was the area around Hiro like physically in terms of?

Very hilly. There is very little flat land in Japan very little flat land. That photograph, there is the road the inland road runs right along and there is hills but further in there are mountains that are quite high.

08:00 When I went skiing there is a place called Mt Dyson and from memory it was in from Hiroshima and it was reputed to have one of the longest ski runs in the world, we couldn't even get up there, we had to fish tail to get up there because there was no lifts as such. When we got up to the top, I had never skied before and looked down

08:30 I forget the pilot who was with us, it might have been Jack Stammers. He said, "Now we have to get down," and it took us well over an hour to climb up the top of this hill. "Who is going to be first," I said, "London or the bush," and I took off and I had never skied before and I knew that you had to keep your weight forward. I got down the hill and there was a bit of a dip there and of course,

09:00 I went bang, skis and stocks all over the place and those skis were that wide, they were like planks. It was quite an experience up in the air. You are doing about 60 miles per hour from 0 to 60 and once you start you have got no option but to keep going but we had some laughs that day.

09:30 What was the state of the infrastructure around Kure the buildings?

The infrastructure are you talking about the houses. If you have a look at that photograph you can virtually see it was a big naval base Kure and they had administration buildings and whatever else there, whether

10:00 they sort of staved off doing too much damage to Kure, I don't know, they needed some place to land and I think they did do that. Iwakuni was pretty well blasted but the buildings in Kure were pretty much intact, compared with other places.

Were there any

10:30 men that you observed or knew that had sort of a particular hostility towards Japanese or exhibited?

Some of the army blokes they were really dirty on them, but I think that sort of mellowed after a while when they realised these people, they didn't do it, find the blokes that did it and get stuck into them, but the people themselves just did as they were told.

11:00 We had a situation there where it became I don't know whether it was a month or two months at a time, where there was a guard on the palace and they had a big parade in Tokyo and it was judged as to who would do it. The 81 Wing won it when we were there

11:30 and those guys were in Tokyo and I think it was for two months but how we found out was that Glen Cooper who was the CO came back and he beat the place up in his Mustang, he did everything looped and barrel rolls and what the bloody hell is going on. This old SAO Swanny, he was a regular air force bloke,

12:00 he said we won the right to the castle that is what all this is about. It wasn't long after that we went up to Miho to play football and this bloke the Flight Lieutenant Littlejohn was his name and we had this old Duggy Charlie Baker CTB that was stationed on the station for whatever use and we flew down the Inland Sea

12:30 at almost naught feet and I said, "What is happening?" He said, "If Cooper can beat up the bullshit castle," as we called it "in his Mustang we can do it in our Duggy." I'm thinking Holy bloody hell and I am standing behind him and they are flying the damn thing and all I could see is wall the bullshit castle was in a U shape

13:00 and then all of a sudden I just went straight to the floor, I couldn't stand up. They laughed they killed themselves over that and Cooper thought it was a great joke.

You mentioned this black market. Can you describe how it worked what sort of things were?

Chocolate was something that was a prime thing.

13:30 Saccharin tablets. I wrote back to my mother and said get a bag of saccharin tablets and send them over because you could sell them for a Yen each, now that was 5d. on the world market. She only sent me one lot, Saccharin wasn't heard of to that extent in those days. Even a cake of soap would be something like 20 Yen, that is

- 14:00 100 pence, which was unheard of in those days say 10/- for a cake of soap. Cocoa or anything like that. Cigarettes of course and you could buy all the cigarettes you could smoke for a round 50 tin, Players cigarettes. You used to smoke yourself to death.
- 14:30 It made sense to us because we didn't have to get into our pay books. Anybody that cashed a quid [pound] would be somebody waiting there, with 220 Yen for a quid. I didn't touch my pay book for a long time, I only went to get some money out to come home with.
- 15:00 That was and I used to send half of my money to Mum anyway.

Where would you acquire most of the stuff that you would sell?

We had a canteen and that was my initiation into this black market. I was on 'Dona' duty and this guy he was a corporal, Peter Gentle he came to me and said, "Shammy I want a Jeep at six o'clock tonight." "Whereabouts Pete?" He said, "Over at the canteen."

- 15:30 I said, "Oh yes." I said, "Whose authority?" He said, "Wing Commander Kinamon." He was the canteen officer. I pulled around the back of the canteen and the thing lifts up and out comes this bag, I don't know what was in it, and by this time I knew of an old lady out on the breakwater who
- 16:00 dealt in black market stuff so I drove the jeep over there and Gentle went inside and did all the business and came back out and drove him back to camp and that was it. There was some amazing things that happened. We had a KD [Kitchen Duty] officer who incidentally didn't get out of his cabin on the way back on the Manoora
- 16:30 because they would throw him overboard. He used to skip things and at one stage he lost, somebody pinched a half a ton of sugar in the camp. I won't get court martialled or anything it is too late, this interpreter sergeant Bill
- 17:00 came over to see me and said, "Shammy I want to see you." "Yes Bill what can I do for you?" Two days after the sugar had gone we knew it had disappeared off the camp and he said, "We found the sugar." I said, "You what?" He said, "We found the sugar." I said, "Where is it?" He said, "It is up at Yamaguchi," and I said, "Holy bloody hell that is eighteen miles away and that is in Kiwi territory."
- 17:30 I said, "I will have to talk to Johnny my operator," and Johnny said, 'Gee Shammy it could be a trap.' I don't believe it was a trap with Bill involved and he said, "Who is the other bloke there is four of us going to pick it up?" He is an SP sergeant, Service Policeman, and we looked at one another, he said, "At about half past one in the morning." We just
- 18:00 were free to drive wherever we wanted and picked up a weapon carrier and went around the back of the strip all the way around the back of Yamaguchi and pulled up at this little bit of a lane and here is Bill in there yabbering to these Japs in Japanese. The SP sergeant is there with his 38 revolver telling them what is going to happen, Johnny's around the corner keeping it and here is the half a ton of sugar, bags just sitting over the corner and I threw it in the back of the
- 18:30 wagon and we jumped in and took off. We had a guy, the photo with people on a lugger and this guy through this Mama-san, Mitsuyong Yamamota, she was an American Japanese lady and she looked after all the girls that waited and looked after
- 19:00 the tables and cleaning in the officers mess and she got this guy, she knew him and he came up with his lugger up to the air sea rescue unit and loaded the half a ton of sugar onto the lugger and that was the end of that 400,000 Yen. Half a ton of soap, my cousin rang me up one day and said, "Shammy I have got half a ton of soap, "I wasn't a black operator
- 19:30 but this was the way things happened it was incredible. He said, "Shammy I have got half a ton of soap," and I said, "What do you mean you have got half a ton of soap?" He said, "It has been here for two months and I haven't got any paperwork whatsoever it has never arrived as far as I am concerned." I said, "Half a ton of soap," we jumped in the Jeep and went around all the, and everybody said why not to us and throw their hands up at me
- 20:00 and I said, "This lady over at the breakwater," and she threw her hands up in the air and I said, "Forget it Mama-san." "Just wait a minute," and she offered a price which was below what the soap was worth on the black market and I said, "That will do whatever," so I got the half a ton of soap and took it over and delivered it where she wanted it and I think we only
- 20:30 got about 60,000 Yen for it but what do you do.

What was this lady like?

Just an ordinary Japanese lady with a kimono and how she got into what she was doing I have no idea.

How did you develop other contacts of where to sell black market stuff?

I think initially it came

- 21:00 from Peter Gentle he was a good mover and he was a batman to Kinamon. Kinamon was demoted from wing commander to squadron leader for shooting up a mess in Tokyo, got drunk and grabbed a 44 and started shooting up. Air Vice Marshal Sam Jordan and he said, "He was a very brave man, Garth." "I don't doubt that, but," I said, "he was a wild one too."
- 21:30 He said, "Yes he was." It all emanated and it doesn't take long for a thing like that to multiply because there is a market there and it doesn't matter and if there is a market you find it and you have got the lot. We used to go about once a fortnight we used to go on a black market run down to Ube or somewhere.
- 22:00 I would go and buy a crate of grog and sit down and chew the fat and catch the train back, there was nothing else to do. The pictures that we got were terrible we used to see, Laurel and Hardy and all this business and somehow or another through Cooper meeting these guys up in Tokyo, he got to know this commander of the
- 22:30 naval base at Sasebo down in Kyushu. Cooper was a delightful man really nice bloke he was a CO, but he used to come over to the airmen's mess and we used to go over the officers' mess it was a very good setup. This guy said to him he said, "You know Glen if you can send a plane down to Sasebo on such and such a morning." He said, "As long as I get it back the next day."
- 23:00 He said, "You can have first release movies straight from America." That was great all of a sudden it took all the mob out of the beer hall. That is all we would do we used to go up and get beer every night there was nothing else to do. Along came these films all of a sudden the beer hall emptied and the theatre is full and Cooper was delighted with this. He gets to hear about it but Boucher the Air Vice Marshal of the RAF type who is in charge of the BCAIR [British Commonwealth Air]
- 23:30 and he said, "If it is good enough for the Australians, it is good enough for the Poms." We couldn't do anything about it we couldn't fly up to them and then get it back in time so he forbade the aircraft to take off. He was only a little bloke but he was a little shit. They booed him out of the mess at Iwakuni, they threw plates at him. He came in with his hat on, which is something that you don't do.
- 24:00 I am sitting with my back and the door is over there and I heard somebody sing out take your hat off you mug and I am thinking what is going on here and I looked over and he was about to start walk down there to the servery and these two RAF Pommie types were opposite me and they said, "Hey we will all be court martialled." "No bloody way, get your hat off you mug."
- 24:30 By the time he got past the servery they started to pelt him with plates, now he is an Air Vice Marshal with the RAF. He turned around and he said, "These colonial troops." Well that just about you know, these colonial troops. That same bloke I was asked by an Air Commodore Cogan, I was told to report to Cogan upstairs in the transport section at Iwakuni.
- 25:00 "Shambrook do you know your way through Hiroshima?" I said, "Yes sir, in daylight not in the dark." He said, "Very well, Air Vice Marshal will be arriving at ten o'clock tomorrow morning from Singapore and I want you to take him through to Kure to Northcott." He took over from Red Robbie the boss of Beecroft. Instead of leaving at half past one Mr Boucher left at
- 25:30 four o'clock in the afternoon as a result we got to Hiroshima in the dark and there was practically one building that was brick and reinforced that was standing and you had to go through the railway yards onto these two bridges that were left. I had no idea, I thought what the bloody hell will I do and he has got his driver driving this little car
- 26:00 and we drive down this street and there is some AIF guys walking along the side and I said, "Pull up and I will ask these guys where we are and get some." He said, "Those dumb Australian bastards wouldn't know," from the back seat and I thought up yours Jack. We turned around and went and all of a sudden I said, "Hang on hold it, go down here, turn left and turn right," I realised where we go and away we go.
- 26:30 Boucher turns around and said, "Step on it driver I am late to meet the C and C in Kure." It is winter, bloody cold and there is ice on the road and the inland there is a road a good road but it is relatively narrow and practically no traffic thank God, we go round this bit of a curve and she went round once, went round twice and bounced off the sea wall. Boucher is down amongst the gears
- 27:00 like I am sitting here and the driver is over there and we put him in the back seat and when he got into the car it is only a little car and he said my clothes are to be put in this way and taken out that way and it has got to happen and he is standing outside saying what a glorious way to die. I thought I wish you had you so-and-so, and I couldn't have a cigarette but he could. Eventually luckily the car was OK so we
- 27:30 turn around and steadied away and eventually we got to the railway station in Kure. And here's these two Australian MP's sitting in a Jeep nearly frozen to death and so they realised who it was because I had a flag flying in this dam little car and off we go up to Northcott's headquarters right up the top of the hill at the back of Kure and down the stairs comes this Australian Brigadier, "Air Vice Marshal Boucher"
- 28:00 he said, "Where the bloody hell have you been?" Boucher just about spewed, one thing and another I am thinking I wish I could say something. Northcott's aide was a great bloke by the name of Ian Pilchie he was a pilot type and he came down and he said, "Shambrook what happened?" and I told him, he

said, "You must be hungry?" and I said, "I sure am yes." "Take your Bert with you and go around the back," and we had steak and eggs

28:30 but incredible.

Speaking of steak and eggs what was the general food like that they gave you in Japan?

Most of it was stews and whatever. Did I tell you about the burning six double storey buildings down? When, the Kites came when we were at Bowford

29:00 when they flew across from Okinawa and Jack Stammers he come from Brisbane he got out of his Mustang and he kissed the motor, oh beautiful and he had this little monkey in the back of his Mustang, so the Yanks somehow the Yanks claimed this monkey. And there were six double storey buildings

29:30 and we all had braziers of coals because there is no central heating or anything and the monkey jumped on the brazier of coals and tipped it over and the Yanks they just took off. The wind was blowing from that direction and it started off from the end one, and went one, two, three, four five, six burnt the lot out. The only fire brigade they had was a Japanese motor bike and side car with a hand pump.

30:00 There was nothing for it to plug into and we were in the second last building and this Yank came in with a 45. "Get out of here this place is going up in flames right." "Just leave it we will be sweet." "Get out of here," he said, he had this bloody 45 and the guy who was with me Bunker Haley he said, "OK Yank"

30:30 he said good as gold, we are going whack and down went the Yank and the bugger picked up his 45 so we packed our gear and got out of there. He staggered out later on but I don't know what happened to the 45. Incredible six double storey buildings just one after the other and who was waiting at the end with hot coffee and biscuits, old honest John the Salvo bloke. That is when the trouble

31:00 you were saying, was there much unrest, The officers had 'bullshit castle' as we called it and they were ensconced with eating and the whole box and dice, we were out we slept in the theatre and wherever else we could get and nobody seemed to be doing too much about this. So Cooper knew that something was on so he called a meeting of the whole station and we met in the theatre

31:30 and now he said, "What is the problem?" We had a welfare officer and the welfare officer was this Wing Commander Swan the RAAF permanent type Pommie. He said, "You have got Wing Commander Swan as your welfare officer." "We don't want Wing Commander Swan as our welfare officer." He said, "Who do you want?" We said, "Honest John the Salvo bloke." He said, "I don't know that we can do that."

32:00 "We want honest John as our welfare officer." He said, "All right." Poor old Swanny he just went purple in the face with this happening but things started to move not that old honest John but they realised they had to turn around and do something. We had other blocks to go to but they were not finished and there was no heating nothing.

What did honest John

32:30 **do for you?**

We just wanted to get rid of Swanny I think. I don't know but he was there and if anybody went to him with a complaint he took it straight to Swan and it was fixed.

Was there any gear or people lost in the fire?

No none at all. Gear I don't think so, just the fact that we lost six double storey buildings.

33:00 Ground floor and first floor with showers and whatever else in them. The food was quite good it wasn't fresh food. I went for a walk one day and I went past this garden and there is a tomato, if anybody eats tomatoes and I love them, a tomato right on the edge of the road, everything backs onto the road, there is no footpaths or anything and I am looking at this thing.

33:30 An old Japanese lady came out and I was nearly going to pinch it and say what the hell I can't do it and I said, "Mama-san and tomato," and she went and picked it and said, "Dozo" 'please', you know I said, "No, I can't do that." "Dozo, it is all right," she gave me this tomato. We were not allowed to eat anything over there that was produced by the Japanese because they use human excreta for their fertiliser.

34:00 I thought I am going to take the risk with this. Two of us took it back and drooled over this tomato and ate it. We weren't allowed to drink water when we first went there we were compelled to drink beer when we first got there. The water may be tainted I don't know what it was. It was a funny situation.

Were you given other options

34:30 **apart from beer?**

You had to boil the water and we had no means individually of boiling the water. We had an earthquake while we were there. We had a typhoon go through last week and I am lying in bed and my bed is going bang what the holy hell that typhoon is back and all of a sudden somebody says earthquake.

- 35:00 What happened when the earthquake starts they shut the electricity off. There is bloody blokes running into rifle racks in the middle of the room, they had escape ropes out the side of the building and blokes instead of just lowering themselves down and just going, they burnt their hands. The amazing thing was you are standing there on the ground and the ground seems to be going every which way and the building was swaying like this that much and you think holy
- 35:30 bloody hell are we far enough away for the thing not to fall over on top of us. The bloke next door, this Brian, he was a bit of a... and he brought a set of pearls for his mother and I can hear him saying, "My pearls, where are you pearls?" And threw him down the stairs. This other bloke Jimmy Ray he was over guarding the
- 36:00 boiler room and he said I am standing there, he come from Coffs Harbour, doing my duty for my King and country and he said all of a sudden I started to shake and he thought it is the malaria it has got me again. I sat down and he said this is the worse attack I have ever had and the next thing this bloke comes around the corner and says earthquake, so they both took off for the hills.
- 36:30 **Did your buildings survive?**
- Yes they were a bit out of kilter but yes. They were all pine everything was pine there is no hardwood in Japan and they planed it all with an adze and it was fantastic it was amazing what they did.
- 37:00 **Back on honest John, after he became your welfare officer what sort of changes happened?**
- I think we were, Swanny was possibly the bloke he was saying, so any time that he went, he had to go to Swanny because he was the senior administrative officer, but it was known what the problem was and Cooper had turned around and said we are going to fix this.
- 37:30 It was a slow process but it happened.
- Where did you end up living?**
- There were other blocks and I have photos of them there across from us but they weren't finished and they didn't have heating or anything as such and they had to run we had to go up to Mho [?] and pick up steam pipe to get the heat about 200 or 300 yards,
- 38:00 the steam pipe and lag it and bring it across and hook it up into these units, it took a while.
- What sort of service generally did honest John provide?**
- Virtually you could go up to the Salvos rooms that they had any time and get a cup of coffee
- 38:30 there was no problem with that and I think that anybody who had sort of problems that they wanted to contact people or do something about it, he would look after that. I finished up I mentioned I am on the Board of the Salvation Army I have nothing but admiration for them because when we shifted them from Nerang Street over to Wardoo
- 39:00 they had three dimensions to do it in and they had almost enough to do the first and second stage. So instead of holding off they had say maybe the Salvation Army in Gympie had money to spare they weren't using it at that time so they would say to Gympie give us that money and they brought it back here and we
- 39:30 did stage two and then they paid that money back to Gympie. Every time we talked about something to bring it to fruition it always happened, they were very good people to deal with, wonderful, they deserved everything they got it was a very good exercise, Wardoo Street. Nerang Road, Wardoo Street.
- 40:00 You have a look at that development it really is something, it is one of the best Salvation Army hostels in Australia.

Tape 7

- 00:37 **If you could take us through some of the work that you were doing initially when you arrived in Japan for the months you were there?**
- Virtually in the early months we were in Kure for a few weeks and then we went down to Iwakuni, but we had virtually nothing to do because we had no transport.
- 01:00 We virtually walked across into Kure for whatever reason and walked back and then eventually all our transport became available and that is when we drove through to Iwakuni. There was a lot of repair work that had to be done and we had to drag stuff from all over the place to get that done
- 01:30 I could be anywhere from Hiroshima to Mho to pick up stuff that was there and we still had to turn round and get the Japanese labourers who came onto the camp every morning and take them back every night. Whatever was in between we were all pretty good darts players because sitting around we would

02:00 be playing darts. You never started a game of cards too much because you could be called any tick of the clock to go somewhere and do something. There was always plenty to do. Some days were less than others obviously and if it snowed too much we didn't have chains or anything to put on the trucks and it was

02:30 you just got up in the morning, parade and you are there go and log on and you are there for the rest of the day and then you either went up to the beer hall at night or you went to the pictures because it was a closed camp after nine o'clock at night.

What kind of tasks would they give you if you had a bit of spare time through the day,

03:00 **what kind of things would they give you to do?**

No there was no such thing as giving you something to do. It all depended what you were on, if you were on tanker pool you were flat out all day but there always had to be spare drivers for whatever reason that came directly from old wimpy Morris and Bluey Hawker,

03:30 the sergeant as to what you were to do. You were there at their direction.

What kind of vehicles did you have in Japan?

The same type just the Four X Four, GMCs, General Motors Chevs, Fords, try and get a Ford because they are a better or faster motor than the General Motors. They were all, I don't know whether you have ever driven crash gear boxes,

04:00 we didn't have synchronised gears in those days you had to drop them in. We used to go and fill up the tankers when we got the tankers organised from Kure and we used to line up and race those tankers back to camp. Every time I think of it, gee it was incredible.

How did you go in those races?

04:30 If you got the General Motors or the Chev you always got a bit of a start but not much. They weighed a hell of a lot they were an eight wheel job and if you got a puncture in one of them you had to go and get help to take the tyre off them, they were that damned heavy. I was pretty fit in those days. It was just squadron life,

05:00 if you were there you had a job and you just had to wait and be told what it was that they wanted you to do. We used to wash the trucks pretty near everyday and that was about it. Nothing exciting except for the black market runs.

How would you do this would you have to make an excuse where you were going or

05:30 **to these black market runs?**

They were lead trucks they were classed as lead trucks. As far as I am concerned as a Dona I can go anywhere I can do anything I want.

Did you do any kind of storeman and packer kind of work?

No nothing, we were only there again

06:00 as a tanker pool we didn't have a water tanker situation because the water was laid on, we had a fire tender and just a general duties. Eventually we got a staff car and getting away from that for a minute we had a situation where we had George Wallace,

06:30 he and young George but they came across with the Tivoli girls and this was a stupidly rough situation. Of all things the Tivoli girls went to Tokyo, bloody blokes they are full of beer and one thing and another

07:00 they went up to the Yanks. Here is that situation coming up again and so we had a couple of staff cars by this time so the two of us went into the railway siding, they would two or three carriages to contain them and they would just shunt them off and leave them and we went into pick them up and we had young George and the Tivoli girls.

07:30 And they didn't tell us how many there were and I said, "Hang on where is George himself?" They said, "He is full as a fart back in the carriage." We had to go and pick him up he was out like a light but they performed that night it was incredible they put on a real good show. The beer hall situation,

08:00 we were paying two Yen a bottle which is 10d. for Australian beer which eventually got across there and it was stronger than Japanese beer. Japanese beer was good beer and we would pay the Yen a bottle for Japanese beer, but about two weeks before Christmas before we were leaving to come home at Christmas, the blokes that were running the canteen

08:30 they said, "Now look we have got about four or five hundred thousand Yen here and we are just accumulating money even at the stupid prices of beer, what are we going to do with it?" And everybody said, "We will drink it out." They said, "That might be all right," but to cut a long story short we had free beer from about a week before Christmas to a week after New Year and we left

09:00 at least two hundred thousand Yen for the blokes who were coming in, so they could operate and keep the thing going so that was just another thing.

Where were you headed from here that you were leaving?

We left the two hundred thousand Yen in the canteen for the guys that were coming up in

09:30 the draft, we were the first draft and we are going home in Easter so we didn't want to leave all that money there. There was no point so we left the two hundred thousand there which allowed them to operate, buy beer and keep the thing going as it was. Eventually we were going home at Easter, so we were way ahead of things so it worked good.

During your time in Japan would you get up in

10:00 **and fly ever?**

No I never did oh only in Charlie Baker when we went and played football somewhere. I forgot about that I forgot we went up in a Douglas while we were there that is the only time. You could not fly in fighter aircraft it was single man.

Tell us about the football you were playing?

League, the initial game that we had

10:30 when the Tivoli girls were there, do you believe so we got up a team to play the officers in front of the Tivoli girls, talk about rough. I forget what the score was we played it down on the strip. I will never forget it, the ground had zinc filings in it and it didn't matter what sort of a scratch you got it festered and

11:00 we would go back and scrub ourselves down and whatever but I finished up with poisoned knees and I had four great lumps in my groin. They gave me some penicillin but that didn't work and the bloke who was over in the general ward his name was George Washington and he said, "Shammy come over and see me in the morning and we will fix it up." I went over and I said, "What are we going to do?" and he said,

11:30 "Just sit down there," and he gave me some aquaflavine and a big wad of cotton wool and I put it on a couple of days running and it cleaned it up. We played quite a bit of football we played the Poms but they would never buy us a drink, we went up to Yamaguchi and played the Kiwis and they had the worst beer in the world. After the first time up there we took our own beer with us and we would buy them a drink.

12:00 We thought ours was better than their own.

What was wrong with their beer?

I forget the name of it but it is terrible beer. Even they would admit it themselves it wasn't good beer not compared to ours.

How was the mixture of nations who did you find you got along with best?

The Kiwis not that we can we say fraternise that much it was just

12:30 the fact that they were I suppose colonial troops not quite as bad as the Aussies but they were colonials and the Poms always sort of looked down on you, you are just an Aussie and that is a funny situation and we didn't get to mix with the Indians. An Indian spitfire squadron

13:00 the Kiwis had the Flying Barracudas and we were flying Mustangs and the Yanks down on Kyushu had these black widows they were one of the first radar planes they came towards the end of the war. They used to frighten the living daylights out of us because our mob used to go down there and beat them up in their Mustangs and they used to come and beat us up at night and fair dinkum

13:30 they would only be twenty or thirty feet over the top of the roof and it would shake and we were scared stiff that one of them was going to run into the chimney one day. Thank goodness it didn't happen but that was fun but it wasn't because you used to be worried sick someone was going to crash into you when you were lying in bed about midnight. What did the Yanks fly I don't know what they were flying apart from the

14:00 black widows I don't know, we didn't see American aircraft hardly at all.

Did you intermix with the Yanks at all?

No we didn't mix with the Yanks that were there at Bowfu when we came down from Iwakuni we didn't see any Yanks, they were up in Tokyo. We had an area to look after and that is what

14:30 we did and they didn't interfere with us. Macarthur was telling everybody how they were going to do and why they were going to do it and we just followed the run of the mill.

What was said about Macarthur amongst the Australian Forces?

We thought he was a pretty smart cookie. To do what he did and the way that he did it made an awful lot of sense.

- 15:00 To have invaded Japan would have been incredible apart from the fact from trying to get onto the country or get into the country. To imagine the number that would be killed trying to do it not on.

Did you see any evidence of Japanese defenses for that possibility?

Not really at all.

- 15:30 I think that, they, I don't know, that Inland Sea would have been a trap in itself. Beautiful, very pretty country Japan. We went back there in 1969 and we picked up a guide at Anarda Airport in Tokyo
- 16:00 and we climbed into these cars and I am in the front seat and this Mike Securi was his name and he was a black belt black dan holder and he gave a demonstration in the foyer of a hotel at Nagashima which is a place that is built over a hot
- 16:30 steam cell and it was amazing that everybody looked at him even in Japan, with all those people they knew who he was. And we are driving around the ring road and that was the thing about Japan and it still exists, the smog it is incredible and it stays and it moves and I said, "What is all this smoke Mike?" "Oh no, spring mist," he said.
- 17:00 I said, "Oh yes," we went right down to Sasebo and Kyushu when we went and we came back up to Hiroshima and of all things, we finished up and we didn't realise we were in the middle of the Jap national holidays and would you believe that year there were twelve million more people taking holidays. Twelve million more, that was more than the whole of the population of Australia and we couldn't get a car or a boat or any damn thing, we had to wait six days we were in Hiroshima for.

- 17:30 **Talking about Hiroshima what was it like when you first saw it at the time after the war?**

Absolute devastation you couldn't believe that such an area could be flattened by one bomb. Again all those houses were made of pine and paper and the conflagration must have been something you couldn't imagine. The whole thing would have been just alight in seconds.

- 18:00 The lot of it, not just one, incredible.

Why did you go there exactly?

It was part of our prefecture we were responsible, the army had a unit or two in Hiroshima. I don't know that they were helping so much to get the Japs back on their feet but they were there as part of the occupation area.

- 18:30 As the Hiroshima prefecture in Bowfu prefecture, Yamaguchi prefecture they all had their own sort of princes who ruled the area before we got there.

What did you think when you saw this area?

I sort of imagined when I saw this one building that was standing that it wouldn't make a big a mess of our country than what it would have in Japan but that was

- 19:00 a very smart thinking because of the force of the blast. Even the building that was standing, I went inside it was all fractured but it was standing and I was of the rather silly opinion that it wouldn't hurt us as much as it hurt them but I had to reform that thinking, terrible.

Did you see any evidence of the effects of the bomb on the people?

The fact that one of the bridges that we

- 19:30 went over and you may have seen a photograph with the imprint of a human being was photographed onto the cement on the bridge, it was there all right amazing.

Were you all talking about it?

What could you say we were all sort of in awe of what had happened. I don't know if you have ever read Truman's, a book on Truman, quite

- 20:00 an amazing little bloke. He went broke three times and the fact that he sanctioned the act to let that bomb go was I admire him no end for it, to have held off would have been an aftermath to a lot of people and something that either he had more knowledge or better knowledge

- 20:30 with what he did but he was a very strong little man.

Tell us during your time did you have any Japanese working on the Bowfu?

We picked up workers every morning they did all the manual work that had to be done they did, they would washed our trucks and clean them and there were

21:00 Japanese women who came and looked after the officers mess and cleaned that and one thing and or other. We looked after our own cleaning service, our own barracks we looked after that. There was quite a few.

What was it like to interact and instruct them?

Those two little Jap guys they would do anything for you, we used to

21:30 give them a cigarette and they would do anything for you whatever you wanted done it was just the fact that they were there for your benefit, I don't know who paid them we didn't. We might have slipped them a couple of Yen here and there I don't know.

What exactly would they do what kind of task would they do?

They would clean out the transport section and keep that clean and sweep it up and

22:00 anywhere that needed to be done, we didn't do that we used to look after our own barracks.

How old were these boys?

I think they were about 16 or 17 or something.

What about interaction with the Japanese like socially outside?

We were not allowed to fraternise and that is fair dinkum. I don't doubt that it happened in lots of places. The Kiwis had a different idea to what

22:30 we did, they set up an international club as they called it up in Yamaguchi it enabled anybody who wanted to, to go there and it made an awful lot of sense. A lot of those guys had been in the islands for months and months before they went over there. When those Tivoli girls went over there they would have been the first white girls they had seen for how long I don't know.

23:00 As a general rule of thumb we were not allowed to fraternise although the officers went to the hole in the wall, we didn't.

What was the hole in the wall?

A brothel.

What was talked about this situation that the officers had this and the others didn't?

We didn't have any damn option we were told and that was the start and finish of it.

23:30 I don't doubt that there were individual instances where it didn't work that way but not very much.

What about unofficial the brothels and that?

I think that there were plenty there I really don't know to what extent. As a matter of interest we had a swy school, which operated every night on a table

24:00 and this particular night this mate of mine Johnny Hare who was in my op Snowy Island, came back and said, "You had better go and get Johnny," and I said, "Why what has happened?" "He is as drunk as a skunk and he has been backing tails all night and he has just about backed the school out and he has got money coming out of his ears." I went up to the swy school and I didn't go for that sort of thing for myself

24:30 while he was carrying on , throwing dice and doing all the betting, I just kept picking up money and stashing it and saying, "Come on Johnny." "No, no I am staying," he wasn't going to leave at all. I said, "Right-o I am off," so I went to bed. He has turned round the next morning because we had to take over at eight o'clock and he is looking under his pillow and under his blanket and everywhere

25:00 and I said, "What is the matter with you?" And he said, " I have got more money than this somewhere," and I said, "What do you mean you have more money?" He said, "I won a lot of money last night." I said, "Did you." Eventually I got out this packet and I said here and that was the year that Russia won the Melbourne Cup and he put a heap on it. He went and bought a Geisha girl out of a brothel in Bofu,

25:30 married her in Shinto Rites and he went back for the second term. I haven't seen Johnny here since I left. He came back to Australia he had to get permission to come back for the second term and I lost him. There is another little bloke Teddy Marshall who fell in love with this Japanese Lady

26:00 who was older than he was, Teddy was only 19 and he was the other donna with Snowy Ireland and I said to him one day, "What is this lady that you have got?" He said, "Who told you?" "Teddy I know all about it I have got to pick you up in the morning anyhow." "Oh yes please," and he was staying in town

26:30 and apparently she was a major's wife and he was killed out in the islands and he lived in her home or whatever and they cohabited whenever. I saw her one night by accident there was nothing to look out the window one night and he was walking along the road and looking in the window and I said to Teddy, "She is beautiful

27:00 now don't be silly for heavens sake don't go getting hitched or anything of the such," and he said, "Shammy I am going to go home and come back for a second term. I said, "You're mad." "No I am going to do that." And so he did and you couldn't believe it, it is a small world I was down in Melbourne at the old Essendon Airport and walked out the swing doors there to catch a plane and who was standing there but Teddy Marshall.

27:30 Teddy g'day Shammy. I said, "Did you go back for a second term?" And he said, "Yes and you bet I did," and I said, "Did you marry her?" And he said, "Oh no I didn't." She was a beautiful lady so there is just the difference where some instances where it happened and I think by the time the second draft came through that that whole picture might have changed.

28:00 **What was it like being without women in the services for a long period?**

We had nurses but not a lot, we didn't see them at all. The army had nurses, but we didn't have WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] over there, they were virtually non existent as far as the RAAF were concerned.

What was it like as a young man?

It was hard, yes it was a bit hard.

28:30 **Was it a topic of conversation that comes up a lot?**

Tell me about it. It didn't do any of us that much harm. It was a curiosity. I have told this so many times this 'Chook', this mate of mine, he wanted to go walk about and he was drunk like we had been

29:00 at the beer hall and I was saying, "Come on Chook don't be bloody silly it is ten days on the rock pile in Kure." "No I am going into town." We switched the lights off and went to bed and all of a sudden gee what is that smell, he had gone across the paddy field and had fallen down one of these honey pots [outside toilets], can you imagine he is in a blue uniform and he has fallen down one of these honey pots

29:30 stink and he is still drunk and he is just standing there in the middle of the room. Got our bayonets with the cover on and got him down stairs and cut his uniform off him and scrubbed him with carbolic soap, and would you believe for a week to ten days after that every time he perspired this smell would come out and we used to say, "Get out of here Chamberlain you so-and-so." "You are a nice mob of bastards you know.

30:00 Just because a man falls down a honey pot."

What about the Tivoli girls how rowdy did it get?

It got to the stage that they snuck them out the back door and they came and sat up at the bar and they were very attractive women. Blokes full of piss and bad manners

30:30 and some of us just got up and stood in front of them and they took them out the back door. And I think they were staying over at the officers' mess anyhow , they made accommodation for them over there so I felt a bit ashamed of that, I didn't fancy that at all.

How rowdy did some of the men get did they get a bit?

For whatever it wasn't good.

31:00 Cooper got out and read out the riot act, they put on a show the next night and they clapped them out of the house and they closed the beer hall for the night that made the difference.

What was the show like was it a variety show?

Yes old George Wallace he was always funny and what was the name of the other bloke

31:30 he is still performing this fellow he is as old as I am. It was quite good they had a band and whatever else with them and the girls kicked their heels up and showed plenty of leg and one thing and another and it was well received.

Why was there the move from Iwakuni to

32:00 **Bowfu?**

Iwakuni I guess was in another prefecture and the strip at Bowfu was a better situation than what it was at Iwakuni. Iwakuni was pretty busy because any aircraft that came in landed virtually at iwakuni unless they went up to Tokyo and that was the Yank area

32:30 so I think it was just the accommodation was there at Bowfu. I don't know I have no idea why we shifted but I think basically it was accommodation was the start of it because they had run out of accommodation at Iwakuni.

How did life change and your role change here?

Not a lot, they did a lot of building at Iwakuni

33:00 a huge airman's mess there and it was very well done. Apart from that Bowfu was all right there was nothing wrong with that but your food was pretty ordinary you knew almost knew what you were going to have from day to day, that was all right we filled up.

How far away was it to the two

33:30 **places?**

Iwakuni would have been about an hour and a half by road from Bowfu and Kure would have been about another hour the other side of Iwakuni and you had Hiroshima on the way through again.

Did anything change like the interaction with the locals or anything?

No not at all it didn't change one iota.

34:00 **All up how long were you with these ops for?**

I was there from September/October 45 through to April 47.

Tell us what were you doing in the months leading up to

34:30 **the finish of your period in Japan?**

I think we were more or less handing over to the new guys that came up. They had to take over and do whatever we had to do and we explained to them what it was all about but they had come into a situation that was much better than what it was when we got there, that was all we were doing. Once we had handed over to

35:00 them we moseyed back to Kure on the train and onto the old Manoora and home again. We nearly got sunk by a mine on the way home. The old Manoora was no bloody better then and it was, worse than what it was when we came across from Morotai from Labuan but it was great to see the Sydney Heads again, it was beautiful.

35:30 **Tell us about setting foot in Australian soil how long it had been and what was the feeling like?**

It was sort of what can I say, it was great but a lot of the guys that had come back before us they were still trying to find them in Sydney, because they had come back into the country

36:00 and some of them were arrested for peeing in the street which the Japs do over there and exposing and all this damn business and we were rounded up and taken out to Concord. And we weren't allowed out of the camp and they packed us onto the train and counted us onto the train and before we left Sydney, because some blokes had been there for months and their parents had been saying

36:30 where is so-and-so we were looking for him. He hasn't turned up he was supposed to be home and they had just gone and lost themselves in Sydney. That was about the end of the line. I only lasted one night in Concord and we climbed on the train the next day and arrived in South Brisbane station and back home.

Did you stay in the air force?

37:00 No I had leave that was due to me which I took and virtually got out, got discharged. Dad and my brother Ray had been running the business all that time, I got out.

Looking back at your service time what did you think you learnt from

37:30 **your period in the air force?**

I think you had to grow up quick I think that was the thing and the fact of having guys that relied on you and you relied on them and it was always there that you helped one another. To what extent you helped one another was the fact that you knew that they would do the same for you.

38:00 It was quick growing up thing, like where I was living here in Coolangatta and then going to Churchie and being on my own there for two years virtually and then going into the air force and it is the next stage up in growing up in a hurry, it was great.

What do you think were your best times in that period?

38:30 My best times in that period, it was pretty much run of the mill the only time I went skiing that time that was quite special, we virtually didn't get anywhere. While we weren't busy from time to time we were needed as truck drivers and

39:00 we virtually stayed on the camp and that was round about it. We went walking and whatever else I don't recall a particular time but the football games were quite special, we always got a kick out of that, but apart from that we were inoculated against encephalitis when we were over there

39:30 and that was a worry. It was a situation that affects your brain, mosquitoes and there were four blokes that got it while we were over there and that is not enjoying it at all but they managed to get over it. They just put them in a dark room for weeks and I think that the experience of going to Japan and seeing how they lived and when we went back in

40:00 69 to see the difference that had been created as an industrial nation and around the area where we were, there was practically nothing left. There were petrol chemical works and you name it, it was amazing what they had done in that time.

I would like to ask you a final question. Do you have any final words you would like to add about your service?

40:30 I am very thankful for it, I enjoyed the whole experience it was great. I have always believed that people should travel to get experience and I have been fortunate to be able to do that both my sons and all my daughters have all travelled a fair bit and it has been a sort of a revelation and then coming back

41:00 here and starting a family with five kids that was and building a business but I always have a very soft spot for the air force and I am just sorry that I can't find more of the guys that I was with. I went to an Anzac Day down in Sydney but it wasn't the big one so I am just sort of promising myself after listening and doing that, I am going to go to

41:30 an Anzac ceremony in Sydney and make myself available because Don is up at North Narrabeen and to get from there, get up at five o'clock in the morning, I am not a great organiser of transport and I think I might do that.

INTERVIEW ENDS