Australians at War Film Archive

Lewis Harte (Bernard or LB) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 13th July 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/2214

Tape 1

00:30 **I was wondering if you could tell me about your early life and what life was like for you as a young man?**

I was born in Bundaberg in Queensland in 1918. I wanted to go to the war but my mother thought I was under age. I was only

01:00 three months old when the war finished.

Were you a child of celebration?

No, it was before the war finished that I was born. I was born in September and the war finished in November as you know. My mother was born somewhere there at Gin Gin near Bundaberg. She was at a ladies' school at Maryville when she came back and married my father who had a

01:30 photographic studio in Bundaberg. Her father, my grandfather, was quite a character. He was the Mayor of Bundaberg. He was actually in England and they had an interest in a woollen mill. But he was playing up and knocking off one of the loom girls or something there. It didn't do for the son to do those things in those days so they banished him and sent him out to Australia as a remittance man. He set himself up

02:00 as a gentleman farmer outside Bundaberg there. That was in the time of the Kanakas [Melanesians]. They came in at that time too. We don't hear much about it but I think he had a lot to do with bringing the Kanakas in too. Anyway, he became Mayor and he started a gun collection, which became the biggest private collection in Australia. You will see that in the Queensland Museum today. It was down below but they are bringing it up. It is the Maynard Collection.

02:30 His wife, who was born in Australia, died in 1915 so I never met my grandmother. She, according to my mother who lived until about '93, she had a bout of asthma and that was all. As she wasn't well, my grandfather, her husband, brought out his girlfriend from England as the housekeeper.

03:00 At ninety-three years of age, my mother said to me, "I've never realised. I have never hated anybody in my life but this woman." We didn't realise and we didn't know anything about syringes or injections. She said, "That woman was poisoning my mother." She said, "She only had asthma and gradually she died." My grandfather, her father, then turned around and married this housekeeper. This marriage

03:30 didn't work out. The children hated her of course. She went back to England so he sued her for divorce. It took three years in those days to be absolute. When it was just about due to be resolved, she came back to Australia and came back and knocked on his door and said she was going to take the family for a row with the jewellery and all that. It was too much for him and he killed her. He murdered her. Then he killed himself.

04:00 So this happened in February 1928. I was then still experimenting with wireless in those days under the house. I heard all this commotion upstairs and I didn't know what it was. Then I went for a walk down Toowong village, that is where the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] is now, and there were posters there for the newspaper about the murder and so forth. So none of the family after that ever went back to Bundaberg.

04:30 My grandfather's youngest son, Harold, he certainly never went back there. He had already been given in the will a gun, because it used to be his, and it was studded with gold. He never went back. The thing went off at an auction for thirty shillings in those days.

Did you know your grandfather?

Yes. I knew him well. He used to make queen cakes and I liked queen cakes as a child. I knew him quite well. He said to me

05:00 once and if you read my book you'll find out that he had this rapier. He would bring it out and it was a sword in other words. He would lunge at me a couple of times to frighten me or just as a joke and I was

scared naturally. He was rather a quiet sort of fellow in between murdering people. I went there about twenty-five years ago with my sister and I think we were the first to go back since 1928. I said to my sister, “I wonder if the old

05:30 house is still there.” It was in George Street, which was a long, long street in Bundaberg. I said, “I’m going to walk that distance.” I came across it and there it was this double-storey place. There is a photograph up there by the way. There was an old chap chipping weeds next door and I said, “Do you know who owns this place?” He said, “It’s over one hundred years old, you know. It is an old place. It belongs to my daughter and son-in-law. They live there but they are at work now.” I said, “When your daughter and son-in-law come back from work

06:00 today, you see that bedroom up there, you tell them that is where my grandfather murdered his wife.” It was probably up for sale that next week.

Your mother was raised in an affluent environment then. She was very well-to-do with your grandfather?

They were in England. My father’s cousin came from Warwick and her name was Maynard. She came into a

06:30 fortune when she was only three years of age. Her grandfather died and he had no one. She took up then with the Prince of Wales, Edward VII. He was knocking her off right and left and he was Queen Victoria’s erring son. He was also known as Prince Albert. He had three principal women. There was Lily Langtree, the daughter of a parson, from the

07:00 Isle of Jersey. The Jersey Lily they called her. The other one was Frances Maynard but he called her Daisy I think. Then there was Mrs Keppel who was the last one. When he was dying, both Mrs Keppel and my lady they turned up at his bedside both vowing to look after him until he died. He was with her for about nine years and the other two for nine years as well. He got around quite a

07:30 lot. She married the Earl of Warwick and he was rather a sickly sort of chap and actually didn’t have much money. My ancestor did, you see. She financed a lot of these things. Anyway, the Earl of Warwick was actually married to Frances Maynard when

08:00 she was having this liaison with the Prince of Wales. Anyway, that went on. About 1996 I think it was, Jane, my daughter, and I went over to England and over to Holland and Scotland. She had to deliver a paper at a medical conference there. So we went to Warwick Castle. I have got it there and there were waxes including Daisy, in other words the Countess of Warwick, and it is in her

08:30 boudoir and the lady is adjusting her gown you see. I saw this thing there and it was a beautiful setting and reclining there in the bedroom and it was all in wax. I said to the lady in charge, “I’m related to this lady, can I go and stand beside it.” She said, “No you can’t go in there but you can take a flash.” So Jane went downstairs to get the camera with the flash. So as she was down there the lady said, “Just sit beside me here near the display.” I was sitting there for a while

09:00 and all of a sudden a sliding door opened and out came a knight of old in stockinged hose and a beret and he had a rapier too. He was going across in front of me. I nearly had a mickey. I said, “Give him one in the belly for me as well.” He said, “I will, sire, as soon as I’ve had a cup of tea”. What they were doing is putting on a joust for the tourists and it was cup of tea time.

09:30 He came from this secret panel, which was just behind me. Then Jane came up, my daughter, so I got a photograph there with Countess of Warwick just behind me. Then I stood underneath the family coat of arms. It is all in the photograph if you would like to see it. That was our visit to Warwick Castle so we had quite a session there.

So your grandfather was the Mayor of Bundaberg?

Yes in 1912 and 1914.

10:00 **So he was obviously an influential and powerful man in the district?**

Fairly influential I would say but not what you would call powerful in those days. He was fairly well known there but once the murder was done they preferred to forget him. In fact, when my daughter and I went there, the museum was very good then. I thumbed through the newspapers. The only newspaper edition that was missing was when the murder was on. It doesn’t do to murder people up in

10:30 Bundaberg apparently, so they got rid of that one. He was very close to Bert Hinkler. My mother said to me, “Bernard, I can still remember that day when my father took Bert Hinkler to Brisbane and they were walking up the gangplank.” There was no train in those days. I don’t think there was a train. “He was walking up there with Bert Hinkler holding his hand and Bert Hinkler had never worn shoes before. Father

11:00 gave him a pair of boots. He was wearing these big boots and with no socks or anything and it must have been chafing. The poor blighter was trying to get up there holding grandfather’s hand.” My grandfather took him down to Brisbane and it was by boat in those days. He helped him a little bit financially. They were a German family the Hinklers and they were very poor at the time. You would

know the history of Bert Hinkler.

Your father was a young photographer at that time in Bundaberg?

Well, he was

11:30 forty-two when I was born so he wasn't very young. He was an Englishman too. He came out with his mother. His name wasn't Harte by the way; it was Browett. He lived in Bellingham, which is a well-known industrial place, as you know, of what I suppose you would call middle-class people who were reasonably comfortably off. His father died. His mother came out to Australia and took the boy, my father, Thomas Bernard, and

12:00 she married a man called Hart who was a Jew. It was Hart. This Hart had a lithography business in those days making plates and engraving and that sort of thing. That part of Surry Hills in Sydney in those days was the arty centre of Sydney where small industry thrived. That is where his business was. His name was Hart, H-A-R-T. He was very cruel to my father's mother and also him. They contrived to run away together. So they ran

12:30 away and my father looked after his mother for the rest of his life. He supported her. I think he sold newspapers and all that type of stuff around Sydney. Then he joined The Sun newspaper. That went on for some time and then he hated him so much he put the E on the end of the name so that is why it became H-A-R-T-E. Many years later and I've got the story up there if you want to read it, I

13:00 came across a daughter of the world's first flying doctor. It wasn't the Royal Flying Doctor Service. He operated about six years beforehand using the Qantas [Australian airline, originally Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services] aeroplane with Hudson Fysh and Guinness and a chap called Black piloting and they used to go to medical cases. Anyway, I got the history of this first flying doctor. He was an Englishman who came out here. At the end of it she showed me a little

13:30 cameo and on the left was a painting of the forerunner of the photographs. There it was on this cameo that she had, and it was her grandfather and her uncle I think on this cameo, and there was L.J. Hart, lithographer, Surry Hills. I said, "It's a small world, Marjorie." "Yes" she said, "It is. "That is how we ended up our interview, which is all on tape for posterity.

14:00 **Is there a natural link between lithography and photography? Is that how your father developed skills and became interested in photography?**

I don't know exactly how he started actually in photography. He became an apprentice to a well-known studio, I think it was Hood's or something like that, in Sydney. I'm not too sure. My father never spoke much about his life. I regret that I knew very little about him in Bellingham. We went over there

14:30 but we didn't go into Bellingham my daughter and I. I wish we did now. He never once spoke about his life. I just got this through my mother and she was ninety-three. Even that murder by my grandfather we never spoke about things in those days. I heard about that in 1928 and I knew about it and I never said a word. My mother never said a word to me. She was ninety-three and it was after the war years and we were talking. She said, "Bernard, I didn't know you knew that." I said, "Mum, I knew from

15:00 1928." She said, "I had no idea." I said, "Tell me something about Dad." She said, "I didn't know much about him really. I was going up to this ladies' school up in Maryville and as soon as I came down my grandfather, who was a great friend of Tom, my husband, said, "Look I want you to marry him" so I married him. That is how it was in those days.

I was going to ask you if in fact your mother was marrying down in marrying your father?

No. It was nothing like that.

15:30 **In fact your father was…?**

I don't know much about it. He was just a photographer. Of course they were very much in vogue photographers in those days and to have a studio of your own. By the way it wasn't electrified. He used acetylene lamps in those days and the chap in the newspaper wrote it up about the wonderful Elite Studio with the lighting and everything and the acetylene lamps; he gave a good write up about the Elite Studio. He wasn't a good businessman my father, he was the arty type really.

16:00 **And he began working with newspapers?**

Yes, The Sun newspaper in Sydney. He was an early photographer around Brisbane. He took the first aerial photograph of Brisbane from a little aeroplane. He was involved when the Duke of York came out here. He became our King later. He was on the

16:30 Royal Train on the way up to Brisbane through to Townsville I think in those days. He did a lot of the early photographic business around. I was there. He took me up too, when I was just a young fellow and just a kid, when Bert Hinkler arrived. There was a big crowd. He couldn't get down onto Eagle Farm aerodrome because it was muddy so he landed at Ascot Aerodrome. We saw him there. Then I went out

17:00 there to Kingsford Smith's arrival and I saw that too. I was sitting there. He took me out in the van. He worked for the Daily Mail in Brisbane. There was a Brisbane Daily Mail and a Brisbane Courier and they

amalgamated in 1932. We are talking about 1928. I would sit on a pile of newspapers and when Kingsford Smith landed, I was right there in front of him. Then with Amy Johnson, I saw her dip her aeroplane into the mud there. She had an

17:30 ignominious landing when she came out. She came out about the same time.

What was Amy Johnson's claim to fame? I'm not familiar with her story?

She flew solo. She was the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia in 1930.

So those events had a strong impact on you as a child in terms of your interest in flight and flying?

Yes I suppose it did really. I never realised it when I got my pilot's license. I never realised it because I got

18:00 tied up with wireless and then radio and then broadcasting in those days and that took all my time.

So you grew up in Brisbane and your father had moved up to Brisbane to…

No that was earlier from Bundaberg. We came down shortly after I was born really about six months later. I tell the story that it rained and rained when I was born for the first couple of months and I had to move out of Brisbane because I couldn't get my nappies dry. Anyway, we moved down to Brisbane. I had a bit of trouble with my heart and that and had double

18:30 pneumonia you see. They cured me in Brisbane and that is why we went there really.

Did that have any long-term impact on your health?

No, not at all. It was a valve not opening or closing but I'm not too sure. The one thing the doctor said to my mum was, "He must always sleep on the veranda and never in a bedroom." All my life growing up, I was sleeping on the veranda. He said, "He must get full air." It had no

19:00 affect on me. When I joined the air force I had no problems at all.

As a young boy at school what were main interests? What were your aptitudes at school?

I don't think I was a very good scholar. I had no aptitude and I wasn't very good at sport. What is your next question? I went to a church school called the Presbyterian Methodist School in Toowong in Brisbane. We wore straw hats and that but I had no great aptitude at all.

19:30 **Did you learn much about World War I when you were a young man at school?**

Never at school but certainly myself, yes. I went to the Anzac services in the cemetery at Toowong. I took an interest in that.

Your father had been too old to participate had he?

No. He was in the Boer War. He went to join up for the Boer War. He was in Sydney and they were recruiting in Hyde Park in Sydney. To go to the

20:00 Boer War, you had to be able to ride a horse. He had never been on a horse in his life. Anyway, when they were recruiting he jumped on this horse and he went about six yards and it threw him off. The chap said, "Thank you very much, Mr Harte, for your offer but we won't worry." So that is how he didn't go to the Boer War.

Was the Empire still very important in your upbringing? With your parents and their English heritage was it the Empire and the King?

Yes, it was. To all of us in

20:30 Australia in those days the Empire was a very sustainable thing over the years, the British Empire. Pink maps covered a great deal of the world, as you know, in those days. Yes, it was very much the Empire. In fact this badge I am wearing here now is the badge of the Imperial Services Club, which doesn't exist now. So that was formed before the turn of the century or about the turn of

21:00 the century.

Was religious education important to you when you were younger, the Presbyterian faith?

No, not a great deal but it was actually the thing to do to go to Sunday school and things like that in those days. You always had to go on Sundays and the Sabbath was naturally not a day for working or it wasn't supposed to be in those days. You always observed the religious rites and those things in those days. I was going to an

21:30 Anglican church in Toowong at the time and not Presbyterian. I well remember the rector saying he wanted me to be confirmed. You had to be confirmed after a certain period or you were supposed to be. I didn't want to go along with it and Mum said, "You've got to go." When the rector told us that on Confirmation Day after the service was held, there was a confirmation breakfast down at the community

hall, the church hall, I thought, “Right.” So a couple of my mates and I decided we would go to the

22:00 confirmation service and we could get inducted there because of the breakfast. After the service was over, two of us trooped down on our bicycles down to the community hall and it was locked up. The rector had obviously forgotten about it. I sat on the gate there, the swinging gate, for about an hour. There was no breakfast. Then I went home to Mum and she’d gone out and there was no breakfast at home. I have been down on religion every since.

22:30 **What was Toowong like at that time?**

Toowong was an interesting place. We thought it was old. Every second Saturday I would take my billy cart down to the sawmill to get wood chips for the fire. We didn’t have electric fires and we didn’t have gas fires, it was a copper. It was for the copper every Monday.

23:00 We had to have wood chips for those. I had to go down and get those from Patterson’s Sawmill. Patterson’s Sawmill is just over the road from where the ABC is now. It used to be alongside the railway station. There is a complex of buildings there now like David Jones. That is where Patterson’s Sawmill was. The house was still there that they lived in and these two spinster sisters lived in it until just recently.

23:30 We had our favourite of course greengrocer who would deliver in those days and also the butcher. The butcher in those days would be on the other side of Toowong and he would come on a Saturday. He would come with his four-wheel cart and he would come to the end of our street. There he would chop up and you could get fresh meat from him. Naturally, I was there at

24:00 six o clock because he would give me a little bit of Windsor sausage to eat. His name was Alderdice. I remember his name. The next time I would see him I used to go to the matinee and sometimes at night to the other picture show called The Elite on the other side of Toowong. He would be dressed up in a dinner suit and would be taking the tickets there. Everyone worked hard and in the Depression years particularly. That is Mr Alderdice. Then I well remember Mr Bradshaw. I think Mr Bradshaw might have been a

24:30 World War I Veteran. He was always immaculately dressed with a tie and a waistcoat and polished boots and a lovely white apron. He served in his grocery shop at Toowong but he would also deliver to your home. He was a wonderful man. He had a great moustache. I loved the Bradshaws. Then there was the clothes prop man. He would come about once every six months. The clothes props were just

25:00 branches of a little tree with a fork in them. Of course he would sell you these clothes props to keep the washing from getting on the ground. Then there was another man who used to call and he was the rat catcher. The rat catcher was an interesting man. He would come about every twelve months I think. The rats were very bad in those days. They weren’t mice they were rats. He would have his fox terriers and he would come out with a dray, the

25:30 cart, and they would go around and get into all the tunnels and bring out all the rats. They would lay all the carcasses down for my mother to inspect. She would inspect them and pay him and then he’d scoop them all up. That is where I found my first love. It was the rat catcher’s daughter. One day he brought his daughter and she was sitting in front of the dray there and I could see this golden hair with the sun behind it. I fell in love with the rat catcher’s daughter. She was too

26:00 proud to talk to me. She sneered at me really but I still loved her. The next time I saw her was when I think I saw her when she was with about a half a dozen kids in tow and she was as wide as a bus. My love went out of the window. That was the rat catcher’s daughter. We had the rat catcher, the clothes prop man, the grocer and the greengrocer, the fruiter and the butcher in those days. They were the people that kept coming. We had the dunny man [sanitary engineer] of course. The dunny man would come for the

26:30 outside toilets in those days. He would come and shoulder his burden and then go away. Every Christmas time he came and it was usual to put a little pound note or a bottle of beer or both just outside where the pan came in and he’d collect that. He said, “Oy, thank you.” It was quite a ritual.

You were in your early teens when the Depression broke out?

It was in 1929. The Depression was at its

27:00 peak between 1929 and 1932 but it continued after that. I was fortunate being interested in radio and I went straight into work in wireless and radio. A lot of young fellows who’d had a fairly good secondary education; they couldn’t get jobs around Brisbane because there wasn’t much industry. There were people called Pye who used to make shirts and there was Evans Deakin’s and a few heavy industrial places but not many. They had to either go into a bank as a

27:30 clerk or an insurance company or be a salesman and it was very difficult to get those jobs. When the war came on in 1939, those chaps who couldn’t get jobs joined up and for the first time in their lives they had coins to jingle in their pockets. They were lucky because those who survived the war, they went into an affluent society after the war and there was no trouble getting jobs. So the war actually made those people who

28:00 couldn't get a job.

Did your father get through the Depression okay?

No. He was with the Brisbane Daily Mail. When it amalgamated with the Courier Mail in 1932, they dismissed and sacked those that were over forty years or age, or forty-five I think. He was well over that. He would have been forty-eight so they sacked him.

28:30 He had to go out and he started a business there developing prints from a paper negative. It was a Canadian idea. He got all this machinery and worked in this building in Brisbane but it was a flop so he and my mother lost money. After that he just continued doing photographic work on a casual basis.

What is your first memory of radio?

29:00 I think my uncle used to make a little crystal set and that was my first memory. He used to have a pair of headphones and I'd listen to it then. Radio broadcasting, you call it radio, but radio encompasses everything. It's not only broadcasting, it started long before broadcasting. In 1923 when it started, I was a bit young but in 1928 I used to listen to it then.

Explain to me what it was that you were listening to?

29:30 It was mainly 4QG Brisbane, which was a government station. QG stands for Queensland Government. It became an ABC station later on. They did a lot of talks and it was very boring stuff. It was mostly talks and playing music. They did one outside broadcast – no that was 4BC I think – it was the Evans Deakin's speedway on a Saturday night. Actually, you could hear the motorbikes from my house but there was a commentator there and it was the first commentary I ever heard. Then later on, I got involved.

30:00 **How was that different to radio broadcasting as we know it, what you were receiving through the wireless?**

Well it was only just to scratch around and you'd hear it with a pair of headphones later on.

Can you describe for me the set you were listening to it on, your uncle's?

That was only just a little crystal set. It was only that big with a pair of headphones and nothing else.

How did the crystal set work?

30:30 The crystal set works with a little wire and it looks like a spring, and that was the spring and it resembled the whisker of a cat hence why they used the name. It is actually impinged on a small crystal. You would have to fool around to get the right spot and if you did you would pick up the radio.

Was that in a sense the tuning was it the moving of the spring in relation to the crystal?

31:00 There was a tuning condenser. You could tune into the stations like that with a coil but the actual impinging of the crystal or the cat's whisker onto the crystal had to be judged so that it was lightly touching it and on the right spot before it would act as a rectifier. Later on, the valves came in. The valve sets came in and that was an

31:30 invention that started first of all with Fleming, the Englishman, who invented the diode. Then, in America, Forest invented the triode, which was one extra element and through that manipulating the electrons through the filament and the plate, you could amplify it and increase the number of electrons in other words and amplify the sound. That is how sound was first amplified with radio. You could amplify sound

32:00 before with a step-up transformer but with radio that is how it first started.

At what point did you begin to realise that you wanted to be involved in that field?

It was mainly because of the influence of a friend of mine. He used to do it before me. His father was a German and he worked out of the railway workshops as an engineer. He got

32:30 him involved in that too. He got me involved and we used to go down to his place and we started making our own wireless sets. It wasn't only wireless sets but transmitters. We became a pirate radio operation, you see, and we used to make even our own batteries in those days. We called them piddle batteries. The fellow that introduced me to that was a dentist in Toowong called Merford and he was a World War I Veteran. He showed us how to make these piddle

33:00 batteries, you see. What we did was we just had a glass jar, or a pickle bottle, and we put a little bit of zinc in it and also a rod from an Eveready or a diamond battery, dry batteries. We would take the rod and the carbon off and stick it in and then we had another battery of 1.5 volts. The electrolyte was our urine. We would wee in the bottles. So we were weeing in all these bottles whenever we

33:30 felt like it and we were making our own batteries and connecting them up. It used to smell after a while. We covered them up with wax we used to make. We made those at first. Later on, we made wireless transmitters and then we used to transmit. A lady dobbed us in over the road. Actually, she only dobbed us in because she had this beautiful wireless set called a dual wave,

34:00 a short wave and broadcasting band you see. Of course, when we came in with our transmitter over the road, we would blot her out. She complained to the Wireless Inspectors' Branch and out came the inspector then to try and catch us. We had an idea he might come so we dismantled our transmitter and put it in the ceiling. When he came I even remember his name. It was Tom Armstrong. He was a good fellow and a World War I chap too. He was Senior Radio Inspector in Queensland by the way and he came out from Brisbane to catch us. He saw all these

34:30 QSL cards, that is, the receiving cards. He took a few and he went at us and said, "You'd better watch yourselves." He left it alone. He knew it was up in the ceiling but he left us alone so we got away with it. That was in about 1934.

You were saying that you weren't much of a scholar and you didn't have much of an aptitude at school but you must have had quite a scientific brain?

Yes, I did really. I never really realised it.

35:00 I was in a bit of a trance. I said I was never much of a sportsman but we used to play cricket in our street. We all used to get around. They used to call me "Un" which was short for unconscious. I would be at the wicket and I'd be thinking of something and the ball would come and I'd miss it. And they'd go, "Oh, Un! Blast you, Un!" That really explains my scholastic misdemeanour as well because I was always thinking of everything else. I was in a trance.

35:30 **Did you have a strong interest in the way that systems worked?**

Yes indeed. Of course when I left school, this chap was working in a little wireless company in town. We only had two people in Brisbane, two factories in Brisbane. Cranberry's was a very small one, on the North Quay, and the Music Masters Radio Company. The Music Masters Radio Company was formed by a chap who was a

36:00 bankrupt and his name was Kelly. He was living in a boarding house in the next suburb. The lady who owned the boarding house gave him permission to use the washhouse underneath to make wireless sets. He didn't make them; he engaged an engineer. That is how we started the Music Masters Radio Company. Each of the four valve, six valve and seven valve and eight valve sets were named after the Music Masters like Beethoven, Chopin, Mendelssohn and so forth. The beauty of them was they had these

36:30 beautiful Queensland timbers. They were absolutely beautiful timbers and that is what sold them. He moved into town then, Kelly, and hired a place called Wilbridge and Sinclair, which was a sort of a wholesale place that wasn't being used next to St. Stephen's Cathedral in Brisbane. So Kelly got this factory going and started employing staff. He had two sons. I didn't know much about it

37:00 myself but I remember one of our chaps complaining because we only had one motor car there for service work you see. It was a rugby tourer. They would take their girlfriends out for a ride and then they would just leave the car there and our chap had to go and find it the next day. One of these sons was a chap called Theo. So Theo became Managing Director of Woolworth's and became Sir Theo Kelly.

37:30 They were a good family and he was a good fellow too and a very bright fellow. We made the wireless sets there. In those days we made everything and we were very, very good at it actually. There were only about two or three of us making these sets. They became very popular around Brisbane the Music Master Radio Sets.

Can I ask you with your pirate radio station and your early experiments there, what was your main motivation? Was it the power of

38:00 **radio or was it having your voice transmitted or the actual way in which the systems worked? What was it that appealed to you?**

It was just merely an interest really. It was nothing more than an interest and I suppose I didn't have any other interests at all. I wasn't a great sportsman and this seemed to grow on me really. It just grew on me really.

It was just the influence of your friend?

Yes it was mainly the influence of my friend and what he had done. His name was Slicker.

38:30 He was a bit older than me. That is all. It grew on me and I sort of became part of it then. When he went into the Music Masters Factory, I joined him as soon as I left school. While I was there for a while because there was a job coming up at 4BH Brisbane in broadcasting on what they called the control room there, with the board, I applied and I got that job. That is how I went into broadcasting from there.

What place did radio have in the broader community at that time?

39:00 A lot, mainly because of the test matches overseas.

Tape 2

00:33 **Bernard, we were just talking about the presence of radio within the broader community at that time and the test matches?**

They were very popular in those days. I think they had a lot to do with the stimulation of the interest in radio in those days. Most of the programmes of course were music as well and live presentations, even plays

01:00 were done live in my day. We went through very lean years after radio broadcasting was started. Very few commercial radio stations operated on a Sunday all day. They would come onto the air at about twelve o clock because there wasn't enough advertising to sustain them. The government allowed amateur radio operators, certain of them, to broadcast programmes in the morning and they had quite a lot of listeners.

01:30 In fact many a kid heard his first birthday called on an amateur station and not on a commercial or government station. They operated for at least ten years that I can recall. They were just amateur stations but they could play music and voice of course. When I first went to broadcasting, 4BH for example only had one

02:00 studio. In the afternoon, even on weekdays, we would go off the air at two o clock and we wouldn't come on until five because we didn't have enough to sustain us. We would come on with the children's session at five. So we would use the studio between two and five to do the rehearsals for any plays. We used to have a few live plays like One Man and his Family. We rehearsed there and they would do it at eight o clock that night. That is how we would

02:30 work it. If you read my book you will find some rather hilarious episodes that we had in those days. I went into the control room and first of all there was a man called Callow and we were both youth in those days. The chap in the control room was really everything. He had to push the actors away from the mike [microphone]. We had what we called carbon granule microphones and they were loose granules. If you

03:00 hit them with your hand or your script you would make a hell of a din. We had no overload protection on our transmitters in those days. You could throw the transmitter off the air and it would take about three or four minutes to bring it back on the air again. I used to watch them and the producer happened to be the manager, Eric Harrison, watched these people rehearse. And when they were on the air, I was going, "Don't get too close, go away." They got a bit scared of me. I had this wonderful power. I was only about sixteen or

03:30 seventeen and I had this wonderful power over these actors. One particular day Eric Harrison who was also the producer of the thing called me into his office. He said, "Bernard, have you ever done any acting?" I said, "No, sir, I have been in scout plays and church plays." He said, "We had an actor for tonight and he can't turn up. I want you to be the actor." He said,

04:00 "Do you mind doing it?" I said, "No, sir." I couldn't say no. I was that nervous I spent most of the afternoon going to the toilet backwards and forwards. I got through the rehearsal reasonably well. I was to be a lover. I was an artist loving this girl. When I say lover, we were on deck chairs loving each other with our eyes and things. Her husband went for the big spit over the rails.

04:30 I was this ne'er-do-well artist and making love to this woman and of course this woman happened to be very old. She was at least twenty-three years of age and tall and rather snooty looking down at me. I made a fair fist of that, making love to this lady. I hadn't made love to anyone and I hadn't even kissed a girl in my life. Then it came to eight o clock that night and the play was on.

05:00 The theme music was on and we were all around the microphone. I had to say my piece and I went up to the microphone and I was so nervous I bumped the microphone with my script so hard that it threw the transmitter at Bald Hills off the air, 4BH this was. We were off the air at eight o'clock at nighttime. I was the fellow that put the station off the air. I only said one or two words. While they were waiting I went away and left

05:30 them. I went out into the front office there and bade them goodnight and went home to Mum and let them work it out themselves. That was my excursion as a thespian into radio in those days.

Bernard, how do you make love on the radio?

With your voice. Everybody should know that by now surely if they're into wireless. You make it with your voice and the intonation of your voice; that is how you make love.

As a sixteen-seventeen year old did you have that deep baritone

06:00 **sultry voice did you?**

Yes but not the method. I hadn't had any experience. It was just the script. I didn't get that far. That is how you make love on the radio: with your voice.

You made it about as far as most sixteen or seventeen year olds?

Yes.

Radio plays were popular and the sport was popular. Was there a local news service at that time?

No. The only news service came through the government station

06:30 in those days. 4QG was Queensland Government. Later on in 1932/1933 it became part of the national broadcasting service and the national broadcasting service was contracted out to operators who happened to own picture shows like Hoyts and so forth. So Marsden was the first General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Company formed to operate and manage the national broadcasting service

07:00 stations in Australia. Then later on the government decided the ABC should be formed to take over their own stations. That is how the Australian Broadcasting Commission was formed, which later became the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

You left school when you were fourteen in about 1932 was it to join 4BH?

It was 1933 or 1934. I just can't remember the exact date.

07:30 I went to 4BH.

What was the nature of your work there?

It was in the control room mainly and outside broadcasts. I was doing a lot of that. I did a bit of announcing too by the way. They put me on on Saturday afternoon. They wanted me to do some announcing and mainly on Saturday afternoons because there wouldn't be many listeners and I couldn't muck things up. So I did the Saturday afternoon on 4BH for some time.

08:00 I didn't worry much about the records. I never thought of the listeners; I was playing the records I liked. I liked Lance Tivott and the Goya Road and all that sort of stuff. Anyway, one day a girl rang me up and she said how much she enjoyed the music I was playing. I didn't think anybody was even listening to me and she alluded to my learned comments. I knew nothing about records but she thought I was learned. She was only a young

08:30 girl. She was in her twenties and she worked in a warehouse in Charlotte Street in Brisbane. She wanted to get onto the stage and do a bit on the radio. I said, "I might be able to help you with the radio and get you on there", I said, "I'm hopefully going to America myself to the states to work there." It was a status to work there as a radio announcer in those days. We were chatting away and we became a little bit lovey-dovey on the phone. I gave her a kiss down the line and she gave me a kiss. I agreed to take her to the picture show at the

09:00 Winter Garden Theatre the next Friday. I had been on the phone to her for about twenty minutes. I said, "Goodbye." I turned to the microphone and I nearly had a mickey. I looked at the microphone and I'd had my microphone on all the time. All my love and all my discussions with her went over the air, like what a fellow I was in radio and I had made it clear I was well over

09:30 twenty. Anyway, I wanted to die then. Quite a lot of listeners rang me up then and said, "It's the best show that has ever been on radio since it has been invented." I tried to bleat out a few ads. We didn't have recorded advertisements; they were all live. You had to put the advertisements out live. I could hardly get them out. Naturally I got a mouthful from the manager the next day

10:00 and they took me off the air. It was back to the soldering iron and I never did any more announcing until some time later.

It was like reality radio?

Yes it was in those days. Another play was on one night. I well remember that. We didn't have a tea room but at the back of one

10:30 studio there was a little bench there and you could have a cup of tea. We would all gather around there and you could even hear it in the studio the chattering out there. Our batteries, our cells, to light the filament of the valve in those days, believe it or not, a cell was about two or three feet high. Each cell, there were three of them, and they were chloride batteries and they would light the filaments of the valve. There was a thick wire in between so you wouldn't lose any voltage. But you had to have

11:00 charger on most of the time you see and we only had one power point. It had a double adapter on it. I went out there and I was happy with life and everything was going well with the play. And I was talking away and I said, "I'll go and have a cup of tea." I went out there to have a cup of tea and I pulled the damn plug out and I didn't realise that it was the charger charging this chloride battery. I made my cup of tea and I took it in

11:30 there and I was sitting down there and all of a sudden the voices of the actors started to fade away. I suddenly realised and I ran over there and pulled my plug out and put the charger in and went back to there and the voices started coming back again. The Manager, Eric Harrison, rang up then and he said, "Bernard, have you had any problem in there with the transmitter?" I said, "No." It was the truth

because it never went off the air. He said, “It must have been a blackout. We have a lot of those out here”.

12:00 He lived out Enoggera way. I said, “I think it must have been, Mr Harrison.” Anyway, I got over that one once again. The next time I did an outside broadcast and I well remember this one. It was in 1937, which was pretty late in the piece. We were going to do our first radio broadcast. In other words, all the lines that had been broadcast had been on landlines that the PMG [Postmaster General (department)] supplied. For some reason, we had to have a popular program on the air called

12:30 Stuart the Suit Specialist. It was Ed Tyrell’s orchestra and it was the biggest orchestra in Brisbane at the Regent Theatre. We would relay that on a Saturday night, from an empty theatre, to all these places up as far as Townsville. There were about six or seven radio stations involved. It was the biggest on line one we had in commercial radio in Brisbane. We had a boat there called the SS Cooper from World War I. I think it was a minelayer and it was in 1912 that it was launched. They were going to have this

13:00 Christmas show on the Cooper as we went out into Moreton Bay in Brisbane. The trouble was that we couldn’t do land lines so this amateur radio operator loaned us his five metre radio strength transmitter. We had a look at it with a great amount of trepidation. It was an amateur and a terrible-looking thing. Anyway the manager said, “We’re going to do our Christmas broadcast from there.” We set it up and I was to pick it up on a

13:30 wireless receiver as the SS Cooper went along the Brisbane River out there. I would pick up the band and the fourteen-piece orchestra and it would be relayed to the studio. I was sitting on top of the Canning Hill Abattoir, the refrigeration room in the abattoir. That was where the abattoir was in Brisbane those days. It was so cold. I had to climb up there on a ladder because I couldn’t get into the building and sit on the top there

14:00 with this thing. I couldn’t pick it up. There was nothing coming. I could hear the band coming and see the Cooper go past with all the band. They were all in their monkey suits and there were women dancing there. The Lord Mayor was there of Brisbane and our manager was there. The technician couldn’t get it going there. We had no way of talking to each other you see so I could either pick it up or I didn’t. Of course it went past me and there was

14:30 no pick up from the SS Cooper. Anyway, the technician was an Irishman and he had a bit of a temper. He was a hell of a nice character. His name was Cyril Morgan. He picked up the transmitter and he went past the dancers and he threw it over the edge of the boat. He was that angry. He didn’t tell the orchestra leader, Ed Tyrrell, or the manager that he wasn’t on the air. Later on he did. I’ll never forget that incident.

15:00 **Sorry, am I to understand that radio up until that time had been sent through the Postmaster General’s lines, through the landlines?**

Yes, always, right up until after World War II.

What you were talking about there in 1937 was early experiments with broadcast transmitting in other ways?

Yes. It was the first one we had ever done using a portable transmitter to transmit to the shore and a landline from the shore. I was doing a landline from

15:30 Canning Hill Abattoir to a studio.

Were you under some sort of apprenticeship in terms of being guided or taught?

No. I started an electrical engineering course. There was no radio course in engineering in those days. I became a member of the Institute of Radio Engineers as a graduate; in the early days the actual schooling was by technical colleges still then. It was a correspondence course as well, which wasn’t so good. I started doing an electrical engineer’s

16:00 course which would include radio in it, that is how I did it. I qualified then in 1937 for my examinations in broadcasting like transmitters. In those days you had to produce a birth certificate. I think it was still a British birth certificate. I am Bernard Lewis Harte or I was. I went along and I had passed the exam and they wouldn’t

16:30 issue me with the certificate without my birth certificate. So I went along and got my birth certificate but when I got it there, lo and behold, instead of Bernard Lewis Harte it was Lewis Bernard Harte. I went home to Mum and I said, “Oh, Mum, look at this.” She said, “That stupid father of yours. I sent him down to register your birth and he got full in the pub.” I said, “This is a great time to tell me. I registered to join the Institute of Professional Employees and the Institute of Radio Engineers as Bernard Lewis Harte.”

17:00 Anyway, just after that I was sent away to Wooloowin, a big transmitting station or a relay station there, as a transmitter engineer. In 1938 I went away and in 1939 of course the war broke out. I joined the reserve as a pilot two weeks after. I didn’t have time or think of changing it to Bernard

17:30 Lewis Harte I was Lewis Bernard and that is how I joined up. Even to this day I go into a pub and someone still writes out a cheque to Bernard and they say, “Are you also known as Bernard Harte.” I

said, “Actually, it is my name.” That is one of those anomalies of my life. Even in the war my fellow crewmates used to call me LB for short, Lewis Bernard. They knew all about it, you see. When I was flying during the war it was LB.

18:00 **And your surname is made up; it has got the E tacked on the end of it?**

Yes, that was before I was born. I can deal with that one. We moved around a little bit in those days.

Did you sense that you were part of an industry that was really going to flourish in the future?

Yes. I was very confident. Of course when they brought in soap operas and things like that and of course the

18:30 test matches direct instead of by cable. It was not really a flourishing industry; it was a growing industry. Radio played a bit part in our lifestyle in those days. That’s why to this very day I am trying to encourage the government to take an interest in establishing a national radio museum. John Anderson, the Deputy Prime Minister, evinced interest and said he would refer it to the

19:00 Minister for Communications but I haven’t heard from him. I wrote to several other people, I’m getting on to eighty-six now, hoping that somebody will take it up and establish a national radio museum. People don’t realise, even the old people have forgotten, that it played an enormous part not only in peace but in war. It was more so than television because in those days television wasn’t heard of,

19:30 and television and FM [Frequency Modulation] and that were embellishments really to the communication of radio in my book.

In what ways was it supporting or developing your lifestyle?

It starts with the Morse code for example. I got my first class operating certificate. I could operate in an aeroplane or a wireless station and ship to shore, that was a naval station

20:00 or a coastal radio station as well as a broadcasting station. That first class ticket encompassed everything in wireless or radio in those days, so it was a very important facet of our life in those days not only in entertainment but in communication. In 1926 when the first beam wireless was put up, that really pushed

20:30 everything. A chap called Drake Richmond was an experimenter in England and he was one of the pioneers. He put in the beam wireless station in Australia at the behest of the British and Australian government there. Then that was a direct communication through beam wireless. It had a lot to do with sending telegrams overseas as well as picture gram services.

21:00 They established a picture gram service so it became a big part. It conveyed everything in the way of communication and did away with a lot of the telegraph communication by landline.

Do you think it was in a sense almost a social glue or a bonding for the community that they had a common voice as well as the newspaper but they had something that linked them to other parts of the country?

Yes. A lot of them didn’t realise it at the time

21:30 because you only realise things when something goes wrong, like Flynn who was the forerunner of the Flying Doctor Service. He did a lot for outback communication with establishing a little portable pedal transmitter. It was invented by a chap called Traeger [Alfred Traeger, in 1927] who was an engineer from South Australia. He showed this to The Reverend Doctor Flynn,

22:00 or Flynn of the Inland as he was known. The people in their homes could pedal away at this little generator and as they were going like that the generator is developing voltage and exciting or developing a transmitter and it could transmit and then receive. So they had a pedal wireless for communication to people of the outback. I was still going to this Presbyterian Methodist School when Flynn of the Inland visited us. He showed us this thing.

22:30 I suppose that started me off thinking. Also, a couple of months later Percy Grainger came and played the piano for us at school. He was a well-known composer. Those were just incidents.

Was Australia a fertile ground for innovation in radio?

Yes, and not only that but also pretty well everything. Australia had to improvise because we didn’t have the

23:00 physics and knowledge or the stuff to play with at our command. For example, the telephone was invented in about 1837. Two years later, a chap in Victoria and another in Tasmania were making telephones. There were no factories making telephones here. He did it by a sketch, Bell’s sketch who invented the telephone, Professor Bell in Boston who was actually a

23:30 Scotsman. Two years later they were making them. It was the same here in wireless. A lot of the improvisations went in because Australia was a rural nation. It was mainly a rural nation and we didn’t have the industry and we didn’t have the factories. We had a lot of inventive people. One of the first

powered aeroplanes was put together by two brothers, the Duigan brothers, in Victoria. They were farmers. They used a lot of

24:00 fencing wire and that to put this first powered aeroplane together. I know Houdini did one too but they made it themselves and put an engine in it. By coincidence, the skipper of one of the Cats [Catalinas] I was flying in was Terry Duigan, their nephew. I hope he is still alive today and living in Victoria, Terry. He had a stroke. Duigan they were. They made that on a plan that the Wright Brothers had. The Kittyhawk when they first built it in Australia.

24:30 Australia was an improvising nation. When I said we made our own batteries and our piddle batteries, we made those too. Naturally we could have got them but we didn't have the money anyway. We did that and it was all improvisation in those days in Australia. We are a very, very inventive nation and we should be very proud of that. That came about because we had to do things. You had to. You couldn't

25:00 buy.

In the mid '30s when you were working in commercial radio, was commercial radio or the government radio more influential in the development of radio?

I'm saying the government initially, yes. Then when plays came in and soap operas later on commercial radio had a greater part in the development or furthering of the radio.

25:30 **What do you think the government saw in it? What was the government's interest in developing radio as a technology?**

Well, it was happening overseas. I might mention the ABC later on they had the first recording machine. It wasn't a tape recorder it was a wire recorder called the latvaphone. They imported that. They were innovative people the ABC, but they were restricted because of government policy and

26:00 bureaucratic bungling in many respects. The commercial radio rushed ahead and they had to vie with each other to make a living you see. So the commercial radios went ahead and got the listeners as well because

26:30 soap operas were developed and they made recordings here too. It was the work of recording that developed commercial radio a lot. Gramophone records weren't made here at first, they were imported from England and the United States. The Brunswick Records and His Master's Voice came in later on of course. They didn't have any factories here at first but they brought in presses to press and that was to develop and

27:00 then sell the records. Later on, the Columbia Record Company established a factory at Homebush in Sydney and they made recordings. Dawson [Peter Dawson, Australian baritone], the singer, he used to record there. Melba [Dame Nellie Melba, Australian prima donna] I think made one. No she didn't, she didn't make one there. Dawson was one of them and several of the well-known singers started recording there and later on orchestras were

27:30 recorded. Even Don Bradman [Australian cricketer], they wanted him to make a recording there. All he wanted to do was play the piano and they wanted him to talk about his career. I came across one of the chaps who worked in the early presses of the Brunswick Records in 1925. He told me all about the people who were making records in this country. Later on I started experimenting with making recordings myself and I built my own

28:00 recording machine later on. It was before tape recorders and disc recorders making the discs. I had quite a lot to do with it.

Who were the principal advertisers in the mid '30s?

Actually the principal advertising was controlled by JWT Advertising Agency and George Patterson. The principal advertisers were a lot of pharmaceutical companies mainly and breakfast people like the Seventh Day Adventist people like Sanitarium.

28:30 There were people like that. I can't remember too many of them at this stage. There was Heinz; they were an early advertiser as well. Quite a lot of the overseas companies advertised here because we followed the American idea.

Advertising by the radio or

29:00 **advertising and marketing was an emerging art form itself at the time?**

Yes. These advertising agencies were becoming big companies, like JWT was American. Clemenger was Australian and George Patterson then was Australian. There were about four of them and they controlled most of the advertising in press and on the radio. This was before television.

I want to ask you about what was probably one of the big moments in radio at that time,

29:30 **which was September the 3rd, 1939? Could you recall that event for me?**

What happened? I was in broadcasting still of course in 1939. I was staying at a boarding house in Kingaroy. On a Sunday sometimes I would be invited down to some people called Burns. He was a World

War I digger and he was a senior linesman for the PMG. He was a telephone linesman. He had two lovely

30:00 daughters. At any rate I used to have a motorcar called the Austin 7. It was a baby Austin and I gave it the name 'Egbert' because it never seemed to work very well. My mother bought it for me for seventy pounds. I had it in Kingaroy and the boarding house people used to chiack [tease] me. I used to call it Egbert and they called me Egbert then.

30:30 I was known around Kingaroy in those days as Egbert and then for short 'Eggie'. I will never forget when I went away to the war one of the chaps wrote on the flyleaf of a book of poems by Henry Lawson, "To Eggie." I was up there on a Sunday night when war was declared and Prime Minister Menzies came on. I was listening to it and we had an open fire. Claude Burns

31:00 was standing there to get warm. It was very cold up there in Kingaroy. He prophesised what was going to happen being a World War I digger. I said, "Good night" and I went out and I couldn't start my car. The battery was flat. I wrote a story called When the War was Declared My Battery Went Flat. I went around to the boarding house and scratched around to get rid of the fleas again. This boarding house lady, she was a beaut, I used to have a room on the

31:30 back veranda. When I was away at the transmitting station, she let the dogs dance on my bed. When I would come home, the fleas were awful. I had a problem there with her so I was pleased in a way when I went away to the war because I got rid of the fleas.

You couldn't have hooked yourself up a piddle battery for your car?

No, that wouldn't have been good enough for those days.

32:00 So that was Egbert and I was Egbert – that was Egbert Mark 1 and Egbert Mark 2 and I was known as Eggie during the war.

What was your personal feeling and response to the fact that Australia was at war?

I wanted to join up before it was over. I used to worry. Imagine me out in the bush there with no one around me and no cities or anything to talk with people about what was going to happen. I got worried that the war would be over before I joined up you see. So three weeks after September the

32:30 2nd I think it was, I managed to get a flight down on an aeroplane to Brisbane and I joined the reserves as a cadet pilot. I didn't go away as a cadet pilot because I got sick of waiting. I went away as something else. I was scared that the war was going to finish before I joined up.

It sounds like you were pleased that war had broken out?

No, not at all but I just worried that I should join up and it will be

33:00 over before I get a chance and what will people think about me. That is what it was all about really I suppose. I was in a protected profession being in broadcasting and an engineer too.

Had you been aware of the developing political situation in Europe?

Not a great deal.

Do you think you had much of a sense of what it meant to be at war?

Yes. In World War II, yes we knew what was happening with the Germans but nothing with the

33:30 Japanese it is strange to say. Later on before the Japanese came into it, we picked up an American in Brisbane. We flew to Australia from the island to pick up an American who had come out to Australia to warn the Australian Government about the menace of the Japanese. When we were flying back, we had to fly him to Tahiti. We were very happy about that because we could imagine

34:00 ourselves cavorting on the beach with bare-bosomed ladies on the beaches of Tahiti. We only got half way there and then Pearl Harbour was attacked. We flew him to Fiji and he went back to Washington then. That was the first inkling really that Australia knew what was happening when this fellow came out.

Do you think you personally had a sense of the gravity of the situation for Australia and for the

34:30 **young men of your generation when war broke out?**

Yes. It was the Empire. It had to be the Empire and we were part of the Empire.

What became of your German friend? You had a good German friend through the 1930s?

I don't know. I have no idea. He was Australian but his father was a German engineer. I don't know what happened to

35:00 him at all. I went away you see and I didn't come back until well after World War II. I went down to live in Sydney and Port Macquarie and Kempsey.

So when war broke out you were in Kingaroy and were you there for a few more months before coming down to Brisbane?

Yes, for quite a few months.

Can you tell me about coming down and enlisting in the reserve as a cadet?

I was a stranger of course.

35:30 I just passed the test or whatever it was.

What was the test? Tell me about the process?

I'm sorry, I can't recall it really. I said I wanted to be a pilot and I'd been getting flying lessons up in Kingaroy it is strange to say. They said, "You have qualified as a cadet pilot on the reserve for training." What happened was that the

36:00 input of pilots was very low in Australia here. There was no room for me to be called up. I went back of course and they said, "We can't call you up now, we'll get in touch with you." I stayed another three or four months. The fellow said, "You could join up as a Wireless Corps cadet, a radio operator and you can get in that way and change when you get in." They told that to a lot of people but it was a lot of furphy [rumour, in this case untrue]. I went down and got

36:30 caught and it took me a while to get into aircrew.

How were you getting flying lessons up in Kingaroy? Tell me about that.

I was just learning to fly. There was a professional pilot up there. It was only a paddock by the way. He would come into Kingaroy but where he came from I don't know. It was probably Brisbane. I would have a few lessons there and I was going to get my pilot's license.

What sort of aircraft did he have?

It was an open cockpit. It was a

37:00 little Moth aeroplane.

Were you paying for lessons?

Yes. I had to pay that out of my wages, yes. I just about qualified and then I got called up and I went away.

Was being a radio engineer paying quite well?

No, nothing really paid a great deal. Even though I was qualified in broadcasting in those days, once I turned twenty-one up there even then they would think of getting rid of me to put

37:30 somebody junior on but you couldn't get anybody junior who was qualified you see. That was happening even then.

Do you recall where you went to enlist in Brisbane?

It was at St. Paul's Terrace I think. I went away to Melbourne then.

Was it always going to be the air force for you? Did you consider the army or the navy?

No. It was the air force.

Do you think that was the influence of seeing Kingsford Smith?

I suppose so, yes.

38:00 Yes, you are quite right, it probably would have been.

Was there a certain prestige about the pilots at that stage?

There was in those days, yes. I well remember them. They were a bit snooty and they looked down their nose at anybody who wasn't a pilot or aircrew in those days. That went right through the air force during the war years by the way. Even my friend down in Port Macquarie to this day, he was

38:30 dumped out of the air force because he got caught low flying. He was an instructor. He still looked down his nose at me and I was a staff officer. I went up the ranks not only in flying but I did one of the first staff schools in the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]. He said, "You're just a wop." I was flying with the squadron and I was a wop. He changed. He had a stroke but he is a

39:00 great friend of mine now.

So you were a cadet pilot on the reserve list?

Yes.

Did you return up to Kingaroy or did you stay in Brisbane for that time?

I went straight back to work. There were only two of us, the chief engineer and myself. He was a World War I wireless operator in submarines. He was a Scotchman. We were the only two there on this

39:30 transmitting station and we were great friends. I went back there and I got called up eventually. I went back after the war. I forgot. They tried to get me out of the show you see and I went back as chief engineer. He'd gone on then from this radio station. I left then and I went down to help installing a new transmitter at 2UW in Sydney at Homebush Bay.

You returned to

40:00 **Kingaroy and then did you have to make a separate application to become a wireless cadet trainee?**

No.

They sent you a letter offering you that position?

When I went back after the war as chief engineer?

Sorry, I'm just trying to get a sense of before the war and you are on the reserve list as a pilot and then did you decide that you couldn't wait and you were going to be a wireless cadet so you made a separate application?

40:30 No. They just sent me down.

They wrote and asked you or you asked?

They said to me, "We can put you in now if you come down as a wireless trainee." Instead of going ahead and having the knowledge where the others didn't of course, I went back a course. I got mumps and I spent about a month in hospital at the showground in Melbourne, which was converted into a hospital.

41:00 It was a terrible place.

So once you'd agreed, you were sent to Point Cook is that right for your basic training?

Yes.

We'll leave it there, Bernard, we're right on the end of a tape.

Tape 3

00:30 **I might just start by asking you about your training at Point Cook, how did you come to go to Melbourne?**

I finished the course at Point Cook and then we were posted.

What was the course at Point Cook?

It was Signals School. We came out in various categories as wireless operators

01:00 or wireless mechanics and things like that.

I just want to get a sense of the training?

The training was rather intensive because it was pre-war training. It was very intensive and quite a lot of people didn't get it. We were using old equipment compared to what the Americans used later on but nevertheless I must say the training and the discipline was very strong in those days. After that we finished the course,

01:30 then we got our postings through. Mine was to Cootamundra at first and that was a navigator school to train navigators. I would be what they called a staff wireless operator. In other words, in the Anson aeroplane – it was a light bomber and they were used to train the navigators – there would be a pilot, a trainee navigator and a wireless operator and I would be the

02:00 wireless operator flying on those things at the Cootamundra school. There were two schools of navigation I think in those days in the RAAF. So I was only there for a few months and then I was posted to a Catalina [Patrol Bomber Y (PBY) Catalina flying boat (Y means made by the Consolidated Aircraft Company in America)] training place. It was mainly because I had some background knowledge of radio. The reason for that was that those who were chosen had to realise that they would probably live on the flying boats

02:30 too for anything up to a day or two.

Can I just stop you because for the archive we really need to get more detail about your training and stuff? Is it okay if we go back to Point Cook and how many months did you stay there and what sort of things did you learn and obviously you would have known more than some people?

03:00 Yes. It was at Point Cook when we finished the course and training started at Melbourne Technical College. We were boarded out in Melbourne and then went out to Point Cook and stayed there of course. We had to go through the discipline side of the RAAF really as much as teaching wireless. We had a flying Douglas [Douglas DC-3 transport aircraft], a flying radio school. About a half of a dozen of us would

03:30 get up and operate these transmitters. We had to know how they functioned and also the radio sets as well. Also more important was the operational procedure during war.

What was that?

Morse code. We had to know and we were taught Morse code but fortunately I was using it up there in the radio station before so it wasn't a big problem for me. We had to get up to so many words a minute in Morse code and we would have

04:00 sessions where we were communicating with each other as an exercise, then we would get up in the aeroplane and we would communicate with the ground by Morse code. It was part of our training. The procedure of course was the wartime air force procedure and what you could do and what you couldn't do, like keeping radio silence and so forth. That was part of the procedure.

What sort of training like when you were in the air sending messages back and forth,

04:30 **how high were you flying when you were sending morse code?**

A little over about two thousand [feet] at the most. We were just flying around the Point Cook school there in Douglases.

What planes were they?

The Douglas. They had a long fuselage and you could get a few radio sets in there. It was like a flying classroom.

How big were the radio sets that you were using?

05:00 They were not very big up there; the transmitters and the receiver was not quite as big.

Do you recall what model they were?

They were 1043 I think. They were British by the way. They weren't made in this country. They were British and they were very old-fashioned and they were brought out. The RAAF didn't have anything there to speak of. Later on AWA [Amalgamated Wireless Australasia] started

05:30 manufacturing transmitters and receivers for aeroplanes in war; that was called AT5AR8. They were manufactured by AWA and installed later on but not until 1941. So we still used the old British transmitting and receiving equipment.

How reliable was it?

It was fairly reliable. It was built like a battleship.

06:00 It wasn't very efficient. It wouldn't get very far and it was very difficult to manoeuvre.

I was just wondering what the regular disciplinary change was for you apart from the wireless stuff. What was the general training that you got from the RAAF?

Survival mainly. If we went into the water how we would

06:30 survive. The emphasis was on procedure by Morse code. There was no voice or anything; the emphasis was on that. It was very important because if you made a mistake there you could give the information to the enemy. That was very, very important and more so than anything else.

What was the speed that you had to do?

07:00 It was up to about eighteen words or twenty-five words per minute was the ultimate. When I did my first class ticket, I had to do twenty-five words per minute. If you got to between eighteen and twenty that was okay for the RAAF.

What was the most difficult part about training?

I can't say there was any great difficulty

07:30 but it was monotonous in one respect and it dragged out a lot.

How long was it before you left?

I was at Point Cook about three months and three months in town.

From Point Cook where did you go then?

From there I was sent to the Navigation School at Cootamundra where they were training navigators and, of

08:00 course, you had to have a staff wireless operator in the plane. I was the staff wireless operator in the plane, which was an Avro Anson light bomber. That was actually the plane they were trained on or one of them. I would go on those trips on the navigation exercises as a staff operator. That gave me a great deal of aircrew experience.

Can you talk me through the aircrew of an Avro Anson and one of those navigation exercises and what was involved in them?

08:30 I can't talk about the navigation exercise.

But what you were doing?

I was communicating with the ground if necessary. We had to still observe radio silence mainly but it was ground-to-air and air-to-ground was my job.

How many people were in the crew?

Only the pilot I think and the navigator and myself.

09:00 **What was your experience of flying in the Ansons and what type of aircraft were they?**

They were called a light bomber and pre-war they were. They were made by the De Havilland Company in England and later assembled out here in Australia. They were not used for action during the war that I can recall. The plane that followed them was the Hudson [bomber] from

09:30 America and that was used in the early stages of the Pacific War anyway.

What else can you tell me about that time?

Not a great deal. My activity really began when I was posted from Cootamundra to a flying boat base to train in aircrew on Catalinas. Also we had to

10:00 train as mariners as well. In other words we did a course to be a mariner in case we were out at sea and we went down and we had to sail a boat and row a boat and learn navigation as well. So we combined aircrew exercise in flying boats at Rathmines with a mariner's course. After that we were posted to the

10:30 squadrons up in New Guinea.

So where did you do your air gunner's training?

That was at Rathmines there. That was part of the aircrew training to be a gunner. We were called then not wireless operators but WTOP (Air), Wireless Telegraphy Operators, and

11:00 Air in brackets was because some of them were ground operators and some of them were air operators. We were virtually ground staff and we got five shillings for each time we went up in the air. We were WTOP (Air) and we were not called wireless operators until later on. We were given no rank at all. What happened of course was we joined up too early, in other words. While we were training or being sent out

11:30 to these squadrons, the Empire Air Scheme was formed and operated in Rhodesia and Canada initially and later out here. So, young fellows going into aircrew went into the Empire Air Scheme. They wore little white things on their caps. We were already in the air force so we were actually operating and we were members of the Citizens' Air Force, the RAAF not the Empire

12:00 Air Scheme. The RAAF had at the time one squadron overseas when World War II started and that was 10 Squadron. It was a Sunderland [seagoing aircraft] Squadron and they had trained on flying boats. When the war started, the British Government asked the Australian Government if they could keep the squadron to participate in the war over there. The government agreed. So we only had that one squadron Number 10. Number 9 was formed out here and that was at

12:30 a little old-fashioned place and it was attached to some of our battleships. Then Number 11 had already been formed and that was a composite squadron of Qantas planes or Sunderlands that were seconded to the RAAF, some of the RAAF Walrus [early amphibious bi-plane] planes, and then the flying boats, the Catalinas, making up 20 Squadron.

Were you disappointed that you didn't get into

13:00 **the Empire Air Scheme?**

Yes we were. We were merely LACs, leading aircraftsmen, and that is the second-lowest rank you can have. We had already been flying in the Pacific before the Japs [Japanese] came in there. When the Japs came in we lost a couple of our crews, so one of our chaps elected to be paraded to one of the members

of the Air Board that we were still

13:30 not aircrew categorised and yet we were flying as aircrew and only LACs, and yet they were coming in on the Empire Air Scheme and they were becoming sergeants or commissioned officers off a course. The course by the way was much inferior to ours. Also, we didn't have a wing or a half-wing. What we did have was on our shoulder here and it was a cluster of sparks to show we were signallers. That went through and the Air Board then gave us the

14:00 rank of sergeant and also a half-wing. That is how we actually were recognised and it wasn't until the Japs were already in the war. We had been flying then in the South Pacific and looking for German predators like submarines or surface predators. They were coming down here at the time. In fact they torpedoed some of our ships, the Germans, and not many people are aware of that. One of them was carrying

14:30 recruits from the Empire Air Scheme to Canada. Our job was to look for these Germans there in 1941.

Just before we get into that can you just go back to your training with the Catalinas, what was your first impression of the Catalinas?

They were rather weird. You stepped on to this thing on the water. We were told, in

15:00 training, that we had to learn to cook too because there was a hot plate in the thing. There was a cupboard where we could put food and we were told that we could be away from the base for anything up to a week. We had to live on it and it was our home. We had to get used to fitting in there and to use it as our home away from home so to speak. Then at the time, America was not at the war when we were getting the Catalinas, so they had to come out as

15:30 civilian aeroplanes. They were brought out; most of them were Qantas pilots who had to come out in mufti [civilian clothes], not in uniform. Some of our RAAF chaps went out to pick them up but they had to be in civilian clothes. They had to come out with no armaments so when we got them there were no armaments at all. When we were training, all the RAAF could dig up in the way of armaments were Lewis guns [light machine gun]

16:00 made in Belgium in 1917. These Lewis guns were well out of date. So our initial Catalinas were equipped with Lewis guns because America couldn't bring any of their guns out because they weren't at war. We had to equip them there where we trained with the flying boats at Rathmines. When we were away, we were trained on these Lewis guns and the stoppages and that and how to deal with them and all that kind of stuff. We were

16:30 appalled that we were using these World War I guns in our brand new flying boats. Of course, we found out later on how disastrous it was and I was involved in that.

How hard were those guns to operate?

They were a circular magazine on top and they weren't built for the tropics to start with and they were so slow operating and they weren't very efficient. You would press the button and you'd have

17:00 a stoppage probably. That was called a number one stoppage. If you pressed it again you might get a number two and something else jammed and number three was the final one. They were pretty well useless to us. Later on when the Japs were in and they were well and truly at war with us, we were issued with Vickers GO guns. GO stands for Gas Operated. They were a little bit better and were developed in the 1920s.

How many crew were there on a Catalina?

17:30 It varied. It was generally up to about eight but we operated with about seven.

What positions did the aircrew make up?

There was the pilot and his assistant, the captain and his deputy. There were two wireless operators and that is four. There was a flight engineer and he had an assistant because he had to have a sleep. That is six to start with.

18:00 There was a tail gunner up in the back and he was an armourer or a rigger.

There was only one gunner, was there only one gun?

No, there were several. There was first of all the bow gun, which was in the front of the plane where the bow is. There were blisters, which were one on each side, and the tail gun was the other one.

18:30 **Why did you have two wireless operators?**

We would be in the air for anything up to twenty-one hours and you had to have shifts to get through it and particularly when you were away from the base for a while. It was the same with the flight engineer. He is sitting up there and he has to have a sleep. He'd go and have a sleep and be replaced and come back again when we were still in the air.

19:00 It was up to twenty-one hours. Later on navigators were brought in as an addition to the crew.

Did you say before that you had to have mariner's skills?

Yes. That was part of our training on Catalinas.

What was that training?

That involved working a boat and rowing in a dinghy and sailing a boat and sailing the Catalina. It was out on the

19:30 water you see and you had to sail it there. It was also using throwing the ropes because when you are in a flying boat you have to tether it to a buoy or drop anchors. It was how to drop the anchors and how to tether it. A drogue is a sleeve, which you can put in the water to slow down the speed of the flying boat. We had to learn all of that.

Can you tell me in a bit more detail how that worked when you slowed down the boat?

20:00 Yes. A drogue was a canvas sleeve and it was conical-shaped with a small hole. You would drop that in the water and as you were going through the water it would tend to slow it down. You would drop two of those in. We did have an anchor, which was made of aluminium in the bow as well, but nothing really slowed it down very much. With a flying boat you could

20:30 reverse propellers so you would use that as a brake as aeroplanes do today and that helped a lot. Generally speaking you just had to rely on your skills in navigation and marine work. The drogues would be thrown over by the blister wireless operators and they would throw them over each side on the instructions of the captain.

21:00 **What was the procedure for taking off on a Catalina? You were tied up to a buoy or whatever and then what was the procedure?**

You would be tied up to a buoy and that was part of the mariner's training we had to do. You would release that and start the engines, the flight engineer would. You would then taxi probably out to the sea. You would be in a safe haven and then in the open sea to take off you see.

21:30 When you take off you have to give it an enormous amount of boost because a flying boat, as distinct from a land plane, is sucked by the water to stop it taking off. The water actually sucks it like a suction valve. You have to get an enormous amount of speed up to get out and that is why they had to get out into the open sea. They had to get air underneath the hull because the air would act as buoyancy to

22:00 take off. When you take off instead of going up like that you have to keep your nose down because if you haven't got sufficient speed when you are up the aeroplane would tend to fall back on the water. You would give it more boost and it would fly up again and it didn't have enough speed. It would be back, back, back like a kangaroo jumping until eventually you are hitting the little heel called the chine. It would crush and once it

22:30 crushed the water would rush in. You had to be very careful when you took off not to let it fall back but to keep it like that so that the nose would be down and you would get your buoyancy underneath the thing and lift it up that way. That was the object but it didn't always work. When you had a load of bombs, say twelve of them, it was rather difficult because you had all that extra weight. It was an enormous amount and you only had two engines to get off the water. We had twelve

23:00 two hundred and fifty pound bombs and a full load of gas and a crew of seven and we had to get that thing off the water. It took an enormous amount of power.

How big were these Catalinas?

They had a one hundred and four feet wingspan and the length of the actual hull would be about ninety. They were very thin. They had a very thin

23:30 dual hull kept together by struts. It looked a bit frail but they were very strong really. The engines were twin-row wasps and each row had twelve cylinders so it was quite powerful. The Pratt & Whitney's were very powerful engines. The pilots who were there in those days originally were

24:00 pre-war pilots of the RAAF or seconded from Qantas who had a flying boat service to England from Australia. That is what happened.

Were there any accidents in training that you knew about?

The pilot was pretty skilled but there were a few training accidents. There weren't too many.

24:30 When we went up to the war, operational flying in other words, we lost one or two that way in the early crews. Later on when we only had a few aeroplanes, we never had more than two serviceable planes when the Japs were in the war, we had to do a lot of flying and we didn't have time to do all the maintenance on them.

25:00 **What was the most dangerous part of flying a Catalina?**

Well, over the ocean when you've got no land in sight there and you are flying through a guba. A guba is a name for a tropical storm. If you went over your target and you were flying over a target for about half an hour and dropping your bombs and then heading for home after that and you run into a

25:30 storm like that you would really cop it. Sometimes you would run into the storm on the way to the target and the same storm on the way back and that was difficult. Sometimes it would take most of the paint of the hull off the flying boat. It was rather severe.

Was taking off more dangerous than landing?

Yes.

You spoke about the taking off procedure. Is there a specific way to land it?

26:00 You had to come in in much the same way. You don't come in like that but you come in very gently like that and as parallel as you possibly can. You had to come in at a spot where fortunately there weren't mountainous seas there. We struck a lot of those mountainous seas and I was involved in them quite a lot.

Is it a noisy plane?

26:30 Yes it is very noisy.

How does that noise impact on you and doing your job?

Actually I get a small disability pension from the noise affecting my hearing. We didn't have any earmuffs at all you see. We had nothing to protect our ears at all. It is only in later life that it has affected me.

27:00 We had no form of protection at all. We did have Mae West's [life jackets] so that when we went into the water we could keep afloat. They called them Mae West's. They were inflatable and they were made of cork. They were like a pair of corsets with a thing around your neck and it would keep you afloat. Also our suitcases we carried were made of

27:30 aluminium and you would close them and they were sealed. You could use them as a raft to keep afloat too if you went down. I went down a few times like that.

Did they train you for that sort of stuff?

That was part of the mariner's course.

Can you tell me a bit more about that course?

Well I can't other than what I've just told you. That is really all there was to it. We had to then use our own sense of that. I remember in Fiji, I think we went down there and I was

28:00 floating around on one of these suitcases, which was only about that big, for a while before I got ashore. No, it was just your own common sense after that.

What else did you wear on the plane? Was it cold up there?

No. We only used to fly at about eight hundred feet before the Japanese came in. We'd be looking for German raiders. We didn't have any parachutes because we didn't need them. When the Japs came in, after a couple of

28:30 weeks we only had two planes serviceable at any one time against the Japanese in Rabaul and those places, we used to get up to about five thousand feet to bomb Simpson Harbour. I was in the first raid on Simpson Harbour. We thought we should have parachutes like other people had in bombers overseas and so forth. I went into Port Moresby stores there to get a parachute and I got one out and I looked at it and it was mildewed. It had been there in storage for

29:00 years probably. We thought it would be safer if we didn't have any parachutes. We conducted our part of the war for the first six months at least without parachutes at all. It was more than that. It was twelve months that we didn't have them.

When you were first posted to the Catalina crew, what was your understanding about what the Catalinas were going to be used for?

We knew they were doing

29:30 reconnaissance work and we knew that they were establishing advanced operational bases in the South Pacific. That came through a government edict in 1939 to establish these bases in the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides, now known as Vanuatu, that is Port Vila, and Noumea in New Caledonia and Rabaul and Kavieng as well. In the Solomon Islands,

30:00 Tulaghi, which was the capital of the Solomon Islands then, but the base was called Gavutu. It was a little island near Tulaghi. They were being established there when we went away in 1941. I went over to the Solomon Islands I think first and then down to Port Vila and operating there. We crashed taking a

load of bombs. It was just like I told you about making sure it

30:30 doesn't fall on the chine. That is what happened to us out on the open sea at Port Vila. We had a load of bombs and we were fuelled up and we were going to bomb Rabaul from Port Vila staging through somewhere. We had too much load. The pilot had only operated on land planes until recently and he didn't like flying boats. So we crashed with that stove and the thing ripped the hull and we were in the water.

31:00 We had an auxiliary power unit, which would pump a bit, but we managed to get it into fairly shallow water at Port Vila. We didn't beach it we just got it to fairly shallow water. Strange to say, a French boat builder came along and said he could fix it for us. The big tail was flapping around and the hull was a bit of a wreck. He built a boat in it, the skeleton of an

31:30 upturned boat. He laid a keel right along the bulkhead doors and put struts out just like an upturned boat. By doing that it kept the hull rigid and we used hessian soaked in bitumen to wrap around the hull to keep the water out. Then more struts and that kept the tail,

32:00 it was a huge tail, from wobbling. We could work trimming tabs or anything like that to adjust it with but we tried it out to see if it would fly. Three of us went up and it worked. We filled it up with fuel and then the four of us sat in it and we flew it to Australia direct. Then we ran into a guba, a tropical storm, but the thing held together. We had to stand up most of the way because we couldn't sit down with all these little struts. I operated the radio set

32:30 there. We flew her direct I think to Rathmines or Rose Bay. The Qantas base was there and they did a lot of our repairs.

So when you came down how far from land were you?

We would have been about five miles out from land in the open sea.

You were taking water in and what did you do?

The engine was still working and we revved the engine up and just went along like a

33:00 ski. The water was rushing in but we just got enough time and enough boost to get us in to shallow water from the open sea. The water then rushed in as soon as we stopped but it was shallow there and we got out. That was my first time there. I was in several crashes.

Can you remember the first time you were in a Catalina and it had all its bombs on it, could you feel the difference in the aircraft?

33:30 Yes. You could always feel that. It took so much to get it off the water.

Can you describe the difference in the feeling between the two?

You could because the buoyancy of the flying boat was a lot better without the bombs. You could tell because the power wasn't so great. The twelve two hundred and fifty pound bombs weigh quite a lot and there were only two engines to get it off the water.

34:00 When the Americans came into the war and Pearl Harbour fell, the flying boats were ferried out from San Diego where they were made and they were armed you see. They came over with beautiful Browning guns, 0.5s [Browning 0.50 inch calibre machine gun]. It was a lovely war for us then with these beautiful Browning American guns. They were much better for us. We used those, or at least I did, until we left the Catalinas.

34:30 **Did you enjoy working on the Catalinas?**

Yes. We were very close together, very much so. The chief flight engineer and myself were on every operation together right from mid-1941 right through to 1943. We did everything together. It was a sad part of my life and I get nightmares from it. In March 1943, the government or

35:00 Air Board decided we should have a break because we were the early birds. We were posted away from operations and we were then operating out of Cairns. We had moved down from Port Moresby. My posting came through I think one day before Jack Dewhurst, my associate, and I went on my way by train or by aeroplane down south to Sydney. The CO [Commanding Officer] of the squadron,

35:30 Wing Commander Frank Chapman, he wanted to go out and do a job with some new incendiaries. He wanted to try them out. So he scratched a crew together to go out and that included the flight engineer. When they were out passing Gasmata in the south of Rabaul, New Britain Island, there was a hot Japanese base there. These incendiaries caught alight in the plane. The plane

36:00 went down in flames on the water not far from this Japanese base. The Japs came out and took them in. They took them in and decapitated them. They just beheaded them. Their remains are in the Rabaul cemetery up there now. I get a few nightmares on that one. I asked the government to give me some disability pension for it but they said it couldn't have been war-caused. What happens with aircrew is that it comes back in

36:30 later life because you are so involved with bringing up children and marriages and work and then when you've got less time then things manifest themselves. That is what happened with me. Anyway, I haven't been successful. That was a rather sad ending. We had been on a sticky operation in 1942 and 1943 bringing out some Australian commandos or an independent force, I'm not too sure, from Timor, which is now East Timor, but it was

37:00 Portuguese Timor occupied by the Japs. The Australians were over there operating in the jungle there and some of them were sick and wounded. We were sent over from Cairns to bring them out.

Was that just one Catalina plane?

Only one, yes. So we were sent over and bringing the Catalina down in the surf – we found where they were – was difficult.

37:30 You are bringing the flying boat down on the edge of rolling breakers, which means it will be washed onto the beach if you don't watch it. We had to take extra drogues and an extra anchor and every now and again start the engine to stop it going to shore. It was left to two of us. We took a line and a rope of over one hundred feet. It was about a three hundred foot long rope from the

38:00 Catalina to a coconut tree on the beach and using a rubber dinghy like this – we did it in turns – I would go first and we would work our way onto the beach with some supplies for those who were staying there and going on to Dutch Timor, that was the other half of Timor. We would take some supplies wrapped in a mackintosh and food and things like that. I would get right to the edge of the surf there near the

38:30 beach and my dinghy would be tossed on the beach and so would I because the wave would upturn it. So they grabbed me before I was sucked back into the surf and take the stuff. Then one Australian soldier would get into the rubber dinghy with me and away we'd go. Then the other chap would do it. We did this all night from dusk until three a.m. in the morning.

39:00 We got thirteen wounded Australian commandos on our flying boat. We had to be off before dawn because the Japanese would do a sweep with Zeros, that is their fighter planes, down the coast every morning. We were told we had to get off before they came down because we were sitting ducks. We had no armament either you see. As it

39:30 was, we couldn't get off the water. We could only get one engine going.

I might just stop you there because this tape is about to run out.

Tape 4

00:32 **You were just trying to start the engine?**

So we got the thirteen in. Some of them were wounded and some of them were sick. We had to get off the water as I explained to you a little while ago. We could only get one engine going and the flight engineer panicked a bit and he maintained it was something to do with the plugs. We only had a

01:00 scratch [crew] because there were only four of us on the plane and it was pretty full I think. He got me to change a row of plugs. Here we are bouncing around on the surf in enemy territory and it was now daylight. It wasn't that at all.

Where were the plugs on the Catalina?

On the engines. You had to get outside to do it. Anyway, I had a

01:30 little knowledge of the electrical side of the flying boats. I wasn't that sure but strange to say one of the grounds staff a few days before had told me about a weakness in the starter motor, the solenoid, and that they burned out. In the end I got up there on the main plane

02:00 and here we were in enemy territory and I decided to try to change over the solenoids from the good engine to the bad engine. That is a bit complicated so I won't worry you about it.

It is good for the archive too?

Yes but I can't remember it completely what happened. Anyway, I changed this over myself on the top of the flying boat. We got the engine going again by mechanical means.

02:30 What I am getting at really is that we could get one engine going and the other engine wouldn't go electrically because this solenoid had burned out. I was satisfied that it was burned out. It meant starting this big engine by hand. It was just like the crank handle of an old motorcar except the handle was a longer one because you had to get down into the bowels of the engine. There was a long rod there

03:00 and to turn this over by what they call an inertia start with one person was almost impossible. So I

enlisted the officer in charge of the contingent, a captain I think he was. He came up and he gave me a hand like this and we couldn't get it going. I well remember to this day the skipper, Flight Lieutenant Thurston. He was up in the

03:30 pilot's cabin there and he was wringing his hands. He said, "Bernie." Here we were in enemy territory and we could only get one engine going and we couldn't get off and we were sitting ducks. He said, "Bernie, this is the unhappiest day of my life." I'll never forget him saying it. He was grinning his head off when he said it and really laughing. Here we were in enemy territory and he was grinning his head off. He had had a lot of experience in the Mediterranean with 10 Squadron before coming out. I was with him and I flew with him every time and every

04:00 operation with him when he came out from England. He was a wonderful chap. Anyway, he died later in Singapore. He went back to the cabin. They were depending on me entirely because there was only one skipper if I remember rightly. That's right. There were only four of us. I kept going and I had just about done it and the captain came up again and we gave it one big burst eventually and

04:30 we got it going. It was what they called an inertia start. The flywheel starts going like that. You get this flywheel going quickly, it is released and that starts the engine. We got a burst then. I was still on top of the main plane and I had to get off in a hurry because the engine started and Thurston was in such a hurry to get off he forgot I was still there. He started taxiing the plane straight out to the open

05:00 sea and started to give it revs [revolutions, accelerating it] and boosts and here was I still on top. So, the captain there saw what was happening and he opened the blister. There was a little handle on the main plane that the maintenance people used to climb up. So I grabbed that otherwise I would have been blown off. Thurston was taxiing to take off. The captain grabbed my feet and I remember that. I was hanging over the main plane and gradually with some help of the other soldiers they

05:30 eased me back into the flying boat through the blister. I just got off in time and by that time Thurston was ready to go into the air. I will never forget that.

Did a big cheer go up when the engine started?

I don't think so. They were pretty well buggered the soldiers. They had had it. We got up into the air and

06:00 I went back to the radio op [operator] desk to send a signal that we were airborne. I could hardly work my key with my hand after doing this, the nerve in my arm was jumping all the time and I couldn't settle my hand down to operate a Morse code key for a while. It took me a while and then they got the message and they sent a Hudson out to escort us in. That was in July 1942. We had something similar in 1943.

06:30 **Can I just ask; they sent a Hudson out?**

Yes, to escort us back in to Darwin. They sent it out from Darwin. Strange to say I went back to near that spot two years later when I had just got my appointment as a staff officer. I said to the RAAF Headquarters, "I have been out of operations for a year or two so I'd better get some practice. Will you send me up?" So they sent me up to a

07:00 huge field in the Northern Territory. I went as a supernumerary on a B25 and that is a Mitchell Bomber, and a supernumerary means you go as an extra crew member. I went over and it was near the same spot and we were to bomb a gun emplacement that the Japs had there. Three B25s went over and one was shot down. In that was Bernie Wiszneski who was a friend of mine too.

07:30 Anyway, we came back. The CO was worried because he thought I was with Bernie Wiszneski in the other one. I hadn't signed the EE77, which was the document you have got to sign before you leave. Anyway Bernie's body was never recovered at all. It just disappeared. I found a plaque to him in the Adelaide War Cemetery just a few years ago when I went up there.

08:00 The next big problem we had in the Catalina in 1943 was we were sent from Port Moresby I think to Wittermere. Mere I think is Dutch for a lake vessel and it was in Dutch New Guinea right up in the highlands to bring out some Javanese, or Indonesians now, missionaries. These missionaries had got out of Java and how they got to this part of Dutch New Guinea I don't know.

08:30 They were with a tribe of pygmies and living with them there and we had to go and rescue them and bring them back. We had no difficulty finding the place but we had to go through a staging place called Merauke, which is at the bottom end of Dutch New Guinea. It is the worst place that I've ever been into. There was a sea of yellow scum all over the bay because the tide doesn't get out and it smells and that. At any rate we stayed there the night and then we flew up

09:00 into the highlands of Dutch New Guinea and you could see the snow-capped peaks by the way. They get up to thirteen thousand feet you know. We were up maybe five or six [thousand feet] there and we found the lake, which was a lake on a volcano. We touched down there and we went ashore.

Was that a smooth landing?

Yes getting down it was a very smooth lake and it was like glass. Getting down was not the difficulty it was getting up and away from it that was the worst. We touched down and a

09:30 canoe came out and we saw these pygmies there. The pygmies are only little and that high and they had big bows and arrows. The only clothes they had on at all was a gourd. A gourd is a hollow shell in which you insert the penis. That is all they had and they had it tied around here and they had like a feather duster on top of the gourd. I suddenly remembered a story by Jack Hides who was a patrol officer in New Guinea in the 1930s. He said he came across a tribe of pygmies who had

10:00 tails. That was a furphy. He maintained it wasn't but we found them and that was the same tribe. They had a tail all right but it was attached to a belt through them. They wore this tail and through that the gourd and that is all the men had. They looked harmless but they were very war-like and it took a while for them to settle down and accept us. So we went ashore and we got I think about six or seven of these Javanese or it might have been more.

How did they

10:30 **react when they first saw you?**

They didn't like us at all but then we gave them trinkets. We gave them little presents and it was different all together and they brought their women out then. They became really friendly with us and I've got photographs but not good photographs. We put these people in and the big problem was then getting the flying boat off the water. Don't forget it was the volcano. It was a lake in a volcano and it was like glass. That is even worse than an open

11:00 sea because the glass or the sea or the water is sucking the boat and it is like a suction. To get a flying boat in the air you have got to get air under the hull. There was no way we could get it. Eventually we put half of them back on the shore again and left them there. We ended up with only about four or five of them on the flying boat. We had to lighten the load so we took them ashore. Then we stirred up the lake like that and

11:30 we got a couple of ripples and eventually we got off the water, having in mind it was a volcano and the edge of the volcano was all around and we had to go over that. Boy that took some doing getting just over the top of the edge of the volcano and then we flew to Merauke again and then back to Port Moresby where we took them in those days. That was quite another adventure for us that one with the flying boat.

12:00 **Can I just ask a couple of questions? With the pygmies, had they ever seen a Catalina before, a plane of any description?**

No they would see something flying over but not down.

So was there somebody with you who had to try to talk them into getting on board?

We didn't want the pygmies on board. These were the Javanese missionaries. They brought the Javanese out in these canoes to us you see but we went ashore to meet

12:30 everyone, the Javanese and also the pygmies, and they didn't accept us too well until we gave them trinkets. They had big bows and arrows and they were bigger than them. They were only that high. That was our first encounter with pygmies.

Were you a bit nervous?

No, not really. You didn't get time to get too nervous or scared. We were more

13:00 concerned with getting the plane off the water. That was the thing that was in our mind all the time. Getting the plane off the water was number one. It must have been in our skipper's mind too. Getting back to the one we did in Timor, we were called back to Darwin less than a week later to find a Kittyhawk pilot who had gone missing. He had come down somewhere. We flew to a place called Anson Bay and we found him there

13:30 on the beach in his Kittyhawk. What it was, he had been chasing Japs and I think he'd run out of fuel and that was all. He was standing beside his Kittyhawk and two of us went ashore in these rubber duckies [dinghy] and brought him back. We took him in and then he came back the next day with some fuel I think. That pilot, I never got it confirmed, but it was Flying Officer Gorton who became our Prime Minister. I never used that in my story because

14:00 I couldn't get confirmation. He went to 77 Squadron and operated from there. He had his face smashed in beforehand but he was operating out of there. I think I wrote down in my logbook that it was Flying Officer Gorton. Towards the end of his life, he put out a book a couple of years ago of his life. He lost his marbles towards the end of his life, Gorton. I asked his

14:30 manager to find out if he was the chap from 77 Squadron that we rescued. He came back to me and said, "He can't remember. I'm sorry his mind has gone". I never got it confirmed so I couldn't put it in my book that we rescued our future Prime Minister, Flying Officer Gorton.

I was just wondering how you refuelled the Catalinas. Where is the fuel depot?

There were forty-four gallon drums in these little

15:00 places but we didn't refuel there. We refuelled in Merauke and it was in forty-four gallon drums. They had to bring them out in a canoe or a boat or a barge. We had little boats and we would refuel from them mostly.

How long did it take to refuel?

Hours, several hours. We could carry twelve hundred and fifty gallons and it was forty-four gallon drums so that would give you an idea. We would probably have less than

15:30 half in the flying boat so it took a while. We could do it by hand or by electric pump. So when we went to the Solomon Islands, for example, we had a decent depot there and probably I don't know whether we had any tanks in the ground or not. I can't recall that.

Did you ever have any situation where you ran out of fuel?

No. I can't say we did. We always seemed to have enough.

16:00 **I was just wondering if you could talk me through crewing up? Who chooses who will be in the crew for a Catalina and what is the procedure?**

It would be a squadron's CO who would determine that. He was in charge. He was squadron CO and the commanding officer and he would have a couple of offsiders and they would do it. We stayed together,

16:30 Jack Dewhurst and I, and then of course I told you that he was caught and decapitated. I was already in Sydney the day that operation was on. Thurston, the skipper, he left before that. He was sent to Martin Mariner Squadron and that was another flying boat operation, an American flying boat. He was operating in New Guinea doing transport. He had a spot of bother there.

17:00 He was a permanent officer and he left the RAAF about the time the war finished or it might have been just before. He got a job with Qantas and he went in as a second pilot. His first job as a captain was from Australia to England. At Singapore or near there, he got peritonitis and he died. He was a great fellow.

17:30 I lost a lot of my friends in those days.

Did you have different names for the Catalinas that you flew?

No we didn't have that like the Americans. There was A24-10, which was the one that I was in. We would call it A24 and A22. I was in A24-4 to go over to Timor. It was the fourth one made for Australia.

18:00 Then we did another rescue job and this was in the Woodlark Islands [Trobriand Islands]. A B26 had come down in the water on the way back after a raid on the Japs. They got in the water and they got ashore so we had to find them, which we did. We came down and brought them back and strange to say one of the people was a chap called Price who was one of our

18:30 squadron chaps. He had gone over as a navigator. We brought them out and took them to where we had to take them. About fifteen years ago, one of the people we rescued who is still alive, John Hamilton who lives at Maryland in the United States, he came out to Australia to go around to thank each member of our crew that was still alive to thank us for rescuing him and the others. I got to know John

19:00 well and he since them comes out each two years when the Catalina reunions are on to be with me at these reunions. We didn't go this year. I think we may have had the lot now and he may not come out again. He was with me the year before last, staying here with me for a while and down in Tamworth with my son. While I was there, the defence academy [Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA)] in Canberra

19:30 asked me if I would come and lecture to their students on World War II. Strangely enough, it wasn't in their syllabus apparently. My daughter, who was working out of Canberra, arranged for us to get down there and we stayed with her the night. I went down to lecture these students who were navy, army and air force cadets. They were very good types of people and I was very proud of them

20:00 all with the way they behaved. John came down with me so I spoke and then I introduced John and explained how we rescued him and he went on then. They enjoyed it very much indeed. That was only a few years ago. John and I have been in touch since and I will be speaking with him this Sunday. I will see how he is. I don't think he is doing too well.

It sounds like you did a number of rescues, what was the sort of make-up of your

20:30 **operations?**

We were just assigned to do that. The PBY [Catalina] is really a reconnaissance plane for doing surveillance. I was doing work over in New Guinea in the flying boat as a crewmember at a place called Buna. At Buna we observed the Japanese making their first landing on New Guinea soil. They went up to Gona, which is a

21:00 Catholic mission there and they raped a lot of missionary ladies and nuns and so forth. We actually saw them coming ashore. We didn't drop any bombs; we just reported them. That was the first landing that I can recall on New Guinea soil and it was Buna Bay. Later on we went back and we bombed them.

What was it like seeing them there for the first time?

We were fairly high up and

21:30 it was rather eerie. They were just like ants and we couldn't detect anything about them. They were coming ashore in barges there. I had a fair bit to do with the bombing of them later on but never came into contact with them. Even in Buka Passage in the Bay of Buka on the top of Bougainville Island. Bougainville Island by the way is really part of the Solomon Islands and not New Guinea. We were sent out on a mission because we were operating out of Cairns there.

22:00 At one stage we ran out of bombs. We got some beer bottles from the Cairns brewery and put them in crates and we took those on a mission together with other crates of twenty pound bombs. They were only fragmentation bombs. You will probably laugh at throwing beer bottles at the enemy, which we did, but the reason for that was the noise of the

22:30 wind in the throat of a beer bottle at five thousand feet makes a hell of a shriek and it is frightening. If you put a razor blade in the throat of the beer bottle, it was even worse. We threw out, there were only two planes, these beer bottles at about five thousand feet. Then also we had these twenty-pound fragmentation bombs. To fuse those, you had to have a pair of pliers with two nuts and you would throw them. It was just like World War I.

23:00 We didn't expect to kill.

So you threw them out by hand?

Yes, and the beer battles. You couldn't expect to kill many Japs this way but what we were doing it for was, with the help of the hordes of mosquitoes because they were very bad there, we were keeping the Japs out of bed at night. They couldn't get in. Just on dusk when they would be ready to hit the cot along would come a fleet of Flying Fortresses [bomber aircraft], the Americans, and they dropped their bombs on them. They were sitting ducks. So we did that but only for

23:30 two nights and then the bombs arrived. We continued on at a leisurely pace of bombing them.

Can you recall who got the idea for that? Had it been done before?

No. I don't know who got that. All I know is we got them. I don't know who suggested that. I can't tell you that but there were only two planes involved in it. We weren't a squadron or anything like that. It was merely a diversion but we had to keep up the pace to keep them out of bed.

I was just wondering when you first saw the Japanese going to

24:00 **Buna, did the Catalinas have cameras on them to record anything?**

No, we didn't have any cameras.

So what was your procedure to report that back?

We would just go back to base and report it. It only took about one hour to get back to base and then we'd just report it and what we saw. Later on the navigators took cameras but we didn't have them in those days.

Was there a thorough

24:30 **debriefing that happened?**

No. I just gave in my report. The flight engineer and the skipper gave his report but we just got on with the job.

Just talk me through going on an operation. How do you know who is going to be flying and do they brief you before they go about what you have to do?

The flight engineer was in

25:00 charge of the crew. He would get the instructions from the operations room and the skippers about where we were going and he would come down and tell us. We never went near the operations room. It is rather regrettable and we should have been in it but we weren't. We were kept in the dark. The flight engineer knew towards the end where we were going and why. He had to know because he had to arrange the number of bombs to take and so forth.

Why do you think they didn't let the whole crew know?

It was just typical and bureaucratic.

25:30 They just decided, "They needn't know and just send them." We were not given close instruction at all by operations room. None of us were.

Was that a disadvantage as far as doing your job?

Yes I would say it was because it would be nice to know where we were going and why, because then you'd get more enthused with what you were doing.

26:00 **Was there ever an incident where if you had known a bit more information, you would have been able to perform better or pre-empt something?**

No. We had a specific job. There was a target and we had a target and we had so many bombs and we knew how long we had to be there and we had to know what the weather was like so we could escape into the clouds if we were chased by the Japs.

Would you know what the weather was going to be like before you took off?

26:30 We had a fair knowledge but not a thorough knowledge and gubas would come up just like that. In fact, on one occasion I seem to recall we were flying over the ocean one time and when we came back there was an island there. It had come up during the day and just surfaced.

You said that you would be told towards the

27:00 **end what you were doing or where you were going? At what point in the flight did you get informed about what was happening?**

It was just before you went down to the wharf to get on the plane. We would be housed somewhere near a wharf. For example in Cairns, Trinity Inlet was where we had the aeroplanes docked and then we would stay in the hotel. When we got down to the wharf, they would just tell us what was involved.

Can you describe

27:30 **Trinity Inlet to me and how many planes were there?**

There would never be more than about two planes. The others had to be serviced. They had a two hundred and forty hour inspection and so forth and they had to be beached. They were brought up on the beach or whatever it was and they had to put the wheels underneath them and bring them up. They weren't amphibious. Later on in 1943, they brought in amphibious flying boats and you could land on a strip if you like or on the

28:00 water but ours were all water planes. They had an undercarriage and they would wheel it out in the water and then put it underneath and then tow it ashore so the plane would be beached sitting on wheels. Some of them were damaged. I can't remember more than about two planes certainly in the early days that were serviceable at any one time. Later on

28:30 when they brought more in – there were one hundred and sixty-eight Catalina flying boats brought out for the Australian Government all told. Later when they were doing mine laying and I'd gone by then, they probably had more. They were going up to the China Sea almost to Japan.

Do you remember what your first operation was on Catalinas?

No, I can't recall which one it was. It would be before the Japs came in of course

29:00 and it would be going out to do a patrol on reconnaissance work and searching for German ships. It would be somewhere around about Rabaul and around that way because they were really bad around there.

So when you found a German ship how were you communicating back to where it is?

You don't.

29:30 If it was urgent, you would use Morse code but if it isn't urgent you do nothing until you get back to base and give a report. They couldn't get very far from where you were. We didn't come across many German ships; they were mostly our own freighters and some of them were off course so we didn't come across many of them at all so it wasn't really a problem.

So what happened after you finished up with the Catalinas? Why did you want to go and why?

30:00 As I said, the RAAF Headquarters decided that we had been operating from before the Japanese came in right through until 1943 and we should have a break. So I was posted to a Gunnery Leader's School to train as a gunnery leader. The gunnery leader

30:30 was an American idea. In bombing flights, one person would be in charge of the rest of the flight and the gunnery leader would check the firepower and decide what manoeuvres they should do. He would sit up in the main plane and direct operations. He was known as the gunnery leader. I hated guns but I was sent to Gunnery School. It was a difficult one. It was at a place called Cressy in Victoria.

31:00 I got through the course. I don't know how but I became then a gunnery leader. I think I was commissioned by then. Sorry, I'm ahead of myself. When I left Catalinas, I went to Wireless Air Gunner's School at Maryborough in Queensland to teach cadets the theory of wireless and operational procedures. So I

31:30 lectured there for a couple of months at the Wireless Air Gunner's School until my commission came through. As soon as that came through, they sent me on the Gunnery Leader's Course. I never went away really as a gunnery leader. I was crewed up then on a Beaufort [bomber] Squadron to go away as

the gunnery leader and that was at Sale and that was to go away to the Pacific Islands as a gunnery leader. None of the others had had any

32:00 operational experience or any aircrew experience to speak of in operations. I was the only one and I was the old man there.

What was that like being more experienced?

The Beauforts were made here and they were fearful. They were called 'the flying coffin'. They jammed and they weren't very good. I managed to save our crew at one stage. They were all inexperienced including the pilot. There were a lot of bushfires in Victoria at the time

32:30 and the visibility was nil. We had to make a landfall at a place called King Island in the Bass Strait and we couldn't find it. We were running out of fuel and we had to get back to Sale. We had direction finding stations and I plotted it and got them back. I saved that crew.

What do you mean direction finding?

We had established in the bases and the network direction finding stations. They were the

33:00 transmitting stations in these various locations. You had one here and one there and you'd pick them both up and get their beam and where they'd cross, you could work it out. I'm a bit hazy on it now because it is so many years ago. After that I was just about due when the Air Board grabbed me and decided I should go on a staff course. There were about eight of us on this staff course. I think it was the second

33:30 staff course in the RAAF so it was quite a privilege because they only sent people there who were pretty knowledgeable. I went to the staff school at Laverton. It was a really luxurious place there. After that they made me Staff Officer Radio Training of Eastern Area.

What did that mean?

34:00 Well Staff Officer Radio Training is you were actually responsible to go to live with squadrons and check them out to see if their capability is there in air-to-ground communication procedure and working the equipment, the pilots had their knowledge too of how to communicate with the ground. I would stay with the squadron and then move on to another one and check them out and report to area command.

What were the things that you looked for?

34:30 It was efficiency in the operating of the transmitting equipment and efficiency at the procedure. My area was from Queanbeyan near Canberra to Lowood in Queensland and it was a huge area. I was based at Point Piper in Sydney. I had one difficult assignment. I went to Lowood and they had lost a Beaufort a few weeks earlier. About a month earlier, they had had a court of inquiry and it was all right, it had passed.

35:00 They didn't know what happened to it. The Wireless Air Gunners there were all commissioned officers. They had been commissioned off a course in England. They had finished their course in England and it was after Normandy so they had surplus aircrew and pilots so they sent these chaps out to Lowood to go away in these Beaufort squadrons. They had no combat experience at all but they had commissions.

35:30 When I checked them out and when I went there, I went to the officers' mess and they were all over me because I was the chap from RAAF Headquarters and they wanted to buy me beers and all this stuff. When I went through them, I found none of them were efficient and they didn't even know our operational procedure out here. They hadn't had any training to speak of and they weren't very good at operating the equipment either and yet they had commissions off the course. I had in the back of my mind, "Why did that

36:00 plane go in and why was it lost?" I had in the back of my mind that they had been using the wrong frequencies. Not one of those people knew our procedures. Out here in the Pacific it was different to England you see.

What was the procedure?

Well, the selecting frequencies or operating your transmitting equipment was done on the ionosphere and the time of the year. The Radio Physics Laboratory in Sydney I think it was called, they would give us the frequencies and there was a

36:30 block of them. We would select those frequencies to operate to the best condition of the year. We all knew that thoroughly but they had had no training and they weren't very interested in learning it from me. They were all keen on staying in the officers' mess and having a good time. I sent a signal to RAAF Headquarters and condemned the squadron, including the CO, and grounded the whole squadron. I was then a Flight Lieutenant

37:00 I think. I grounded the whole squadron. When I went into the mess that night, the officers' mess, not one of them would speak to me except one, the adjutant. He came up and patted me on the back. He said, "It is about time something was done." I said, "They hate my guts but at least I think I've saved their lives." I left there and after that I was posted then to 11 Group; that is in the Western Pacific and it

is

37:30 based at Morotai. I was doing much the same work checking out squadrons operating in operational conditions there. I was in Borneo when the Japs packed it in.

How many people were there like you who were going around and checking squadrons?

Not many. I think there would have been about two or three. I never came across any. Some of them got different assignments I think but I'm not too sure.

38:00 I don't know what their assignments were because I was posted and I never saw them again.

Do you have any idea of why you were selected for that job and what your strengths were and why you were chosen?

It was because of my operational experience. I had had experience in all facets of it and I was pretty clued up and very knowledgeable. That was the reason for it I would say.

Was that a satisfying job for you to have?

Yes, it was. The

38:30 course was very difficult. It was a very intensive course but I got through it all right. I think we all did. It was a difficult course to do an officers staff course.

How old were you at that time when you were doing that?

I was still in my twenties. I was about

39:00 twenty-five or twenty-six or something like that at the time. I was married then too. I married a girl who joined the AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service]. Her brother became a pilot in Bomber Command and he became a publisher and he was the fellow who started pirate radio in England. He died over there.

We might just stop there because we're right on the end of that tape.

Tape 5

00:32 **I first wanted to ask you about the Battle of Britain which started I think just a month or two just after you enlisted. What news were you getting back and was that a source of inspiration for you joining the air force?**

No, not at all. I was in the air force then. It had not a great deal of influence here. We were training and doing our own thing and admiring what was going on in England of course naturally.

01:00 With actual involvement and thinking about it, not a great deal, no.

What sort of news would you get back from Europe?

Only what we read through the paper but nothing through our own services. Later, chaps came back, Australians, who had been there. The chaps who were in 10 Squadron, which I mentioned earlier, was a flying boat squadron, which was training there, our chaps before the war stayed there. Right throughout to the end of the war in Europe

01:30 10 Squadron remained. They joined our squadron of course but no, not a great deal.

They had been in Sunderlands, is that right?

Yes, Sunderlands. The flying boats used by Qantas were the same ones. They were Class C Short, they were made by the Short Brothers and they were Sunderlands too. In the war they put them with a lot of machine guns and they were called 'the flying porcupines'. They were there in

02:00 1939 when the war broke out so they were one of the first in the battle, our own 10 Squadron in England.

What are the key differences between a Sunderland and a Catalina?

A Catalina only has two engines while a Sunderland has four. It was a great big bulky thing. In other words, it was the hull. It was designed as a flying hotel really for people to travel in and it was two floors, you

02:30 see. There was no comparison at all. They often referred to Catalinas as a pregnant pig. Somebody said to us once, "On the water, it looks like a pregnant pig". It is not a very pretty looking thing to look at but in the air it is very graceful. I went to a museum while we were in England and they had a Catalina there for me to fly around in. It was very nice.

03:00 I have forgotten the name of the place now but it is a flying museum in England and I was there with my daughter.

Were the Catalinas British designed and built?

No, American entirely.

How old were they by the time the war broke out?

They were only about ten years old. One came out to Australia in 1938 I think or 1937. Archibald had an expedition to New Guinea. This was a millionaire chap in America and they had an

03:30 expedition there. One of our chaps, P.G. Taylor, who later was a great associate of Kingsford Smith, brought a lot of Catalinas out. He flew the first one out here and it was called a Guba then, which I told you was a tropical storm. P.G. Taylor went along as a navigator with that expedition into New Guinea. So he was the chap, P.G. Taylor, who was a flier in World War I, I think, and he recommended to

04:00 the Australian Government that we buy them for reconnaissance work. After the war, he persuaded the Australian Government to let him fly one to South America with the object of opening up an air route from Sydney to South America. He did that but they didn't take it up and they didn't make up an air route to South America.

The RAAF

04:30 **was very much a fledgling operation at the outbreak of World War II wasn't it?**

It was formed in 1921 though. It was formed after World War I at Point Cook, which is now a museum. It operated just a few aeroplanes and a few World War I pilots. Harrison was one, for example. They got things going at

05:00 Point Cook or Werribee Flats as it was called. That is where the first military aeroplane base was established in Australia at Point Cook.

When you went to Point Cook, how many planes were there and how many personnel? What was it like?

I couldn't really answer that because there were two or three different departments.

What were those departments?

There was the Flying School for the elementary training of pilots.

05:30 I'm sorry I can't help you there. The Signal School was there but the Navigator School was established somewhere else. Everything to do with flying was originally at Point Cook like navigation and flying and everything.

What different types of aircraft did they have at Point Cook at the time?

They were all biplanes. They had Demons and planes like that, small planes,

06:00 open cockpits.

The nature of your training there was purely theoretical?

No, it was theoretical and practical but mostly practical.

But it didn't involve any airtime?

Yes. We had to do flying time of so many hours. We would do flying around the whole country there.

The biplanes would have a seat for the pilot and a seat for the

06:30 **wireless operator?**

No. We did that flying training in a Douglas, which is a monoplane with one wing.

You described that as a flying classroom?

Yes, quite so.

So there was enough room in there for an instructor?

Yes, an instructor and a number of bays for the transmitters and the receivers.

So they had two transmitter positions?

Yes. There were a couple of them so it was a flying classroom really.

07:00 **I think this is very important for the archive given that school children or researchers may be using this in one hundred or two hundred years from now. What was the basis of wireless**

theory at that point? What were you taught in those early days at Point Cook?

Everything in science then was chemistry and physics and everything evolved from that and with Faraday too. Everything evolved from the science

07:30 of chemistry and physics. The importance of that really graduated until more developments were made really. Radio was not invented. Marconi did not invent radio. Radio is a phenomenon of the electro magnetic wave. It is that electro-magnetic wave that conveys the intelligence of what we call wireless. Before

08:00 he came along, Marconi, other people like Maxwell who was British and also Hertz in Germany did a lot of experimental work. It was mainly theory in the case of Hertz and he predicted about the Hertzian waves. They call them Hertzian waves as you can gather. Kilocycles as we called frequency are now called kilohertz as they are named after him.

08:30 He was a very brilliant German physicist. The chap who really started it though would have been Faraday. Faraday was an electrical scientist and it was he who discovered that when you pass a current through a wire and there is a neighbouring bit of wire there, it conveys intelligence from that to the other by induction because it creates a magnetic field. And this other wire comes into the influence

09:00 of that. That really is the theory of the induction from which wireless involved. Another person who did a lot for that is a chap called Henry in the United States, Professor Henry. Conductors were later called henrys, so many henrys, after him. Those four people had more to do with wireless than Marconi. Marconi wanted to put this intelligence into some form of

09:30 use so he'd recognised. And that is how he got his brother to transmit a signal from a bedroom upstairs, his bedroom in the house in Italy, to a garden shed and he picked it up there. It was just a dot or something. And that is how radio proved it could convey intelligence. Then from there, he went to Newfoundland and England and he transmitted a signal

10:00 across the Atlantic to Newfoundland. The receipt of that signal was in an old military hospital that was abandoned in Newfoundland. He transmitted and he picked it up in Newfoundland. Somebody transmitted it from England at a place called Poldhu [Cornwall, in 1901] in England. That is how the first experiment of any consequence was made of wireless.

10:30 In this country the first transmission of consequence was made in 1926 from Queenscliff in Victoria to Davenport in Tasmania across the Bass Strait. The Marconi Company told the Australian Government they would do this to demonstrate for them the importance of wireless. At their cost, they

11:00 put up these two transmitters and receivers. Another reason the Australian Government went ahead with it was because the cable under Bass Strait was giving trouble and it was breaking down. This would prove that wireless could do the job if necessary. It was rather involved. It was transmitted from Queenscliff by the Governor-General of Australia to the Governor of Tasmania by the Marconis and it was picked up there. It was then taken by bicycle this signal at Davenport

11:30 to a telegraph station and the telegraph station sent a telegram to Hobart; the message was then conveyed by messenger to the Governor in Tasmania. The Marconi Company proved it could be done but the government didn't take them up.

So, Bernard, as a new recruit at Point Cook, would you be doing theory lessons in frequencies and electrical science?

Yes. We had done quite a lot of it at technical college, the

12:00 West Melbourne Technical College, so we didn't do a great deal out there; it was mainly the adaptation of it.

Did you go to the technical college first or did they run concurrently?

No, first.

You went to the technical college first where you did a lot of the theory?

The theory was done there, most of it, and we put it into practice out at Point Cook.

In terms of your military training, your military bearing and drill and discipline and that sort of thing?

At Point Cook mainly.

Do you remember any of the early drills?

12:30 No. I was never one for that. I passed that over. I was never one for drilling.

Did that cause you any trouble?

No, we just did it really as if it was an imposition to us to have to do those things and a chore. We all

hated it but it gave us discipline, which was rather important. If you don't have discipline, you can't carry on with whatever work you are doing in the

13:00 military, air force or in civil life or in social life. Without some form of discipline, no, I don't think so.

At the Air Observer's School in Cootamundra when you were flying on the Ansons, I am interested in more specifics about the nature of that training. What was the step up and what was the challenge you faced at that point?

13:30 We didn't because we were actually staff wireless operators. We weren't involved in the actual training of navigators. It was a navigator's school and naturally they had to have wireless operators in the aeroplanes and that is why we went along. There was one little incident I should mention. To operate our transmitters and receivers in the Ansons and other aeroplanes, we had a winding aerial. The aerial had to be wound out in a drum.

14:00 At the end of the drum of the aerial a bit of lead attached and that would stop getting it in the slipstream getting caught in the tail of the aeroplane. It was down about forty-five degrees this piece of lead. You had to unwind it and remember after the operation to wind it in again before you landed. That was the

14:30 problem I had. On one occasion I forgot to wind it in in time. We were coming in across the strip, it wasn't a strip, it was an aerodrome at Cootamundra. And as we were landing there, there were little houses along the edge of the drome and my aerial got caught on a clothesline. That clothes line was carrying some underwear of the

15:00 lady of the house. I suddenly remembered to wind it in and when we landed there, there in the chute where you wound it up was this lady's underwear. I nearly had a mickey on the spot. I knew I would be up on a charge. The discipline was very great for not winding the aerial in and what was I to do with this lady's underwear? They were bloomers actually.

15:30 I put them in my jacket for a while and then I went up the back while no one was watching and buried them. Of course, the lady came down the next day to see the CO about who had got her bloomers. The CO explained that it might have been an upward draft that had got it and not the aeroplane, surely not. She didn't know and the CO didn't know; only I knew that the bloomers were buried just on the edge of the aerodrome near her house actually.

16:00 Then after that fortunately I was posted to Catalinas to train on and it was water there so there were no worries with having to wind the aerials in. That was the thing; we had to remember to wind the aerial in before we landed.

How long was the aerial?

Close to one hundred feet. It was a bit of wire on a drum. The wireless operator had to wind it in furiously before they came in to land.

With a one hundred metre [foot]

16:30 **aerial, what sort of distances could you be transmitting?**

There was a receiver and a transmitter. That would have been the receiver aerial and the transmitter aerial was on the aeroplane on the top.

So it was the receiver aerial that was trailed out behind. Why did the receiver aerial have to be so much longer?

With the frequencies we were operating on, we didn't have the type of receivers that could operate with a short

17:00 aerial. It had to be a long aerial.

What sort of distances could you transmit and receive over with that sort of receiver?

No more than about fifteen miles.

17:30 **Bernard, Cootamundra was as you were saying a navigator's training establishment?**

Yes.

So you had left Point Cook as a qualified wireless air gunner?

Not a gunner but wireless W3 Op [Wireless 3 Operator] we were called there. I didn't get the gunner until I went to Rathmines and they were only Lewis guns that

18:00 were made in Belgium in 1917.

So was your time at Cootamundra an essential part of your training to go into operations?

No. We were sent there because they had to have wireless operators and that was it. It wasn't part of

my training.

Was that frustrating for you?

No. You don't know how long you are going to be there and I was only there a few months. Then straight away they sent me to

18:30 Rathmines, which was just recently formed.

Can you describe Rathmines for me?

It was a bay on Lake Macquarie. The perimeter of Lake Macquarie is three hundred and sixty-five miles, so it is a big one. The principal town on Lake Macquarie is Belmont and it runs into the Pacific Highway and under there and out to sea. It was good because it was a

19:00 tranquil sort of a place. There were not many heavy seas at Rathmines. And there is a memorial there to this day. It is a recently established memorial at Rathmines and I would like to go there. It trained a lot of aircrew on flying boats in those days.

Was it close to the town of Belmont?

Yes, not that far, but the nearest town was Toronto. Our

19:30 chief instructor was a chap called Scottie Allan and he was Kingsford Smith's offsider on one of his flights, so he was a World War I pilot too. He was what they called OC Flying Boat Squadron. He was a little chap but a great pilot.

When you arrived there, how many aircraft were there?

I think we only had one flying boat at the time when

20:00 I arrived. Some were brought out but one was sitting there in Singapore, A24-1. A24-2 was up in New Guinea somewhere and I think I was on A24-4, wherever that was, it might have been in maintenance, and that is when I went away on A24-4.

So at Rathmines, how many personnel were based there at any one time?

I couldn't tell you that. I can't answer that.

20:30 **At the time you were there approximately?**

There wouldn't have been more than about five hundred.

That is a lot of people for one aircraft?

Well, there were messes and other things and maintenance and the marine staff. I think they trained there too. There wouldn't have been that I don't think, but that would be the most. And there were the pilots and that is it.

So was it a well-established establishment?

No, it had only just been formed

21:00 a year or two before I got there. It was still in the formation stages really.

Were there barracks?

Yes, there were officers' barracks and airmen's barracks.

And a mess hall and a maintenance area?

Yes. Most of the main maintenance actually on Catalinas was done by Qantas under contract and their base was at Rose Bay in Sydney. They did the

21:30 maintenance on their own Sunderlands there you see, which they used for the Flying Boat Scheme to run Qantas International Airways from Sydney to England. I think they called at Colombo on the way through and changed there.

I think there is still one of the small seaplanes that they have at

22:00 **Rose Bay to this day?**

Is there?

Yes it is like a little passenger plane.

Actually when Qantas started that international air service, they used DH-86s, biplanes, and they used those to travel from Sydney up to where they would meet the flying boats coming up from Imperial Airways from England. They would take them on and then Qantas did it themselves.

At Rathmines, did they have a barge that pulled

22:30 **the Catalina up along or was it just hanging off a buoy?**

It would be on buoys. They would actually haul them onto the beach for maintenance, sitting them on an undercarriage first.

Were the maintenance crews mobile? Would they be able to be transported to fix the planes?

They were stationed there. They were just maintenance men and they were stationed there and that's all.

23:00 **Were you trained in any way to do maintenance on the wireless sets?**

No. I could do it but we weren't doing it because we were too busy with the flying there. There were different categories of wireless op. There was Wireless Electrical Mechanic for example and he did maintenance completely. Then there was the ground operator and the aircrew one and he was called the WTOP (Air).

What was the

23:30 **relationship like between aircrew and ground crew?**

Very good, excellent.

There was no division there or tensions?

We were all original ground crew paid when we flew, that is how it was in the RAAF. You would get five shillings each time you flew. That is how it operated because the RAAF had no aircrew at all when it was formed. It had a wireless observer

24:00 and a pilot or a pilot and an observer. That is how it was in those days. There was no category called aircrew. We didn't have bombers, we only had little single-engine aeroplanes.

So your early training at Rathmines was done without armaments on board?

No, with armaments.

Was there an

24:30 **armament depot at Rathmines?**

Yes, there was one I think.

And would they have to be loaded off the beach?

They would be on the beach, yes. We would not load the guns. The guns were just taken by barge or boat and then installed on the planes. They didn't have to go ashore to put the armaments on, no.

Do you recall how the bombs were loaded on the beach?

25:00 We didn't do any bomb loading there. It was done in the Islands and it was done from barges mainly. We had a big problem with the armament when we were originally in New Guinea because, you take the bow gun – that is the small gun – the bow gunner was also the wireless operator, the first wireless operator. So he had to leave his desk and mount the bow gun. To mount the bow gun was difficult because the

25:30 bow of the flying boat had to be sealed so water wouldn't get in when you were taking off and also when you were in the air. Everything was sealed but they were actually perspexed. It was a rotary type thing. The gun had to be stowed away and then brought out when you wanted to use it and put out through the dome. That became a problem

26:00 because there was a little sliding piece of perspex to form a gap in this dome so you could put your gun through it. There was only one problem. It was made watertight, which was good, by a thing called neoprene, which is imitation rubber. That wasn't made for the tropics so in the tropics in the heat this neoprene would seal. There was no way you could pull that slide out to put your gun out. I always had visions of a

26:30 Jap hovering up in front of us having a go at us and I was waiting to put my gun out and there would be no way I'd get my gun out because this thing was sealed. I had nightmares of me saying to the captain, "Wait for a minute will you, I can't get my gun out." That didn't happen but I had nightmares about it. You couldn't pull the piece out to get the open slot to put it through because it was sealed because of the tropics and the neoprene. No one thought of that

27:00 except the gunner when he tried to get it out.

Was it at Rathmines when you began learning about the gunnery aspect?

Yes.

Can you describe that forward gun position for me and how the gun would be stowed away and pulled back?

Yes. In the front bow of the aeroplane it was, in front of the pilot's compartment or just down below it. It was a flat rotating type dome you see.

27:30 You would go around with your guns. As I told you it had to be sealed because when you buoy or you tether your flying boat you'd stand on a little edge at the end of that turret. The wireless operator did that job too by the way. That was his job. You would throw the loop over the buoy. That was all tied up in this really small space. While that was happening the gun was stowed and held by straps

28:00 just below that. It was pulled out and put through the slot when you wanted to use it. It was only a small gun. It was only a single barrel.

And this was a Lewis gun?

Yes.

Did you train on the Lewis gun on land?

Both.

So they had a range?

Yes we had a range.

Can you describe that for me?

No. I can't recall anything about it really.

28:30 It is too far back.

Do you recall the theory of gunnery in the air and how you determined where to aim?

Yes, the angle of trajectory. You had to actually fire knowing the speed of the aeroplane and the speed of the other one. You had to actually judge it on that. So you allowed for so much for the angle of trajectory. I did a lot of that intensely

29:00 later as a gunnery leader in training. We used drogues you see. That is a sort of a sleeve that is trailing an aeroplane and you have to get up and shoot. That is how we did that. We did that by camera and not by bullets.

Can you describe to me the wireless station within the Catalina?

The wireless compartment was just behind the

29:30 pilot's compartment there and the bow gunner I was telling you about. It was a small one. It just had a desk and a transmitter to the left. Later on of course when radar came in, we had to put that on the left and the transmitter was moved to the right. We were the first aeroplane to have radar, by the way, the first flying boat. It wasn't

30:00 called radar, it was called ASV. That stands for Air Surface Vessel. It was produced in England. That meant we would use this radar to identify a ship or something like that. How it operated of course was the signal would go out from the radar set and hit the boat and reflect it back and you measured the distance. Then you would see the blip on your

30:30 screen. We called it the 'Jesus Box'. We were away on this break while they were doing maintenance on our plane and when we came back here was this radar set. We had had no instruction and no training and we had to go away in a few days. Anyway, we went, "Jesus, what's the name for this?" The term radar hadn't been evolved then in Australia.

31:00 So I called it the Jesus Box hoping Jesus would be on our side. The real name was ASV and it was installed by AWA but not made here. Later on it was. We had a screen for the first time and it was just an embellishment.

Do you recall the part in the war that the ASV was introduced?

Yes just before the Japs came in in 1941.

31:30 The British had done a lot of work on it but more so the Americans and they called it radar. Really, the Germans really started it many years ago. The British had a very bright bloke there. Mostly the later development work was in America because they weren't at war and they could do all these things. That is why Americans played such a prominent part in the

32:00 development of this sort of science.

I understand that with radar the investment in it and interest in it was greatest during the

Battle of Britain and there was intensive testing?

Yes. It wasn't introduced but at that time Mitchell was the chap who designed the Spitfire. They used it and it was very handy there. It was very handy and it was used for a practical purpose for the first time there and it saved a lot of lives.

32:30 **Sorry, just to go back to the wireless station or the wireless department you had the transmitter on your left did you say?**

We put the radar set then and switched the transmitter and the receiver to the right.

So the transmitter and the receiver were both on your right and you had a small desk?

There was a desk in between.

On the desk you were making notes?

We had our key there, our Morse key.

And were you making

33:00 **notes on signals that came through?**

Yes.

How would you communicate with the pilot and other parts of the plane?

We had interconnected units and I could buzz him up but mainly I would tap him. We had communications right through the aeroplane and we wore headphones.

What was the system?

I can't recall the system there; there was no system.

What was the actual

33:30 **technology that allowed you to speak?**

It was just a throat mike or something like that. Mostly you were tapping him on the shoulder.

So you could actually reach through up to the pilot?

No. I would have to get up to do that. The engineer was on my left but all I had was his legs because he was up in the aeroplane, right up in the centre there. He had a seat but he had to climb up a little ladder to get there. So all I saw of

34:00 Jack Dewhurst was his feet and his legs.

How would you get down into your compartment?

We would just walk along the catwalk, we had a catwalk, and we had a bunk along either side that we could sleep on. There was a bunk there and a bunk there. Then there was a bulkhead between our compartment and the blister compartment where the blister gunners would

34:30 sit. We would get out of the aeroplane that way. There was a bulkhead door and you would seal that. It was like a submarine really.

You would get out of the aircraft through the rear, through the blister compartments?

Yes, through the blisters. They called them blisters but they were actually bulbs. They were perspex and you would lift this thing up and get out.

When you were training at Rathmines

35:00 **what was their typical training exercise?**

I can't recall any particular one it was just general.

Were you working on patterns and was that how you would generally do reconnaissance – you were being trained to do reconnaissance at that time is that right?

Yes, but that was not our worry. The pilot had to do that and we just did our work of communications to the base. We weren't interested in patterns

35:30 and stuff like that.

So what would be your focus on those exercises?

It was getting the communication working properly and having the right procedure. Procedure is everything.

Do you recall any of those procedures?

R was receipt. You'd signal R and it meant, "Received your message." Later on we changed everything to the American system of

36:00 Morse Code too. 'Dit-da' is A, you see. If we wanted to talk to anyone, we would use abbreviations generally speaking like R, "Received." 'Dit-dit-dit-da' means you are testing. It is V. V for testing was 'dit-dit-dit-da'. You were just testing your set you see.

36:30 In Morse code language in the amateur days you issued CQ and that meant you were calling all stations, any station. We never used that in the RAAF but we used V a lot with, "Just testing." A person picking you up generally knew how strong the signal was and generally they could pick you up for your style. We all had a little style. It was not all of us but I did.

37:00 I elongated the A you see, 'dit-dit-dit-daa'. I got that really from the Americans. They did that a lot. Their Morse code was really slow, so instead of this 'dit-dit-dit-da' as we would do under prefect training, the Americans would do 'dit-dit-dit-daa'. I used that and it was very good because it gave it a rhythm, it gave a rhythm to your

37:30 signal. You would get a nice rhythm rather than staccato. I taught people a lot of Morse code later on.

Are you saying that you had to re-learn your morse code once the Americans became involved?

Yes. It was an adaptation really. It was slightly different and that is all and there was no problem. I liked the rhythm. I like to keep a rhythm going and it was pretty to listen to.

38:00 'Dit-daa-dit.' That was R and that means "Received." 'Dit-daa-dit.' The Americans would say 'dit-daa-dit' but the British would say 'dit-da-dit'.

Do you recall the alphabet? Can you give us a quick run through?

(A) was dit da, (B) was de de de dit,

38:30 (C) de de da dit, (D), de de dit, (E) dit, (F) dit dit da dit, (G) da dit, (H) dit dit dit dit, (I) dit dit, (J) de de de de, (K) de de da, (L) de de da dit, (M) da da, (N) da dit, (O) de de de

39:00 (P) de de de dit (Q) da da de da (S) dit dit dit (T) da (U) de de dit (V) dit dit de da (Y) de de da da (Z) da da da dit. The alphabet. I hope no one pulls me up on that. I can still remember it after seventy years.

39:30 **That is fantastic. Thank you for doing that.**

You'd better read my book and check it out. I've got it in my book, the alphabet.

That will be fantastic for someone sitting there and listening to that after one hundred years.

Any amateur will enjoy it or any wireless operator.

Did you have to learn coding as well?

Yes but it was just basic because it changed so much. The pilot and the navigator or the pilot and the second wireless had to do the

40:00 composing of the message in code and give it to me.

Similarly you would take down a message and write down the letters?

Yes, and either I'd translate it or they would then with the codebook. We generally held only one codebook in the aeroplane and generally the pilot or the captain would hold that.

Thanks, Bernard, we're right on the end of that tape.

Tape 6

00:30 **I was just wondering if you noticed any specific little quirks or differences between the Catalina planes and whether each plane had a personality of its own or certain quirks about it?**

No. It was just the same.

Just the same?

No, they were made exactly the same and they had the same conditions inside. We had no particular one.

What about knowing how far you could

01:00 **push it and those sorts of things?**

How what?

Knowing how far you could push the plane under certain conditions?

No. It was all the same procedure. They didn't vary at all. No plane was different to the other providing it was maintained okay.

Between operations how much time would you have between each operation?

Generally about twenty-four hours with a bit of luck.

01:30 We had perhaps more than most of them because we crashed and damaged our aeroplane so many times. We had perhaps longer than most of them and we kept going longer of course because I was one of the longest there. We had a situation there with medals too; with the Distinguished Flying Medal. I missed out merely because we crashed so much. I flew more than the others but they used to take into account you had to have a

02:00 continuity of flying over a week I think it was or a month you see. It was continuity and so many operations over that period and you qualified for your DFM [Distinguished Flying Medal] in the end. I was one of the few who missed out because we would be absent with our flying boat damaged or it had been crashed. We might go on leave or something like that and pick it up when we came back so I had a broken type period right through. Some of them went right through and left

02:30 earlier or got killed as the case may be.

How do you feel about missing out on that?

I don't think about it at all really. I was disappointed naturally when you flew more than most of the other people in the squadron and I think I did. There were a few that did more than me but they are dead now. I was disappointed naturally but I didn't have time to dwell on that; we were caught up with other things. It is the same when my little kids were growing up, said,

03:00 "Dad, why have those other fellows got DFMs? Why haven't you got one?" I can't explain it. That is what it was all about in those days when they decided to give out DFMs and it was a little bit easier than before.

Do you recall how many operations you actually flew?

Yes, in reconnaissance and everything, it would be well over seventy.

In that time you

03:30 **crashed how many times?**

We actually only crashed about three times but our plane got damaged quite a lot or was out of service. Of course these rescue jobs took a little bit out of the plane and they had to do maintenance when we got back as a rule.

Three crashes seem like a lot. Was it or was that bad luck or was it common for them to crash?

Part of it was pilot error and part of

04:00 it was just conditions and weather. The pilot error was mainly misjudging the landing. I should correct that. A flying boat doesn't land it alights. So it was pilot error there in touching down and that was what caused most of the crashes other than the one I told you in

04:30 Port Vila, which was the taking off. The crash there was rather horrific really and to get out of it we were lucky.

What did you do in your down time and your time off? What did you do to take your mind off it?

We had a few beers or something like that and that was about all. It was nothing much. It was just a few beers and a bit of a yarn. We'd wander down to the wharf or wherever our flying boat was to see how the maintenance was going on and wander back again.

05:00 There wasn't a great deal. We ran out of energy quite a lot and we needed a fairly good sleep. It was rather important to us when we were flying and we were up in the air for twenty-one hours or twenty-two sometimes. That was rather important. We never went out playing golf or tennis. I played tennis a bit but there was not much in the way of sport or anything socially really. I was not a dancer but other fellows did. I went and had a beer or something like that

05:30 at the pub.

How hard was it, maybe it got easier but I don't know, to sleep the night before you know that you are going on an operation? How did you keep yourself calm?

Yes, we did. We developed that system and we developed an attitude like that that it didn't worry us so

much; because we had so many of them, this was just one other operation we were doing among several operations all the time.

06:00 It didn't worry us and we didn't have time to think about it. We would go to bed and we would go to sleep and we had to get up at about four in the morning, early, to get off you see. We didn't have much time to think and then we were back doing our job.

Did you have any particular routine that you followed that made it more normal for you?

No. It was just the normal routine that we did with flying with the maintenance and looking after our equipment and that was all.

06:30 **Would you generally have a meal before you went out on operations?**

Yes, generally, if the mess was open. They didn't provide it individually. If the mess was there, we would certainly have a meal or breakfast or whatever it was. Generally we went before breakfast. We had food on the plane and we could make our own. We had a hot plate and we could cook bacon and eggs if we wanted to, if we could get eggs of course.

07:00 Eggs were very scarce during the war. We could cook on the plane and generally somebody was. It was generally the second engineer, the cook.

Was it common that you would cook on board or was that just an emergency type thing?

We could do it. It was designed for us to be away from base if necessary for a week or so, so we had enough provisions to last for at least a week. We had a cupboard there with food in it. It was nothing spectacular. It was

07:30 meat and vegetables and a few things but that was about it.

I was just wondering when you talked about two wireless operators being on the plane because you were doing different shifts and sort forth?

Sometimes three, yes.

How easy was it to sleep on one of those planes or to get any rest?

Yes. You would go off duty and the other chap would take over. We had the bunks.

08:00 You would just go and lie on a bunk and have a bit of a snooze. The vibration of the aeroplane and the engine would send you to sleep. That was not a real problem having a bit of a sleep. I couldn't do it now but I could then.

Did you ever get given any caffeine tablets or anything to keep you awake?

No. We never knew anything about tablets and we never had any. The only tablet we knew was Aspro [aspirin] if you had a

08:30 headache and we never used those either. There weren't many tablets around.

You talk about using Morse code but was there any time when you would ever break radio silence and send a voice message or anything like that?

No. We never sent a voice message. It was always radiotelegraphy. There was no voice provision. The only other

09:00 message we would transmit would be by semaphore, by flags.

When would you use that?

Sometimes if we wanted assistance or something and we saw another Catalina over there or at base we would call by semaphore. They wouldn't have a wireless set near them so we'd send a signal.

And that would be you sending that?

Yes. It was semaphore. They used it a lot in the navy of course.

09:30 **I was just wondering what colour the Catalinas were painted?**

When they came out, they were a grey colour. Later they were darker and they called them 'the Black Cats'. It was underneath the wings and that. They had a light coloured, creamy coloured main plane and the actual hull of the thing was a grey colour.

Were those sort of camouflage colours or something?

Not when they came out, no.

10:00 **Were they painted camouflage kind of colours?**

No. To my knowledge they only painted them black because then they wouldn't be seen at night so

easily by searchlight by the enemy down below. They called them then the Black Cats because they were painted black underneath the wings and the hull.

So when the Catalinas were getting maintenance

10:30 **done or when they were just at the wharf or whatever, would they all be in a spot together or would they be spread around so in case they were a target?**

No they would get them on an apron. We would call them an apron but it was cement as a rule. It was dragged up there on wheels on a frame underneath. They would put them under it in the water and then drag them up there. There wouldn't be any more than

11:00 two Catalinas at any one time there.

Was that a security thing so they weren't all lined up together?

No. That was for maintenance there. If it was anything horrific, they would send it down to Rose Bay in Sydney and get Qantas to do it.

When you went to 20 Squadron in Moresby and you were doing reconnaissance there,

11:30 **could you just talk me through a typical reconnaissance flight? Were there specific courses that you took or did it change all the time?**

No. Nothing changed.

So what was the typical route that you would take, which course would you take when you were going around the different islands doing reconnaissance work?

We would go according to the weather and our instruction to go to such and such. We would decide how to get there according to the

12:00 weather conditions and you might not be able to go direct or there might be some adverse condition of the enemy lurking around and to avoid the enemy we'd take another course to get there. This all had to be considered with the amount of fuel we were carrying and how we could digress.

Would you always take off with a full tank of fuel or would that vary?

Most times, yes.

12:30 We went on some trips that were so long that we had to pop down at another base or semi-base to pick up some more fuel. We went to Santa Cruz and that is in the Santa Cruz Islands and whether we had to refuel on the way I'm not too sure. Incidentally, I only learned later in life that where we

13:00 alighted – we had to drop down on this place in Santa Cruz. We had to pick somebody up in the Santa Cruz Islands. I worked out in later life that the very spot where we alighted in this bay in Santa Cruz Islands was on top of the wreck of La Perouse's ships. It came out in 1788 to Australia to Botany Bay and he left Botany Bay and

13:30 then disappeared completely, he and his two ships. It was not known where he went. It was only worked out in recent years that his two ships must have foundered in the Santa Cruz Islands. I found out where they foundered and where we touched down and I said, "That is where he landed." We must have been on top of them. A man from the Queensland Museum he was on an

14:00 expedition that located the wrecks of La Perouse's ships and he took some photographs of some of the relics that he brought up. He sent them to me and I've got them at home here, the photographs of those very ships.

That's a happy coincidence isn't it?

Yes. He was a marine biologist, a chap called Dr Coleman. He told me all about the gun, the miniature cannon in Borneo that I didn't know the history of.

14:30 I wrote a story about the history of the Brunei cannon. Brunei was actually a sultanate on the island of Borneo. There, even to this day a very small section of Borneo, one section is Indonesian and one is Malaysian. There was the Sultan of Brunei who had his little place up at the top. He was the richest man in the world until recently anyway.

15:00 That is where Magellan, not him, but his ships were discovered in the Brunei cannon. That's another story. If you ever want to hear it I will tell it to you.

I am just wondering how dangerous the reconnaissance work was and did it become more dangerous?

Yes.

Can you talk about the change?

It was mainly because we couldn't get relief you see and you were at it all the time. They didn't give you

much of a break in

15:30 1942 particularly. As I told you I went over to Timor and then back again and then on to other operations that might be in Dutch New Guinea or something like that. We never got a break really in those days until something happened to our planes.

So fatigue was what was the danger?

Fatigue was not an operational problem really. We got fatigue but we got the chance of having a sleep.

16:00 **So when you were doing reconnaissance work, how many German ships would you normally spot or how many Japanese planes would you see?**

Not many at all. We tried to avoid all that. I can't give you an answer to that but it was not many at all. We either flew in the clouds if we could so no one would see us or we flew down very low. Very low had an

16:30 advantage on the water. If the enemy tried to have a go at you and you are only about one hundred feet from the water and he would dive bomb onto you, he could go into the drink himself. You were just as safe just above the water as you were in the clouds. It is the in-between that is the problem where there are no clouds. That is the skill.

That is really interesting. You are saying that you can just skim across the water and you know you're not going to crash basically but you know that another plane might?

If it came at you, yes. Not that many people would come down that low.

17:00 A few Zeros would of course but that is it. If it was a dive-bomber who wanted to have a go at you he would think twice about it because if he got down to your height he was sure to go into the drink himself. We had a few dive-bombers ourselves including the Thunderbolt.

You had a few dive-bombers come at you did you?

No. I can't recall any dive-bombers, not me.

17:30 **So you talk about flying low, what would be the highest that a Catalina could fly safely?**

Not much above five thousand feet and then we'd reach a ceiling in those days with the bombs. It was not a stratosphere type aeroplane at all. We could get up a bit higher than that to six thousand or seven thousand but generally speaking we would go at about

18:00 five thousand feet and we were comfortable.

I was just wondering with the advanced operational bases that you were flying around and to. Can you describe some of them on the different islands for us?

Yes. The Menzies government brought them in and the one we had at Gavutu, which was a little island near Tulaghi, which is in the capital of the Solomon Islands on the island of Florida,

18:30 it consisted really of a small island with a little mountain. It wasn't much. There were tunnels buried in the mountain. It was only a small mountain. There would be quarters built for staff and there'd be only about four or five on the staff at the most and a fuel base and that would be it. When the Japanese took over the Solomon Islands, they dug more tunnels into Gavutu Island to put fuel and everything.

19:00 There is a rumour that they buried gold in there. The editor of a local newspaper who was a patrol officer in New Guinea heard about it and he has been over there recently trying to recover this gold. If the Japs really left any or not I don't know. But they buried more tunnels into Gavutu itself. It is only a couple of hundred yards wide the island of Gavutu. It was chosen because it had enough depth there to bring our Catalinas in fairly

19:30 close without going on a reef or sand or anything like that.

So at Gavutu if you were flying over would you be able to see any sign that the base was there?

We knew where it was, yes. Generally we wouldn't unless we knew where to look for it.

So the people that lived on the base there, were they living inside the mountain as well?

Yes. We had them on the edge and some of them in the mountain. They were all

20:00 RAAF personnel and there might have been only a dozen there. We had one in the water there, which was bombed a few times by the Japs. Anticipating the Japs landing there, the staff actually scuttled the flying boat so the Japs wouldn't see it again. They caught a boat from there to Port Vila and then over to Sydney on another one and they got home that way.

20:30 **What sort of supplies were you taking there or what was your purpose for going there?**

It was search and rescue or just search. We were looking for Germans originally and later Japs.

And you might stop there to refuel?

Yes, or we would stay the night or something like that.

Can you describe a couple of the other bases on the other islands?

Port Vila was on an

21:00 established island and it had been there for years. Port Vila was a condominium government or the Hebrides was. It was half British and half French. So, we had a base there, which was just an inlet in a bay where we could anchor our Catalinas. And they had put up a couple of Nissen huts alongside it and that was all.

What are they?

A Nissen hut is what they used in the Antarctic.

21:30 It is just a small shed really that is closed in at both sides and rounded at the top. They are called Nissen huts. They only had about one I think in there. We never stayed long enough to enjoy it. We had a small mess there but nothing much at all really. At New Caledonia we didn't have anything in the way of facilities there. That was Noumea.

22:00 At Rabaul, there was an established base there and with Kavieng I never went there. At Horn Island [Torres Strait] we had one there and it was just a usual type RAAF base and it was small. It had an orderly room and that was all.

So when you would do your reconnaissance and you would go to one of these bases for refuelling or

22:30 **whatever, how important was it to get back straight away? Was it a fast turnaround sort of thing or was it common for you to stay there for a day or two?**

We generally limited our stay there because we had to get back to get on with operations from headquarters, which was then in Port Moresby. When we got back to Port Moresby we would stay on the plane overnight and disperse into a little bay in

23:00 Port Moresby harbour. This is when the Japs came in because they would come in and bomb Port Moresby at night. Rather than be sitting ducks, we would go up into a little inlet there and sleep there the night. Apart from that, we couldn't get accommodation. It was only a small RAAF base and to sleep you would have to sleep under someone else's bed, which wasn't very accommodating. The only trouble there was the mosquitoes were very bad there and we had to take a lot of Atebrin.

23:30 **Working and I guess living with people in such a confined space you must get to know each other pretty well. Can you tell me about the men you flew with and who they were?**

There was George McMaster. He was one. He was the nephew of Sir Fergus McMaster one of the founders of Qantas. He was a big grazier out of Charleville there somewhere. George was a nice chap but didn't have a lot to say.

24:00 The others; there was Jack Dewhurst the engineer and Knowles, his assistant, I knew him. He opened a garage after the war in Nanango. Other than that I can't recall many others.

How important was humour as far as gelling together as a team?

Typical Australian humour prevails and pervades all the time in war and in peace, as you know. Generally you would send someone up. For example, they called me

24:30 'The Gutless Wonder' at one stage, George McMaster did. The reason that I got the name of the Gutless Wonder was that I had a spot of dysentery, which was easy to get. As you were flying an operation and you got up to thinner air it manifested itself even more so, this dysentery problem. I was getting as weak as a kitten. At Port Vila to have a shower we used a bucket and we'd fill it up with

25:00 water and we'd haul it up on a pulley to a beam and then we'd tip it over our shoulders and that was our shower. To have enough strength to haul that bucket of water up there to the pulley and toss it over myself he called me the Gutless Wonder. I didn't have any gut left of course because of the dysentery. So, for the next couple of months until I left the Catalinas I was called the Gutless Wonder.

25:30 It was a very imposing title. He'd say, "The Gutless Wonder is coming now."

It seems like you've had a number of really comical nicknames in your life. What is it about that? You must leave a strong impression on people?

It is humorous and I was humorous myself or supposedly so, and I suppose I attracted people who said those things. I would coin words myself a

26:00 lot when I was a young man, like Egbert and things like that. I went under several names as I told you in the early broadcast years. Without humour you are lost.

Do you recall a time where something was really bad and someone said the right funny thing

just at the right moment?

Yes I can but I can't recall it just at the moment.

26:30 When I leave you, I'll probably think of it but I just can't at this moment.

What was the average age of your crew? Were you all about the same age?

Yes, we were in our mid-twenties all of us. Someone was a bit older and we called him "The Old Man." He was about thirty I think. Most of us were in our mid-twenties and were the same age.

Were most people single or were some married?

A few were married.

27:00 George McMaster married during the war. I remember once we came from Noumea or Port Vila and we were on a quick trip to Australia. It was to Sydney, I think, to Rose Bay. We only had shorts, bush shorts; we were only wearing those. We never wore flying suits at eight hundred feet. I had a hole in the back of mine. They were ripped down the back. We wanted to go down to

27:30 Martin Place. I don't know whether I had any underpants on or not. I will never forget marching down near Martin Place, in Pitt Street there, and we wanted to go and meet somewhere in a pub. There was George McMaster about one inch behind marching like this so no one could see my torn trousers. The two of us looked like we were twins. I'll never forget that. That was in about 1941.

I've asked a few people in different

28:00 **services and different conflicts what the uniform meant to them, what did it mean to you to wear the uniform?**

You should have a feeling of pride. You must have that otherwise you shouldn't be wearing it. The air force had a very nice blue uniform, as you know, and particularly if you were an officer and were wearing all the gold braid that went with it. I was rather proud to wear the uniform.

What did it represent for you or symbolise for you?

It symbolised the RAAF and what it was doing to protect Australians I suppose through feats in the air. That is what it represented.

I was just wondering, when you were doing reconnaissance and looking for German ships in the shipping lanes, did you have to have some kind of

28:30 **training for identification of enemy ships and enemy planes?**

It was minor. We knew straight away.

Was that part of your training?

Yes but it was minor. It was not a great deal because we would just let headquarters know and they would identify it straight away.

So from the air looking down at a ship was it fairly obvious?

We reported there was such and such a ship down there and send the signal to the operations

29:00 room in Townsville. If they don't come back to you, they would know it was one of ours. They would know exactly where all the ships were.

Could you be sure from just looking what it was but not really?

No.

So you would be just, "We've seen a ship," but it was for someone else to identify?

Yes.

With planes it would be different I guess because you'd be a lot closer to planes and it would be the

29:30 **silhouettes that you'd be looking at?**

Yes.

30:00 **I just wanted to ask you about the Wireless Air Gunner's Course that you did in 1943. I think you said that you hated guns and you hated maths?**

You mean the Gunnery Leaders Course?

Why would you say that you hated guns?

I hated the damn things. I hated mathematics and I hated guns mainly because they didn't work in the

early days. This course was all

30:30 mathematics, angle of trajectory and all that, and these latest guns. I wasn't gifted in that way to pull guns to bits and put them back again and fire them. I've never had a gun in my life.

So was it more a frustration with the new technology?

Originally, yes. After that I didn't want anything to do with them. We had to maintain our

31:00 revolvers of course, but that was easy.

I didn't realise you had revolvers?

We had revolvers and we had to carry them and maintain them.

Where would you carry them?

We had the holster just here.

Would you take them on operations when you were flying?

We'd hang them up there mostly, yes. They were Smith and Wesson.

They are quite a big gun aren't they?

Yes, it is a pistol

31:30 **The gunnery leaders course at Cressy, could you just describe Cressy a little more for us and what the base was and what it looked like?**

It was developed as a gunnery school, then they had a section that was for gunnery leaders and that is what it was. The gunnery school was for those who were using guns in aeroplanes. That is virtually what it was all about.

32:00 It was particularly for air gunners in bombers. I can't tell you a great deal about it because I wasn't there for long enough to go into detail. From what I can recall, I had some very good meals there at the mess. I think I was a sergeant then.

So were you instructing people on all different kinds of planes or all different kinds of guns or was it more specialised in different areas?

I was never instructing on guns.

32:30 It was only wireless and operational procedure.

So was all the equipment that you were instructing on the same?

It was the same because it had to be. It was standard equipment at Maryborough. I was lecturing on radio theory and operational procedure. The operational procedure was backed by my own combat experience.

33:00 **Were they using different wireless sets to what you had done when you did your training at that point? Had the technology evolved at all?**

No, not as much. Incidentally when I was teaching wireless theory to the young fellows to be made wireless air gunners and aircrew they called me 'Purple Heart'. Purple Heart was a little ribbon and every American who went out on a flying mission came back with a ribbon [actually the Purple Heart is awarded to those who are wounded in action]. He was given a

33:30 medal. It was called the Purple Heart. Every mission he went on he was given an award straight away so it was called the Purple Heart. There are functions up there and I have got one up there now and it was a pass-out dinner. They toasted the instructor and they referred to me as 'the Purple Heart'. That was another nickname I had.

Was that a touching

34:00 **gesture?**

It was a rather nice one really but we all knew that the Yanks [Americans] got a medal just about for everything. Nothing like that happened in the RAAF.

What did the Aussies think about that different system of rewards?

We just laughed it off. We thought it was crazy. As soon as the war broke out they came out and they went

34:30 out in the aeroplane and they came back with a Purple Heart even if they didn't do anything. Anyway, it changed later I think.

When did you first come across the Americans?

I didn't have much to do with them. They were in Flying Fortresses mainly when they came out. We had Kittyhawks then and they used a lot of those. Then they used the Lightnings [fighter aircraft] and all that. I never went to any of their bases at all. I had nothing to do with them really.

35:00 They did the big thing when they came out for the war; they brought out an aerodrome construction corps and they went to Eagle Farm aerodrome, which was defunct because of the low-lying mud, and they brought that aerodrome back to life. It was the Americans who created the Brisbane Airport and not the Australians.

35:30 Our planes operated out of Archerfield after Amy Johnson came out and she landed in a ditch and Bert Hinkler couldn't land there either because it was too low-lying and too muddy. They temporarily abandoned Eagle Farm, which was an ex dairy farm once, and used Archerfield. When the Americans came here and saw it shortly after

36:00 Pearl Harbour, thousands came out with Flying Fortresses and they wanted to use them straight away. They went down and did the filling and the levelling off and created bigger strips. It was the Americans that did that and they've never been given credit for it. It is a pity. They are great industrialists; from an industry point of view the Americans would lose everyone. They actually won the

36:30 war really, not us, because of their industry. They could create ships like the Victory ships. They could create aeroplanes, new aeroplanes. They could produce destroyers and battleships and aircraft carriers and the Liberty ships so quickly. No one else could compete with them and that is what won the war. There is no question about

37:00 it. It was amazing how they could do it. They've never had the recognition for that either but that's what really won the war.

I guess every nation has their strengths don't they, because I have heard other Australians from different services say a similar thing about the power that they have but then the Australians have got that inventiveness?

I mentioned that earlier but that is different. When you create a big

37:30 industry, they have the ability to create bigger factories and bigger industries to produce things en masse and they did that. Those Victory ships, the little carriers, they brought out a chilling amount. It was weekly really. They were carrying troops and provisions to Britain and it was amazing.

38:00 Although there was an enormous amount of ships in Normandy, to my feeling the biggest armada of ships I have ever seen is when I went into Leyte [Philippines] in a Dakota [DC-3 Douglas Dakota]. I was going up to Leyte and we flew over Leyte Harbour. It was only about a week before, or maybe a fortnight before, Hiroshima. All these

38:30 ships from the Dutch Navy and the French Navy and the British Navy and the Australian Navy were all there assembled. As we went in, the sun was going down and the sun was shining on this armada of steel and it was glistening like gold as far as I could see. There was this huge armada of ships and they were assembling them in the Philippines. They had taken the Philippines you see just when I got there or a week or two before. They were moving up

39:00 ready for an onslaught on Japan. It never took place because of Hiroshima when they dropped the atom bomb.

What did you think when you saw that show of power and strength?

I just couldn't get over it. I was enthralled. I knew about Normandy and how vast it was but it couldn't have been as big as this one because we had so many navies and more

39:30 ships available. There was this armada of steel. You never hear about that in the history books either but I actually saw it. I saw the sun glistening on all this metal and it was just like gold. We went into Leyte strip on Leyte, the capital of the Philippines over Leyte Harbour and they were just assembling for the onslaught. Nobody ever talks about it today and I never hear anything about it and I haven't read it in the history books.

When you saw that did you think that we'd have to

40:00 **win the war?**

I was satisfied that we were winning already. The Japs were on the retreat after the Battle of Midway. They were on the retreat after that. I was in the Coral Sea Battle, which was really nothing much. It was only a fizzer. I think if anybody won on courage, it would be the Japs and not us. It was fought not closely together. It was far away and you didn't see each other. We had a couple of Catalinas doing shadowing work mainly,

40:30 shadowing. It was nothing much. They keep writing about the Coral Sea Battle and its importance. Every battle is important of course but there was a false notion in this country that the Japs were poised to invade Australia. I can tell you they had no plans to invade Australia. What they wanted to do was to cut the shipping line to Australia in the Coral Sea there and also get

41:00 into Port Moresby and get into New Guinea. Maybe they could assemble then and get in later.

Sorry, we're just right at the end of the tape.

Tape 7

00:37 **Bernard, could you pick it up where you were discussing your theory about the Japanese invasion?**

Yes. There was some discussion but not a plan. It didn't come from the army. It came from the Japanese Navy. They suggested that the Japs invade Australia near Western Australia north of Broome I think it was. That idea was

01:00 stopped by the Japanese Army because they said they wouldn't have the supply to keep up the supply line. They were so involved in Malaya and those places, bearing in mind that the majority of the Japanese Army at the time was not involved here, it was in Manchuria and places like that. That is where the bulk of their army was and there was no way they could maintain a supply route. Some of those chaps knew, and probably the chaps who dived at Broome in the pearling days knew

01:30 that if you walked in from the coast, the West Australian coast, into Australia, you would hit the desert and you would perish straight away. There was no way you'd get out of it. It was only a couple of years ago a friend of mine was doing a trip in a four-wheel drive up that way and some Japs had landed or some people came out in those boats to Australia. They weren't Japs; I don't think they were Islanders. Anyway, they came out here and some contractor [people smuggler?] had taken them ashore at

02:00 about that place and had said, "All right, I'll leave you here. If you just go up the hill there and wait for a bus." They were all in their suits and that when my mate came across them in his four-wheel drive. Here they were in their suits with their suitcases waiting for a bus. There was desert the other side. That killed their thoughts of invading Australia straight away and the other thing was mainly the disruption of their sea routes.

Having been up there before

02:30 **Japan entered the war, you must have been shocked to see the speed of their advance down through the islands?**

Yes. Then again, we didn't have time to think about those things but, yes, we were.

You were operational in the area for the whole time in the area in 1942?

Yes, for the whole lot. I was in a raid at Rabaul when they landed there at Rabaul and I saw them land at New Guinea. I was involved at the very, very start from the flying boats point of view. There were Hudsons operating. We had some Hudsons operating.

03:00 Then I was involved in the evacuation of 24 Squadron from Rabaul. It was done in two stages from the back of Rabaul, one of the bays, down to Samurai [off Milne Bay]. I was in the Samurai to Port Moresby leg.

Can you tell me a bit more about that evacuation?

Yes. We had a squadron up there and the Japs had landed and we had to get our own squadron out of there and some soldiers too. The operations at Townsville

03:30 sent up two Sunderland flying boats. They were seconded to the RAAF. They were with ex -Qantas pilots and one was Lenny Grey who was a radio ham as well. He got an Air Force Cross for that. He went up in the first one and Walters was in the second one. Lenny Grey landed there and brought out the first contingent down to

04:00 Samurai. Samurai was a very pretty spot but there were a lot of crosscurrents there and it was very difficult to put a flying boat down and up. We waited there and we picked them up there and took them to… Our CO was a chap called Cohen. He changed his name later on to Kingsley. We went on that leg there from Samurai to Port Moresby. We stayed there a couple of days doing this shuttle service.

This is the ground crew from 24

04:30 **Squadron?**

I think it was the ground crew, yes. We had to bring them all out and we got them all out.

What was the nature of 24 Squadron, they weren't flying boats?

No, they were Hudsons I think. It was a Hudson squadron flying out of Rabaul against the Japanese. The Japs took Rabaul so they had to get out.

So they flew out their aircraft and you got the ground crew?

A few. They didn't have many there. They were mostly ground crew. They had to walk several miles to get to this rendezvous down from

05:00 Rabaul to be picked up in secret in the dead of night by the Sunderland flying boats, the Qantas planes that were seconded to us. We had an easier job going from Samurai to Port Moresby with them. It was a lot easier.

Was it difficult for you to adapt to flying in the Sunderlands?

No, I wasn't in the Sunderlands ever.

Sorry, I thought you said it was Sunderlands that you used to evacuate?

They were

05:30 used, one of our squadrons had them. They were used but they were mostly Qantas pilots. In fact both pilots were ex-Qantas. They did the leg from the back of Rabaul to Samurai and we would pick them up there. We were going to make Samurai a base. Port Moresby was getting too hot for us because the Japs were there so much. We were looking for a base and we were looking at Samurai but the crosscurrents destroyed the idea. Also at

06:00 Milne Bay, there were a lot of coconuts floating and debris and flotsam; that is why it was too dangerous. That is why we moved down to Cairns on the mainland of Australia in 1942.

Did you fly into Milne Bay at all while they had the squadron there?

We didn't have any squadron there but we flew there several times.

There wasn't a flying boat squadron there but they had a large RAAF contingent there?

We went to Cairns instead on the mainland instead of Milne Bay.

06:30 **Can I ask you what Port Moresby was like in the early days before the Japanese had come into the war?**

Yes. That was a very dusty spot. It was under Australian protection of course at the time. Not a great deal happened there. The Australians were there too. There was the CMF [Citizen Military Force] and we called them 'chocolate soldiers'. They actually weren't in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] but they were in the Citizen Military Forces

07:00 that was formed before the war. These chaps volunteered to go up there and to put guns up in the hills and look after general stuff there. They weren't the AIF. They were the Citizen Military Forces, the CMF, and 'chocolate soldiers' they were called. A lot of them joined up with the AIF and they did a very sterling job all the way through. They were the Australians up there and then there was the Administration of the Australians looking after the Australians that were there as well. They were

07:30 deeply ensconced there. The natives looked very much up to the Australians. Well, they gave them a lot of help there, that is what it was all about. The RAAF base was on the water's edge and there was nothing much there really. There were two aerodromes. One was about three miles and the other was five miles inland. I think it was the five mile [six-mile, Jackson's Field] where the

08:00 75 Squadron was formed with the Kittyhawks later on.

Did you actually travel around Moresby itself on land at all?

No we stayed on the water. We slept on the water and we stayed there most of the time. This was in the very early stages.

Were those early stages of the war frustrating for you?

No. We were all deeply involved in what we were doing and there was no time for frustration.

I guess I just had the sense that when you

08:30 **joined up initially you wanted to be a pilot and you wanted to get into the action as soon as possible?**

We all did. It was a bit of false bravado and we all did that. That is why I was scared the war would be over before I joined up and qualified as a pilot. "What would my mother think of me and what would my friends think of me if the war was over."

This is the sense I get that you would have been a pilot and an officer in Europe and in the thick of it with all the

09:00 **accolades and here you were now just a wireless air gunner flying in the Pacific where there wasn't actually a war. Was there any frustration or disappointment there for you?**

Yes. We all wanted to be in Europe of course naturally and there was a bit of frustration there. Then we

got involved with so much that we couldn't stop and think of it.

09:30 **I was wondering if you could give us a little more detail about your experience with the United States VIP [Very Important Person] when the bombing of Pearl Harbour came?**

Yes. I am not too sure. I think we were in Caledonia or somewhere there or Port Vila and we got a signal from headquarters, the Air Board, to go to Australia and Brisbane and pick up this American VIP. He was staying at the Lennon's Hotel which was the

10:00 hotel I think in Brisbane at the time. The problem with getting into Brisbane was there were no buoys there for Catalinas or anything like that. We had to drop anchor. We got into Brisbane there and the skipper went in and picked him up and brought him out the next morning. Then we set off to go to Tahiti with him. Who he was to this day I don't know. He had been out here I know to warn the Australian Government. He was a

10:30 VIP from Washington actually. We set out for Tahiti stopping first at Fiji on the way through; it was a halfway spot, for fuel and an overnight stay. Then the next morning, we took off for Tahiti and halfway through, I told you, Pearl Harbour was attacked.

Tell me how that news got to you?

Well I think they sent a signal and I picked it up you see.

Could you read it and did you understand the signal that came through?

11:00 Yes.

What did the signal say?

Sorry, I can't recall. I just gave it to the skipper. Anyway, we had instructions to return him as far as Lautoka in Suva. This is the interesting thing about it and you won't read it in the history books. When we touched down there to stay the night at Lautoka, we dropped him. A plane came out the next day and took him back to Washington. The first thing is

11:30 that before he left the crew, he gave us all one pound each, which was a lot of money in those days, so he was a pretty wealthy man and he thanked us for what we'd done. The other thing is when we went and looked ashore at this island there, Lautoka, there were Americans in camps in Nissen huts on this island. There were three hundred and fifty Americans who were already in camp and they'd been there for three weeks. This is before Pearl Harbour. They anticipated

12:00 something but the timing was wrong and the location. They apparently thought something would happen around near Fiji. Anyway, they were already in camp. Three hundred and fifty Americans were already there. We slept the night on the Catalina and took off the next day. I didn't go ashore. That was amazing and not many people seem to be aware that the Americans were already there. They were caught of course with their pants down in Pearl Harbour on the Hawaiian Islands.

12:30 **It was ironic that the VIP you were giving a ride to was here for that very purpose?**

Yes. He had come out to warn Australia. At any rate he went back and we then took off and we went back to Port Moresby. Then I told you about seeing the Japs' landing and then going to Rabaul and dropping bombs there. It was a long time ago.

I want to ask you about the raid you performed on

13:00 **Truk on the Japanese?**

That was an interesting one. It was a long way to the Caroline Islands. The Caroline Islands were a Japanese possession given to the Japs at the end of World War I by the Treaty of Versailles. The League of Nations gave them that as a prize in a way because they went alongside the allies and not the Germans and it was a German possession. They were given the Caroline Islands and they built up a huge naval base there. It was from the

13:30 naval base at Truk that the fleet went to bomb Pearl Harbour. It was a very highly fortified place. We were sent up there, two Catalinas, to bomb this Truk Harbour. It was a long way and we had to stage through an island there and get fuel there. We got up there and we were feeling a bit nervous about this business of bombing a huge naval base in a Catalina. Anyway, we got over there

14:00 but fortunately the weather closed in on us and there were a lot of clouds. We just bombed the place but willy-nilly; we didn't know where the bombs went. We just dropped them and went up into the clouds and stayed there and worked our way back again just in case somebody chased us because there would have been in a race to survive. The other one that went too, I don't know whether it was at the same time but I don't know what happened to it, but it went back too. I don't think it got as far as us. That was a

14:30 rather dicey one. It was so long the trip when you look at the map and you see the island of Truk.

That was essentially just a tactic of keeping them on their toes like you talked about before?

We must have had some notification that a lot of ships were assembled in Truk Harbour and we were sent up to bomb those ships if they were there.

Did you actually get a visual on the harbour?

Just the outline of it, yes.

15:00 I never saw any ships there but they were obviously there. We were up a bit high and it was dark and there was the weather and we were quite pleased really to get out of the place.

Was there ever a problem of airsickness?

No, not flying over water. You only get airsick over land because you get the different changes of temperature but not over water. You pretty seldom get airsick there unless you are bouncing

15:30 around in a storm like or something like that which was unusual. We never got airsick.

Were there any other common health problems amongst Catalina crew?

I told you about the dysentery and that was the main one.

How did you pick up dysentery?

It was the food we were eating in different places and different towns and different countries. That is how we picked it up. And it was the water.

So you would often go ashore rather than having your own food?

Yes, we'd have to go ashore.

16:00 It was the water too in those different places and the hygiene was never very good.

What were some of the places where you were forced to eat the local food?

Noumea was one and on some of the Port Vila ones. I just can't think of some of those countries at the moment. It was in our own places too where I probably developed from a hygiene point of view and our own stupidity in aeroplanes.

16:30 We were taking the wrong food.

Was anyone on board qualified with basic medical training?

We were all taught first aid as part of our training.

What point in your training did that take place, was that at Rathmines?

That was at Rathmines.

No doubt that would have been called on at various points with the evacuations and the rescues that you performed?

Yes. I didn't get very involved in it

17:00 but it was, yes, you are quite right. We had a few doctors. We had a doctor in the squadron but he was in a different part to where we were.

I wanted to ask you also about the point where you saw the Japanese invasion at Buna, which I guess was in July 1942 or so?

It was before July I think.

17:30 **The decision not to bomb them, did you require approval to be able to bomb if you saw something?**

We didn't have any armaments. We didn't have any bombs. We went on a reconnaissance mission to find out. We wanted the fuel. We didn't want bombs. I can't remember whether we had come back from a mission but we certainly didn't have any bombs to drop. We didn't want to drop bombs because we didn't want to give away our presence virtually. No one fired a shot at us. We just observed it below the clouds and then went

18:00 back to Port Moresby.

That was not very far away at that point?

No. It took about one hour at the most to get back there. Buna is just up on the peninsula.

What was left at Port Moresby at that stage?

It was still pretty well intact. There weren't many bombs falling in Moresby then.

The Catalina squadron had left by then?

18:30 No. We were still up in Moresby at that time.

Can you tell me how the amalgamation of 11 Squadron and 20 Squadron happened?

They never amalgamated. We exchanged crews and things like that. The 11 Squadron was originally part Sunderlands and part Catalinas or originally part Sunderlands and part Walruses, those little things that used to be attached to 9 Squadron. Then 20 was formed entirely of Catalinas.

19:00 Then later on in 1943, 43 Squadron was reformed and that was the first amphibious one. That was the squadron that later on went over to the Darwin area to do mine laying and then another one was formed. That was after me.

So in Port Moresby, both 11 Squadron and 20 Squadron were at full strength?

Yes, virtually, if you can call it full strength, yes.

And there was some exchanging of crew?

Yes, all the way

19:30 through.

And you occupied the same area?

Yes. It operated as you say probably as the one squadron but we never actually amalgamated administratively.

You mentioned earlier the small amount of contact that you had had with the Americans, did you have any contact with British or Dutch forces?

No, we didn't really. When I was training at Rathmines I came across a few

20:00 Dornier [flying boat] pilots and crew. They came down from Timor and those places. That was the Dutch East Indies then and they came down. I came across Dorniers later on in some of the places we were at but never had any close contact with them at all.

Dorniers were the Dutch?

Yes. The Dornier is a flying boat and it is very much like the Catalina. There weren't many British out here at the time. They were mainly

20:30 naval people and they kept to their ships but there weren't many in that area of the Pacific.

What was the reputation of the Dutch at the time?

They were a daredevil lot. They would be in anything. We thought they were a crazy lot, that is about it. They were pretty good pilots but we hadn't a great deal of contact with them. We thought they were a crazy lot.

21:00 **Did you have much contact with the other services like the army and the navy?**

No we didn't. It was just the RAAF. We never did.

What was your personal feeling towards the Japanese?

They were just little animals that is all and other than just being little animals nothing really.

21:30 I hated their guts of course naturally and the way they operated. We did a few bestial things too, our services. It was nothing much really but the Japs were just a lot of mongrels really. They were animals in they way they behaved. They had great endurance though. They could live on a bit of rice for days and nothing else.

22:00 **Did you ever feel any guilt or concern about bombing the Japanese forces?**

No, none whatsoever.

Is there ever any concern about friendly fire? I know a couple of the POW [Prisoner of War] camps came under allied bombing at some stages?

No. We never had anything like that at all. It never came to us at all.

22:30 There was no problem there.

Did you ever experience people within aircrew, 20 Squadron or 11 Squadron, who weren't able to cope with the conditions or weren't able to cope with the stress?

One or two, yes. There was one skipper but I won't mention his name. There was one skipper and he crashed and he killed himself and the crew coming in.

Intentionally?

No, he just misjudged

23:00 it and he panicked. He should never have been made a skipper.

Was that judged from his actions there?

The crew reported it too and he should have been grounded straight away. He panicked quite a bit. As it was, he was coming in from an operation and crashed his flying boat and the crew went down with him.

No one sensed this amongst other members of the crew?

We heard it from other members of the crew.

23:30 They told us about him. I thought he was a nervous little fellow and he shouldn't have been involved. I don't know how he got there but there it was and he killed himself.

You mentioned the importance of humour earlier on?

Yes. It was an essential ingredient.

I also wanted to ask you about rumours, were there rumours flying around?

They were always flying around.

24:00 I can't pinpoint one of them at the moment but there are always rumours particularly when you are away from civilisation and you hear them. It is mainly hearsay. They are an essential ingredient and that has been the Australian make-up of humour even if it is corny.

What about superstition?

No. We never had anything like that, no.

24:30 It was never used in our vocabulary.

People didn't have lucky scarves or anything?

No, we never had any discussion and as I said it was never included in our vocabulary.

There were never any rituals that you went through before or after flights?

No, none at all.

If there was a loss of people within the squadron, were there ever any ceremonies that were held?

25:00 No. We would prefer not to dwell on it. It was as simple as that because we were flying too and we would be out on an operation the next day and they had gone the day before. One chap was with me and he was a wireless op too, his name was Hickson Sullet, he went out with another skipper and he went down. This was about in January I think when the Japs first came down. He was taken and he was taken to

25:30 Japan and he survived the war. After the war he came back. He was a New Zealander, Hickson Sullet. He was a nice chap and he was one chap that came back. He was a POW. His captain survived too. A few of them did so; he was very fortunate.

26:00 **I wanted to ask you also about when the operational base moved back to Cairns and you moved from Port Moresby. What were the facilities that you moved to down there, what was the make up of the squadron base there?**

The officers stayed at the Hyatt Hotel and we took over a hotel there for the sergeants or the top floor. That was all. Our flying

26:30 boats were at Trinity Bay. There weren't a great number of personnel there at all. That is all I can tell you. They opened another one at Bowen down there too to do maintenance there. We were just mainly operational from Cairns.

Cairns must have been a centre of military activity at the time?

27:00 Yes and so was Townsville and it was mainly Townsville I think. It has got a big base there now, Townsville. I can't recall any military here but obviously they were here.

The squadron headquarters sounds like it was a lot more comfortable in Cairns?

Our headquarters for our operations was in Townsville at a bank building.

27:30 The chap in charge of it was Bull Gearing, Group Captain Gearing, and he was in 10th Squadron in England. He got his DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] over there and he came out and he was sent up here. He made a visit there a little over twenty years ago to visit the operations room and I went and met him there. I have got his photograph. He is dead now.

Did you ever do convoy support of shipping?

28:00 Yes, the convoy work.

How did that work?

You got an assignment and you just went along and you stayed there for so long and somebody else came and replaced you and away you went wherever the convoy was going.

Would you literally be doing circles of support?

It was mainly that, yes, it was up and down. You were mainly looking at the sea-lanes that they were going through to make sure there was nothing left that was likely to come up and hit them. So it was mainly reconnaissance work as well as convoy.

28:30 **Can you tell me about leaving the squadron in March of 1943, was that difficult to leave because you'd been with them all that time?**

Yes, it was. There was Dewhurst and I. We were only three left in the crew, the original crew. It was he, Vic Knowles and I. I didn't like leaving him. As it turned out, it was fortunate I did really because it saved my life. Vic Knowles didn't go out on that

29:00 operation either. It was only Jack Dewhurst and he got the crew together for the CO to go out. It was a grab crew around the place that hadn't been together before. That is what happened there.

Did you have some sort of farewell before you left?

No, I don't think so.

You didn't have a quiet drink with Jack at all?

Yes, but after that I just went. The next day he went out and

29:30 I wasn't there for the first time. I don't know who the crew were with him but they all went down.

Did you know where you were being posted at that point?

The signal came through and I was being posted to No. 3 Wireless Air Gunners School to lecture there. My commission came through. In fact when it came through the CO, a chap called Connelly said, "Sergeant Harte, I have got two signals here. In my left hand, I have got a signal appointing you as

30:00 Flight Sergeant. In my right hand, I've got a signal discharging you from the RAAF and appointing you a commissioned officer. Which one will you have?" I said, "I'll have the one commissioned officer thanks." To get a commission you had to be discharged and then engaged again. That was routine.

Excuse me, Bernard, I'm just a little bit (UNCLEAR) about that. You had one to be a Flight Sergeant?

It came through from RAAF headquarters

30:30 somewhere and probably they got a bit mixed up there I don't know but somebody appointed me from Sergeant to Flight Sergeant. Then another signal came, probably from the same RAAF headquarters but from different personnel, saying, "He has been granted a commission as a pilot officer."

Had you applied for either of those?

It wasn't me alone. Some of the other chaps from the squadron were

31:00 commissioned too. George McMaster was one. He got his commission too.

The Flight Sergeant would have meant that you would have stayed operational?

No. It had nothing to do with what you were doing, it was just your rank.

So your job would have remained the same?

It could have. As I got the commission through, I had to be posted later on. I stayed there about another month or so. At

31:30 Lavarack, they were trainees of course for Wireless Air Gunners and while you were training the discipline was pretty high. Whenever an officer walked into the room you had to stand up. I was Sergeant Harte one day and I wore my pips as an officer and the next day when I came in as Pilot Officer Harte and they all had to stand up. They were laughing their heads off and they thought it was a great joke but they all did. That is when they called me the Purple Heart. I got on pretty well with my students.

32:00 **Were you given the commission as part of what it took to be an instructor?**

No. It had nothing to do with that.

Isn't that quite unusual to go from being a sergeant?

No. It was a reward for my flying and the responsibility I held during the Catalina days. That is why other chaps in the squadron got it too. It was not only me. It had nothing to do with the Wireless Air Gunners School. If I had stayed there as Flight Sergeant I would have made probably a

32:30 Chief Instructor or something like that.

That must have been one the prouder moments of your career?

My wife to be came out and stayed there at the time too. She came up and unfortunately we had a drink together in the pub one day and the CO walked in there and I should have been out there teaching. I thought, "I'm going to lose my commission now." Anyway, I didn't but I was pleased to get out of the place though.

33:00 **Did that feel like you had achieved a big part of what you had set out to do?**

Yes, I would say so, yes.

You took it as always being officer material?

Yes. It was responsibility mainly and a reward for what you had done. At least the RAAF didn't forget us all together. After we had joined up so early in the piece and got no recognition at all until we were paraded to get it and

33:30 then they rewarded us after that, which was rather good I thought.

Could you describe Maryborough for me?

It was a big town in those days. It was probably about the size it is now or it might be a bit bigger. It was renowned for its tomatoes of course, Maryborough; it was not a big industry there. There were a lot of farms around there but it was a rather influential

34:00 town and a very nicely established town. It didn't suffer during the war years to speak of at all. It was a nice pretty little spot, Maryborough.

How large an establishment was No. 3 Wireless Air Gunners School?

It was about the biggest I think. They had about the two of them in Australia. There was another one down Ballarat way but they were both full-up training aircrew and that was my job, to train aircrew chaps.

34:30 We worked pretty hard. They were all very good students.

Do you recall how many other instructors there were?

No, I don't. I can't recall them at all and I don't think anybody would remember me either.

Was that a role that you fell into quite naturally?

Yes, quite naturally. Anything to do with instructing seemed to come fairly

35:00 easily to me the same as it did in broadcasting later on in my period of civil activity training staff and announcers.

What does it take to be a good instructor?

To know what you are saying and to project your voice. If you can't project your voice, you will never be a successful instructor. You have got to project your voice and know how to do it and that is it.

35:30 **How important is it to understand the individuals that you are speaking to and how they learn?**

You couldn't spend too much time on individuals because you'd get nothing done really. You would just have to blanket them or put them in a blanket really. With any of them having any problems, yes, but not get down to one at a time with individuals. You had to blanket them all as trainees.

36:00 **How would you describe the morale of the students?**

Very good. There were no worries and I never had a problem there.

Were there any major disciplinary concerns that stood out?

No, not at all.

I was also interested in your time at No. 1 Officer Training Unit at Sale?

36:30 Yes. I was only there a couple of months. I was sent there to crew up on Beauforts to go back to New Guinea or somewhere up there.

What was the transition?

Mainly it was the pilots and the aircrew getting used to the aeroplane, that was what it was all about.

What did it take for you to get used to the Beaufort?

It didn't take any time at all because I was so used to all that stuff and the equipment. I just went into it quite easily.

37:00 **What were the main differences to the Catalinas?**

It was cramped and small. We called them pissy little things and flying coffins. They were cramped and small and there was no space and it was just a very light bomber. It was nothing. It wouldn't do much damage anyway.

But the role and the equipment?

It was easy.

It was very similar?

Yes, it was no trouble.

37:30 It was just being cramped up there. It was terrible. I was pleased when the RAAF Headquarters grabbed me and put me on a staff course. I was pleased to get out because I didn't want to go in these planes. All the crew and the pilots were untrained. They had never had any operational experience. I was the only one who had.

They were being sent out of Sale?

They would be going from Sale to New Guinea somewhere to a

38:00 squadron or to establish a squadron.

Can you tell me a little bit about the staff officers' course?

It was like entrance to a university course, an entrance exam to a university and studying for that. It was very high academically speaking. It was mostly based on administration

38:30 and the usual studies you go through, like in the higher school certificate say. It was mostly administration.

Was this a necessary transition in your commission?

No. It was a lot of work, yes.

But was it something that came with your commission, staff training?

No, it was a special staff course. We were selected from various unit squadrons throughout Australia and England. It was quite a feather in one's

39:00 cap to be selected for a staff course. You don't apply for those. They put you on them. The Air Board decides to send you there because of some responsibility they want to put in your hands later on. Mine was as a Staff Officer Radio Training.

So the course prepares you to be a staff officer?

A staff officer, yes.

39:30 It is not necessarily in radio training.

Can you explain what a staff officer does?

It is mainly administration. It is normal stuff like that. That is what it is.

What sort of function do they play within the broader service?

Well they go back to whatever category they are in and develop it from there from the administrative point of view.

Developing a policy?

No. One chap was a pilot and

40:00 I don't know what he was doing before, Hughes his name was, what he did when he got through the staff course I don't know. I don't know what he was appointed to. I should have known but I don't know what he was appointed to.

Was it difficult for you to make the mental shift from flying ops and being in that head space to actually studying and focusing on books?

Yes. It was odd for all of us really. We didn't have time to play up at all. My

40:30 wife was then in the AWAS and I would see her now and again.

What was here role in the AWAS?

She was a comptometrist. Before there were computers, it was like a big adding machine. You carted it around with you. Comptometrists were very much in demand. She would speak in terms of decimal points. You wouldn't say twelve or something it would be twelve point four five or something like that. She was very good

41:00 mathematically. It was a very select bunch. She worked for Nestles at Newcastle before she joined the AWAS. She was a very brilliant woman really rather than me.

So she didn't mind the maths?

No.

Did she like the guns?

No.

Bernard, we're right on the end of that tape.

Tape 8

00:30 **Bernard you were just talking about your wife being in the AWAS, I'm interested in your experience with WAAAF members during the war. Did you come across them?**

They came in later on about the time the Japs came into it. It might have been a bit before. We had them just in bases around the place at the time. She came as I said from the Nestles Company and joined the

01:00 AWAS as a comptometrist. We all had a soft spot for her too with her Nestles association. He was an old storeman and I think he was a World War I digger down below in the basement of the Nestles warehouse in Newcastle. He used to get these tins of sweetened cream. He would pick them up one at a time and throw them at the thick wall at the back and dint them you see. They couldn't

01:30 sell them after that. So through his courtesy and my wife's courtesy, she would present us through his courtesy these tins of sweetened cream, which we took away to the Islands, and we were very grateful for that. I got very sweet on her obviously for that reason. She was with the AWAS for a couple of years and we married in Newcastle at the Methodist Mission.

02:00 **What were some of the roles that the WAAAF members were doing?**

In signals mainly and despatch and stores and, of course, cooking and things like that and culinary activity. It was mainly in signals and things like running typewriters and Morse code. They learned Morse code as well. Some of them were in the first aid section but mostly in the signals section and cipher and things like that. Some of them had very responsible jobs as cipher operators and activities like that.

02:30 **Were any of the men resistant to having women in the force?**

No. We didn't have enough personnel and we needed the women. They were all very helpful and we liked them very much indeed.

Were any of the men surprised by the quality of the job the women were able to do?

Yes, we all were. I was too. It was the first time I realised that women didn't necessarily belong in the home alone.

That is something that really hit you?

03:00 Yes. And that goes for today too. Women belong in industry and business as much as men if not more.

When you say, "if not more," I'm interested in that.

You will find some women are better at certain jobs than men.

What are some of those jobs?

Well, perhaps I should say psychology. My daughter is a Doctor of Psychology, as you know, and in

03:30 assessing human activity, women psychologists to me seem to be better.

That's very interesting. Graduating from your staff officer's course must have been a proud moment for you as well given the difficult nature of it?

Yes. That is when I got this appointment to Eastern Area as the staff officer there. That is when I

04:00 asked RAAF Headquarters as I'd been out of operations for a while if I'd got to go and live with squadrons and perhaps go back into the combat zones. I would like to get a renewal of experience again just to familiarise. And that's when I went to that area there in the Northern Territory and did that operation over Timor.

That was out of Hughes?

I think it was Hughes but I'm not too sure or Batchelor. I think it was 18 or 12 Squadron up there. It was a RAAF squadron but B-25s,

04:30 Mitchell bombers. They were very good. They were called "Pistol Packing Mamas", which was an American expression, because the guns were tied to the hip of the aeroplane, the fuselage, like that. There was something about them. I think they had a joke with me too. I went, as you know, as a supernumerary. The skipper said, "Now Bernie, you just stand over there, that was behind the pilot, just stand there while we go and

05:00 dive bomb and you'll be all right". I had forgotten or I didn't know anything. These Pistol Packing Mamas their machine guns had belts on them and the belts came inside the fuselage. When the pilot pressed the guns to fire the bullets would go out but the cartridges would all come flailing around inside with cordite and the whole lot and you couldn't even see. They didn't tell me that. They thought,

05:30 "Here is this bloke from RAAF Headquarters, we'll show him." I had a hell of a fright standing there exactly where he told me to stand. All his bullets went out but the cartridges came all around me. That was one episode I had with them. They had their joke except one of the blokes got shot down and that sobered us up a bit. He was a friend of mine.

Were they American crewmembers?

No. They were all Australians. It was an Australian squadron

06:00 flying Mitchell B-25s. I think that was the only squadron of them.

Which were only recently introduced?

Yes. They hadn't been going that long.

How were the crews trained up for them?

It was the usual way. There was nothing greatly different than other aeroplanes. They were a beautiful little light bomber the B-25 Mitchell.

06:30 **Having I guess got your operational experience back, you were posted then to 11 Group?**

No. From there I took up my appointment at Eastern Area at Point Piper in Sydney.

Sorry, that was before that.

Yes. Then I covered there from Queanbeyan near Canberra up to Lowood in Queensland. I was there a couple of months and then I was posted up to 11 Group, which was based at Morotai in the Celebes in the

07:00 Western Pacific, really.

Can you describe for me what Morotai looked like at that point in the war?

I can't really. It was just an island and the Americans were dug in there. It had a radio station and you'd hear the voice of so and so. They were mostly Americans and they would get their radio stations going straight away. I wasn't there long enough to really absorb it. I flew around there a fair bit and then from there I went to Borneo and I was there at

07:30 Tarakan when the Japs packed it in, then I went back to Borneo for the surrender. The surrender was taken by Field Marshall Blamey and I was there at that ceremony.

You weren't flying as a normal wireless air gunner were you?

No. I was a staff officer.

So what role did you perform within the flight?

No. I only went to New Guinea to inspect a squadron or something like that.

08:00 **That would require flying around?**

Yes. You would go and see the squadron and check it out and that was all.

Would it include going on operations?

Yes. Then I came straight back to Morotai when the Japs packed it in, so I didn't stay there for any

period of time.

Were you there for that period of the Borneo invasion?

No. It was just after when the Australians landed there.

08:30 They went to Balikpapan and Labuan and Tarakan.

The Australians had made those landings when you arrived?

They had just made them, yes.

And shortly after that was the Japanese surrender?

Yes.

Can you tell me how you received the news of the end of hostilities?

I can't recall that. Somebody probably raced up the strip and told me I think. In fact I think it was my cousin. I had a cousin who was stationed in

09:00 Tarakan, Roddy Maynard, and he might have raced up and told me. I met him there and sat on a forty-four gallon drum with him for a couple of hours. I think he raced up and told me about that.

You don't recall your experience?

No. It was just an anti-climax really. There was no reason to celebrate. There was no one else on the strip. My main memory of landing there…

09:30 I went over there on a C-47 again but the strip was sitting on an oil well. It was all oil there. They couldn't get a firm base so our crowd put steel plates in. The planes would come down there and the oil would ooze through. It was an old oil well and that is where the strip was in Tarakan. It was a most interesting

10:00 experience and I remember that more than anything. When I got back, the organisation was underway for the surrender ceremony. The Japs were being brought in then.

I can't believe after such a long and enduring period of conflict there wasn't cause for celebration?

Yes. I was never one for a great celebration but I suppose you are right. It was an anti-climax really but we were going on and on and on and we thought something was going to happen soon and it came about. As a staff officer you

10:30 are not supposed to run around and have high jinks and all that.

Did you hear about the bomb?

Yes. That came later. That is right. I did hear about that but not a great deal. It did come before that period.

You had flown over Leyte not long before and seen the armada?

Yes, that's right. That was a wonderful experience.

11:00 **What did you think the end of hostilities meant for you?**

Well, the managing director of the broadcasting company I worked for kept writing me letters and trying to get me out and all this kind of stuff. They trained me to be in the permanent air force. That is what staff officers had been trained for, to be permanent. I rather regret that I didn't because

11:30 I would have got a posting to Japan as maybe attaché or something like that later on. I would have got a good posting because they were looking for staff officers to send up there. Like a fool I didn't. I went into broadcasting as a chief engineer this time. To take my wife there was wrong. She had Bright's Disease, kidney trouble, and it got really acute while she was having our first child at Kingaroy. It wasn't a very good

12:00 experience. One of my technicians got killed on a motorbike and I wasn't very happy. I went from there to 2UW in Sydney.

Had your wife been living at Kingaroy while you'd been away?

No. We didn't get married until 1943. She came from Newcastle and stayed in Sydney and Newcastle. It was after we gave Kingaroy away that

12:30 I went to 2UW and we settled in Sydney for a couple of years.

Before moving on to your post-war life, I would just like you to take me through the experience of the Japanese surrender and seeing General Blamey.

There was nothing much there. They were very despondent the Japs and very polite. I have got

photographs of them there. I said, “A penny for their thoughts.” I wrote the story of the surrender. They were just downcast and rather immaculately dressed. They were only little

13:00 blokes of course. They were the officers and they just went up and handed their sword over to Blamey. Blamey just took it. He was rather an arrogant sort of fellow. The band played and that was it.

How close were you to the ceremony?

Probably about ten or fifteen feet. The biggest ceremony of course was in Tokyo Harbour with General MacArthur but that came later in September.

13:30 That was the one in our area.

It is quite remarkable that you began your combat experience, your operational experience, up there in the vast open South Pacific area of operations and to end up ten or fifteen feet from the conclusion of it?

Yes. When you come to think of it, it was. It is true and I suppose there is some satisfaction in that. We never seemed to

14:00 get very excited about any of this stuff then. I suppose we had been at it for so long. I had five and a half years in the RAAF and most of it in combat experience or associated with it directly or indirectly.

How long was it then before you were brought back to Australia?

I pretty well came back within weeks to Australia. I was discharged I think in

14:30 Brisbane. My wife came up and met me. She got her discharge from the AWAS and we went up to Kingaroy and got a little place there. That is where our first child was born. After a little over a year, we left to join 2UW and bought a place in Epping in Sydney.

The final decision to discharge from the RAAF, was that a big decision?

15:00 Yes. I am sorry I got out so quickly. I should have stayed in because that is what we were trained for.

Were you motivated by beginning a family?

Not really. I was a bit panicked really. You say to yourself, “I wonder what I am going to do after the war,” and, “Can I get a job?” I didn’t realise that we were in this affluent society and I panicked and here was this opportunity for me going back to my own job again virtually with a high elevation and that was

15:30 it. That was terrible going back to it.

Being in a relatively small town like that after being in action?

The transmitter was about twenty miles out but we were living in the town, yes. My chief, who was the chief engineer, he hadn’t done anything to the transmitter to speak of like replacing and it needed a lot of work done. For example, the rectifiers had

16:00 had it. And they weighed about half a ton and I had to get them shipped up from Sydney and all this kind of stuff shortly after I got there and it was a hell of a worry. And I got a whole bank of rectifiers into the transmitting station and do it up generally. He had left and gone to 2GB and I saw him there when I went down there. He died of course. He has been dead for years. He was the flavour of the century in Asia.

16:30 **How did you adapt into the slow pace of peacetime and civilian life?**

Quite easily, surprisingly, it was quite easy really and it didn’t seem to worry me a great deal. I increased the pace of my civilian life when I got involved with broadcasting and running my own recording studio. I built that. We built our own equipment at

17:00 Epping and then I worked for 2UW as well you see. I was really at a high pace then getting involved in recording music and all that kind of stuff on a disc. It wasn’t on tapes or anything like that; they hadn’t come in then.

What inspired you or motivated you to work at an increased pace or approach your life at an increased pace?

I suppose it was to try and earn a living and more money.

17:30 **Did the disciplined lifestyle that you had learned aid you when you went back to civilian life?**

Yes. That has helped a lot.

In the period immediately following the war did thoughts of those that you had lost start to catch up with you?

Not immediately after but years after, yes. It wasn’t immediately after; it was years after.

18:00 Yes, they did. I was busy and we were bringing up children. My second child was born in Kempsey. From 2UW, I was appointed manager/engineer of a radio station most of which had been washed out to sea in a big flood. I was given the task of rebuilding it and that was a big job. There was nothing there and I had to start building it virtually and recruiting staff. They didn't have any

18:30 staff to speak of and I did most of the announcing and engineering work myself until I started building it up and recruiting and writing the scripts for ads and selling the ads. Then gradually I employed staff and built up a very big directional radio station. It was the biggest of its kind at the time.

Did you get back into managing people?

Yes, I like managing and

19:00 mainly designing and creating studio equipment for radio. I enjoyed that.

Can you tell me about creating life? What was the birth of your first child like?

It was a bit of a worry because I was on shift work at the station and my wife being sick that was a bit of a worry. The second one was born when we were in Kempsey there and again it wasn't

19:30 easy because my wife was there and I was there and I told the doctor to come but he had a case and he couldn't get there. So the little baby started coming out and it was only the ambulanceman who was there. I held up the light and he started bringing the baby out. Just at that time the doctor, a huge man of about six foot six, came in and pulled him out just in time.

20:00 He had these huge hands and he said, "Bernard, you have a male child." I went crook at him for being late but I shouldn't have because he was on another job. He was born when I was living in these flats and it used to be a hospital. On the floor above where we were, there was a balustrade going up and a winding staircase in the front. We found we couldn't get the stretcher down through this

20:30 way with my wife on it and the baby. We tried this way and that way and we couldn't get the stretcher down. We took her back twice and gave her a cup of tea. Then we decided one thing that I would go ahead; they were waiting for us in the theatre of the hospital for her to have a baby up there. I said, "I will go ahead and I will take the baby". I took the baby to the hospital in the ambulance. The wife was to follow in the

21:00 taxi we had you see. He was there to take her. What happened was in Kempsey there the railway train runs across the road. And if it's a goods train invariably it will stop and shunt and cars can be held up by ten minutes waiting for the train. That is what happened. I went straight up to the hospital with the baby and my wife had to sit there in the taxi for another ten minutes or so. I arrived there and I said to the sister in charge,

21:30 "I've just come with the baby." She said, "No, we're waiting for your wife to come with the baby." I said, "I've had the baby." They said, "No, that can't be right, we are waiting for Mrs. Harte." I said, "This is the baby. We've had the baby." So I gave the baby to Sister Simon and she took the baby into the theatre. Then ten minutes later my wife marched in from the taxi and I'd put her in it.

22:00 I just couldn't get over it. It was the laugh of Kempsey for years and probably still is. I bring that up now with my son and everybody has a bit of a joke about the Kempsey days when he was there. That is, how he was born and it was another ten years before Jane was born. When she was born, I was in Rotary [Club] at, it was at a place called Bellingen, and we at the Rotary Club at Kempsey decided to…

22:30 **You were telling us about being a father?**

The other one was Jane. We were in Rotary and we decided to go over to Bellingen because their Rotary Club was being launched and it was Charter Night. It was held in the School of Arts at Bellingen. It wasn't really good weather but five of us went across from Kempsey. We were in this School of Arts where this charter function was being held and a tornado came up. It blew

23:00 part of the roof off the School of Arts and put the place in darkness. We were stranded there. We couldn't get back because the rivers had come up and we were swamped and we couldn't get back to Kempsey. So, we were billeted and we were there for about four or five days. I was billeted with the Sara quads. That was Percy Sara and they had the quads. It was in the Women's Weekly and it was all over Australia really.

23:30 They were well known, Percy Sara and Betty Sara. They had the Sara quads while he was in Bellingen and he was the ambulance officer there. I was billeted in their house. I woke up in the morning and there were all these little kids crawling all over me, four of them. We ran out of clothes and Percy Sara loaned me a pair of his trousers to get around there. The

24:00 rivers receded and we went back there. And the first Rotary meeting we held, the sergeant-at-arms [club master of ceremonies, roll caller] and a bit of a wag, Bill Freebody said, "Bernie's been wearing Percy Sara's pants. Something is going to happen to the Harte family." To the day, nine months and a day Jane was born. That was quite a laugh around the place then, me wearing Percy Sara's pants, because he'd produced all these children. Anyway, that was in my Kempsey days.

24:30 **What does it take to be a good father?**

Consideration to your wife, number one, and your children after that. I didn't give enough consideration to my children. I should have spent more time with them and given more consideration to my wife. You think of those things now but at the time you are moving at such a pace that becomes everything and the number one priority is what you are doing and not what you should be doing.

So your career back in radio

25:00 **obviously was stimulating you?**

Yes. There was never a dull moment in radio with me.

Can you tell me all about how radio had changed during the war period?

It became a necessity for people to listen to the wireless during the war to find out what was happening in the news activity and have a relief from the anxiety of the war with radio shows and

25:30 soap operas too. The radio shows like Jack Davey, they came later on of course, but there were similar shows like that.

And the news service took on a new significance in radio?

Yes it did. It was very important. Radio actually developed more during the war with people finding it necessary to listen to the radio really to survive. With serials, when they took on, like soap operas and

26:00 shows like that, people would listen to the radio while they went about their chores. With television you have got to sit down. To me the two greatest blights on society today are the television set and the motorcar. The motorcar because people still prefer to go short distances in a motorcar rather than walk and with the television set because people will watch television and then have an evening meal and go to bed after that without any

26:30 exercise. The other thing too is with television you don't have to think. With radio, you have to conjure up the image of what I look like and what you look like and what the scene looks like. You don't have to do that any more, it is all laid on.

What about the technological developments that had happened during World War II? There must have been a lot in terms of transmission and reception?

Yes. There wasn't a great deal but certainly a lot when frequency modulation came in. It really came in after the war but it was used in America before the war.

27:00 They had brought in improved fidelity like simile reproduction and that. The television set was established of course some years after the war but there were experiments with television being conducted. The first experiments of any consequence in Australia in television were in Brisbane in the old Observatory Tower. The Observatory was built by the convicts on Wickham Terrace in Brisbane to function as a windmill. It never did. They had to tread the mill.

27:30 A chap called Petrie came out and fixed it later on, so that observatory was used by the weather bureau for a while. A doctor in Brisbane and the radio engineer they experimented with television, the mechanical method, from that observatory tower.

In terms of recording technology, that must have advanced a great deal during the war?

Yes.

They had introduced magnetic audiotape and that sort of thing?

Yes, that is very true.

28:00 The latvaphone was the first recorder imported into Australia by the ABC. It was a form of wire and it was a great huge thing. It was like a big organ. Then came the wire recorder as we know it, and we had them made in Australia by Pyrox. They became an improvement. They improved on these wire recorders. Then came the disc recorders and they were improved too because to make a

28:30 recording in the early days of recording, it had to be on a wax surface and only by established recording companies. They would cut a groove in this wax and then electroplate it so it was hard. That is how it was done. So if you made a recording, you couldn't stop it and it would go back again and you had to wait and do the whole lot again. So then

29:00 the wax discs were not so good. With broadcasting then came the acetate and the acetate was like a thin bit of paint really. It was spread over an aluminium disc. It was called cellulose acetate. You could cut a groove on these new things provided they didn't get too stale. It brought instantaneous recordings into broadcasting stations. In the studios themselves they could record

29:30 shows and commercials and things like that on their own recording machines. Later on the wire recorder came and then the tape recorder came. That was developed a lot in Germany after the war and in America.

There must have been a large increase in commercialism and marketing in the post war era?

Indeed.

And commercial radio flourished?

Yes and it stimulated the sale of gramophone records too,

30:00 of 78 [78 revolutions per minute (rpm)] gramophone records, radio did all that. There was a lot of stimulus in the advertising then and people were accepting advertising whereas before it had to be seen in print before. Established firms, even Bushell's [tea company] and things like that, would only advertise in print where they could see the product and not hear it. People like that took a lot of working on.

30:30 **Did you see the role of women irreversibly change as a result of their war effort? Were they taking a greater role in public life and within professional life?**

Yes, after the war.

Was that case in radio as well?

Yes, it was. We had women announcers before the war but not many. After the war, there was almost a surfeit of them with people involved in production

31:00 and announcing as well but not compering the shows; that was pretty well all left to men at that stage and still is generally speaking. That was one role that they didn't play so much but it was only natural. You had to yell and shout and things like that. They then came into production and continuity, in other words writing scripts for commercials, and even writing plays including that woman who wrote me a letter recently and things like

31:30 that. They took a big part in radio then.

There were some pretty dramatic impacts on radio and on Australian society more broadly, what do you think the main impacts or changes that incurred within yourself were as a result of World War II?

I suppose news really stimulated one's inventiveness to get news out and do it a bit differently. I established I think one of the first if not

32:00 the first country radio station news services rather than buying it from the ABC or somebody else. I established my own news service with a journalist there. We started that in 1950, which is going back a long while. That gave a lot of stimulation to radio because people would listen to our news in preference to the others because it was all local.

What was the impact on you personally and what were the main changes in you as a result of your war years?

32:30 I don't know. I can't answer that really. I just continued on at the pace that I was doing. It was a very strong pace and wanting to create things all the time. It wouldn't be the war that did that so much. It was my own initiative I suppose for good or bad.

So what were the main lessons you learned from your war years?

Controlling one's temper. I was never a

33:00 hot-tempered person but controlling one's feelings perhaps a bit too much. I controlled them too much and I didn't speak out. Constraint, yes, and also I learned to do things that you have to find a way of doing with improvisation.

In terms of your repatriation and reintegration back to civilian life,

33:30 **do you think that the government supported you appropriately and adequately?**

No. They didn't do anything really. We could get a War Service Home Loan but that's about all. But with the interest if you hadn't paid enough off when you sold it, you wouldn't get much out of it. I don't think we were treated well enough really in the early days.

What about in terms of your health?

34:00 I've been fortunate to be fairly good with my health. I get a disability pension of only forty percent. I get the full pension and a disability of forty percent. It is to do with my throat, which gives me a problem at times, and I get a bit of a rash and a few things like that. It is only a nervous situation and that is all created during my long flying career in the war.

34:30 **So is it the result of the tension of operations?**

Yes, that's what they've got it down for. It manifests itself later on in life.

Is that symptomatic of what they now know of as post-traumatic stress?

Yes, it is really. A lot of it is. It hasn't been fully recognised yet by governments, this post-traumatic stress as you call it. That includes the nightmares I was telling you about,

35:00 which they are not fully recognising yet, which I think is the same situation. Otherwise most of my friends are dead now and I'm getting on to eighty-six and I'm still around. I don't know whether I should be here or not really but that's it so let's hope I can keep going.

Did your experience of losing so many people and being so present to death give you any philosophies about death?

35:30 No, no philosophy at all, just sadness. It was just plain sadness and that manifests itself greatly in my make-up. There was nothing else. There was no other repercussion at all.

What is the meaning of life to Bernard?

Getting on with trying to create things all the time. I don't know whether I'm successful. I'm creating things up there in my office as you know with

36:00 making records and writing stories again for publications and doing another book hopefully for publication. That is getting on with life in my view. If I stopped that, I think I would vegetate. So while I am doing that, I feel some satisfaction in life. I would like to be married again but I haven't got anyone yet who would run the risk of being with me.

How important

36:30 **were either formal associations or maintaining your friendships from your service years?**

After the war, we had these clubs like the Catalina Club, I remember that, and the Air Force Officers' Club and things like that. They were really good but they've sort of withered on the vine in recent years. I suppose my closest contact is John Hamilton in Maryland in the United States of America who comes out every two years. Hopefully he will come out

37:00 this year.

Were they important for you those relationships and formal associations in the years following the war?

Not greatly but dwelling on it later, yes. Not at the time but dwelling on it yes indeed.

Were you able to discuss your experiences with your family and friends?

If I spoke about the war to my kids, they would laugh their heads off. It is only now they have matured – and they are in their fifties now, my sons are,

37:30 their late fifties and my daughter is forty-four – that they are starting to take an interest in the war because they've got their own kids you see. I am pleased to say that my son's three children they march at Anzac Day wearing a replica of my medals. I think that is rather good and I like that very much. At the time, they just laughed their heads off and they thought it was a great joke. Later they sobered up in their thoughts.

38:00 **What were the best of times for you during the war?**

Flying in Catalinas, they were the best; and flying – operational flying.

And the worst?

Administration and being stuck in an office or something like that was terrible.

What about your proudest moment?

38:30 I suppose I could say when I left the squadron and I felt it was a job well done and that was my proudest moment. From 1941 to 1943 was a fair time to be flying around and getting out fairly unscathed. Yes, that would be my proudest moment in 1943.

Do you carry any regrets from your war service?

No, I can't say I have. I did a lot of stupid things during my war service but, no, I

39:00 don't have any regrets. I met my wife, which was very good. She died in 1974, you see, when Jane was still at high school and going into high school from primary school. I am proud that Jane and the boys have done so well for themselves in life without any real hang-ups with drugs and all this kind of stuff.

39:30 **How do you feel about the public and the media perception of the role the Catalinas played in the war?**

It is not well known really. It is not well known. Incidentally, I have been in touch with the Port Authority in Cairns and they are doing work on one of the foreshores there and I have suggested they might name one of their projects there 'The Catalina Plaza' or something. They have come back to me and said they'll give it some consideration. The Deputy Mayor, Margaret Gill, of the

40:00 Cairns Council has come to me and said she's going to push it as much as possible. So hopefully I will go down to the unveiling of a building there called The Catalina Plaza. They have a monument there opposite the RSL [Returned and Services League] Club but this would actually perpetuate the memory of the Catalinas and the role they played in the area and give more publicity to the stories I have just told you about the Catalinas and the beer bottles and things like that.

Just quickly, we are right near the end of this tape but

40:30 **why was it important for you to speak to us today and have your story told today?**

To pass on to the next generation and keep it in perpetuity. Some of my stories on radio that I haven't recorded are lost, you see, and I don't want to do that again. I wrote five hundred stories in about eight years and a lot of them will stay there and a lot of them will go onto computers and things. Some of them are already

41:00 and I am producing now CDs [Compact Discs] on some of my historic stuff. Yes, to convey a message and impart to other people but not me, it is too late for me to gain any benefit, but perhaps the next generation will gain something from that and it might help to shape their career and their attitude to life. I rather hope so.

Thank you very much for contributing.

My pleasure.