

Australians at War Film Archive

James Speedy (Lloyd) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/247>

Tape 1

00:33 **Lloyd, where were you born?**

I was born in Preston. Born in Preston to a family of nine, and I was born on the 24th August. I'd better say 19 because it was 1917, nearly a hundred years isn't it, eighty six years ago, just on. I lived in Preston I suppose with my family until I was about the age of twelve and then my father, who worked

01:00 in a major hospital north of Melbourne.

So until at the age of twelve you were in Preston and then?

At the age of twelve I was in Preston and after that time my father, who worked in a major hospital north of Melbourne, had to go and live on the premises and of course we shifted out there and from there I attended a state school in Preston.

01:30 And it was a government hospital and the government then would transport the kids of the people that lived on the premises to school and so I went by horse and wagon to the Tyler Street State School and they'd come again and pick me up at night. I stopped there I suppose till I was married in 1942. When I got married I stopped at this hospital

02:00 and then we shifted out. I met Val and we got married. Ah, my education of course, after the state school I went to Northcote High School, the Depression was on. Things were pretty tough. Men out of work after the 1929 timber strike started it and that went on till, well the Depression went on till the war and men, their families were getting something

02:30 like three shillings a day, thirty cents a day, that's all they were getting. Of course they'd also get food vouchers and clothing vouchers and their entertainment was attended to by community singing that they'd have in different halls around the place. I sat for the public service exam and got into the public service exam and I'm not sure but I think I started on something like five or ten shillings a week. That was the wage. Ah, I worked in there

03:00 as the lowest of office boys, which was a messenger and I worked there for some four or five years in the Public Works Department and it's a funny thing but today in the public service they change that often, and I'll tell you when I left, I stopped there till I retired at the age of sixty and in those days most of the politicians were Sirs. Most

03:30 of the heads of departments were Sirs. They were all knighted because this was our culture. It was King and country you know. Everything was the flag. Everything was the Queen or the King, whatever the case may be and so I had a great insight you know into how the public service worked. One thing that did impress me when I was a young lad that I worked in the public works department and I had a labour minister. I shouldn't have said that, I had a minister of the crown and I suppose for

04:00 a few years I, oh eighteen months I suppose I attended [him]. He'd come in and he'd ring his bell and then I'd go and he'd say, "Get me so and so." Hand him the phone, ring up, put it down he'd hand it to you to put down, you put it down and he wouldn't put it down. He'd have a couple of phones, "Get me so and so", and not once in that time did that gentleman say to me, "Good morning son." I then went to the next minister who was a Sir, Sir George Gowdy [?], one of the greatest gentlemen you could ever meet. Wonderful man and I think he had a great

04:30 impact on me as to how life should be lived. He was terrific. I left there and I was sent to the Taxation Department and you're saying, "Well don't say things that you don't want to say." In fact, I then went to the Taxation Department and I've been through thousands and thousands and thousands of factories in Victoria in my lifetime and that is the worst place I have ever worked. It was a shocker.

05:00 We had compulsory overtime at the Taxation Department, three nights a week. War had just broken out. It was a protected industry. You couldn't get out of it. Three nights a week and for three nights a week till ten o'clock at night you would work and I think I cleared nine shillings. Nine shillings a week are my

wages. That's what my wages would be at that. That's for the benefit of the young people, you know before

05:30 the war that's when the first counter lunches in hotels came into being. You couldn't buy a counter lunch if you didn't buy a beer and of course I didn't drink, so I'd take my mate down. You'd get an allowance from the government of one and sixpence I suppose, which is what eighteen cents. You'd get that from the government for your dinner and we used to go down to the pub, I'd buy a glass of beer and give him the glass of beer and I could then buy a counter lunch, cost one penny.

06:00 One cent. Sausages, only one thing you could have. You could have it as long as it was sausages and spuds. That's all it was.

Sounds good to me.

Yeah, in some time along there, they then brought in compulsory military training and what had happened was you would, oh at this time we go back to September, the start of the war in 1939.

06:30 I think it was the 3rd September war broke out and on the 20th September 1939, I was with my brother, on that Monday I think it was that we were going to go and join up but I'm there and I think young people wouldn't do it today but on the Sunday I had a motorbike and side car, I had my girlfriend, which was Val in the side car, and we went rabbiting and we came home through Heidelberg with rabbits. Ferrets were on the back, rabbits hanging over the motorbike and

07:00 lo and behold I finished up under a bus. I had a broken thigh and that put me in hospital for nine months in the Melbourne Hospital. Coming out of the hospital of course, they then had this three months' military training. Everybody had to do it. No, like you draw your hat, name out the hat or your birth date, everybody had to do it at the age of eighteen and so they had this and I think the first couple I was exempt, well I was in hospital for some. Other time, I wasn't fit enough when I got out

07:30 and I think the last time I went in they put me in down at Mount Martha and they said, "Well in case something goes with your leg", this is the thinking of the military. "In case something goes with your leg we'll put you in the field ambulance unit." So I spent three months in a field ambulance unit, did military training. Prior to this of course in my peacetime, and that's why I'm a bit disjointed (UNCLEAR) at Mont Park and we were at this hospital in the northern suburbs and there was no

08:00 groups there where you could have scouts, so I thought, "Oh well, we'll do something." And as a means of supplementing your income too, I joined the 5th Battalion Victorian Scottish Regiment and spent about three years from 1934 to 1937 or thereabouts was the stint with the Victorian Scottish Regiment. After I'd done my three months in, ah it'd be 1940, I suppose or '41

08:30 thereabouts, I thought one day, "Well, I'm going to get out of this. I'm going to join the air force." I don't know why. I said to the young lady that rang me up that I'd joined because a lot of people were out of work at that time and they joined the services you know and Val said, "Well that's not quite right." But it was right that a lot of them did because they were now going to get sixty cents a day instead of thirty cents a day and so I joined the air force. And I suddenly realised the other day why I joined the air force because when I was about

09:00 sixteen or seventeen I wanted to join but you wouldn't do what young people do today, just go and join, you had to ask your parents you know and I had the qualifications which was English, maths if I can remember and physics to go into the air force and he wouldn't let me...

Your dad?

I never made it, so at this stage I went in to enlist, I suppose you'd call it for the air force

09:30 and I walked in and I suppose we talked about the services and I was duly got in. I was medically unfit for overseas service. I was only fit for service in Australia and its territories only. So they said, "Where do you work?" And I said, "Well I work in the Taxation Department." He said, "We'll make you a pay clerk", and that's where I was. I did pay. So I was sent out to Shepparton, did training,

10:00 came back in, was posted to the Number 1 Engineering School at Ascot Vale. There's a big engineering school for apprentices. I was posted there and then later on I was sent to the embarkation depot and where they sent people overseas on enlistment coming in and going out and there I did a lot of conversions for money for their pay books and so forth. Now that's when I really entered the air force, at that stage. Well, I joined the air force and I was in the embarkation depot and was there for quite some time doing conversions and what have you. I then got a signal, or I didn't get a signal, I suppose my officer got a signal and they handed it on to you, and you would look at these signals, these are air force signals

11:00 telling you what to do and if it had a signal saying, "Tropic", your heart would go down in your boots because that's when you were going to the tropics. And if you had a signal on it that said, "Sea kit", I think you knew then that you were going overseas somewhere other the tropics, and so you have to follow out certain procedures and I did that and medical and what have you, and the next I know, oh Val at this time was pregnant,

11:30 she's pregnant and the next I know is I'm shot off to 1 Embarkation Depot. I think number one, we

might have been number two in Melbourne. [Number] 1 Embarkation Depot Sydney and I stopped there for a week. Funny how they do things and I'm in Sydney for a week and there's a signal come through, "Proceed to Melbourne." So back to Melbourne I go, and I come back to Melbourne by

- 12:00 train. They shipped you back to Melbourne by train because I have to pick up the boat at Port Melbourne, a boat called The New Amsterdam. So I don't know what happened but I must have got out and that was from the Melbourne Cricket Ground. I must have got out from there and I shot off home. I've got a wife that's pregnant you know. I'm starting to feel lonely, missing her cooking or something and I go home and we have a few short hours together and
- 12:30 not far from here, Heidelberg and at Heidelberg Station I can see her today you know, where tears are streaming down her face as she's you know as she's kissing me goodbye on the train, and the train goes off and I'm
- 13:00 going for places unknown. I haven't got a clue where I'm going. There was no contact with her, no contact with me, I couldn't contact her, she couldn't contact me. I finished up at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and it was only some little while ago my grandson, who's now thirty six, we went in there and he went downstairs apparently at half time, "Oh quick pa come here", and when we got there underneath the Melbourne Cricket Ground there's plaques there with air force -
- 13:30 certain dates. And you know what, we were there. I went through all my procedures I had to go and it was at that stage that I had to go for another medical examination and I went before three doctors and two fellas were saying, "He's right", 'cause I had a broken thigh and one leg's shorter than the other. "He's right, he's right," and the other one fellow's saying, "No, he can't go. No." Anyhow, the first two that said it, I was re-categorised to A, and I was
- 14:00 on the boat six o'clock in the morning I think we left. If I can remember we left the Melbourne Cricket Ground, I don't know how we got down to the boat, ah we got onto the boat and at about six o'clock at night we set sail in a flag ship of the Dutch Navy. It was a private boat called The New Amsterdam and we go outside the heads on The New Amsterdam, and that's when I knew I was on a big boat because she started to rock and I hate the sea. So anyhow we got there. The next we know is on
- 14:30 The New Amsterdam. We had five thousand troops on board. Ah very crowded. I don't know whether anyone's told you this but they smell, they're putrid the air in them. I used to sleep up on top on the deck and one morning not far out of Durban, that's where we landed. The sun was coming in my eyes and I was wakened up and here was the boat had done a big turn in the ocean, massive
- 15:00 turn around. You could see where it'd go, oh probably like a mile out it'd go around and it was reported then that we had some people coming out of India. Ah I spoke to one gentleman that was an Indian Englishman, they were coming out of India and he had seven year old twins he'd never seen and he was going back to England. That tells you how they were there. He was going back to England to see his seven year old twins he'd never seen, but one of these fellas apparently was in some trouble with the army,
- 15:30 and apparently he jumped out the window and this, why they were turning the boat around to see if they (UNCLEAR) but of course they just kept on going. We got into Durban, a bit of a cultural shock to Australians who were going. I got a bit of a shock because all the young not the young ladies, old ladies, all females you know are naked from the waist up, which is a shock to us not used to that as you know,
- 16:00 and when I got out on the land I could see a gentleman talking to another fellow who was from Melbourne and he said, "Oh, see that fellow over there?" And this shows you how small the world is. "See if you can see that fellow over there." So he came over to me and I'm going to mention names here because I suppose the poor fellow's gone. He said, an Englishman, "My name is Mr Williams-Went." And he said, "Do you come from Melbourne?" I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "I was just wondering whether you'd know
- 16:30 my brother in England in Melbourne?" And I said, "Well I haven't had a look at Durban but I'd say that Melbourne is a much bigger place than Durban and I doubt whether I'd know him." "Oh, he said he was an air commodore in the air force." I said, "Well I certainly wouldn't know any air commodores in the air force." And he said, "He was also mixed up with building projects." And I said to him, "Well look, I did know a fellow. He was an air commodore in the air training league", and I said, "And he was an inspector of public works with the Public Works Department", and I said, "But his
- 17:00 name's not the same as you, as your name." And he said, "What's his name?" And I said, "He was Mr Puttick-Went." This fellow in Africa was Mr Williams. This fella was a Mr Puttick. He said, "That's my brother", and I worked with him. He was an elderly gentleman. When I was twenty he'd be sixty you know. Puttick and this was the fellow he was looking for. Funny, isn't it? So the world is not very big. We went around, oh he invited me home and
- 17:30 to his house and I think I must have gone out one night or two nights, I was there for ten days, one or two nights. There was nothing else to do and he had a daughter, which was a bit of an embarrassment. I found it an embarrassment every time I talked to her because her name was Lovie. I bet she'd still be going, "Lovie Lovie Went." And so that was Africa. While we were in Africa, we the Australians, and there were five thousand in Melbourne, we
- 18:00 went out and camped at a racecourse called the Goodwood Racecourse and we were billeted in the

stables where they'd have so high it'd be closed and then the rest'd be open and so you'd sleep on the floor and in half an hour you'd have to wake the next fella up, make him go and do his shift for an hour because the inhabitants or for a better word, the natives, that the indigenous people would climb in over and grab uniforms or whatever they could get,

18:30 and so this is what used to happen there. The seafront of Durban was a bit of a magnet to Australians I suppose if you had the money, wonderful restaurants along the foreshore of Durban. Mainly that I could remember, they're mainly run by Indians 'cause Gandhi's life changed in Africa when he was there but most of it's run by

19:00 Indians. And on one occasion they had two types I think, which they'd tell us about. You had the Europeans or the Afrikaans, the Dutch men or the English men, whatever they were, the whites and you had the blacks, the indigenous people and they were accepted by the blacks and the whites were accepted by the whites. And the whites would accept the blacks too but there was that middle class, which we call half-caste, they used to call them Cape colours, and these are the fellows that nobody wanted. It was really sad.

19:30 These were the people that were loaded onto trucks where we'd have one labourer, they'd have four or five sittings on trucks doing the labouring work and they had a compound of their own, which we were told to keep out of. You never go near the Cape coloured compound. I suppose like a housing commission. I don't know, I didn't see it. I went out to a racecourse there, first time I'd ever been on a racecourse and I thought, my god, what have I struck? Coming out of the racecourse in the grass there was

20:00 a native, a dark man in the grass and obviously someone had hit him with a bottle or they'd gouged him with a, with their fingernails or something 'cause he had great big red welts down his neck and there was a white policeman there. You got white policemen and black policemen, the black policeman are all in serge blue with everything up to the kilt although they don't wear anything on their feet. They're all naked on the feet, no boots or socks, and there was a white policeman there and we

20:30 called him over and said, "There's a fella lying there you know. He looked in a pretty bad way." And so he spoke to him in his language, I don't know what he said, and he pulled him up and this is where I thought you know, gee, if this is apartheid, this isn't what you know, it's not good. Doesn't look good. I said, I can imagine people on trucks, we can imagine them four or five instead of one doing the work, in fact it gave them work, but the policeman dragged him to his feet and I said, "Well you better, are you gonna get him to hospital?" He said, "No, he doesn't want to

21:00 go." He must have spoken to him in his language. He said, "He doesn't want to go." I said, "Well, you're not gonna let him do that. He's in a bad way. You send him", in Australian. And me telling him what Australians do. You'd say, "Well, you've got no opportunity mate. You've got to go into hospital", and he said, "No." So he gave this fella a shift along and the chap went away, he must have been drunk or something, he went away and back he came to us, this group of four of us or something, in this language, oh I don't know what he was saying, he must have been saying because

21:30 the next that happened the policeman sunk the boot in. I thought, my god what a, and the people were (UNCLEAR) just an everyday thing to them. Just passed him by as they stuck the boot into this poor old native. Put him to his feet, kicked him up the backside and got him on his way, wherever he was going. I don't know. Anyhow, we came home from there.

Can we?

When we got back onto the ship we then found,

22:00 on board the boat was some Italian prisoners of war coming out of Africa. I don't know how many. They used to wait on our tables. I didn't tell you about the sleeping accommodation either in the The New Amsterdam.

That's all right, we can come back to that.

Yes, they were coming out and they used to wait on our tables and I'll tell you about the dining situation on board boat, and they had a few doctors that could walk around the ship. They had freedom.

22:30 Italian doctors on the boat, but they also had a, and I don't know how many, they were a great number, anyhow there might have been fifty, might have been a hundred Polish Army girls. Well, they were in uniform, I don't know whether they were army, but they were Polish girls coming out of Poland and they were coming down and I felt sorry for them because what would happen was you'd see the Australians like or they all are I suppose. Might have been some of the Englishmen, I don't know

23:00 but they would say, "Goodnight." But what they were telling the girls to say goodnight wasn't goodnight you know and I felt sorry. They didn't know what they were saying but oh it was some shocking thing

What were they saying?

They thought they were speaking English.

What were they saying?

Well, I can't tell you.

Can you give me the first letters for the words?

"F". You know. "F U" and this is what they thought was goodnight you know, and it was and it was, I felt sorry for them but anyhow that's how things go. So I'm telling you a bit of the

- 23:30 sordid things here. That's how things go and this is life. Ah I had something else in my mind there. Anyhow, we set sail from there, that's right and we went around to Cape Town as we left and apparently there was sitting or standing on the wharf was a, as we were leaving was a, I don't know whether there was much secrecy about it because
- 24:00 this woman used to do some wonderful soprano or something from Africa, used to stand out, and she was singing a hymn or singing Farewell or something, whatever as the boat was going out and apparently she did this for all the boats. "Till We Meet Again" or something she used to (UNCLEAR) and she had a lovely voice too but she was pretty strong. I suppose she had a microphone or something and she used to sing there. So we got around to Africa, never got around to Cape Town. Never got off at Cape Town and
- 24:30 and we were only there for a day. Set sail again and we got up to Freetown in Sierra Leone and I was a bit interested in Sierra Leone. Never got off because I used to have a little engineer that was seconded to the public service out of Sierra Leone and he was in Melbourne here, and he said, "When I get back home, I always ring you, you tell me the right things." He was a factory inspector apparently in his own country and he was doing a tour of all the engineering places, and he
- 25:00 was in Australia for awhile. We got to Sierra Leone and it's marvellous how quick they learn. Ah couldn't get off, there was no way of getting off the boat whatsoever. We get to the situation where they'd have bum-boats as they call them. I suppose if you've been overseas, they'd still have them and with the natives there and they got fruit and monkeys they'd have, and what have you and I remember one fella there, he used to sing Abi. I don't know whether
- 25:30 you'd know a song Abi. "Abi my boy." Well, there is a song that goes on, "Abi Abi my boy, what are you waiting for now? Want to marry her some day in June. What are you waiting for now." And this native would sing this, and then all of a sudden he'd say, "Me want bloody hat." So someone's hat'd go over. "Me want bloody boots." So they knew that, and someone'd throw their boots over. Well, we left there, and out of Freetown we kept going and as we got out of course they had monkeys on board. Fellas'd
- 26:00 pull up monkeys and what have you, but they were injected with something. They were done away with, whatever it was. An interesting thing was that at Freetown they'd learnt, I suppose with tourist boats coming in that when they're out at sea, they would put an endless rope up to you, and so they'd get you to tell you what the money was somehow or other 'cause you want something in his boat, which could be fifty feet down there when you're on a boat you know, these big boats and you'd
- 26:30 tie your money on, and then you'd grab the [?] get onto that and up come the goods and down would go the money. But they were that quick, the fellas'd try and say, "Whoa", rip this out before they, before the money got to them but no, they wouldn't let it go. They're a wonderful people, the natives. You'd throw over money and never dive for the brass stuff, you know the pennies or whatever but silver they knew when it was (UNCLEAR) and they had to dive. And so they, they'd dive
- 27:00 down for that. We then left there and we got up on, and oh going up the Atlantic or on the Indian Ocean too, I've told you that I'm not a good sailor. I don't like the smell, there's not enough fresh air. Everything is wet, you know everything you touch is wet with, I suppose sea water, mists and what have you and going up the Atlantic, I thought, "I'll never make this."
- 27:30 And what would happen, you wouldn't look at a wave coming there, you looked at a wave coming up there and I thought, "This is gonna go over the top of us." Well it didn't go over the top 'cause the next moment you were in a ten storey lift (UNCLEAR) and you're looking at the sea down there, and this'd go on for day after day and we got up around there somewhere, must have been up around near Ireland or between Ireland and England and there are a lot of submarines coming into port off
- 28:00 the Atlantic Ocean, they were English submarines. We got in there and we got into a little place called Greenock in Scotland on the Clyde and I don't know how long we were there. It was cold. The most lonely homesick I've ever felt. The rest of it was a great experience you know. I was seeing places I'd never seen. Seeing places I'd read about, and it all it holds you,
- 28:30 you know. Where to next? But once we got there to England and I could see those old tramp steamers belching smoke and the clouds scudding the as they say the scud, we don't get them here but they scud low there, the clouds seem to be heavy with moisture. Dark, sea gulls croaking as they fly over and then you had to get down the Jacobs ladder. No pier in the Clyde, get down the Jacob's ladder onto barges and they took us across to
- 29:00 little buildings called mechanics institutes, which you get you see now. We see them, don't we? We see around the, these country towns you'd see the old ones, you know they say, "Mechanics Institute", this is part of the town hall and we got into the Mechanics Institute there, I suppose we slept on the floor. I don't know. I forget but we did get there, but what I do remember is I got up next morning and went outside and lo and behold I reckon it was the joy of my life, here were some

29:30 little kids dancing around the maypole.

Mm.

We don't see it here.

Mm.

We know the maypole and the little kids were dancing around this maypole outside, cold as charity. Snow, it was in January I think. Either December to January, cold as charity, bleak and the little kids were dancing and coming down the street, at the end of the street was a coal man and he had bags of coal there and coming

30:00 down the street were these Scottish ladies in old, with wheeling old prams and they were coming down to get their coal I suppose. Well they were getting coal, I suppose it's, they were on a ration and they had big legs and the chilblains. No covering on them, no stockings, old shoes and the never had trousers. It wasn't invented in those days. They had skirts on but massive chilblains and I felt very sorry for them but you know,

30:30 this is the way they lived. I suppose they'd be because at Greenock was near Greenwich, no it wasn't, it was near Glasgow and so you had the big ship building yards were there, so I suppose their husbands worked on the ship building yards on war procurement stuff or something, I don't know. I cannot in all my travels know what happened from the time I left those

31:00 ladies with their chilblains and the kids on their maypole, I cannot remember the next until I got to Brighton in England. I cannot remember getting on a train. There's nothing that I can remember about the trip from Glasgow or Greenock down to Brighton. I don't know. I got by, there by train obviously. Can't remember a thing about it. Isn't it funny?

Bizarre.

Not a thing and yet we travelled in the daytime. Haven't got a clue. Well we get to Brighton and at

31:30 Brighton, oh I've got some photos of them there, you've got the big piers that run out. Beaches are not like ours. They're all pebbles. There's no beautiful sand but beautiful gardens, not when I was there but you could see that the foundations of them. The whole of the beach was covered in barbed wire. There were great big iron rods (UNCLEAR) into the beach, I suppose to stop the tanks or any invasion and out from Brighton they had dance halls on the piers, so the piers would run out

32:00 and massive piers, bigger than our piers here, and in the centre they'd have this dance hall. Well, they cut a piece out of the pier so that any invasion, they couldn't get along, and on the front of, I can't think of the name of the street but on the front of that there were two hotels about the size of the Windsor I suppose in Melbourne, big hotels. One was called The Grand and one was called the Metropole. Now at one of those

32:30 hotels some years ago you remember Maggie Thatcher had her British cabinet there, and they were bombed. Well, it was in one of these hotels that it happened. Ah, you went in to England entering the air force, all air force went in to England, so you went into the Grand and coming home you'd come out through the Metropole and they were the embarkation depots. We stopped there I suppose for about, oh ten

33:00 days we were there. I don't know why but we were there for about ten days, ah didn't do much. You couldn't do anything. Black outs. I can remember, and why I went there, I don't know 'cause I never had any money, but we must have gone to a hall where there was ice skating or something and in the street, in the gutters, our gutters, they had big pipes and these carried seawater from the (UNCLEAR) know what was in them and seawater

33:30 and if fire started they would pump seawater out of them you know, onto the fires, that's what they had. And coming out of this it was all in black out, and soon as you stepped out they had a series of, you'd be in this room, then you'd go into a little alcove, you'd shut the door behind you into a little alcove, and then you'd open the one outside and so the light couldn't get out. Everything was blacked out and one of the fellas we were with fell over and hit his teeth, hit these pipes and the things smashed his teeth off and oh we had a

34:00 hell of a mess. Ah yeah, I shouldn't tell you the next bit, so anyhow ah

Why not?

Hey?

Why not?

Oh well, yeah well all right we, you don't know what's wrong. You're blacked out, you can't have a light but this fella said he was bleeding or something and there was liquid on his face and a few of us dragged him back to the hotel where we were at, back to our quarters and oh he was in a mess all right. He'd knocked two of his original teeth right off at the gums you know, but one

- 34:30 of the fellows who, I came from Melbourne, I don't have much dislike for many people you know, but he just got me, and he wouldn't help at all. He was on his way. "Oh bugger you", you know, "We're on our way." So he went and I'll never forget this night because when we took the fellow back into our room, we got up into our room, left him with the medical people, this chap that was injured and I must have been, I've got a pretty quick temper, and as Val knows I
- 35:00 flare, but it's gone in a flash you know, and I was waiting for this fellow to come in and as he came in I [got] into him. There was a fight on, this fellow. I nearly said his name then. Never met him since but he came from Melbourne. There was a fight on and during that fight was my first air-raid, and I don't know, I was just saying I'll let you hear that tape if you want to stop at any time for the young girl and during that
- 35:30 air-raid they say, "Oh do you get nervous?" Well, there's always a matter of tension no matter what it is. Soon as the air-raid siren blows, you know the old heart gives a flutter but it's all over to (UNCLEAR) and so that was my first air-raid. I could hear the planes are scudding, they must have been very low. I suppose a German fellow going out over the Channel 'cause at Brighton you're only about twenty-odd miles from France, not very far there. Well they can swim there can't they,
- 36:00 and this British plane, I suppose had been chasing him you know. Nighttime, you can't see them. So that was my first air-raid. Next morning I think I was shifted, shipped to London. I went to London and this is where I first saw, you know the reaction of English there and they don't wear their heart on their sleeves, like we're apt to do. They're not a kissing type of people. You know
- 36:30 we get a girlfriend, we kiss her and give her a cuddle you know. They don't. They're a very reserved type of people and everything's got to be right, like the fella in Africa. "I'm Mr Williams-Went." He said, "It's not me, I'm Mr Williams-Went." I wouldn't. I'd say, "I'm James Speedy", but they don't and they're very reserved and then coming up in the train, you know we had to go by train up to London up to the headquarters. We're coming up by train here where all these people, men, women, young ladies, I suppose they had a rough night because all
- 37:00 along the track houses were alight blazing and they'd just say, "How did you get on last night?" "Oh alright", and you can hear them talking, and didn't seem to be distressed, it seemed to be part and parcel, I suppose this is their iron clad nature, I don't know because they have got it. Make no mistake about it, man they've got it. I don't know of anybody else, you know that could have suffered forty four thousand people killed in London and still carry on,
- 37:30 but they have got it. I think we'd have had it too. Our girls would have had it too but they weren't in the position, but anyhow we got out of the station, out of the train at Victoria Station, you might have heard that and here working outside were young ladies again. When I say young ladies, they'd be under thirty if I can imagine with their Ben Bowyangs. You know what a Ben Bowyang is? Well young fellows, they used to do it here, when they were young, they'd tie their trousers up
- 38:00 with a with a ribbon around there and hold their trousers up, so it'd be in the mud. That's the Ben Bowyang trousers, and these young girls were out fixing the roads, and fixing the footpaths in London from damage that was done that night, I suppose from London. I then went to air force headquarters, which was in Kodak House. I suppose they took over Kodak House, the headquarters and I reported in there and
- 38:30 what had happened was, I was posted to London, and you had to get your own accommodation in London. If you want to stop me and ask questions, just ask on the way so you can clarify it.
- We will.**
- So I went, oh they gave you then, I'm not sure whether they gave it to us or we had to go down to Australia House and get a list of accommodation that was available because they never had
- 39:00 any army, any military Australian accommodation. You had to get your own accommodation and they were paid an allowance. I cannot remember what the allowance was. It must have been pretty good because some of them didn't want to leave London. Hah! Anyhow, they got an allowance and I just don't know what it was. Anyhow, we went to, I'd better tell you this, we went to Australia House and I finished out with three of us or four of us I think it was, three of us it must
- 39:30 have been, because we finished out at Knightsbridge, which is the upper crusts of London, you know everything's (UNCLEAR). Well that's what we're led to believe, this is where the people lived. I think [Lady] Diana lived there, and all the upper [class] come live at Knightsbridge I think. Yeah, so we were out at Knightsbridge out near Buckingham Palace and we got into this boarding house, if that's what it was, and in the front room where the old madam of the house or the landlady, not a madam as in a prostitute manager, the lady
- 40:00 of the house I called her madam, she wanted to put us in the room but in this room was a young female still in her twenties and thirties and talking to her, she certainly wasn't English. She may have been French but her husband apparently was in France. I don't know, couldn't have been, the second front wasn't on. He wasn't there anyhow and of course the second front wasn't on at that stage, so she said,
- 40:30 "No, she wasn't leaving", and it came to (UNCLEAR) with this big double bed, she could put two of us up, but she couldn't put three, that was asking a bit too much. So anyhow, she could put two of us up.

We never stopped there, we went on and I went back and looked at a few other places. Oh yeah, I'll tell you that we

Tape 2

00:32 We got up to. Where did we get to?

We got to you billeted in London.

Yeah.

And looking for a billet.

So, oh that first night in London. I'll come back to the billeting. That first night in London, when I got to London I suppose I've done what lots of others have done, that you wouldn't have done, and that is I slept in the Bank of England on the first night in Threadneedle Street.

01:00 You may have heard of the Bank of England in Threadneedle Street. The upper stories were shifted out to wherever, their records and that because of the bombing. All these places were empty but the bank was still operating on the ground floor, so that was by the way, that was in Threadneedle Street. One of the next places we went to, I went with a friend of mine, who's still alive, he's in Adelaide, and we went out to an address they gave us at Finchley, East Finchley, which is a suburb of

01:30 London on the underground and when we got there I'm almost sure they were a Jewish family. A Mrs Marx and her daughter, Adele, and Adele would be, Mrs Marx was elderly of course. When I say elderly, she was young compared to what I am now but she was a mother and Adele would be a lass of twenty-four, twenty-six. Ah

02:00 now, I don't know what Adele did for a living. I haven't got a clue. I'd never spoken to her that much but anyhow what would happen was when the air-raids would come on in London and we slept in this thing, we must have paid her a fee. We had to pay an allowance and I haven't got a clue what that was, she would come down and we were upstairs, double storey place and she'd give us bed and breakfasts and when the air-raid was on she'd say, "Oh come on boys,

02:30 air-raid yellow." Air-raid yellow, air-raid red, air-raid green. Yellow is air-raid pending, and so we'd go downstairs and we would stand under the door because you're taught, you know that's your practice that under the door is the safest place to be because the door jambs, that's if anything's gonna stand up, you can't compress a piece of wood that way can you, but you can bend it, so that was the place and Mrs Marx would get in her bed, which was what they called

03:00 an Anderson bomb shelter, an Anderson shelter.

So anyhow, she'd get into her shelter and it was what they called an Anderson shelter, which was like a dining room table, made out of steel, legs top and down the side, it had mesh all 'round it and she had a bed made up under that and so she'd crawl in there and that's where she'd sleep while the bombing raids were on.

03:30 If the house came down she was protected and so apparently these were all over London, you know in the houses. In the meantime you never saw Adele. Now I was there for a couple of months and I wouldn't have seen Adele Marx more than three or four times, and yet she was in that house somewhere but as soon as the air-raid went on she was gone. She was nowhere to be seen and what she would do, she would be

04:00 out, get on a mobile gun on a, I suppose a truck, an army truck and there'd be a Bofors gun on this truck and they'd have these, I suppose men would be with them too, but she was on the gang, she was on the crew and so they'd scoot around the streets of London, her in her area going bang, bang, bang. Stop, go around another couple of hundred yards and fire again and this was to mislead the Germans into thinking, you know that there were guns everywhere all over London and this is the type

04:30 of thing that they did, you know. They were marvellous and that's one of the sorry things I've had - that I didn't keep in touch with those people you know and it's all right now saying years later but I should have realised earlier but you don't. You come back and you're trying to get on with life, you know and perhaps Adele's still alive, I don't know. If she walked in here, I wouldn't know her but they're pretty brave people.

05:00 I then got a posting to Plymouth. I got a direction to go to, oh no I wasn't, I was sent out or seconded to the RAF for some short while, this is the Royal Air Force, to do work there for Australians that were attached to the Royal Air Force and there were plenty of Australians that were just in Australian squadrons. I think there were only two Australian squadrons, which I'll tell

05:30 you about, 10 and 461, but the, there were a lot of other Australians, which would be in mixed crews and I suppose you've got this from other people you know, there'd be Poles and French and Englishmen and Dutchmen all in crews, and I think they marched, the Australians marched under, if you watch

Anzac Day you'll say, "What's this, the odd bods association?" And that's what they march under. They're odd bods. In the air force if you're moved around you moved usually as single people, not in big groups, anyhow four or five

06:00 but unlike the army where they'd move you as a company or a battalion or something. They moved you in the air force wherever they wanted to fill a hole. If they wanted gunners, they moved you. If they wanted pilots, they moved you and of course everybody thinks that everybody in the air force, everybody outside the air force thinks, "What were you, a pilot?" There was only one pilot but there's a hell of a lot of people that are not pilots, which I'll tell you about that keep those pilots where they are. They're the people really that are the guts of it. That's

06:30 where they are. I get very upset but that's what it is. So anyhow, I went up to where was I up to? Going out to

You were with the, seconded to the RAF [Royal Air Force]. To the R-A-F?

I was seconded to the RAF at Knightsbridge and again, like I'm sorry how people just don't know we're a pimple on a pumpkin, Australia. We were at that time. I hope we're a bit better now. Pimple on a pumpkin, and I'll go

07:00 back a bit when we were in Africa. Val was expecting. I couldn't buy wool here. She couldn't buy wool here to knit for a baby you know. That's where we grow it. Couldn't buy it. I went to a shop in Africa and I said to a woman you know, "Can you send this, here's some money? Can you please, have you got some white wool? Can you please send it to this address in Australia?" Which she did do and then she said to me, "How long did it take you to learn English?" They just don't know. It's

07:30 marvellous. I went out to Knightsbridge, you've got to bring me back, I went out to Knightsbridge and I was doing some things there and there was a young Australian not young English girl there working there. Don't know early twenties, might have been in her late teens and she must have got on something about the '39 bushfire. Now in 1939 in Melbourne there was seventy-odd people killed around Melbourne or in Victoria and the fires you know came down as far as Chelsea. Parkdale. Those places, houses were burned in our bushfires.

08:00 They'd lost the Southern Cloud or the Southern Cross up at Kinglake, they thought flying from Sydney. Couldn't find it. It was eventually found up around near Tumut I think. This was an aeroplane, if you remember the old Southern Cross days and I was telling her this and I was trying to get the immensity of the country into her and what they used to do in the air force, I suppose in all the services, they'd give you a book with certain information on it and I'd say, "Well now the distance from London to Vladivostok." She could understand

08:30 that. I said to her, "Do you know London to Vladivostok, how far that is?" "Ooh", she said, "that's a long way." I said, "Well this is the distance between two of the furthest capitals in Australia. Perth to Brisbane is about the same distance as what they tell you in the book." She could then get the immensity of it and I said, "You're not even a third of the way around Australia, oh you might be a little bit over it, a third of the way 'round Australia", so she could get the immensity of it. And she kept on and on about

09:00 this Australia and I said to her, "Well look, I don't know I've seen some kids go to school here. I've never seen them outside." This'll be strange to you I suppose. "I've never seen them outside the school saluting the flag on a Monday morning." I said, "They do in Australia", and I said, "I don't think you'd know who was the King and Queen of Australia." What was her reply? "Don't be silly, they haven't got one." And that was another

09:30 thing that brought home to me that Australia was only a little pimple. Nobody knows about it really.

It's still the case today.

We're full of our own importance at that time you know. We won the war bull, we won the war, there were thousands of thousands of Englishmen too that got slaughtered. They talk about, you know we talk about the First World War, the Dardanelles, where we lost thousands and we did too and it was sad but there were thousands and thousands of Englishmen got slaughtered there. Nobody's and I suppose it's rightly so, we

10:00 look to our own. So anyhow, that's it. They just don't know and I said to her, "You know that you could and because we know when I went to school and I don't hear you say it, I don't know whether you said it when you went to school, I love god and my country." I honour the flag and chiefly obey my parents, teachers and the law. This was the creed that was sent out to every school in Australia when I was a kid. And I went to a school reunion some little while

10:30 ago. My own school, a hundred and twenty five years, and I went in there and the teacher said to me, "Here's a gentleman, he'd like to talk to you", and I talked to these kids about this classroom. Different to when I went there this classroom, and I said to them, "This is what we used to say." Now I can imagine today this is all altered because a lot of people don't have religion. A lot of people look at different religion, different cultures and everything and I said, "You can't say what I said because it doesn't apply", and the teacher said, "Well we do say something.

11:00 Would you like to say for this gentleman, what we said?" And the kids went "(UNCLEAR)" and I said, "That's very nice", and I never understood a word of it but this is how it is today.

So Lloyd

We. Yeah, I got waylaid

From Knightsbridge, where did we go from Knightsbridge?

Well, we went from Knightsbridge, we went back to London, back to air force headquarters and I then got directions to go down to Plymouth and I eventually got on the train,

11:30 got my way to Plymouth. And that very night I'd left Marx's house, my mate tells me with the flying bombs that were going that one came through something near the house and smashed the window and went into the room but he got out of it unhurt, so I might have been a bit lucky there. So we then shifted down to Plymouth. I got out the Plymouth railway station. I thought, "My God, where do I go from here?" Now people talk about Coventry

12:00 as the most bombed place in England. It's not. Coventry's well known because everybody knows that Lady Godiva rode the horse and the hair was the only thing that covered up her modesty. That's the only thing they know. Now Coventry was knocked about. The most bombed town in England was Plymouth. There was an air force station there. There's, there were massive ship building yards on the on the river. I was nearly gonna say the river Clyde, it's not

12:30 I think it's the (UNCLEAR). Anyhow, there's a massive ship building yards, so I got out of this station and I thought, my God, what have I come to? From an area looking say from Collins Street to Lonsdale Street, from say Spring Street to Swanston Street, that's a big area, flat as this floor. Not a building, not a brick standing. The only thing that was standing were gun emplacements of the Americans,

13:00 manned and around this, they had gun emplacements with the Americans on guard for night raids and what have you. I didn't know what to do there, so I got in touch with the returning officer we always go to and I got on the phone and got out to a place called Mount Batten. It's a little island and I've got a photo of it. I'll show you where exactly it was and a little place called Mount Batten.

13:30 That was the name of the station. I've got something else in my mind but it might be out of order. Into Mount Batten and I rang up there and I said, "Can you get across? I don't know how to get out there", and so after about an hour out comes the motor transport with a WAAF [Women's Auxiliary Air Force] driving it, the English WAAFs, and they, she came in and took me about to back to Mount Batten. Made myself known in Mount Batten. Did all my procedures that you have to do when you come

14:00 onto a station, go and find your own digs. Now the digs were not bad. They were big, I don't, I think it must have been an army camp before the war, some training camp. On the shore on the little island surrounded by water, joined to the land to the mainland by a little neck of land about couple of hundred yards wide and four to five hundred yards long and then they had this mound of earth, which was Mount Batten, because

14:30 you didn't have to have planes on it. The planes had to be in the water. They alighted on the water. So I got to this place called Mount Batten, and the dormitories would be one, two, three, four stories, three stories high, ah long. There were too big, there were some, they were all occupied by Australians. I don't know how many Australians would be on the station. Four hundred.

15:00 I might be wrong. Might be two hundred, might be six hundred but there weren't thousands anyhow but there, they were on the station and so I got into one of these and they said, "Oh well get into that building there and put your digs in." And I got in there, and then got up on the first floor where I think the first fella that met me was the Australian postman, he was the post fella. Everybody liked the Australian, an airman, that's his mustering postal and he'd be the only one postal and everybody liked the postman 'cause he was the fella that brought all

15:30 the good news and this is what they were looking for of course, letters and he showed me which thing to go on and I got into this dormitory there and I was unpacking. It's thirty or forty in a dormitory on double decker beds made out of something like gates, you know like an ordinary metal gate that you'd have on your side gate, although they were also in The [New] Amsterdam. They had those that you slept on.

16:00 So I got into one of these and I was starting to unload and out of the corner of my eye, 'cause they were empty. The beds were made but they were all empty - no one in, they were all working and out of the corner of my eye, I struck a fella coming in. The most dishevelled, untidy fella you could ever meet, covered in grease, covered in oil. This is how a lot of these mechanics were. They worked bloody hard and long.

16:30 Ah anyhow, "How are ya mate?", he says. I said, "Very well, how are you?" "Oh, what's your name, I'm Bill?" He said, "I'm Bill." So I just kept on going, you know pass the time of day and he kept on his way and I was unloading all my gear into my locker or whatever I had and making up my bed, making sure I had a palliasse to sleep on and

17:00 all of a sudden I could hear this beautiful noise. Magnificent and I turned around and the fellow that was dishevelled, the fellow that had grease and muck and stuff all over him was no longer there. There

was a different man there and what he was doing was playing a violin. He'd be a terrific violin player. He was a terrific violin player till the last five or six years.

17:30 He could play a violin. This was a fella by the name of Bill. Anyhow, as time went on they all came back you know, and then there was oh talk up the end of the corridor, they all came in at different times, different periods. They'd be on different shifts. Up the end of the, near the door they always had a table where they opened their parcels from home because they had a hut they could

18:00 eat at but they wanted their parcels from home because there was goodies in those. The eating accommodation was good. We went down into a big mess hall upstairs. The Englishmen were or the English dragged me back to the eating facilities.

Oh well (UNCLEAR).

The station itself had flying personnel I say or air force personnel, not flying, there were more people in the station than flying. Rhonda, Velda. Flying personnel

18:30 or air force personnel were all done by Australians. All orderly room and that's the hub of the thing is the orderly room where the clerks are. That's what keeps the things going. Finance, there weren't many, there were only two of us, fabric workers because these are fellas that if the planes get shot up they're made of fabric, they got to be patched up, instrument makers, they're all

19:00 run by Australians. Now guards, cooks, hairdressers, they had hairdressers, which you got paid an allowance for to get your hairdressing. So there was no excuse not to get your hairdressing. They paid you an allowance and you pay to get hairdressing, so these were all done, motor transport drivers, all done by the WAAF, who did a terrific job. Usually, not all of them, but usually women of the WAAF and they would do this. Attached to the station too,

19:30 and the fellas used to try and sing overtures to these young ladies, there were some WRENS [Women's Royal Naval Service] and they looked pretty good, the WRENS in their little uniform and down on the side there they had, I don't know what they did but they had a shed, they kept very much to themselves and they were, the WRENS would be in there doing something to do with the navy. Some secret things, they were the navy. Outside, that's the station outside up on the other end of the station was the English that lived up on the hill.

20:00 The WAAFs and what have you. Now when you came to your messing situation, big mess halls, English men downstairs, English women upstairs, Australians upstairs. So that on this big hall, the Australians were on one side, the women were on the other. Breakfast you'd have

Did they all stay strictly to one side?

Pardon?

Did they all stay strictly to one side or was there a co-mingling?

Oh no, you couldn't do that.

20:30 Yeah they stuck to their own side, yeah they stuck to their own side of the hall. They ate and we ate. So we'd have skim milk, porridge and skim milk, they'd have porridge and fresh milk. This fella, violin fella, he didn't have any skim milk, he always had fresh milk. He crossed with the WAAFs and they'd pinch their fresh milk you see and so it was usually porridge for breakfast, or bloody beans. I was sick and tired of them and the first meal I had when I got home here, Val opened a tin of beans. Funny, isn't it?

21:00 Beans, you've never seen anything like it, always beans. So anyhow, that's what the eating provisions were.

Were you at Plymouth till the end of?

Yes, till the end of the war. No, I went back to London but to the end of the actual fighting war, yes at Plymouth, then had to go back to London for a couple of months. I'll tell you about that when we come to the end of that. So anyhow, I'm off the beam now.

21:30 **We're at Plymouth. We've just gone through the porridge and beans and RAAFs [Royal Australian Air Force] and WRENS.**

Porridge and beans yes and then I was sent down to this little thing and I worked in a pub. You think, "Gee, he had a good job."

While you were in the air force you were working in a pub?

Yes and I'll show you the pub. It was a little pub called Castle Inn. It still stands today I believe. Castle Inn. It must have been there before the Napoleonic Wars

22:00 and people say, "God, when were they?" 1820s or something because when they wanted to we were right next to the hangar all on the water of course, the planes were up there and this little Castle Inn was next door and I could show you the window where I worked. Overlooking things that I'd heard about, read about you know. Things like Drake's Monument, Drake's Bowling Green,

- 22:30 the citadel, all Pilgrim Fathers and I'll tell you about [how I] nearly lost me life on the steps of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1944, so these are the things you know that you read about and here I was in this little window just looking out on them. There they were, four or five hundred yards away. So I worked in this old Castle Inn was that old because when they wanted to do the tarmac up, they wanted to cut away some more ground, and
- 23:00 I'll show you before it's cut away and when they cut it away they found skeletons in the thing and they thought, well they had the police called. Civilians have got to come in, they had the police out and these skeletons would have been in the ground that'd be bones and in there there'd be rings of rust where the legs were and the arms were so these were shackles you know and so they said they were from the Napoleonic Wars. Well, it used to be a prison camp or something
- 23:30 and this is right on the entrance to Plymouth Sound and you could imagine Drake on his bowling green looking down there and seeing the Spanish Armada come up the main [road] and that's what they did. So that was Plymouth and that's where I worked, you know. At nighttime they'd have, I think we had on the squadron something like seventy-one planes, not at once, during the war because they're a massive plane. You
- 24:00 could
- We're talking Sunderlands, aren't we?**
- Sunderland flying boats, yes. You can look at the Lancaster in Canberra and you say, "My hell, it's a big plane." I'll tell you what mate, the Sunderland's bigger than it. I don't say it's as big as the bombers you know the Americans used but it's a big boat and these fellows would go out all weather, cold, wet and they would work on these planes on the wing over the water.
- 24:30 Not far to jump in the water, thirty-two feet down, that's how far they were. Up in the air working, trying to do spark plugs and magnetos or something and they worked particularly hard. If a bit of a blow came up at night there'd be Tannoy loud speakers out, all out no matter what, mustering you out and you then manhandled that plane up and onto the tarmac. Pulled it up, just like a boat if you launch a boat down at Port Phillip
- 25:00 Bay on the ramp there. They'd have to manhandle this if they couldn't get the tractor, manhandle it up and get it up out of the weather because they used to leave the front of the aeroplane open. I was gonna say I'll show you one. They used to leave the front of the aeroplane open, so that the air ventilation can go through and if it was rough water they had it lap in there and sink the plane and when the rough weather really came up, those planes
- 25:30 would be on the water and they'd run those engines for twenty four hours a day up to the wind because if you didn't, it ripped the plane and they're light you see and pushed them back and then and so you either had to go out and drag them up, drag the planes up and this could be midnight you know, two o'clock in the morning. Get 'em out and get them up. You won't hear anything gory from me because if you're in the air force you don't see things gory. It's not like,
- 26:00 I don't know whether the other fellas have told you this. It's not like the army where you're there. You're fighting. This is where the action is. The action with [10 Squadron] never took place at Plymouth. It was an air force station. The action took place what two hundred mile out? I'm not saying the Bay of Biscay was two hundred mile but they used to patrol two hundred and forty mile out off the coast of Ireland and what used to happen early in the piece, you see until 1943 they weren't doing much good.
- 26:30 They were escorting troop ships and cargo ships. That's what they used to do but from 1943 on they started to get on top with their new radar and starting to pick up submarines but that was the best year they had but two hundred and forty mile they'd go out and then the Yanks would fly up from America but there was a part of no man's land in between where they couldn't get at them. This is where the subs would sit and wait for the convoys, but the Bay of Biscay is where
- 27:00 they used to come. They'd come out of the pens in France and down the English Channel and get out into the Atlantic there from the Bay of Biscay. Yeah, they did some good things. I could talk a little about aircrew later on perhaps.
- Mm.**
- Only the bits I know. You won't see anything gory because it just didn't happen. The sad part about it and I don't know anybody else and I find the sad part about the air force is, particularly seaplanes. That
- 27:30 once they're gone, they're gone. There's no one. There was never any if one was lost. If one was lost you just didn't all go into mourning you know, it was just another day, people were sad but the thing had to go on. Then there was no big do that you know, we've lost, we've lost ten or eleven men or something. It would just go on. All it would be is, "Lost in action over the Bay of Biscay." Nothing
- 28:00 else. I said there were seventy-one planes. There were about seventy-one during the course of the five or six years it was there and we can talk a little bit about 10 Squadron, how they got there and what have you.

In the twelve minutes left on this tape let's go quickly to the end of the war.

Okay.

And then the next tape we can start coming back and going over things in more detail.

Well, I was gonna touch then on VE [Victory in Europe] Day or something but anyhow you

Yeah, go to VE Day,

29:00 **that's good.**

You go.

Go straight to VE Day.

Well, when we went to June I can remember when VE Day was coming up. Dunkirk, no VE, the second landing when they were coming up, our barracks were just like this and you'd be near the water of Plymouth Harbour like the swamp is out there. Very close, a hundred yards. Less than that and that harbour would be full I would say.

29:30 I wouldn't know whether there was fifty boats, could have been a hundred. That's how many were there. Hundreds of soldiers and these boats in 1944 they would have soldiers on board, I'm talking about the 4th of June, soldiers on board, there'd be tanks, guns, full trains, full steam trains on board, they'd have fires lit and like Englishmen, they'd be Englishmen most of them because like Englishmen they always liked

30:00 to sing a hymn. You know, "Abide With Me" or something and they'd be out there singing these hymns and

So this is D Day, isn't it?

This is the 4th of June. D Day was the 6th.

But we're talking about D Day?

We're talking about the 4th. Two days before.

Yeah.

And they were there. All the hospitals were purported to be around the coast were purported to be empty because they thought they were going to have a lot of trouble, you know bringing wounded back and what have you. Around Brighton

30:30 way, where 'round towards Dover they were purported to have built military camps there, mock military camps to make the Germans believe that this is where it was going to come from. It didn't, it came 'round from the south of England a bit. Wakened up on the 5th of June, ah that's wakened up on the 4th of June, 3rd of June and everything was gone. Never heard them go. I was near them. I never heard the thing go, they just cleaned everything out. Wakened up on the 5th June and they were all back

31:00 again. They all came back in again. Now it must have been that they were going to do that then on the 5th June but they got across in the Channel somewhere, must have been rough to sea or the tides weren't right or something so they came back in. Wakened up on the 6th June, and they were all gone and the second front had started. Hospitals didn't get full because 'round our way they never came in. They might have come in at Brighton, you know 'round near Dover and that but a lot of people and that injured and killed but

31:30 they never got in and someone said, "Well, why were they singing? Why did they have fires on the boats?" Well the German Air Force at that time was buggedger you know. It was, I think it was really knocked about. There was, they never had the force they had like earlier in the piece. They'd spent their distance. The old Spitfire had done a good job, thousand bomber raids. I'll tell ya, lots of things I haven't told you about the thousand bomber raids.

Oh we're definitely gonna come back to it.

Well as long as you remember. I'll forget it.

Yeah.

32:00 **Can you take just take us now with the last**

So I

seven or eight minutes to the end of the war.

So at the end of the war there was a feeling that it was going to end. I didn't know and I met a cobbler of mine there, married an English lass. He's since passed away. His wife lives down at Black Rock still, wonderful people to me. You can come onto my social life later, wonderful people to me. They lived in a little town called Newton Ferris and I don't know but on this day we went to a

32:30 picture theatre, I don't know what we were seeing, at Plymouth. That's how things were starting to get.

Never had any holidays. You couldn't get a holiday. You worked seven days a week but I went to Plymouth with them and came out and someone said, "Oh the war's over." And that was it. The war was over. Now they did celebrate in London. They had hell knocked out of them, but no it's just, "The war was over." It never seemed to reach to Plymouth you know and that was it. From then on the squadron

33:00 was signalled to get ready to go to Japan or up in the islands. From there up and they were ready but before that I don't know when the war finished, June was it? Something. June?

In Europe, yeah?

Might have been April.

May, it was.

May was it? By the next August it had finished in Japan and we never got there, so we, they came home. Everybody came home bar Lloyd Speedy and I was crook on it and

Where were you?

I said to my [officer], Plymouth on the squadron moving, there was a squadron on the boat and I said to my

33:30 officer, "You haven't seen the signal. You'd better lose me." He said, "I can't do that." So I had to go to London and out to London find my own digs. I went up to London and worked there, I don't know for, from then I think I was in Gibraltar on New Year's Day 1946. I was in Gibraltar on the way home. I think it was about that time and they lined us up, those fellas

34:00 who were due to go home that had service (UNCLEAR) due to go home but I want to stop and do this and something else, and I think there might have been thirty or forty of us in there. "Those that think they can stop behind had better go out", and of course there was only two of us left and I was one of them, so I then came home. In Gibraltar I think it was somewhere about New Year's Day we called in to Gibraltar. Went down to Gibraltar, went down through the Straits of Messina the most beautiful scenery I've ever seen in the world between Sicily and Italy. Mount Etna on Sicily belching

34:30 smoke and snow on the top of it. Went around to Brindisi. From Brindisi down to Tewfik or Port Said, Tewfik and then around to Aden and from Aden, things happened on the way there too, Aden down to Fremantle and then I rang Val, and then of course I came home. And when the boat pulled up at the pier and there was a little girl in a little yellow dress, just about two years of age.

35:00 I think she's here now. She's now fifty-eight.

And what did you?

I then went back to work. I went back to work in that rotten Taxation Department. So I went to work in the Taxation Department, shifted on from there, went into industrial relations after the war. Did a bit of study, went into the Department of Labour and Industry and finished up as chief inspector of factories in the shops in Victoria, and that's where I retired.

Tape 3

00:33 **Now childhood. School. Apart from saying the oath every morning, what was school like in those days for you?**

I don't know. I haven't given it much thought. You moved on you started at the age of four. You gradually moved up in classrooms. A bit different from today I think. In those days you had an

01:00 exam in every class you went, yearly exam. You never got quarterly exams till you got to high school, got to secondary school. If you weren't you had an exam at the end of every year. If you weren't good enough you didn't go up. Today I don't think they do that. They shift you on you know, and a pass was fifty I'm led to believe. You couldn't have a pass of forty like they have now. You can get a degree, I'm led to believe now if you get forty.

01:30 That's not on you know, they should not have it in all subjects in the university, they might have seventy or eighty but if you didn't pass you didn't go up. I suppose they had teachers. Classrooms yeah they weren't covered with floor covering, ah they were good rooms we had. There was one little fire in the corner, which the teacher had. Sat up on a little dais, a little platform,

02:00 and there was no active cruelty, like they protect them now, you got the cuts, you got the cuts boy.

Did you get cuts often?

And they all had a strap.

Did you get six cuts often?

'Course you did, yeah.

What would you get six cuts for?

Oh I don't know. It was usually six of the best. Not one, six. I suppose they thought you know, I don't know why they didn't give two or three or one.

A good round half dozen.

Yeah.

On the hand or the backside would you get them?

No, on the hand, there

02:30 **Did you have any?**

You'd go and get it 'round there or back you know, but you'd get another one.

So apart from pulling your hand back, were there any other tricks. I know my dad used to say at school they'd tie a horsehair across their palm.

No, never heard of that, no. The only thing - just get back you know. Try and get back and you wrap around your hands. You'd wrap around there but they all had their strap. They had them. They'd have a, wouldn't matter, not a matter of pulling off your belt. They had, it'd be a, I don't know a harness, it wasn't

03:00 thicker than this, little bit of horse harness or something like that. I don't know where they got them from, they all had their or luggage strap you know. Yes, they all had their straps.

Now you mentioned that you were living in a hospital.

Oh my father was in charge of the division of mental hygiene hospital.

What did he do? What was his role? Was he a doctor?

No, he wasn't. No, he was what they called a head attendant, a head of staff yeah.

And this was

03:30 **a hospital for?**

Insane.

For mental patients did you say?

Yes, Mont Park.

And

Have you heard of it?

Yes, I have.

Yes, Mont Park.

I just

I lived in Mont Park.

didn't know you'd mentioned the name.

And the thing's (UNCLEAR) you know for years and if you, I don't know whether you want this or not for background, ah you know at one time it was called the lunacy department and then it became ah the lunacy department, then it became the Department of Mental Health I

04:00 think and then it was mental hygiene, so they updated and got away from lunacy.

Did you get to see much of the hospital in those days?

Of the hospital?

Yeah.

Oh yes, walked in and out, didn't go (UNCLEAR) quite open.

What were the conditions like in those days in a hospital like that?

Oh pretty basic. They got a good meal. Ah they were fed three times a day. They grew their own produce. They had a dairy farm where they milked oh two hundred, three hundred cows.

04:30 They had an orchard where they grew fruit. They had a vegetable garden where they grew fruit and they had this farm where the cows were, where they grew crops and what have you. They had a massive laundry where they did all their own laundry, all their own sewing. They had seamstresses and they

used to teach the patients and I can remember as a kid if you went up, now they've sold it out unfortunately. But I can remember as a kid on this Waiora Road end

05:00 there'd be gates across and on the Plenty Road end, that's the other end on the Preston end, there'd be gates there and they'd shut these up at certain times 'cause you couldn't run through at night. Public weren't encouraged to go through the grounds but it was a good ground and what's happened at the present time of course is that the governments, either this government or one before them, Kennett, they just said, "We're shifting all the people out of asylums", which they have done and I as an outsider, I don't know, but I think that's where a lot of our problems

05:30 are coming from. These people are wandering the streets and as long as they wander the streets and take their tablets, terrific.

Mm.

But you've got to supervise them in taking them.

Tell us?

And what they should have done instead of putting that monstrosity that they're putting up at Austin Hospital, hard to get at, hilly, can't move. Instead of putting it there they should have put it in Mont Park. Ninety acres they had there. What did they do? They're selling off Mont Park.

(UNCLEAR) on Mont Park they came in oh rightly, so you know the people that I call them do-gooders.

06:00 So what they did is they closed up all the wards before they closed it down and I had one doctor say to me at one time, I was on the committee up there looking at their food and that, the voluntary thing and he said to me, "Oh you've been here a long while." Well I was there since I was twelve years of age till when I got married. I was twenty-four or something, so I was there a few years and lived amongst it and he said, "I'd like to get something off you for you know, to get the history up."

06:30 And all these things like the dairy was closed down. La Trobe University's on it now ah the laundry was closed. They'd just teach, didn't matter whether they could sew or not, they had something to do and the lawn and the vegetable garden and the orchard were all taken away from them. These people where you've got to keep people occupied. They were gone.

Were there any World War I vets in there? Guys who'd come back shocked?

No, the World War I vets went

07:00 to Bundoora to the Bundoora Repatriation Hospital, which was up the road and on the opposite side. Ah, I would say from my observation, I never got closely into them into their living quarters but I'd say that they were better looked after than would be the civilian people. Not that civilian people were not looked after, they were, but their clothing seemed a bit better you know. The asylum had a uniform. Yes they were up at up

07:30 at Bundoora Repatriation Hospital and TB [tuberculosis] out at Creswell, which is on the same side as Mont Park. That's where they

Did you know any World War I vets, healthy or otherwise?

Which?

Did you know any World War I veterans? As a child?

Oh yeah I did but they were just ordinary folk like I am, yes.

Would they talk about the war at all?

No, no. Val's father was, I'll tell you how they won't talk about it. Val's father won the Croix de Guerre

08:00 in the First World War. He would never talk about it. "It came up in the rations." That's where it come up. That's what he'd say, "It came up in the rations." So he won the Croix de Guerre and he was recommended for the Distinguished Conduct Medal but you know they won't tell, they won't tell you.

Amazing that, isn't it? They

Yes

Wouldn't talk about

Her uncle won the Distinguished Service Order on Gallipoli but he's gone now, but he wouldn't talk about it.

So growing up, excuse me growing up in the Depression,

08:30 **tell us**

Mm.

A bit about that.

In the Depression years, well things were pretty horrid you know. Ah public service for a start always had a job but they had twenty per cent cut in wages. It was mandatory. Everybody got cut twenty per cent and that went on for years after the Depression went on for years and years. A lot of people, thousands out of work. You'd see them. I can remember when I was going to school we used

09:00 to go along the road up near through a cutting which was called Coles Hill. It's not there now. Modern technology's cut the hill away and the road's just, you think it's flat but in those days I can remember when we used to go to school in this horse and buggy that I told you about. We had to go across the paddocks because you'd have some fellas would want to work and other fellas wouldn't want to work for the dole, three shillings a day, thirty cents a day. Some would want to work. Now the some that wanted to work,

09:30 they'd call them scabs. They were always called scabs. The fellows that didn't want to work, they just didn't want to work. I don't think they got paid but they didn't want to work and they used to stand on this cutting on Coles Hill and they'd pelt the fellas as they were coming past in the truck, the fellas that were working. Houses, you'd see houses oh you could buy them for a song but nobody had any money to buy you know. Most fences were down because palings would be

10:00 used for firewood. Ah you'd see people getting along the street, your shoes they would have old motor tyre nailed to them (UNCLEAR) so they'd couldn't get leather, so they'd nail motor tyre stuff to them. They had concert halls where you could go and do the first lot of community singing I suppose.

Tell us about community singing?

Well community singing, I've been to a few in Preston. They'd give them a ticket to go into the community singing and all these people would get there, usually on a

10:30 Friday night and they'd have the local identities, the local band or someone running around just singing to them and they'd sing songs you know, they'd put it up on the screen and so they'd sing.

So would you be sitting in rows like in the cinema and

Pardon?

Would you be sitting in rows of chairs like in the cinema?

Yeah just like in the cinema, yeah.

What were some of the big hits, can you remember, that you would be singing

Oh my God I couldn't now. No I couldn't remember back that far. "Abi Abi Abi my boy."

That song

11:00 **features heavily in your repertoire.**

Ah yes, I just can't remember but yes they used to have these old community singing days and that was their outlet. I don't know whether they had movie pictures as they call flickers, because that's what it used to do, flick, flick, flick. You see that sometimes on your television, don't you, ah the flickers or the pictures. They'd be silent of course in those days

11:30 till about I don't know. 19, might have been late 1920, '20s or early '30s where they brought in, I think it was Al Jolson in the singing film was the first one, which was the 50-50 they brought in. Fifty silent, fifty talking and while you had the silent films on, not these but the theatres in town of course, they had the orchestra pit and they used to play, it'd come up and go down you know and they'd play the music and

12:00 they'd keep up with all the things that were coming in on the old silent bit of excitement, so the music would go up.

Did you have the movie serials in those days? You'd go on a Saturday morning and see cowboy

No

flicks and

No. Not that I can remember, no. I remember the Old Star Theatre in Preston where I'd have to clean the shoes or clean up the back yard to get threepence to go to the pictures. Threepence. Three cents. Today it's like (UNCLEAR)

Would you be able to buy any chocolate or something with that to eat (UNCLEAR) sweets?

No, we

12:30 didn't have time for chocolates. No, wouldn't have enough money for that. No, if they did, I think if the kids buy it wouldn't be chocolates. It'd be all day suckers you see. They last longer and so the kids'd buy all day suckers, I think'd be the thing they'd have.

Are they like those big round lollies?

(UNCLEAR) lollies on a stick.

Were they long lollies all day suckers?

Yeah on a stick usually oh

Like barley sugar or something, were they?

Oh they'd be like about that, about as big as a marble you know and

And what games would you play? I mean you're

13:00 **living in Bundoora. It must be fairly countrified then, what would you get up to?**

Well cricket would be your social life. Cricket, there was no football, there weren't enough around for football. I used to play a bit of cricket at Bundoora. That was our nearest little town. A little town where they had a bit of send off I think or come back when we came back. Ah I was, I might have been a bit unusual I don't know, I never had many kids friends at school because I never lived near them. Kids that went to school, they lived near

13:30 the school. I had three miles to go and had to catch a horse and buggy to get home or else. Now when I went to the Northcote High School, of course I had to push a pushbike from Bundoora to Northcote and home again every day. When I started work in the city I had to push a pushbike from Bundoora to the treasury buildings every day and but in those days of course if you were coming up any of the hills you could cling onto the back of the old fruiterers wagon or whatever it is because the trucks never went fast. Twenty, twenty five mile an

14:00 hour they were breaking the speed limit, they were speeding you know and so coming up the hills you'd cling onto those and get towed up. On Fridays I'd go to school, I don't know how I succeeded in school, I never know. On Fridays I'd go to school and then I'd push from Northcote to Yan Yeen. Work on a farm all the weekend, push back to home and on Monday morning again push the bike to school again.

What were you doing on a farm?

Oh (UNCLEAR). Well

14:30 it was it was a Depression. Couldn't get a job and I had a brother, which we only buried on Thursday. Eighty-eight. He died on Thursday. Eighty-eight they buried him and my father put him onto a farm at Yan Yeen milking cows. Thought, "Well, get on the farm and see how that goes." He was there for four or five years. Worked hard but never did any good. Ah I might be getting, you're asking the life prior to that.

Yeah, no I'm interested.

The milk, you couldn't get milk contracts.

15:00 You could get cream contracts but what they'd have, they'd pay you for so much cream that you separate the cream, so much cream and you'd send, take it down to Yan Yeen railway station. Send it away to Holstein and Neilsen or whoever else processed cream into butter.

Would you get a bit of extra milk?

And then you were paid by the percentage of butter fat in it and then they weren't getting enough, so they brought in a scheme called the Paterson scheme. Pretty good memory, haven't I?

Yeah.

And Paterson scheme was where you signed up that you'd get

15:30 nine pence a pound for cream, so if it went up to two, if it went up to twenty four pence a pound you'd still only get your nine. If it went down to one you'd have to, so they had a contract, a set price on the Paterson scheme.

Tell us then excuse me, let's go to when you left school at fourteen

Yeah.

Did you sit the public service exam then?

I left school at about sixteen or seventeen. When you got to the eighth grade in the state school,

16:00 oh I shouldn't call it a state school because well the schools were owned by the state, when you went in your primary school you left usually at the age of, not the age, age didn't make any difference, you left at eighth grade. You could leave any time after the age of fourteen that was the leaving age. They then took it up to fifteen, so it didn't matter what they said, if you were fourteen you could leave. The Education Department didn't require you to be compulsory educated after that. So

16:30 if you got to the eighth grade and you had a number of certificates, you were talking about the school.

You went up, when you got to this every year you had an annual examination. When you got to the sixth grade you sat for a certificate, your first certificate. Qualifying certificate, all right? You then went on seventh. When you got to the eighth grade you sat for your merit certificate. That was the highest you could get at the primary school. You then went on to high school and the second year at high school you sat for your intermediate.

- 17:00 Ah the next year you sat for your leaving. The next year, if you wanted to go on and this is where they miss today is your High School Certificate now, haven't they? That used to be when you passed your leaving certificate, didn't mean to say you could leave school, but if you wanted to go to university you couldn't go to university on your leaving. You had to sit for another examination called matriculation and you couldn't go to university unless you matriculated. A lot of people go today, I only see from
- 17:30 my kids. My kids are well educated. They've all got degrees. I can only see from them that kids in fact get into university that really shouldn't be there because we as an organization, as a population today, they want to say everybody's got to have the right to go to university. Of course they have but they're got to be good enough to go there and that's what they seem to overlook. It doesn't matter what you do, if you can just make a bit a grey you can go to university and some of those people shouldn't be there. They won't make it. It's a bit difficult.

18:00 **Tell us?**

So you had to have matriculation.

Um did you matriculate or did you

No

Go to leaving?

Leaving certificate.

And what were your ambitions as a lad then? Did you have any ambitions?

To get a job. Didn't matter what it was, to get a job. You couldn't get jobs you know. They were just out of this world. They just weren't about.

So how did you go about it? What did you do?

I sat for an examination of the Commonwealth Government for a storeman I think first up. My father'd say, "You going for that?" you know. I don't know what happened

- 18:30 there but I didn't know how to do stores apparently, so I never got in. Maybe there was a bit of, ah in those days, favouritism I don't know but I never got in but I then went to the public service. They'd hold exams and they used to take over the exhibition and I'm saying when they hold exams there'd be a thousand fifteen hundred sitting for it. There wouldn't be today but there would be in those days and it was an entry to get into the public service. You had to enter because it was a permanent job

- 19:00 once you got there. Ah I'm thinking I'm still paying tax on it, I think I paid superannuation from about the age of seventeen or something you know and where my cobbers were working and earning when we were married, I was married on four pound a week. Maximum wage in the public service at twenty one two hundred and eight pound, ah annual salaries, two hundred and eight pound a year and that's what we

- 19:30 lived on, four pound a week. I think I was going to say something there. I forget what it was. I got mislaid, but that's what it was in those days, oh when my cobbers were doing motor mechanics or something and getting through their apprenticeships and they were earning, I was earning four, they were earning five or six and paying no super. I was paying super you know. I was behind the eight ball but at the end of the day you're that far ahead of them that it doesn't matter really.

And was it at this

- 20:00 **time you wanted to join the RAAF? You had that bee in your bonnet?**

Well yeah, I reckoned I had the qualifications. Now what made me do that, I don't know, what made me long for that, I don't know. It may have been a boyish thing but I did have the qualifications and I think it was English, physics and maths.

And your dad said no?

No, he just said, "No". No, that's it. Well they had, see parents had a say in those days. They have no say today. Do you know

- 20:30 that at the age of twenty one that in my day that you handed over all your salary to your parents till you were twenty-one? I handed all my salary into my parents till I was twenty-one.

Did they give you any back?

By the time I get to twenty-one, I'm then supposed to save for a home, get married. Find the girl. Save for a home. Not supposed to but this is, they just said you've got to get married and that's what

happened and I can remember taking Val and we you know, we're going to the pictures. What - two shillings a week

21:00 to spend on lollies. Ooh (UNCLEAR) two shillings a week pocket money.

What would you do with that two shillings a week?

But we didn't know, well oh I don't know. Spend it on lollies or something. You didn't know, may have gone to the theatre but we didn't know any different. We were happy. When I got to twenty-one I had a motorbike you know and we used to go motorbiking. I supplied the petrol and the girls, you'd take them out, they always supplied the morning or afternoon

21:30 tea or the dinner. They always did that. Not today they don't. Man

(UNCLEAR)

And I'm not from today's age but I bet you they go out and they're waiting for the fella to take them to a restaurant.

So how old were you, were you about seventeen when you joined the Royal Scottish?

Yes about that.

Were they militia?

Militia.

Or CMF [Citizens Military Force] in those days?

Militia. Militia.

Um

You say CMF. Well you could call it either militia or they're all the same, so you can remember that, ah you can't remember. When war came there were two

22:00 types and we were only talking about it last night. There were two types of enlistment. One was you either enlisted and you were an enlisted serviceman. You could go wherever you wanted. You were what they called a volunteer. You could go wherever you wanted. If you didn't volunteer you were conscripted and if you were conscripted you could only be forced to go Australia or Australian capital or Australian territories and that's what it was. So you had the AIF, Australian Imperial Forces,

22:30 forgetting we're talking about army, Australian Imperial Forces or conscripted personnel. Now you haven't got conscripted personnel in air force. They're all volunteers. You haven't got conscripted personnel in navy. They're all volunteers. The only one it happens to is the army. They were the conscripters, and I'm not saying, you know don't get me wrong that there's any difference between them. A lot of the fellas that were conscripted, you know wanted to try and get out and join the AIF later on but just couldn't. They wouldn't let them go.

23:00 **Tell us what it was like in the Royal Scottish? What were you required to do, and what sort of training did you do?**

Well they always wanted to know what was under the kilt.

So what was your uniform? Were you wearing a kilt?

Oh yes. I haven't got a photo. Oh yes, kilts and sporrans and oh yes proper Scottish don't worry. Gordon, Highlanders tartans, yes the things there. Oh we used to go and I said earlier in the piece, you know that you'd do this for a supplement to your salary too, you'd get a bit ah because

23:30 there were no boy scouts where I lived. No organisations like that, so you'd go down to, can't think of the name now the street now. South Melbourne, Sturt Street, and you'd drill there, I don't know, once a fortnight there'd be drill and oh certain things they'd teach you how to do. Pulling guns to pieces or rifle fire, and I can't even think of the blooming machine gun I was on anyhow.

Was it a Vickers or a Lewis?

Lewis machine gun. Not a

24:00 Vickers, no. Couldn't think of it and I was saying Bren, that's how old I'm getting. Vickers. It's a Lewis machine gun, and so you would then go, I was a Lewis machine gunner and then you would then go down to Williamstown, that's now gone under housing, down there and you would sit for exams on pulling it to pieces blindfolded and firing at things, Vickers machine gun, and rifle fire. So you go down there once a month or once, I forget, it wasn't every week anyhow. Once a month or once every two months,

24:30 and then you had to do a one or two camps a year. So that got me out of the office you know. Fortnightly camp. Either at Seymour, no Puckapunyal in those days, it was Seymour. There was a big military camp from World War I. Seymour, I think I did one turn down at Point Nepean. What's the name of the

barracks down there?

Um I don't know.

I think it was the Lord Mayor's camp later on but there used to be an army barracks there.

25:00 **And how long were you in the Royal Scottish for?**

For Victorian Scottish, oh three years, two and a half, three years

And

That was the contract.

Oh you signed a contract for it?

Oh yes

Number of years?

You signed a contract for a number of years, mm.

And what year was it, you weren't in there for '34 to '37, were you?

The which?

You were there from 1934 to 1937?

Yeah, that's in the Scottish Regiment.

Were you particularly aware of the build up in Europe?

No.

Of war at all?

No wasn't.

25:30 No, never knew a thing about it.

Really? Hitler wasn't

Never

something you knew much about?

No, well Hitler didn't come into being until 1933, did he? That's when we first heard of him. The famous corporal from the First World War and then he got on in the political field and it was 1933 I think he came into it and I think he really came into it when I think at the [Olympic] Games, wasn't it one of the [Olympic] Games in

'36.

'36 or '37 yes and that's where he first (UNCLEAR). No, you

26:00 never heard of, I never heard of it, no. It wasn't on. Oh I think there was an awareness or the government wouldn't have been having these fellas doing voluntary training.

So after 1937 were you involved in any militia training at all?

No.

That was in your motorbiking and rabbiting days?

That's right.

Tell us about going rabbiting on a motorbike with ferrets? Fantastic. I want to hear about that.

Oh well, you just get on a motorbike and go rabbiting. Get some ferrets off somebody, ferreting, no shooting.

Did you have your own ferrets?

No, I didn't no.

Did you borrow or rent

26:30 **ferrets?**

Pardon?

Did you borrow or rent ferrets?

Borrow the ferrets off someone. I don't know who, someone, we must have borrowed ferrets. Never kept ferrets. Not a very good thing to keep. Ah ferret keepers won't believe that but they're a bit dirty but no, we used to borrow 'em and take them out.

Walk us through the process of ferreting?

Through the process of ferreting?

Ferreting, yeah.

Well you'd have to find the warren first, that's where I got to teach, that's where the rabbits live. Usually, hillocks

27:00 you know and plenty of rabbit manure around and plenty of holes where the warrens are if they were fresh diggings. Well then you'd net the entrances and put the ferret in and he'll tell you whether there's rabbits there or not and the big trouble with ferrets is apparently, is to know when they've had enough. If you feed them too much they won't work, they'll go to sleep. If you feed them too little, they'll get down there and kill the rabbit and won't come out. They'll stop there, so he's always

27:30 a bit of a problem, but then you'd have to start digging but yes, we used to just net the, all the holes and put the ferret in one and all of a sudden you could hear them scampering under the earth. Oh they make a noise. The rabbits'll bolt then and he'll bolt straight out into the net and you grab him and after it'll come the ferret. So that's how you catch rabbits.

Would you skin 'em there or what would you do with them?

No, leave the skin on and take 'em home with the skin.

28:00 No, don't skin them there and then, you wouldn't have any rabbit left by the time you got home. In the hot weather you leave the skin on 'em. You'd gut them.

And what would you [cook], rabbit stew or how would you do 'em?

Rabbit stew, yeah. Don't you have rabbit stew?

Yeah, I have. I'm just

I think I've just had rabbit stew two days ago.

Yeah, I'm just interested in how you would have them?

No rabbit stew, yeah. Not baked rabbits. We used to stew it, yeah. I don't think we had baked rabbits in those days. Yeah, stewed rabbits

28:30 and they were a good meal you know. I did at one time make enquiries as a young fellow, make enquiries when I was trying to get on a bit about opening a rabbit farm but I got to the agricultural department and couldn't get any further and that was the end of it but I do believe they breed them today.

They do for food.

Yes.

Um excuse me.

And it's a good food. Young ones don't like it or they won't try it you know. It's like us I suppose, we don't eat snails because we've never tried it but the Frenchman loves it but the rabbits were

29:00 good, particularly for ah, for the people that are out of work and I remember the story, not so much out of work but for athletes too. I remember the story of a great bike rider fella, Russell Mockridge, who was one of Australia's great Olympians and unfortunately got killed [in] an accident on a road race. Now Mockridge was a young fella just quickly lived at Geelong, used to ride an old tumble down bike

29:30 out and one day the Geelong Cycling Club are coming home and they get to the end and they can't shake off this kid that's got on the back and so they said to him, you know he had rabbits and ferrets on board and he could keep up with the bike racers, this is in a bike race, and so anyhow they had a talk to him and they got him to come along to a bike race and he brought an old tumble down bike with sandshoes or something and he cleaned 'em up on the bike race out, I think to (UNCLEAR). Well this fellow was a marvel as a pushbike. You go back and look up your sport. Look up Russell Mockridge. He

30:00 was a minister, I think he went into a clerical order. He was a minister, I don't know where it was Presbyterian some church, wasn't the Uniting Church, it was one of those churches and hell of a nice fella. Was on a bike race I think at touring Victoria and got knocked off at Clayton with a motorbus coming across the road and hit them and he got killed, but there's a good rabbitier.

He was a good rabbitier, was he?

Yes.

Well tell us about your accident, you were in hospital for nine months?

Yeah. That's right.

And

30:30 **was it during that nine months that they started the call up for compulsory training?**

Can't recall. I was in there from the September to the June of the next year.

June '40?

June '40, so I don't know when, it's not clear in my mind as to when the call up came. I'd say it might have been after that date. I would say it would be after, when did Japan come into the war, '40?

'41, end of '41.

'41. So I would say the call up came just before that or just after.

31:00 I think that's when they started. See we were a long way away. Ah God we're thirteen thousand miles from England you know and it's a dickens of a long way as things were moving then you know. Not today, they can do it in a couple of days, can't they, but it was a long way. '39, '40 - Japan wasn't in the war. It came in later on, but I think they started to realise that once Hitler really got going,

31:30 he moved. He didn't take long. Only because countries didn't get together and you know he just plucked them off one by one as he came down the Balkan peninsula and down through France and Italy. I can remember one of our planes reported, you know went across and I, they took Lord Gort or Lord Lloyd [Lloyd] across to, an English politician, across to France might have been the 1940s to try and talk the Englishmen in, talk the Frenchmen into hanging

32:00 on, you know coming on and what happened they wouldn't and on the Lake Berotia [?] or something or Berocca [?] in the southern France there were about twenty sea planes, they wouldn't even take them off and go to England.

So tell me, when you come out of hospital with an injured leg, were you hoping that you would be okay and you could you could join up? Was that something you had in mind?

Oh no, not at that time no. Oh yes I was. Yeah, I was. I wasn't married. I was single. Free and you know.

32:30 Do what I wanted to do.

And you were working in the Tax Department then, weren't you?

Yes.

And were you frustrated that it was a reserved occupation and you couldn't get out?

Well not, yes I was. Not so much, yes I was frustrated because I was in a job I didn't want to be in anyhow. Ah but never had the intestinal fortitude to say, "I'm going to go and resign", or something, you know big, there's a big difference, isn't there? So it's all right to say, "Oh I hated it",

33:00 but I never had the guts in other words to say, "Well I'm gonna leave." Perhaps it was a permanent position and this is the trouble with public service. This is why you've got so many good people in there that's just (UNCLEAR) 'cause they, they're frightened to get out. They do in those, I suppose today they do so much in all the years of experience, seniority, superannuation - it's all gone. Although some jobs, they tell me you've only got to be in for about six months and get a hundred and fifty thousand a year or something.

You talking about Governor-General here

33:30 **or something.**

I never said that.

All right so (UNCLEAR) could you resign? Could you just resign from a reserved occupation?

Could I?

Were you able to just resign from a reserved occupation or would they say, "No, you've got to stay here?"

I don't know. I should imagine, no there'd be a manpower, they had, I think they had an office of manpower. You had to register if you weren't employed, you'd have to go and register and they I forgot, they can direct you where to go. Manpower people

34:00 that were, I know I had a brother-in-law that worked in a shoe factory as a boot maker or shoemaker or something. He finished up in a munitions factory. They get them in, munitions factory out at Footscray making munitions or something. So they had manpower and I forget about that. There was a manpower office where they could second you or direct you, that's it. Now I don't know what happened if you didn't (UNCLEAR). Maybe they had the power to carry out sanctions.

34:30 Put you in gaol or something.

I think they did actually.

Yeah

I think it had certain sanctioning powers. So tell us we've got about five minutes left on this tape, just briefly what that field ambulance camp was like and why you so much thought, I don't want to be in the field ambos.

No, I never said I didn't want to be in field ambulance. They put me in the field ambulance because I had a bad leg and they thought, you know if anything happens to it, they weren't sure this is but it was the militia, it wasn't the AIF, this is compulsory training,

35:00 the militia, because they thought if something goes wrong with the leg then I'd be on the spot to do it. I was in the field ambulance camp at Mount Martha, that's where they sent you under canvas. I was three months there. What they had is a lot of other battalions, also militia down there around, they're all gone now but they had that down there and we were the hospital for injuries and what have you. There'd be motorcar accidents and fellas getting shot up because they weren't

35:30 shooting, they were learning, but in accidents in motor vehicles or tripping over and breaking legs and arms and what have you and always the big thing was always periodic mass examinations. If you're in the army you're up for a medical examination wherever and you know they line you up and they have a look at you and they say, "Take it away and get it washed," or, "Who was she? What's her address?" Particularly if you got VD [venereal disease] or anything, that's what they would say to you, "Who is she? Where does she live?"

36:00 And they would then go out, send doctors out and rope her in. Get her fixed up.

So she'd get treated as well.

Hey?

So she would get fixed up?

Yes. She could be, she'd be a civilian more than likely, and rope them and get them fixed up but it went on in those days too.

Oh I'm sure it did.

Not very often that's what used to happen. I'll tell you a bit about what happened in the army too, what happened in the air force because these things happened. I haven't told Val these things. Yes, so there are some, we'll come back later on, what happened in the air force,

36:30 as to fellows who got VD or something and you find

Well

They were very cruel in a way.

We're definitely gonna come to that on the next tape. I just want to know at the end of this camp.

The end of the camp.

Yeah.

Well you, ah I used to come up most nights. We'd have, fellows would have cars and we'd after training, if you weren't on something like they'd be on night courses, I'd come up to Melbourne to see me girlfriend and then I'd meet the fellas back at two o'clock on a certain

37:00 corner in the two o'clock in the morning, pick you up in his car, you contributed to the cost of petrol and what have you, and back you'd go. Now at the end, the camp was just over and I think they just had a parade and you were off and till further notice and I think they notified you when the next camp was on.

And that was what made your mind up then to try and join the RAAF?

I don't know. I didn't want to be a conscript. Let me be honest you know, I had

37:30 the and it's wrong, so don't get me, you know in those days I'm talking about those days, I had the thing that you couldn't be any good if you weren't a volunteer. Well that's wrong, completely wrong

Well I

Because I think you've only got to look at the Kokoda trail, the 57/60th, I think it was that started to turn the Japanese back and they were I think, I'm almost sure, conscripts.

Yes, they were.

So were they? Is that right? Yeah and so

The 39 Company.

I'm wrong you see but that's the

38:00 feeling that was there today, if it was there on that day. If you weren't in the army, might be pounds for peanuts you'd get a white feather in your mail or something. This is what used to go on and these are the sides. Ah, if you went to the army and you were medically unfit and you couldn't get in and so the army, the service and you couldn't get in, you could get a little silver V volunteer, and the fellas used to wear that, V volunteer. Don't pick on me, I volunteered and I can't go.

38:30 **Really? So they would wear that V, a little sort of V meaning they tried to get in but they?**

Yes.

Oh that's good. I hadn't heard of that before.

Yes (UNCLEAR) V. They could wear that. Didn't have to wear it but they could.

So if you were a young fella then and you didn't have a V, would blokes stop you in the street and go, "Why aren't you in the army?"

Oh I would think there are, they're still around today. They're still there, I don't say not every time you walk down the street but there are packs of people that are like that. I could

39:00 point out servicemen that wouldn't want to talk to you because you weren't in the army. You might have been in the air force or the navy but you weren't in the army, so you were no good, but that's people. That's people you've got to live with you know.

I think it doesn't matter on that point how close you are, people will always find a reason to dislike somebody, won't they?

Oh that's right, that's society you know and if you want to be a good citizen, you've got to be able to understand all these points of view and mix with them.

Tape 4

00:31 **I wanted to start with join joining the RAAF. Joining the RAAF. You tried once and now you, you're back to try again.**

All right.

This time you've got a bit of an injury and so how did you go about getting into the RAAF this time?

How did I go about getting into the RAAF? Well I just made up my mind as I was walking down the street, I said, "There's a RAAF office. I'm going in." And I went in there and I spoke to a fellow and he

01:00 said, "Well what do you want to be?" I said, "I don't know." I didn't even know at that stage that I was, wasn't fit to go into the RAAF and he said, "Well where do you work?" I said, "The Taxation Department." He said, "We'll make you a pay clerk", but he gave me a test. What's ten per cent of so and so you know, things that you could do at first grade at school and so that was it, and I don't know I forget what happened after that. I think they, oh then they made provision for a medical test.

01:30 Ah that's right, I didn't know then that I wasn't fit. You get a medical test and then you're sent up to do a rookie's course at Shepparton Showground for three months under canvas and up to this stage everybody's lovely that you meet in the air force. I'm not decrying them even now, but

02:00 the first day there, early in the morning it's, "Come on you so and so's. You're in the air force now. Rise and shine."

Well look let me just

And

back track you a second there. Can you walk me through the medical that you went through because they must have figured out sooner or later that you've got a sustained injury?

Well they would know that because on your records, you know they have every little scar that you've got. Colour of your eyes and if you're got a scar they put it down. Now

02:30 I just can't (UNCLEAR) remember what they, I don't think I knew at that stage that I wasn't fit. I wouldn't be fit enough for aircrew and I wasn't joining for aircrew, they never even suggested it. I don't know whether you go somewhere else. Ah, I knew it'd be ground staff, soon as they put you where they're putting you because you don't just go in and go onto a rookie's course.

03:00 You'd go out to an air, oh I suppose they'd do a rookie's course the same.

And did you have some idea that you might get to England if you joined the RAAF?

None at all.

No idea where you wanted to go?

None at all. Could have been to Melbourne for the rest of my life. It's the luck of the draw, that's all it is.

And what else appealed about the RAAF that didn't about the infantry?

Well I liked their attitude and perhaps I, so you're not gonna put this down or not? I don't but I (UNCLEAR) to me I don't care

03:30 what (UNCLEAR). It looked to me and I'm not decrying the army or I'd been in the army anyhow and I knew what it was like. Rough and ready and you had to be tough, there's no doubt about it. You got to be no place for mummy's boys. I hadn't been in the RAAF but looking at them they seemed to me to be I'm looking for a word, not a cut above. They seemed to be a bit more polished than in

04:00 behaviour or something. I don't think they are when you get into them but to me at that time it appeared to be a bit more

So they had a?

That way and that's what I wanted to do.

They had a bit of an allure about them.

That's right.

So how

And an aura around them you know, for me it did.

Well they certainly cut a better kind of

Mm.

They certainly seemed to be a little bit more appealing to the ladies

Yeah.

It seems. And was that on your mind at all?

Yeah, I think so.

Well everyone wants to look their

04:30 **best.**

Yep.

So after how long did the medical go? Was it just you know about fifteen twenty minutes or was it longer than that?

Oh I can't recall. While I was certain it wouldn't be long. It'd be, "Put out your tongue, got your own teeth?" Ah if they winked at one another through your ears you were in, nothing there to stop them from looking just a basic thing, "What were you, what did you have when you were a kid?" Looked at your fingernails and your toes and

05:00 there were no x-rays or very in depth medical examination I can remember. I'm almost sure there wasn't.

Oh no, I bet there weren't.

If you breathed you were in, that was it.

Now what about your brother at this stage? You were going to join up with him much earlier

Mm.

before the accident?

Mm, he was overseas. He went to Egypt through Greece through Crete

Get captured?

No, he didn't. He got out at Crete

05:30 **Lucky man.**

And they buried him last Thursday.

Oh I'm sorry to hear about that

Eighty-eight

and I'm sorry to bring it up.

Oh well, he had a good life and yes.

Well, he was your older brother so he must have hit his nineties.

I had another one older one. He was elderly years.

Good genes by the looks of things.

Mm.

In the family. So you've joined up and they send you to Shepparton and it's a bit rougher than you had hoped.

No, not that I'd hoped. No, it was, well when you got to Shepparton you

06:00 were back to what you were in the army. Army tents you know and bit rough. My first job at or one of my first jobs at Shepparton I suppose was to, and I wasn't used to it but I worked on a farm and I never shirked it. I used to go down and help to empty a coal truck at Shepparton.

Mm nice.

Yeah, which we did and I can remember one fellow there he was a man. They were men, they were twenty-two you know and of course he was home. He found it that hard

06:30 that he'd just break down and cry all the time (UNCLEAR) funny, but anyhow we went down and emptied this coal truck and got back at about two or three o'clock in the afternoon. No one saved my dinner. I never got any. It was gone, dinner time had gone, you waited for tea, mm.

Do you have any, you know do you sort out things with your friends that you make there saying you know, "If I'm not back by five o'clock make sure you save something for me?" Like did you learn

No, well you

quickly enough to do that?

No, you couldn't do that. There was just nothing. It was:

07:00 meal hours were meal hours. If you weren't on the line you didn't get it. If you just weren't there, there's no none of that. I would imagine fellows that were working on an aircraft had to keep on working you know. They would save their meal, they did get a meal. This is in actual operational duties.

At this stage you already know that you're going to be a pay clerk.

Pardon?

At this stage you already know that you're going to be a pay clerk.

Yes.

So did you question their reasons for making

07:30 **you do manual labour?**

Well 'cause I worked in the public service in the tax office I suppose and then they sent you on after your, I'm trying to think of the words they used, after your first primary meeting with them and at Shepparton on your rookie's course as they called it, then you came back and you did another course on finance. Their way of accounting and what have you. You had to go all through that again and sit for an examination.

08:00 You had to sit for an examination through there too and from then on they posted you to different places.

Now would it be fair to say that being in the public service probably equipped you for the army and it's

Don't

curious way of doing things?

Don't think so. I think it's in your heart you know, you either want it or you don't and it's no good. See this was I suppose some of the big problem as I saw it with the volunteer system now. Oh yeah they did all right because all of them wanted

08:30 to be there usually. With the volunteers you didn't. You had people that were quite good but forced and

some people won't be forced you know. You can lead them but you can't force them and perhaps you know you get a bit less back from this, that, they just didn't want to be there

What sort of a uniform did they give you while you were a rookie?

Ah just your ordinary uniform. You'd get supplied with shoes and socks

09:00 and under clothing, a couple of each of under clothing, I suppose under pants and singlet, a couple of shirts and a uniform. You'd also get an overall, a blue like mechanic's overall, which they put on. That means you're working. You're working I think, your working garb so

Now was it an open slather intake?

And a tie. You always got a tie. Pardon?

Was it an open slather intake? Did they take in all kinds and send them to Shepparton?

I don't know. Wouldn't have a clue.

So you weren't there with

09:30 **training, pilots training (UNCLEAR)**

No, I don't know. Could have been still going to Shepparton. I haven't got a clue. No.

Okay and did they work you seven days a week?

Yes, yeah, no time off. I went to Scotland once and I'll show you some photos and that would be, oh I don't know when that would be. Anyhow, I went to Scotland once. That's the only time I've been in London. No you worked seven days a week, mm.

Now when did

10:00 **they say that you were B2? When did they give you that class?**

When did I be?

When did they class you as B2 not A1?

Oh well, I don't know. I'd reckon that was at the first intake.

So they don't say, "By the way you're a B2 soldier"?

No. No, they don't tell you that until such time as it comes you want to go overseas, then they look at your record and, "He's doubtful," or "He's a B2." Apparently then, they started putting on another medical examination.

Oh okay. Well look tell me a little about the

10:30 **training that you gave you to learn about finance in the army. I'm sure that there's a few tricks in there**

Oh gee, that's a long while ago. I think it was at exhibition buildings they held it, and I haven't got much idea of what went on there but it would be looking at different forms. You used all the army slang, you know if you're talking to a form you wouldn't say, "A wife allotment form." You'd say,

11:00 "That's an MF-5 or something", or military form, it'd be something and so you would learn all the different types of forms. Ah, how to enter their pay books, dates, what a DRO is, daily routine orders, because that's what you'd go on, what the routine orders are down. You don't pay anybody allowances unless it's covered by a daily routine order from the orderly room that this is on this course. You have to know the allowances that

11:30 you'd have to pay them. You'd have to know when their pay book was going to be docked because of certain things that they did and I think I said to you, they're you know, that they're a bit hard. If a fellow went into hospital with a disease that he shouldn't have, I'm talking about venereal disease, if he went into a hospital with a venereal disease I think it was

12:00 the first day he wasn't docked his pay, the last day in hospital he wasn't docked his pay, but all the other days he never got paid. Now the cruel part about it was that the wife never got paid either. They chopped her allotment off. This is early in the piece and she wouldn't know, she wouldn't have a clue and see she should, she knew they wouldn't tell her, so she wouldn't have a clue until such time as she complained to the air board or something I mean, "My

12:30 allotment's stopped, what's the matter?" And they'd make enquiries and say, "Oh some mistake's been made." They would then reinstate it. That's what they did later on. They reinstated their pay and the fellow would have to make it up, unbeknownst to her. He would get or he'd get a certain amount of money, but very little until they'd paid it back. I thought that was a cruel thing but they rectified that.

Well, isn't that a curious thing though that there you are sitting in an office writing out forms

knowing quite a lot of personal information about

Yes.

some poor soldier that his wife doesn't know?

13:00 But you're talking about what at the schooling this is

Oh yes, no I just

What we would do, yes it is. Oh well you did know their personal things. You hear fellas talking this and that and you'd say, "Oh that's not true", but you know that's, I suppose that happens in a bank, doesn't it?

Yeah credit card agencies, milk bars.

That's right, yeah.

So um, can you give me a little bit more of an idea of a few of the other terminologies and forms that you had to learn apart from DROs [Daily Routine Order] and MFs [Military Forms]?

No, no. Just your daily routine orders and all your

13:30 your different forms that you've got to fill in but I just can't recall them now.

And did they give you instruction then about for example if a soldier goes missing, missing, suspected killed, does he get his pay book docked for that period of time?

No. Not as I was aware. Then all his accounts were sent to London. It's a funny thing, you know that when you're on the station you never had pay books to deal with but you never issued

14:00 new pay books. They were all done from air force headquarters in London. If your pay book was filled, I had to forward it to London, they would enter all the things up and send it back again and sometimes you know it might go to London, they'd sent it back again and they'd forget to put in your pay book that you've got a wife or you've got some dependant or something. I wouldn't notice and so you'd just keep on paying that he's a single man. In fact he has a wife and you should have been docking his pay. That happens you know,

14:30 errors do happen but no, but I wouldn't know what happened then. All we knew is that if someone disappeared, someone from our office would go and perhaps you shouldn't put this in but they would look at all his personal belongings in his kit, collect them up and then make certain decisions regarding what is in those contents.

Because I'm sure there were occasions where a fellow was

15:00 **considered killed in action but he turns up three months later for example. Perhaps he's been**

Yes well

at a party somewhere?

That does happen. Yes, well I don't know if he turned up, he wouldn't be returning back to the squadron again. He, he'd be going to air force headquarters and they'd put him somewhere else more than likely.

So to your knowledge?

I can only remember one prisoner of war out of the squadron, that's the only one, there's only one, so he'd a been shot down or something in a life boat and picked

15:30 up by a boat out (UNCLEAR) mm.

So sorry what would happen, what happened to that POWs [Prisoner of War] pay?

I don't know. Haven't got a clue.

Oh okay.

No, never dealt with it.

Okay. So in that training course, how long do they sort of run you through the mill and what sort of an exam did they give you at the end?

Ah I don't know how long that lasted

16:00 for. It might be a couple of months I think on and off you know, and then you're always under training while you're in the job too. They had on the job training all the time.

Well for example how would you work out how much money to give a ship if it's going to travel for a couple weeks overseas for the number of men?

Well I never dealt with ships. I dealt with aeroplanes or sea craft or sea boats I suppose. They're flying

- boats but not boats per water. They were a boat because they were an aeroplane as
- 16:30 built like a boat.
- So you never had to work out a lump sum to give**
- No.
- to a crew at any stage?**
- No, they flew out, they flew back. They flew out and didn't come back, they were missing in action. Sometimes they flew and I don't know how, I forget how we did it here. Sometimes they'd fly to Malta, land in Malta or down to Egypt and they might be there for a day or two and then come back, but their pay would be just the same. They were paid not daily, they were paid fortnightly or whenever they wanted it, which would be,
- 17:00 wouldn't be sooner than fortnightly. Doesn't say every fortnight you get paid. You had to come in every fortnight. You could leave that for a couple of months if you want to and then come and get paid.
- What about chaps who went AWL [Absent Without Leave]? Did they have their pay docked?**
- Yes.
- Did you have that responsibility?**
- Yes, if you were AWL. Yeah, we never had any AWL yeah.
- So what other responsibilities would be handed over to you in terms of looking after men's finances?**
- We only had that it was within their finances that they may have accrued,
- 17:30 like a bank book. It's in the bank. It's in, I suppose air force headquarters have got it somewhere. Which in Barclays Bank, the Bank of England or whoever they dealt with so well as far as we're concerned it's only figures. Now if they came in, and wanted two thousand pound, they mightn't get it. They'd have to give you notice, they'd have to give you notice but you've got figures in your bank book and that's what they'd pay on but I'd say if they wanted to come in, and they had a couple of thousand pound and they wanted it they'd have to give notice
- 18:00 to get it you know, give (UNCLEAR) so we could, we'd go to the Bank of England in Plymouth and get the money. If we
- And would you have to physically take bags of money to and from?**
- Physically we took, no we didn't take bags of money. It never got paid to us. We didn't have any money intake at all. I'm wrong there. The only thing that a fella might come by some money, and I don't know how he'd come by it. He might have won it or you know he'd come by some
- 18:30 money, and he might want to send it home or he might want to deposit it in his bank book, well we would take it then and deposit it, but that's the only time. That was very rare. All our money was paid out. So we'd go to the bank, we'd find out how much money we had to do because we had to make up cash to sections as to how many pounds we wanted, how many ten shillings, how many fifty cents. We didn't pay anything less than two shillings. They'd come in, it was always at least two shillings. So you'd go
- 19:00 to the bank and get your amount of money on your cash to section, eighty thousand dollars or something, bring it back and then you'd make up their pay so that when you come to a queue you'd be in alphabetical order and [for example] Estelle, and you'd look at Estella and you'd get her pay book out, she'd be the next in line and that would have an envelope with your pay in it. Always paid by officers, nobody else. Always paid by an officer. Wouldn't matter who he is,
- 19:30 long as he's an officer he had to do the pay, and so you'd hand the officer the thing, he would give it to him and in that would be a five pounds six shillings and you'd open it up five pounds and you signed for your pay and that's it. Done. Now that's on your pay book. In your pay book is only the calculation of your pay, so many days, fourteen days at seventeen six an hour a day, whatever it is, and the running total of debits and credits. It'd be the quittance,
- 20:00 this is the thing that you signed for and that's all it was.
- What about variations in the money exchange?**
- Yes, well we did that. I can remember we got to Durban and we had quite a substantial amount of money and I think in, I just don't know, we had to do some exchange in Durban and whatever we were on the boat, it might have been sterling, and I'm not sure whether they couldn't have been on sterling because
- 20:30 we had to get money changed and we had to get them to pay them in Africa because we were going to be there for ten days. We didn't know but we were going to be there for awhile and so we went across I think it was to, I think they used to deal with Barclays Bank, which is an international bank, and you go

there and they have an exchange officer there and I can remember say for argument's sake that it was Australia, we were getting it turned into Afrikaans, and an Australian pound was worth 1.2

21:00 562 something you know, about the third or fourth decimal point, but this fellow apparently was only paying us the 1.56. He was forgetting about the four and this got into quite an amount of money and I think they doxed him in. We were getting short changed, so the bank officer or whoever doxed him at that time, so you would get that from go to Barclays Bank and (UNCLEAR) and they would do the transaction there. Now going across I can remember, and I could have been a rich man going across, no doubt about it. We had a blooming old tin

21:30 trunk with a bit of string on it. We had to pay them on the way over too with a bit of string around it, and I don't know who sealed it (UNCLEAR) a seal on it. I think it was something like about eighty thousand pound, which is a lot of money.

Well that's why I asked about the ship before 'cause I know you didn't service the navy men but you went on a ship over to Durban.

Yes, we carried the money with us.

So how do you work out how much money to take for that amount of time with that amount of soldiers?

Yeah, well we didn't

22:00 work it out. That was worked out by whoever was ah no we wouldn't even know how many were on the boat till we got on it. That would be worked out as to how much money they would want to run. Now we had enough to get to Africa, eighty thousand. Now if we wanted more than eighty thousand in exchange, I don't know what would have happened. We'd have had to make some order or something there and then someone would have had the authority to get more money.

And was it carried in coins or notes?

22:30 Mainly notes.

So if a ship went down, that was it.

Just lost I suppose, yeah. Lost.

Yeah, I could imagine.

But it wasn't important. It was only money.

I know. I realise that but

In war it's only money.

Given it's your expertise I feel honour bound to ask all these

Yes, that's right.

piddly little questions and so evidently I need to ask about theft I guess. Was there any chance for any of the men to get their hands on it?

No.

And did that ever happen?

No, unless they broke into the safe in the office.

23:00 That never happened.

Was it guarded for example?

No. Just in an office. I don't know where could they go? They're on a station. If it was broken into, it'd only be a serviceman. There was no other civilians on the station. Everybody was checked in and out. Security was very tight. Therefore you couldn't just walk in and say, "Oh I'm going down the pay office", or wherever. You just wouldn't, although it wasn't guarded, but there's guards on

23:30 the gate. You've got to get in you know, and it makes it, I suppose you could easily get in from the water way but someone'd pick you up. They'd notice who

That's why I asked. It'd make an interesting murder mystery, wouldn't it I suppose?

Yeah.

But apart from that there wasn't much for the men to spend on board was there? A bit of

On board, no.

Canteen

Two up.

Two up

Yeah.

Crown and Anchor

That's right. Cards.

So not much?

(UNCLEAR). No nothing at all.

So were they in those circumstances would they go in for whatever their weekly or fortnightly pay and just sign it and probably leave it with you?

No, we

24:00 wouldn't pay them on board. Number one there would be no pay. We'd carry the money but we wouldn't do a pay on board. We'd do a pay when they got to land and that's where we started our first pay was at Durban. I think it'd be a bit difficult trying to pay them on board. You could I suppose. Some of them did I suppose when they went to America, some of the people there.

Well the sailors did definitely

Yes.

'cause they were on board for such a long time?

Yes there'd be some. I don't know, I suppose there would be some payment but as you say there's nothing it's only two up, cards, you know

24:30 I don't think there was even a canteen as such. You couldn't get beer or anything like that. It wasn't a tour, it just wasn't on.

But I know when the sailors received their money they went through a little bit of a ritual where they would take their cap off and the money

That's right.

Did the

Oh well you got to salute, yeah.

Did the air force do anything like that?

Yeah, you're got to salute. He's an officer you know. Delving out the Queen's, oh King's ransom.

In England, did the Australians get paid in British pound sterling or?

Yeah

25:00 yes, sterling.

Sterling.

Mm.

And were their wages different to the RAF?

Yes, they were and there was some, ah there was an arrangement made where they were paid on some squadrons, the RAF rate, the Royal Air Force rate. Otherwise, you get to the situation where you know a pilot could be paid a seventeen and six a day, and his counterpart in the English Air Force might only be getting fifteen or twelve shillings a day. Well,

25:30 that wasn't on, and when that did happen, and I wasn't on one of these squadrons 'cause I was on an Australian squadron all the time. We did, didn't have that mixture, we were all Australians, but where that did happen they would say to the Australian your drop in salary and the difference was put into your bank book as deferred pay. It was stacked away somewhere. To stop you know, any friction between the two I suppose.

Well it makes sense I guess.

Yes that's right, mm.

Um

26:00 **now because you were on an Australian squadron, predominantly Australian squadron, how did they work out the difference in rates for pilots, gunners, navigators?**

Well

Ground crew?

You've got the Australian rate of pay. It's there. Every mustering has a pay rate.

Is it set in stone?

Pardon?

So that's set in stone?

Oh it's set in concrete. You know it, it's there. If you're a pilot you might get, I don't know I'm having a guess, in those days

26:30 ah say it was twenty five shillings a day. You'd get a navigator, now this, these won't be exact figures I mean this is an example. So he'd get twenty five, a navigator might be down to twenty, gunner down to seventeen and six or so depending on the responsibility, I suppose oh it might be on the responsibilities to their rank structure because if you were

27:00 a general hand you could be on six shillings a day. If you were a fitter and turner you could be on nine and sixpence a day. If you were a pay clerk you'd be on nine and six or ten shillings a day, so everybody had their structure.

And how did that affect the morale? It's an incredible team of people.

No problems. Never raised its head.

Never questioned?

No. They accepted that. That was their expertise.

All right.

Does a driver of a motor car get as much as the mechanic that

27:30 keeps it going? You know. The same thing happens in outside industry, doesn't it? Every day industry today you'll have two people doing the same job and get rates of pay.

But it is questioned and it does affect morale.

It is getting questioned now, yes because women say, "We're not gonna take this. You do the same rate of pay as that fella on five dollars a day, we want to be up there with him", so you're getting four fifty.

Oh well maybe if they took us to the pictures a bit more we wouldn't complain so much.

Mm.

But okay, no but that's why I asked because it

28:00 **is questioned**

Yeah.

Now. It does affect morale in the workplace.

Well it wasn't questioned then at all. No, it was just par for the course. That was the salary, they knew what it was mm.

Okay.

You didn't have any, there was no one, ah no industrial advocate to take up their cause and say, "I'm gonna go on strike. I'm not gonna fly because I'm not getting enough." There was none of that, wasn't in the war, you just took it. Everybody just took the conditions that they signed up for, and that's what it was, mm.

So

28:30 **by this stage and I'm jumping back now to your after your rookie's course in Shepparton and your training. Were you feeling? Like you'd landed in a good spot? Were you happy with the lot that you'd achieved?**

What - in the air force or in me private life?

No, in the air force as a paymaster?

Oh yes, I was happy.

Is that a good job to have?

I wasn't striving for anything great you know. Yes, I was happy with it but I was doing the job that I was paid to do

Great.

And I did it very well. I

29:00 can tell you that. I say it myself but I never had problems. I carried it out and I suppose you did look for it. See I was on nine shillings a day of which I tell you, you're saying if you've got to spend, I got two shillings. I allocated, I had the minimum. I allocated the other seven dollars a day to Val. Had to look after a baby too. A fortnight. I'm

29:30 not [sure] seven dollars a day, seven dollars a fortnight.

Oh look I've often wondered how on earth

That's right.

Women survived?

Yeah.

Especially when they had little kids 'cause they couldn't work.

Mm.

Well, let let's talk about that then. At what stage of your career, or you got married before you joined the RAAF, didn't you?

Yes.

So you were away for three months and you were a newly wed. Is the baby on the scene at this point?

Mm, was she on the scene?

Ah yes, in a manner of speaking. Was she on the way?

I don't know, ah I. I don't

30:00 know. So I just don't know.

That's all right.

Could have. Ah yes, she was on the way when I was left anyhow.

So how soon after your rookie course did they ship you off?

Oh '42, oh twelve months, eighteen months.

Okay, so it's a fair while.

Yeah. Oh I could have been shifted to Queensland. I could have been left in Victoria, could have been left in Melbourne.

Now and I'm aware that

Everybody wants to know

You're sitting in the room but I'd

30:30 **like to ask what it's like being a married man and a serviceman. I'd say that's a hard thing to juggle. You have no control over where you get to spend your time.**

No, you haven't. What you do, of course you miss your family but I don't think there's any difference. Maybe Val said to me and maybe this is the difference I don't know. She said to me when we come back, "I bet you had a good time there", and there was one retort I had for her. "I wish you'd a told me that before I went away."

31:00 If you've got a conscience, obviously it doesn't make any difference, you know you've got a conscience. You've got a wife at home. There's no mucking about or I never did, and I can say that with a full honesty. Never have. You make a commitment, that's it but she did say you know, "I bet you had a good time." And I said, "I wish you'd a told me that, I might have been different." I don't know, but we're not all born the same you know and so younger fellas didn't worry about it. Look

31:30 these fellas were nineteen, twenty, twenty one, twenty two. Full of life you know, no problems. All they thought about apart from work, they worked hard, is eating. Eating or going to the dance at Plymouth if they had a night off. I'd never been into the dance hall, wouldn't know where it was. It was in the citadel somewhere but they knew. I did go once. I went to, I don't know why I went there. I went into the citadel one night and I got downstairs and of course in England in a lot of places, it's all in together this

32:00 fine weather. You could go to the trains during the wartime, it was male and female. All the toilets were the same. You had to take your luck you know.

Oh sorry, I just realised what you just said then. So there were no male or female toilets?

No, all in together, this fine weather. I got in a carriage in, I'll tell you about the citadel soon. I got into a carriage going to Scotland on one leave there. We got up to Birmingham, another fella and I said, "Can we get a thing?" So the fella said, "Oh stand there", you know, "The guards stand there and when the train

32:30 goes, jump on. Got a ticket?" Well we never had a ticket, so I think we might have given him a few bob but we got in and when we got into a sleeper and cold as charity, and in the morning the ice was that thick on the glass and you're in four beds, one, two, three, four with an aisle about that and you get in and you get undressed and get into this thing at nighttime and when I woke in the morning, I couldn't believe me eyes. There was a woman down here,

33:00 a girl, so you see even in sleeping it's all in together this time, wartime I suppose. And so I talked about the citadel where I didn't know and I think I got to this place, it mighta been a dance, not that I danced well (UNCLEAR) I don't dance and why I was there I haven't got a clue, but I went downstairs to the toilet and there was, I could hear a couple of girls in the toilet next door talking. That's how it is, all in you know, but when I got out there was a young lass and she was, I was a bit game I thought. There was a young lass being

33:30 molested by about three or four Americans and she was being molested too and I thought, "Oh well, this is where I've got to make a stand." I'm on my own and I made a stand and said, "Come on you guys, get out of it. Leave her alone you know, she doesn't want ya, now go." And she went off upstairs and I thought, oh that was a bit dangerous, you know, I could have been bashed about there, but

But they did respond?

That was the only time I went to a hall. Hm?

They did respond to you and they left her alone?

Yes, they used a bit of brains I

34:00 suppose. That happens in these

Did you have an escape hatch ready to run through?

No, I didn't. I didn't escape. I'd have to stand and fight I suppose.

Did she stop and say thank you afterwards?

Pardon?

Did she thank you?

No, she was on her way, yeah.

Well

I don't know how it started but she was in trouble.

We'll talk about

She was in trouble.

the Americans a bit later on. We haven't got too much time left on this tape but I just wanted to ask about your posting and when you received notice of that?

Posting to?

34:30 **To England.**

To England in the office at Ascot Vale.

Ha, have you already been up and back?

You just, up and back, where to?

Well they sent you to Sydney then they sent you back to Melbourne?

Oh no. My posting was at Ascot Vale in the office. They just said, "You got to go to the embarkation depot (UNCLEAR) this signal", and it was ah sea kit, so you've got to go and get all your sea kit. Different kit you know, different. Some

35:00 clothing is different. Make sure that all your kit's right. Ah you've got to go and get kit bags and oh other things and then you report to the RTO [Rail Transport Officer]. He makes arrangements for you to get to Sydney. You get to Sydney and report in there and then you just sit there and wait till your name's called. Went into Sydney. The only time I left the camp into Sydney, on my own, came back, they said, "Where you been? We've been looking for you." I should have got into the boat on Sydney I think but came from Sydney 'round

35:30 to Melbourne (UNCLEAR) there, got me back to Melbourne quickly and I went straight out onto the

boat or saw Val and then went out on the boat. That was the posting.

Did you didn't have a chance to say goodbye to Val before you left?

Yeah for about two hours, mm, kissed her goodbye at Heidelberg Station, still there, the station.
(UNCLEAR)

Care to tell me a little bit about what that was like?

Terrible. You know you don't know where you're going. Things are

36:00 uncertain. I think it was more sentimental than anything. Not that we thought that we weren't going to come back. We weren't going to come back again. We were gonna come back again, no matter what but you know, when you're, I suppose for a woman when you're expecting a baby and then all of a sudden she's got no one, she didn't know, but maybe you know, I know fellas that married after the war. Maybe they might have, they could have left it too late.

36:30 If you married before the war at least they're protected for the rest of their life, anyhow but no it's a bit of trauma.

Yeah I imagine.

Yeah, well it plays on ya, doesn't play on me. Every now and then if I mention it, it might you know.

How many weeks pregnant was Val when you left?

Mm, how many? Four five? Three months. Well there you are.

And in the job that you were

37:00 **in, I guess you could feel relatively safe that you wouldn't be facing any action but England was a dangerous place.**

Oh yes, oh look it's, I thought after dinner we might come onto that. It's you know, they got blown out of there on a couple of occasions. Not once I was there. They did get blown out of there on a couple of occasions. I have photos of the station burnt down and so they'd have to then shift out and as they shifted out to a

37:30 a place called, isn't it funny, they shifted out to a place in Wales, Pembroke Dock, ah that's where they shifted to and that happened on two occasions where they were bombed out and had to shift into Wales. Further away from France you see and it's all right to say, "Oh well they're running." They're not running, they're got to keep the planes flying and there were valuable commodities.

So listen did you have a conversation

38:00 **regarding what would happen if you didn't come back?**

No. With Val? No.

Just pretended that was never gonna happen?

Yep, that wasn't gonna happen. It was never gonna happen. It could have quite easily. It could have for her too, who knows? No, she had a baby and she knows that she had a house, we had a house and we had a big mortgage on and I think that it was, we had nineteen pound in the bank when I left and when I come home

38:30 we had nineteen pound in the bank.

And

But she sold me motorbike.

Oh there were some sacrifices that had to be made I suppose

Yeah.

And did you settle on a baby's name before you left?

Ah yes, we did. Ah, I don't know how we came. It's a Welsh name and it's in the Rhonda Valley. I, my parents came from Wales. Lloyds a course, their forebears,

39:00 from a place called Landudno and there's a place, the Rhondda Valley, which is a coal valley and that's where she gets her name from, Rhonda.

And for a boy did you have plans for that?

No I didn't. I had a friend who, we didn't have, well he was born after we came home. I can't get her into trouble if I'm over there, ah when I come home we then had, Grant was his name and I had a fella over there and his name was Grant and I thought, "That's nice", and

39:30 so his name's Grant.

Tape 5

00:33 **Okay, so you've chosen the baby's name and you've said your farewells and do you know that the mail service is going to keep up with your needs with a pregnant wife at home?**

No, don't know that no. There were, no well we didn't know where we were going to, it was Austpost, London and that's as [far as we] knew we were going to London because that was the postal, but nothing else and all the letters were always sent to

01:00 10 Squadron Austpost, London. Obviously the Germans knew where it was, everybody knew but that's where it was. I think perhaps letters coming to me were never censored. They just came in, irrespective. Letters going out were always censored and they were censored on the station before they left, and they had a certain way of censoring them. You don't pick up a letter and say,

01:30 "Dear Stella, I am in love with you." You fold it and you say, "Dear Stella", and you read down here. The word is, "I love you", or something you know, because that's the way they should do it. They should fold the letter and then if they think they've got problems they can read how it feels and that's the way they censor, but they were always censored prior to them leaving the station, but never censored coming in.

When you got back

And you sent little air graphs that the letters were instead of, what

02:00 do they call them? Airmail, see little air graphs, I've got a couple from there and I used to type them because I can get more in with my scrawl and then they would photograph that, you've seen them, have you? Well, I'll show you one. They photograph it and she gets a little film of photograph, this air letter. So remind me and I'll [show you], she's got every letter I ever wrote her.

Well I wanted to ask, when you got back and found your letters and they'd been censored, how did that make you feel, the things that

02:30 **they'd cut out?**

Well they didn't cut any out, I don't think that I know. I think I've had a look. I made, always made sure that I tried not to divulge anything that I wrote to her about was a personal matter, nothing about army or air force or anything. I made it, because they're only going to cut them to pieces.

Yeah.

And you get nothing out of them you know.

All right well look before then, quite a bit happens I suppose. You're on The New Amsterdam and

03:00 **you're travelling over with five thousand troops**

Yes, on The Amsterdam. It's interesting that there were that many on there, five thousand, that you only had two meals a day, so everything was quite organised. They would allocate you and they'd allocate, your breakfast would be at nine o'clock in the morning, maybe ten o'clock in the morning, so your dinner at night would be eight or nine at night. So you had two meals a day. I can't recall any showers

03:30 on it, if it was hot seawater. Two meals a day, you slept in a cabin, big double cabin. There were fifteen of us in it and they were on wire beds and I can remember one two, that was four and I think there might have been, oh four, six is ten yes, there'd be about fifteen beds from the beds going along and they used to have outside. I

04:00 made it my practice you know, we were always having air-raid warnings.

On board?

Practices. Could be you don't know whether they were fair dinkum or not and outside they always had the big shutter door, they pulled across in case the front got (UNCLEAR), the front of the boat got blown off, they'd seal it off. Sacrifice all those people to keep the boat afloat. That's on all ships I think because on these ships, The New Amsterdam. So I always made sure that I was past that safety door and then you'd have

04:30 to go to your boat station. You'd have a certain boat to go to. You always wore your life jacket and you went to the bathroom wearing it. You had to wear your life jacket. That was always on and I remember the first time they were out in the Indian Ocean they had an air-raid warning or alert, and afterwards it was a trial run, and after it was all over the captain's voice came on, "I wish to inform you that we've just lost five thousand personnel."

- 05:00 That's how good it was, it was hopeless. He'd just [lost] five thousand, he reckoned because they were too slow doing [it], so they had to go more practices. Oh and another thing too and I was a pay clerk but I was also seconded, you get seconded, and I was also seconded onto the gun for a night or something. They'd have, I'm almost sure they'd have navy personnel which would man it, but you had to be there as a spotter, you know looking around and keeping your eyes open.
- What**
- This is at nighttime.
- 05:30 **What kind of a gun?**
- Bofor, pea-shooter.
- And what sort of?**
- Wouldn't shoot a flea off anything. I think it's a little thing. They could stand off a mile, you'd never get near it.
- Did you get to actually fire some rounds?**
- Did I get to?
- Did you get to fire some rounds?**
- No. They used to fire them out there, just practice, no, never fired it. No.
- What sort of training did they give you?**
- For to go on that? Nothing. All you had were your eyes, to look at.
- What was the advantage of having a pay clerk down there, who'd never had any training?**
- Well
- 06:00 they could have had others. You just took your turn, but the people on the gun were, I'm almost sure naval personnel on that boat you know, and they'd be people that operated the gun. Well I think I could have looked after myself, no problems you know, if anything happened.
- Did you ever see anything out there? On board the ship? Did you ever see any enemy craft?**
- No.
- Anything strange in the sky?**
- No.
- 06:30 Not while I was at sea, no.
- And I'm just checking my notes because I've just forgotten what it was, I was gonna ask you about being on board with the pay clerk with the meals and so on but I've forgotten so I'll move on. I'll move on to when you got to Durban.**
- Yeah.
- I've got a few questions there.**
- 07:00 **When you got to Goodwood Racecourse and you met this one Englishman, after he took you home to meet the family what sort of conditions were they living in there?**
- Oh much similar to ours from what I can remember very nice home. I can't remember any garden or something. I only went there a couple of times, see I was only there for ten days. Yeah, very nice, homely type of thing, much the same as we are.
- And you saying that**
- They were English.
- Well you said that they didn't really have much of an idea about Australia, which is**
- 07:30 **fairly sort of standard going.**
- Not them so much. Not them so much, the public, the shopkeeper. She didn't know how long did it take me to speak English. I never struck anybody else that said it, but that was only one and the lass in England who you know wanted to know, didn't even know who the king and queen of England was. So I think, there's a smattering. Africa was a bit different. It was our first [stop]
- 08:00 in there. You didn't meet many people, there were more natives than there were whites, or Afrikaans as

they call them. Everything's in a dual language, I found it strange. You go to a bus stop and English that way, (UNCLEAR) queue, English, Afrikaans or non-Europeans there. It's in Afrikaans, non-Europeans. Now these poor beggars could be standing there for a day waiting for the bus. I come

08:30 along and stand on this side, I'm first on. No place for them. They keep waiting. Now this is, so you don't meet many whites as such you know. We were sitting on the lawn outside the Durban Post Office. Stinking hot, eighty. That doesn't sound very hot to us, but humid. Just a shirt on and stick to you. No wind to dry you out, you know. That hot and an

09:00 Afrikaan or a white policeman came along, "Get up on the seats. Natives are the only ones that sit on the lawns." It was below you to sit down on the lawn. We reckoned it was good, wouldn't it? But no, the whites don't do it. It's below the dig for the natives.

Had you had much contact with Australian aboriginals before you left?

No.

And did you have any sort of understanding or education about aboriginal Australians before you left?

No only the,

09:30 ah, no I never did. We never did at school you know. Only what I've read you know, and I have a bit of, sometimes the poor old aboriginals were bashed about and so were the whites, you know.

Well the reason I'm asking is because of it sounds like these are sort of the first coloured people that you'd come into contact with by the sounds of it.

Oh that'd be right. No problems, that'd be right mm.

Did it make you think about anything in particular? Did it strike you

10:00 **at any certain fashion, apart from the quite obvious apartheid that you saw? You know did it, did they seem so utterly different to you?**

No, oh they dressed differently. No, they were hard workers, yeah they seemed to, ah no there was no, I never got into their houses. Never even saw where they lived. You wouldn't see that but no, there was nothing, they were just human beings, you know doing their job. They didn't talk to you, you didn't

10:30 talk to them. You wouldn't understand the language I suppose, anyhow if they spoke anything outside their normal tongue it might be Afrikaans, which you wouldn't understand.

Are the English folks that you went to have dinner with, the home of Lovie Wynn, were they English that in the way Australians were English? I mean did they consider England their homeland?

I don't know. No, I couldn't tell you. I don't know whether he was down there. He was the foreman of the Point Dock Roads, I think they

11:00 called it. That's he, what he told me. Now I don't know whether he's an Englishman just out there but I think he was a migrant, you know an Englishman permanently living in Africa. Now whether he came out with a shipping company or not, I don't know.

Right. No, I'm just wondering whether the South Africans felt the same duty to the motherland?

No, I didn't go into him with that too much.

Okay, now I've heard tales of Australian troops really messing South Africa up when they got there, really running riot, drinking

11:30 **a lot, causing havoc in the streets. Did you see any evidence of that?**

No. No, don't think that they'd, the air force'd put up with it. I'm inclined for that. See when we got there too maybe what you were saying is right because when we got there, there were a lot of Pommie red caps on the streets, they're English police, English military police and there were a lot of those around, but I would say that there were no Australians in that. There wouldn't be. I think they were well behaved.

12:00 **So were you given any special instructions before you went off?**

No, only the one was that you don't go into the Cape coloured quarters. That's the only one that I can remember.

And so they didn't say, "Don't go into the brothels." I know that didn't apply to you, but

No, well I think that's done through normal channels. If you're silly enough to do that you're mad enough because there's just no protection at all you know, it's up and go. Oh well you could pick up disease or anything.

Yeah.

Silly.

What about, you

12:30 **said before that, you know you saw these women, these African women wandering around basically you know naked from the waist up.**

Mm.

How was that confronting?

I think it was, I think it was to us, was to me.

What?

Not that I objected to it.

No?

I think there was some that looked all right but it was just unusual. We were never, you wouldn't know, you know. We weren't used to it.

Oh I can believe it.

And I might say a bit here that might titillate the people that hear this, but you

13:00 know a man is, if he's looking at a girl, and these young ladies don't know, if you're looking at a girl what titillates a man is what he doesn't see. It's that little bit of skirt or something, but if it's there, what's it matter? They don't worry. It's what titillates is what he imagines he thinks is he sees. Is that right? That's right.

Now the restaurants you mentioned earlier. You made a comment about Gandhi and

About Gandhi?

Yeah.

13:30 **What did you mean by that particularly?**

Well Gandhi was in Africa, wasn't he? If my history and memory serves me right. He was in Africa as a young man and I don't know whether he's had something to do with a religious order or church or [something] but he must have been at church. Someone I think tried to turn him into Christianity. This is the story as I can remember it, and he went to a church in, I don't know where, Durban or Cape Town or one of those places, Port Elizabeth, he went

14:00 to church anyhow and the first time he realised that things are not quite right is when he sat down in the pew, and the women next to him drew their dresses and shifted down the other end of the pew. They didn't want to be near him. That turned him from Christianity and he went back to India and he was a Hindu I think, I don't know, but he went back to India and that started him on his way to look after the Indian people because he was a great man, Gandhi.

14:30 **Well what were the big differences for you arriving in a place like South Africa? It's probably the first time you've been overseas or gone**

Yes.

Anywhere?

No, the first time I'd been overseas yes and

What hits you first? Is it the sight, the smell, the sounds?

I'd always wanted to go to South Africa but I wasn't worried about that part of South Africa, I'd like to get into the jungles of South Africa you know, but I think we knew once you start it's an experience, you know everything you're looking at

15:00 is something new. Things that I read about at school but I wouldn't be reading about Durban and women on the streets, I'd be reading about diamonds in the diamond mine and I think I met a fella there once and I was talking to him, he was a diamond miner and he was talking about diamonds and he said, "You know it's a funny thing", he said, "It's in the, next pick is got to be the big diamond." And he said he had a crowd working for him at one time and someone let out a yell and he knew what the yell was, it was one of these diggers -

15:30 native indigenous people apparently had struck a mine a diamond or something, so he (UNCLEAR) quick silence him, hit him with something, 'cause he couldn't pay the fellows, but this was the way they found a diamond.

Right.

So we did, didn't read about those. You'd read about Cradle Mountain, when I saw Cradle Mountain I said, "Oh that's Cradle Mountain, terrific", you know, but not much else of the countryside.

Well you did get to Cape Town and that's not too far away from the animals.

Yeah, mm, well that's Table Mountain now.

Yeah.

Yeah.

16:00 **Now I'm curious about the Polish Army girls that you picked up on board and what they**
Polish

were doing that far south and

They were what?

Well it was just after the Polish Army had been destroyed?

Ah I don't know. I thought that they were Polish girls and I don't know how they were prisoners of war but they did come down from Africa. They came down with the Italian prisoners of war and they were going, we dropped the Italian prisoners of war up around near Freetown, they were going to Dakar, that's French Africa, and

16:30 the Polish girls were going onto to England to be with the English Army or something. Now I had the idea that they couldn't have been prisoners of war, they wouldn't be with Poms on the same side as the United Kingdom. Which through Poland they entered the war, it was. When Germany entered Poland, Britain said you know, "We're now at war." They had an agreement with the Poles, so I just don't know how they got there, but they were Polish lasses. How many I haven't got a clue.

Well it's curious, I mean

Could be fifty, if they were evacuees or something, could be a hundred.

17:00 **And the Italian POWs, did you get very close to them at all? I don't mean emotionally, I mean were you**

No.

Did you come in sight of them?

No, the doctors, they had a couple of doctors'd walk around the deck. What would happen, we had these Englishmen on board too and (UNCLEAR) you couldn't get near them. They would wait on the table and serve you, couldn't understand you anyhow, and you wouldn't understand them as English and what would happen was that some of the English air men, ah air men but the soldiers

17:30 that were coming out of India, as I said they were in the Indian Army or the English Army in India, they were coming out and some of them gave some of these Italians some cigarettes. They'd get out for half an hour a day or something to walk on the back deck in the air. They were locked up, gave them some cigarettes to smoke and the Pommie red caps, that's the English police, grabbed them for fraternising with the enemy. Put 'em in the brig. Not the Italians, the British soldiers

18:00 in the brig, in the prison. That was because of fraternising with the enemy. You weren't allowed to fraternise with the enemy. That's how touchy they were, 'cause they read to the letter you know. Dot your i's and cross your t's.

I can understand it too. Did you did you get much of a look at them then?

Oh just that they were 'round. They were just like ordinary people. I'm inclined to think they had a marking or something, a diamond or something on their back of a flannel

18:30 coat, they wore or [?] uniform. Some type of marking if I can remember.

Okay. Well I'm gonna jump forward here to Greenock on the Clyde in Scotland.

Greenock, mm.

Now you'd been a member of the Victorian or the Royal Victorian Scottish Regiment?

Yes.

Did that really have, was there sort of any connection for you in Scotland?

No. No, nothing. Well my father's family came from Scotland. No nothing at all, just was I liked the bagpipes

19:00 and I don't know why I joined the Victorian Scot, that's what I liked, I think. I might have seen them somewhere and I don't think the regalia worried me so much. I liked the discipline and the pipes and marching. I'd go anywhere to hear a band but when I got to Scotland no, although the tattoo comes on I

still listen to it if I can because it's everybody now other than just Scotland, so I don't think that had anything to do with my pride of

19:30 Scotland. Matter of fact it turned you against it because it was a miserable place. They work hard, they play hard, it's a hard country.

Did it live up to your expectations of what is Scotland?

Oh hard country. Later on I stopped at, I stopped in Glasgow with a gentleman and he was a professor at the, I'm sorry now, yeah it wasn't Edinburgh, it was Glasgow.

20:00 He was a professor of the Glasgow University. Can't think of his name. I stopped with him for about a week at one time. Nice family. He and his wife, that's all. Lovely people. Of course you don't see them much you know. They don't want to be involved with you. Yeah but very friendly, as I say there's no sentiment involved. I was just looking through the other day and I forgot all about when I first got to London I went down, they must have thought, "Oh he's a poor old fella, we'll send him down to a place called

20:30 Brixham." B-R-I-X-H-A-M, Brixham is a little town down near Plymouth and a place called Ranscomb Cottage which was not a cottage, I think it was a mansion, and there we stopped with a man and his wife, and I can't think of his name or her name and they put us up for a week you know, and looked after us, but you forget them, it it's a shame, it's this fishing village.

Well Scotland's pretty close to,

21:00 **well to some of the action that's going on out in the Atlantic as well. Is it the area that you're on right on the sea where you are in Greenock? I don't know the area.**

In?

In Greenock, where you got the occupied

Greenock? It's on the Clyde, yes on the sea.

So are there boats?

Just like coming up the Yarra, much bigger than the Yarra, but.

Okay.

Just like going up to Williamstown or some up the Yarra up to Mooney Valley Racecourse or something.

Are there subs and boats and things around?

Yes, plenty of boats everywhere, plenty of submarines.

21:30 Ah, at that time. Must be (UNCLEAR) because see that was the late 1943, early '44 there was nothing on at that stage. They were still fighting pretty hard in France and the lowlands there, and of course the big base was on the other side of Scotland. See you were over on the Bay of Biscay side,

22:00 on the Atlantic Ocean. Not the Bay of Biscay, the Atlantic Ocean. The big thing was the Scapa Flow north and across in the North Sea there, that's where the big naval establishment was, British naval establishment, so this was more I think that looking at it, Greenock to me didn't seem to be a military port as such, it seemed to be a ship building place and a place where goods were deposited coming into England, you know or coming into the British Isles I should say, and that's what it

22:30 appeared to be. A lot of cargo ships, subs, lots of submarines. When I say a lot of submarines, I reckon I saw oh half a dozen or something, which is a lot of submarines. I mean a Sunderland'll fly for weeks and weeks and weeks and not see one but you know and this is a lot of submarines.

So is that quite a target then for air-raids?

Oh yes. Oh that'd be a target for air-raids.

And was that?

But I think that wasn't his strategy, was it? I think that's where the Germans failed. They forgot to hit these places. What they were doing

23:00 is, "We'll cripple London." You knock a man's wife and children around long enough, he won't worry about anything else, you know you've got him, and that's what they did. I think that they concentrated with their V-1s, V-2s and their bombs and hit London. They did more damage than any bombing could do.

So there wasn't much evidence of bombing up on the on Greenock?

No, not up there, no.

What about the local

Well Hess landed there you see. He got in there all right. What about?

What was the

23:30 **local street life like there? What was the food like that you could buy?**

No, never saw. We got in there as I said late in the afternoon, cold as charity, you know we got down to (UNCLEAR), got on a barge and went to this Mechanics Institute.

Oh okay.

I can't even know what we had for meal that day. Someone must have prepared

So you weren't there long enough but I was struck by my image of both the maypole dancers and also those women loading the coal.

That was the next morning with the maypole dancer and the ladies were down in these old perambulators picking up

24:00 coal from the coal man on the end of the street. From then on, I can't remember a thing to Brighton.

That's all right. I just wondered if the poverty that you saw there in Scotland was similar to the poverty back in Australia during the Depression or was it worse?

Yeah I think it might have been worse.

Okay.

May have been worse because the weather made it worse, I don't know. You know you said, "Would you like to live there?" I said (UNCLEAR) oh it's very dull and drizzly. I reckon that's why they want medals but it's

24:30 no sun you know. They have summer and they say, "Oh when was it? Last Wednesday", you know, so it was. Yeah, I would say looking at those poor ladies, 'cause it was wartime you must take into consideration too, but they would be doing it tougher than any depression Australia had and

Okay.

Forgetting it's another twelve years on. I was only about twelve in the Depression here that I can remember. I'm now up to about twenty-three, twenty-four.

25:00 **So, no memories of Brighton? So the missing days**

Missing link is between Brighton, yeah.

But Brighton itself is quite a remarkable looking place.

Yes could be, I would say beautiful. I've got some photos of it, you know with the gardens and that. They go for that. It's a holiday resort just across on the end of the Cliffs of Dover, just south of the Thames River. It seems to be me that it'd be a big holiday resort because of the hotels that

25:30 line the foreshore there. They haven't got the beaches we've got, they're all pebbles in the main, all the ones that I saw. There's no sand like St Kilda, and ninety mile beach.

Now I'm gonna ask you a little bit about this fight that you were involved in on the first

Yeah, keep going.

the night of your first air-raid? Tell me what your recollections of how it started. What was going on?

Well my recollection is we went to this, I think it was a skating rink and why we were there I haven't got a clue.

26:00 Anyhow, we went to the skating rink and coming out one of these fellas tripped over something and hit one of the big water mains in the gutter and such that it turned out that when we got him back he was injured. When we got him back he'd chopped his teeth off, top teeth I think it was, right off at the gums. Smashed a couple of them, might have been two or three or four of them anyhow. Chopped these off and one of the fellows, the others of course, you know you're supposed to get together and help a mate, you don't leave him, and so one of them, ah he was,

26:30 I don't think he wasn't even drunk, I don't think he was. They were drinking but he wasn't in it at all, so I just waited for him to come in and this was on when he came home. I did me block. I didn't like him.

Hang on.

Never did.

Oh okay, sorry I thought it happened earlier.

No.

So you took him on?

No.

Um what

And that was while that was going on, that was my first air-raid.

It's all very filmic, isn't it?

Mm.

Who are your mates at this

27:00 **stage for example? You've been in for some time**

Who are my mates?

Yeah. Did you get sent over with the guys that you (UNCLEAR)

Well I didn't know any of them before I got on the boat.

Yep.

So there was one from New South Wales, one from South Australia and myself, that's all. You're just friends with everybody. You never make too many mates, you know bosom mates, because you're only thrown together. It's like work mates you know. I've got some work, male fellas I worked with that I wouldn't have as my mates but

27:30 as workers I'd have 'em every time.

Yep.

They were a different kettle of fish, so that you're just thrown together. I think that's where the army may have been a bit better because fellas would go to the army, not so much the navy, they'd go as a group. I went to a funeral of one fella from Preston not oh last year (UNCLEAR), these fellas I went to school with, you know they were all in the same unit. They all moved together, so they'd have mates there.

When you start a fight

28:00 **such as you did,**

Mm.

Are you in danger of getting nicked by the provos?

No, oh no not there. It's a bit different with the Australians. I don't think they lent themselves kindly to provos. I don't mean that in a nasty way. They weren't disciplined so much so that, "Oh here's a provo coming." That just wasn't on and I don't ever remember seeing an Australian police there.

Right.

28:30 None of them, always English.

Tape 6

00:30 **I'd like to start Lloyd by going back to something that Stella [Interviewer]**

Yes.

has already covered. There are just a couple of points I want to ask you about. You said on the troop ships there was an awful stink.

Yeah, just the smell of human bodies you know. Everything's closed. You never seem to be able to, I don't know whether they ever had the portholes open. I don't think you could open them. They may have been sealed up but just the awful stench of human bodies, you know its atmosphere was close, heavy. That's what I found wrong with it. Never

01:00 had any air into it.

Were you a smoker?

I was, yes.

Would have been a lot of smoke down there too, I dare say.

Yeah that's right, everybody smoked. The government gave you smokes. Anything that was rationed, smokes were on. They always gave you smokes.

Incredible isn't it, looking back?

Funny. Oh yes, well they wouldn't do it today, would they?

No.

But yes, smokes. I just noticed a dinner we had to have in 1944 in the squadron and I thought, "Gee I'd better not show them this. They'll think, we never did any fighting or anything." And at the bottom of it, it's got 'smokes and drinks'. Smokes,

01:30 now you wouldn't see that on a menu, would you?

Absolutely not.

Christmas menu, mm.

What were the sleeping conditions like on the troop ship, The New Amsterdam?

On the troop ship? In oh, sleeping on gates as I said you know. Those wire gates. Bit of a hard palliasse or mattress and a couple of blankets and that was it.

And excuse me.

Quite good for the circumstances, you know with all the people on board, not bad.

This man you say

02:00 **who jumped overboard around Durban, you went looking in a big circle for this fellow. Was he the only person that went overboard in the whole trip?**

The only one that I know of, I didn't see and this was so, that's why they were doing the circuit, but yeah on the boat there's signs up everywhere you know. "Falling overboard, this boat will not stop", and I suppose they didn't. Well they didn't stop, they just did a circle and when I wakened up and wanted to know, this is what they said, that he jumped overboard and they turned around, looked for him and then just went straight on, mm.

Yeah that was the thing in those days, wasn't it?

02:30 Pardon?

That was the thing with those big ships, that you're overboard, you're gone.

Oh yes, you couldn't pull up on a threepenny piece. Keep on going.

Yeah and on board, oh excuse me, the Italian POWs as waiters and doctors, were you treated by any of the POW doctors?

No. No. I think we kept, carried our own doctors. No, they didn't treat you. They were just the doctors were allowed freedom of the ship I suppose

03:00 because they were classed as non-combatants, you know the medicals, and there were a couple of them that I can remember and they'd just wander 'round everywhere but the troops that were locked downstairs somewhere, ah they used to come out on the back deck for about half an hour a day and exercise. Now in between that they'd also wait on the tables. Not as waiters, but I think they used to clean up and bring the food and what have you. Mm.

Did you ever have a chance to speak to any of them?

No.

By observing them could you

03:30 **tell what their morale was like?**

No, couldn't imagine. I'd say it was pretty low but they certainly weren't telling jokes or laughing you know.

I'm sure.

I think they were pretty miserable. Maybe, I don't know. See '40, late '43, '44 they could have been happy that it was all over for them at that stage because of the big push. See the big push for Rommel in the desert was '43 I think, and this is when they started to push Rommel. So they may have

04:00 picked 'em up and they're glad to get out of it.

And

That's only supposition on my part.

Yeah, that's fine. This soprano that was on the rocks as you were leaving harbour,

Yeah.

Can you describe that scene to us in more detail? It's a beautiful little image.

Yeah, well going into I can remember going into the harbour at Durban on one side and I can remember coming out, this is where she was and facing it'd be on the left hand side coming out, there was

04:30 a headland there with a rock on it, and here she is standing, in a looked like long evening gown singing this song, you know ah I'm just trying to think. She might have sung a hymn and then "Shall We Meet Again" or something. One of those things you know, and they told me that she used to always be there singing to the troops as they went. Yeah.

Isn't that amazing?

Yeah, I think well could easily be checked out if you could get someone from Africa, mm.

Were you all on deck watching, listening?

Well I

05:00 was. I don't think they were all there, I don't know. Takes a lot of people on deck for five thousand.

Mm.

There's a few decks of course, there's yes, well I don't know but I think they usually [go] up. When a boat goes out everybody's up top, aren't they?

And did it tug at the old heartstrings hearing songs like "We'll Meet Again" or something?

The old heartstrings?

Mm.

Oh I think all those things you know have a tendency to bring you back to earth a bit.

'Cause I remember that another thing you said was when you arrived in Scotland you never felt

Ah

as homesick?

Lonely.

05:30 That's when I was lonely. That's when I really, not to say that I did miss my kids all the time you know, and my mother and father, but that's when I was really homesick. Well Mum and Dad didn't matter so much, it was my wife and the unborn child, that's when I was really homesick and I'd just built a house before I went you know and I've got a photo of it there, and you, well how old, well see Val was only about twenty-one, twenty, twenty-one

06:00 and it's, yeah that tugged at my heartstrings there in Scotland yeah, and the weather didn't help either.

I have an image of this Aussie airman, air Aussie RAAF man just walking the wet streets by himself with the drizzle and feeling very [sad], is that what it was like?

The Aussie fellow, what in a

The Aussie RAAF chap wondering the streets by himself in the rain and

RAAF?

Yeah.

Yeah?

06:30 **Is that what it was like?**

Oh yeah, I was on me own. There was no one else there. That right. You haven't got anybody to lean on, have you? Maybe they were all the same predicament. I doubt it, though there's still as I said before you know it might be a bit hard for married personnel. I think we've got a closer bond with any relationship they may have, and if they're married, well obviously the relationship's pretty good but the young might have it too, I don't know but they're more free and

07:00 I don't know whether they'd, I know the fellas I called mates, yeah the young fellas they wouldn't worry about it. They wouldn't worry, they're going, tomorrow's a new adventure you know.

They'd be running around town looking for the local girls, I'd say.

Oh that's right, yep. That's right.

So what was the mail like then?

Never had any mail up to that stage. No, it was

So how long had you been away without mail?

Well that'd be for the length of the trip, ah oh about six weeks.

That's long enough.

Six

07:30 weeks I suppose. Yeah.

Had you written?

Oh I might have. I might have, ah no, I didn't have mail. I hadn't been to London at that time, it was on me way down. Yeah, six weeks I suppose, about six weeks going, six weeks coming home.

Can you remember receiving your first letter from Val overseas?

No, I can't. No. No that would be, well that'd be in London and I just don't know how we got our mail in London, I suppose they just delivered it from the post office. I can certainly remember the mail I used to get in on the station because the fellow there had a

08:00 an old car horn and everybody knew him and when the car horn blew the mail was in, and of course everybody'd rush up to the post office for their mail. He had a little office where he sorted the mail and everybody had the mail delivered.

Did Val send you any cakes or biscuits or things like that?

No cakes or biscuits, no, just mail. No, none of that. You think it's a party. No, none of that. No celebrating, celebratory drinks or cakes or anything.

All right.

I think they used to get cakes in their

08:30 parcels. Remember, I told you at the end of the corridor there was a table there where they'd cook their or everything off their, ah what do they call them? Not home comforts fund, their parcels, anyhow from home. They'd send them in and they all had to be done up in certain fashion, had to be in boxes, and they all had to be wrapped in calico and they all had to be sewn up, not tied, all these things and then they'd get finally delivered. Well the fellas used to open them and of course there'd be camp pie and they used to fry that and

09:00 steak and kidneys and all that sort of stuff, which they missed. Not that we didn't have, we had beans and ah we had meat, and I'm almost sure it was horsemeat we had. It was a coarse grain meat but quite palatable. This is the rations, the army rations, mm.

Let's talk about your time in London then?

Yeah.

What were your first impressions of the city when you arrived there?

Ah, oh I don't know. I look the first time I thought, "Well what a wonderful

09:30 place." This is when I first got there. The first time I saw it was when the young ladies were fixing out Victoria Station with their, ah Ben Bowyang pants but they got around and you know, I saw Buckingham Palace. I thought, God, I can't believe this. Things you read about when you're a kid. Buckingham Palace, Marble Arch, Hyde Park, Houses of Parliament, St Paul's Cathedral, the Thames. You couldn't imagine the things that, you know that you, that you read about as a

10:00 kid and through you life and all of a sudden there, they are sticking in front of ya, and I don't know whether you've ever been but have you? And did you get a feeling you know, gee I'm proud to be British? I did in those days. Young ones mightn't today but we did in those days, you know because this was the seat of our democracy. This was the seat of our government really, too.

So was Britain home to you? Did you speak of Britain as home?

Yeah, oh that'd be home to me, yeah and I wasn't born there and my people weren't born there. It was home it was,

10:30 well as they used to refer to in my day, it was the Mother Country and it certainly was.

And

That's where everything came from. That's where we came from. Yeah.

What about London post the Blitz, because it must have looked like a, you know a bit of a

I've got some photos there.

broken city in some places?

Shocking but again it's that immense. If you could imagine somewhere from about here to Whittlesea. Can you imagine that?

11:00 That's London you know. It's a massive place as you well know, and although there were plenty of, I think there were something like forty four thousand, that's open to conjecture. I got that in me mind somewhere, forty four thousand people killed there during the war, civilians, you still had to look for the damage because there was that much building around. Well built up, well built on, no open paddocks like we have, no gardens like we've got. Right out

11:30 to the street and so if the damage was done, you had to look for it because it'd only be one here, there, somewhere else but obviously there was tons of damage. Tons.

Did you go to any of the really damaged parts? Did you see any of the really bombed out bits?

No, I just. No, just what you see in your normal travel on the streets. I never went looking for it.

I'm intrigued to talk more about women.

Yeah.

Women that you saw working, what were they like? Were they

12:00 **digging roads just as nonchalantly as a crew of men would be repairing the roads?**

Just like a group, as we'd see here repairing the roads, yeah. I didn't see any men over them or anything. There were just women, picks and shovels and rakes, putting down a bit of tar or whatever to fix the footpaths and roads up.

What other roles did you see women doing that would have been a bit surprising?

Oh I haven't, I've only seen it in London.

Yep.

That's all I have seen it in.

What other jobs

12:30 **in London did you see that might have been?**

I haven't seen them doing anything else, no this was just as I was coming out. It was a working day, other days I was working in an office somewhere you know. No, I didn't see it anywhere else other than Victoria Station.

Were you in London during any air-raids?

Yes.

Um that was when you were staying with the Marx family I take it?

Yes. I was there during air-raids, which they'd come over and I'm just trying to think. I don't know whether they sent them over in the day or the ah, no

13:00 day time ones. In the night when it was moonlight or dark, and I'm inclined to think it was on a dark night, so they wouldn't be seen. Ah they'd send them over then. I can remember if I was in London, I could only travel by underground because that's all I could get around on. I knew where I was going in the underground because it told you on the underground station and on the underground trains you could get around London. Pretty hard up top because you could be going one direction one minute and going south the next,

13:30 and north the next so anyhow, but when you'd get down under the underground, this is just at the start of the flying bombs, when you get the underground, now some of those stations were pretty wide, they would be oh twenty forty feet wide, wider than our stations about half as wide again, and they had out from the edge of the platform they had a line drawn and you'd go down there at night when they were going to think there was bombing

14:00 raids on and that would be chocablock with men, women, children sleeping shoulder to shoulder in the underground.

Did you ever have occasion to sleep down there?

No, I didn't have occasions, no. We were out at Finchley. Finchley was like say ah leaving Melbourne, you'd be at Preston or Heidelberg. You were out of the business district but it was right in London where they really got it and they used to all sleep on the platforms. Then get up next morning, go to work.

14:30 **What was the spirit like among the people?**

Oh well, you know there was, no it wasn't, "Hooray, this is a championship", or anything. There was no

flag waving or anything like that or demonstrations, it was just stoic doggedness, you know that got them there, they just kept on going.

Did they manage to maintain cheerfulness at all or was it dogged determination?

No, I think it's just dogged determination. I think there must have been a bit of an amount of cheerfulness there and again

15:00 you know I hail back to the [fact that] they made great things of the king going down into the ruins or Princess Elizabeth, our, the Queen, present Queen, going there you know driving. They made a great to do of that and the people love it. Now maybe they were like me, they were there after the happening but at least they were there, and this is what went on. Buckingham Palace, you know you can go and look at Buckingham Palace, I saw Buckingham Palace as it was

15:30 and there was no changing of the guard. It was very sombre but all the pomp and ceremony wasn't there but outside that gate on the Victorian Monument, crowds there all day. Every time I went there there'd be crowds and this is where the Yanks you know, they loved it too. They love ceremony. Anything they've got, I notice they had to go back to England, because really the history doesn't go back far. If you look at the Pilgrim Fathers that left Plymouth and went to London,

16:00 what 1642? 1492, Columbus crossed the waters blue. 16 something, the Pilgrim Fathers left Plymouth. That's only a blip on American history but you know for us, it's you know two or three hundred generations, oh centuries back, so that they looked a lot to England too because of their early history. In fact I say England, the British Isles, came from there.

Air-raids, you mentioned too?

Yeah.

You had yellow,

16:30 **red and green warnings. What were they?**

Sirens. Air-raid sirens.

And how did you know it was yellow or?

Well I was saying the other day, I don't know. I think they were a series of I've forgotten. I think it was a series of sirens, you know whether it was just a continuous siren for yellow and then air-raid onwards, blip, blip, blip. I can't, I just can't recall but whatever it was, it's a most

17:00 run up your spine sound. I don't know if you've ever heard one that you could ever hear. They really go through you, an air-raid siren.

And explain to us what yellow, red and green meant in terms of sirens.

Yellow was air-raid pending, green, ah red was air-raid on and yellow, green I'm sorry. Yellow was air-raid pending, red it was on, green it was all over, clear.

And in houses like the Marx house where you were staying, excuse me, in houses like the Marx house where you

17:30 **were staying,**

Mm.

What would you black out with? What would the black out procedure be?

Oh just curtains.

They were thick enough?

Yes, oh they'd have to be thick enough. Well I think they had the wardens running around telling you if they weren't thick enough. Yeah, they'd all have to be covered up.

That was my next question. Air-raid wardens,

Yep.

Would they be out on the streets during air-raids?

Yep, all the time, all the time.

Were they?

You couldn't light a cigarette you see. You couldn't smoke out in the street. That's what they were fussy about, even the glow of a cigarette and that wasn't on. Everything

18:00 was pitch black. You felt your way, and I can remember coming out the train and getting out to my digs. I, when I went back to London towards the end I went out to Hampstead Heath, near the old Bull and Bush Hotel that I spoke about and going down the street there, the only way I could go down the street,

I'd know how many doorways to the house where I was. I had to count seven or eight or whatever doorways and that was my doorway because it was that black you know, so I'd get out and I'd feel my way, oh that's one door, and I'd know it was number eight or whatever,

18:30 it was down the street where I was stopping.

That's hard to imagine.

Black as, that's right, black as black. You couldn't imagine how black they could get it.

What were?

Very fussy about their security.

What would these air raid wardens wear? Did they have a uniform?

Yes, they had a bluish type of uniform or overalls, yeah they were, and arm bands. They were well designated.

And what about?

As were the police.

What about the dad's army? Where did you see that?

No, we didn't hear, well I've seen it on television and you could get a good laugh out of it. No but I could imagine that because I

19:00 had a, I had my father in-law was a Dad's Army fellow and he was [digging] slit trenches and air-raid trenches in Ivanhoe, and I'll tell you what, there's no funny business with him. He was fair dinkum. He'd been through the First World War but today I couldn't imagine whether the young ones would say, "Oh cut it out, we won't do that." Maybe, it'd be a different war. You won't have a chance to do it. You'd have to be quick and lively.

Could well be.

But ah yes, he was a Dad's Army and they're as keen as mustard and sincere about it too.

19:30 **Did you ever see anybody that perhaps forgot to close the curtains or did anything?**

Yes, oh yes, you could see that every now and then. There's always someone that forgets to do something you know.

And what would happen?

Well I don't know, I suppose the air-raid warden would pick them up. They wouldn't last for long, they'd be on them, yes.

And would there be a fine for something like that?

Oh I, well I don't know, I didn't follow it but I should imagine there would be. If you persisted, there would be because you know for the sake of a

20:00 second thought you could put a hundred couple of hundred people at death, couldn't you? Death's door.

You certainly could.

You got to be in it, you've all got to be in it. No half measures.

That's right. Only needs one window open.

That's right.

I'm interested in what you said about Adele riding on a Bofor gun during air-raids.

Yes.

Could you explain that again in a little bit more detail?

Well, see we've got to get down to Plymouth yet. You haven't got there. We, we're not even half way there.

Oh we'll get there.

Yeah, okay. Well Adele, she was the girl that was in the house. About the age

20:30 of oh twenty-three. I might be doing her a favour, but twenty-six, I'd be doing her disfavour. So twenty-three, twenty-six, thereabouts and Adele was, I don't know what job she did because I hadn't spoken to her more than three or four times in her life while I was with them, but she would be out soon as the air-raid, her mother said, "She's gone out", and she would get onto a group of, someone on a gun, a crew on a gun and they'd have this Bofor gun shooting at aeroplanes

21:00 in the sky at night and that's where she was.

And it was pure bluff to make the Germans think there were plenty of guns?

Well, they were fair dinkum trying to get them down but it was bluff to make them think they had a lot of guns there because they would fire, go on for a quarter of a mile or something, have another blast, turn down a few other streets, and they'd have an area I suppose that they'd have to patrol and they'd just randomly shoot off these guns to make them believe there was a lot there, and also to keep them up in the air because as well as the guns keeping them up in the air,

21:30 all of the cities, whether it be at Plymouth or London, they had barrage blowers everywhere. These great big blowers, have you seen them? They're anchored you know and they're shot up in the air and that's to keep planes high mm.

We're nearly at the end of the London. We're on our way to Plymouth. I just want to know about the NAAFI in London.

The?

NAAFI. NAAFI.

NAFI.

Yeah. What were they like?

The NAAFI. The Navy and Army and Air Force Institute. Is that what you're after?

Yeah.

The N-A-A-F-I. Navy Army Air Force Institute.

22:00 When I first got to London I had five shillings in my pocket and I couldn't get a bed anywhere. Now they had the NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute] vans used to go around, it was run by women and girls, and that was the Navy Army Air Force Institute, and there you could get a cup of coffee or a bun or something and I remember my first meal I had, I think I had five shillings, and I couldn't get any money, I had to live on that for a week. I had me board with breakfast, nothing else to eat

22:30 and you'd either go to the NAAFI or the Princess Elizabeth, Princess Mary Elizabeth Club. That's what they called it and I went to the NAAFI and I bought a cup of very weak coffee and a bun and I bit into this scone, I don't know whether it had some butter on it, and I went, "Ouch, what's that I've bit into?" And I opened it. There's something in me mouth and it's someone's molar tooth was in this scone that I'd bitten, so that was the end of the scone. I don't know whether the baker had lost it somewhere

23:00 in a raid or something but it must have been in the flour. A human molar tooth in the thing so but they were the NAAFI. You could buy these cheap meals or you could and likewise of course too, you could go down and get into the Princess Mary, Queen Mary Princess Elizabeth Clubs. They were clubs for servicemen where you could get a bed pretty cheap at night, a couple of bob or something, and you could get there

23:30 and on the way down as they came out the stations they'd have the young girls. I'm telling you the bare facts of life. You come out the station as you're going down, you strike the young girls, oh fifteen to eighteen or something. "Somewhere to sleep for tonight Aussie?" And the fella I was with, I was married, the fella I was with said, "Oh how much?" "Oh, a couple a pound." "No, too dear", and so the further you went down the older they got and the cheaper they got till we got outside and Kelso said to this old

24:00 duck who was sixty, if she was a day, "Somewhere to sleep with?" Beg pardon, "Someone to sleep with tonight Aussie?" And he said, "How much?" And she said something. He said, "I'll tell you what, five bob." And she said, "No, I'll let you feel me breasts", but she didn't say breasts, "I'll let you feel me breasts for two bob", she said. That was life though in London.

Well you got to do what you got to do.

Yeah, Princess Elizabeth Club.

Now luck lucky last question on London and seeing as we're in a ribald mood,

Yeah.

What did NAAFI really stand

24:30 **for?**

Navy Army Air Force Institute.

I know, but what did you guys call it?

NAAFI.

But I'm sure I've heard how it stood for No Aim something or other

Oh might, I've never heard that.

Oh.

Yeah, no I never heard acronyms because I never got that. I just knew it as NAAFI but they might have had another name, "No bloody good," or something

Yeah

But whatever have to fit in but no, I never heard that.

All right. Well let's get to Plymouth.

Yeah.

Tell us about

25:00 **the role of 10 Squadron 'cause they had quite a unique role, didn't it?**

Yes, well 10 Squadron went over in about, when I say it went over they might have sent about twenty mechanics and fitters and what have you from Australia in, I would say about February '39, somewhere about there and they were to bring back three Sunderland flying boats from England for the Australians, so they must have had an idea it was on,

25:30 for the Australian Air Force. I believe they got as far as Plymouth but reading the books it says that they got to England anyhow, and when they were in England they were sent down, ah Pembroke Dock in Wales, because Plymouth didn't exist, they were sent down to Pembroke Dock in Wales to fly with an English squadron, the squadron called 2-1-0, 210 Squadron which is also flying Sunderlands, and they used some of, but of course they never had any planes. When they got there the three planes weren't there, they just weren't there. Now

26:00 war broke out in September, now September the 3rd I think, and early in September, might have been somewhere about 11th or somewhere there, all of a sudden they said well the Australian Government, they're in this war, we will leave the Sunderland squadron, number 10 Squadron, we will leave it there as our contribution, Australia's contribution to the United Kingdom. Paid for by Australia, which it was, which it was done. So they

26:30 did that. They left 10 Squadron there. Now I don't know but I'm led to believe of course that all these fellas were permanent air force bods and they can't just send them overseas, they had to have them on parade and get every one of these fellas that they wanted to serve overseas because we're now on a war footing. I believe from enquiries I've made that there were about five of them that didn't want to stay overseas, they didn't want to sign up, they were signed for Australia. They didn't want to

27:00 sign overseas, so they sent them home but all the rest stopped there. Now later on, after September because of this they found out we've got a squadron there now and I think we had about four officers which flew over later on but they sent the, and they had to do a conversion course down at Pembroke Dock but the mechanics and of course obviously they never had enough, so I think it was early in, oh might have been September, October they sent a hundred and eighty of them overseas.

27:30 Fitters and turners by boat, sent them over there to form 10 Squadron and that's how it started. They flew out of Pembroke Dock, flying boat bays out into the Atlantic in, would go out about something like two hundred and forty miles, that was their place of no return, as I said before. And the Americans'd come the other way from America but there was always that part in the Atlantic that they could never get at and this was where the U-boats [German submarine] used to sit but they had to come home sometimes you know. They got fuel and they got

28:00 men to get and so they used to wait on them. So they used to do that. Now they used to also fly a lot around the Bay of Biscay. This is where the U-boats had to come back into Germany or France. They had big pens at Brest, in France and they used to have to come back in there and this is where they would sit on them.

Can you

We

Lloyd, could you describe a Sunderland flying boat for us please?

Well

28:30 yes, I can get one. I've got one in there.

But we for the sake of the camera, we can't really show a picture. It won't come up very well.

Yes, well what can I say? It's a hull with a set of wings. Four motors. It's a boat hull really and it's got a tail on it with a set of wings and four motors on and that's all there is. It takes to the air. It's a flying boat hull. It can't land

29:00 on soil. Just can't land on soil. All it does is it alights on water. It alights just like, look if you can imagine, I always imagine it, and I see them down here, an overgrown albatross. Have you seen the

albatrosses down at Williamstown flying along and all of a sudden they land on the water? You could say, "That's a Sunderland." They land exactly like an albatross. They just come down and they just alight on the water and that's all it is. A flying boat hull with

29:30 a model plane, the wings. Four motors. Inside there's a man you know and

And were they mainly a reconnaissance plane?

Yes, they were a reconnaissance, heavy reconnaissance bomber. They were mainly, their main duty was to seek out submarines and do escort duty on boats because at this time up till 1943 and I'm thinking like about, I think in 1943 there was something like, I might be wrong, I think it's about two thousand

30:00 ships sunk in the Atlantic Ocean with U-boats, so their job was to seek out U-boats, seek them before or damage them before they could get the convoy or escort convoys. The convoys are going across and come out and meet them and go 'round the outside of the pack picking up submarines and I should have got the name on their emblem and I can't think of the name for all of me, but if you look at their emblem, there's a sign of a fish there with a spear through it, and I have an idea the name of that fish is something like champeron

30:30 or something, and what it means was this fish was always the predator. He was always the one that sat at the back of the mob or the shoal of fish and pick up the ones that, the stragglers and of course the Javelin is the Sunderland you know, Sunderland bomber. He'll go and get the fella that's waiting to pick up all the others and that's the banner. I should have, I can never get the name of that fish in my mind. So that's what they did, convoys, U-boats.

31:00 Didn't do much. They were there for six years. Six years they sunk six U-boats. That's all 10 Squadron. They damaged about another twelve but I think there was something like a hundred or four hundred U-boats from all, there's more than squadrons and 10 Squadron of all the U-boats around. In 1942 they thought they'd have another Australian squadron there and they broke 10 Squadron up. 10 Squadron was in Plymouth, came from Pembroke Dock went to Plymouth, better conditions and they sent

31:30 some of them up to Scotland, which was cold but the one I was on stopped down in Plymouth. Ah cold conditions, better equipment though. They got bombed out of there and burnt out twice and they had go back to Pembroke Dock but eventually they settled in Plymouth, where they started to get on top a bit and they thought, "Oh, they'd make another squadron", so they broke the squadron up or nucleus of that squadron and 10 Squadron when I first went there was always known as The Woman's Weekly squadron

32:00 because it was an, a celebrity. 1939, 1940 all the notables used to go to 10 Squadron. This is where we got our money. Australia - what are they doing? So they were all the notables went to 10 Squadron. When 461 Squadron was formed, and it was formed on Anzac Day 1942, it's always known as the Anzac Day squadron. That's how they get their name. 10 Squadron is not known as The Woman's Weekly squadron now, but it was then. The other one's known as the Anzac Day squadron, 461 it was in Pembroke Dock. It

32:30 also sunk six U-boats in the time it was there. 10 Squadron had seventy-one Sunderlands in its time. Ah 461 Squadron had seventy-six.

And do airmen love their planes the way like sailors love their boats?

Oh I think they do, yes. I think they do. I think the fellas that fly in them do. Yes. There's no doubt about it, they have a, I suppose it's your life you know, and no matter what it's like it saves your life,

33:00 and that's the thing and you're pinning your life on it, mm.

What about the, for want of a better word the dichotomy or the tension between aircrew and ground crew?

No, it doesn't exist. Look

But they're recognised differently, aren't they?

They are, but it doesn't exist. Look, I'm never and I'm not aircrew. I've told you that but if I went to my squadron and anybody said air ground crew's this and there'd be a bloody row on I tell you. The fellas wouldn't stand for it, and neither would the aircrew. Never have I

33:30 heard one derogatory remark from aircrew about ground staff or ground crew or ground crew talking about aircrew. Never one. They know. Ground [staff], their crew know that they can't be up there if they haven't got the ground staff down below. And there's no doubt about it, these are the fellows that do the work. I don't care what you are. I can show you photos you know, and I'll show you some of them up there where they've got crews, their wings this, and I'll say to you, there's eleven in a crew. That fella's aircrew, that fella's

34:00 aircrew, that fella's aircrew, that, that, that, and that the next eight are ground crew. And in the early days they used to get two shillings a day for flying. So what you would have, you'd have radio operators or armourers or fitters. These fellows who knew about aircraft. They were working on them on the ground, they would fly, and while they were flying they'd get two shillings a day extra on their pay and

- only while they were flying and I can show you and say, "That fella there's got the
- 34:30 DFM, the Distinguished Flying Medal." He's not aircrew, he's ground staff flying as aircrew. Now there is differentiation and I thought you know, and I suppose I'm one for equality. I think you get paid for what you do and all aircrew are 41 numbers, four hundred thousand numbers, ground crew are other numbers. I can pick, I know them I suppose but when you and I suppose this might seem a bit,
- 35:00 when you know the inequality that exists I think that what I see is there's too much diffidence in wanting to say to people that matter, "He's a good fella. He's done a good job." If you're an aircrew and you're flying, don't get me wrong, I'm not having a shot at them, I never have but I'm just putting the facts, if you're flying around and you do successful operations or success, what they call a successful tour, which is thirty operations,
- 35:30 it might take months, you know because you don't fly every day, you only fly every, 'cause you're up for about sixteen hours, so that's what your day's work will be. So you only do these operations and if you have it successful you might be at the time of the thing, never mind all the other fellas who are in the plane, you get the DFC, the Distinguished Flying Cross, if you're an officer. If you did something ah not honourable, that's not the word, something outstanding,
- 36:00 something with valour, you're an officer, you get the Distinguished Flying Cross. If Val did the same thing as an ordinary rank, not a commissioned officer, she wouldn't get the Distinguished Flying Cross, she gets a Distinguished Flying Medal, and I say this is discriminatory. This is some of the contentious matters (UNCLEAR). This is discrimination. Why should you get because he's the officer get a cross? Makes no difference I suppose but I said to him,
- 36:30 "He's got the Distinguished Flying Cross. They said, "Gee, he must be good" "And that fella's got Distinguished." "Oh yeah," and that's what it is, and they're both the same you know but one's given to ranks and the other one's given to officers. It's the same with the DSO [Distinguished Service Order]. The only one that doesn't make, of all the awards, it doesn't make any differentiation at all between ranks is the Victoria Cross. Doesn't matter what you are, you all get the Victoria Cross.

Do you think?

But you don't on others. Now that's one of my beefs.

That's all right. This is the forum.

Yeah.

This is the forum to air those beefs.

37:00 **In the couple of minutes we've got left**

And I've got a few others, hm?

I'm sure we'll get to them. In the couple of minutes left on this tape

Yes.

There are distinctions between ranks, obviously like you said.

Yes.

Do you think aircrew was recognised ahead of ground crew as well in that respect?

Yes. I do.

And how does that sit on your shoulders?

It's all aircrew. Everything's the same. But it doesn't matter to the fellas. You said does it matter to the fellas? It doesn't matter to the fellas. They couldn't care less. It doesn't matter. I know that the fella that was playing the violin

- 37:30 and did a good job, and was a scruffy fellow when he was working did a magnificent job and he was a workaholic, I know you know, but if he wasn't down there doing that work that fellas wouldn't be up there flying. That's all it is. They're relying on the mechanic to make sure that he does the right thing. Now there there's no differentiation between those but when you look at authority there is. Oh yes there is. No doubt about it and that's how it always is you know. That's how it is in

- 38:00 civil life. The foreman is more important than the bod under him. He's, any kudos that the man under him does, they don't get, it's the head of that department or that organisation that gets the, he's the fellow that serves two years of a four year contract and can still finish up gettin' kicked out with a couple of million dollars but the poor little fella down there doesn't get a week's notice even, but that's how our culture is.

- 38:30 That's how industrial relations works I suppose. Or our relationship works.

Tape 7

- 00:31 I did tell you about, you know about if there is animosity between them I didn't mean as individuals, there was none, but as you suggest you know could be between the ranks unbeknownst to individualities. The ground staff at 10 Squadron are the people that do all the ground work. They used to call them ground staff. I think they now call them ground crew. These are all the people that don't fly.
- 01:00 These are the people that do all the groundwork. These are the people that fill the petrol up in the vehicles. These are the mechanics, the fitters, the instrument makers, the fabric workers (UNCLEAR). All these fellas have an impact whether that aircraft will fly or it won't fly. These are the people and yet I have a beef. I've said a little while ago that there seemed to be not wanting to give, they're not diligent
- 01:30 in wanting to make awards. Someone must make them. Doesn't have to be much, it has to be some recognition for work well done. Of all the people I would say on our squadron, one fellow got a decoration. One fellow, and to me that's a disgrace for the amount of work they did and what they did and how they kept those planes flying in very, very adverse conditions. That fella was the chief mechanic, and he's in the Australian Book Awards,
- 02:00 a fella by the name of Aussie Ferguson. He got the British Empire medal. Poor old Aussie, I think went on his first trip to London, after working his guts out for all this time, years. Came over, I may be permanent air force squad, came over in the first lot, worked his stomach out, went to London on the first trip walking down a street with two of his mates from the squadron ah on his first leave, and a bomb drops and they heard bang and they looked around
- 02:30 and here was Aussie, dead. He dropped dead you know but I just say that. He, one leave I'm lead to believe, he got one leave, you got the British Empire Medal and he's the only ground staff that ever got any recognition for services well done.

Why did they give him the medal?

Pardon?

What did he do then that made them give him the medal?

Oh because he was in charge of all the mechanics and the fitters and the turners and the armourers. He had charge of all the artisan staff as it were, all the workers.

- 03:00 He was the head. He was the head shebang of the hangar really. He'd have it over all the fitters and riggers. Fitters are mechanics, riggers are airframe riggers and they put the plane together. So he'd be the, he'd be the foreman of all these fellows, or the supervisor. So yeah, that's another beef I've got and they're a bit diffident. It's not that you get these, they don't
- 03:30 ask for it, I bet you none of the other fellows have ever thought of it. I'm the only dope that thinks of it because I think of it for them. I know what they've done. That's right, I know what people do. They're the only ones, you know they're the ones that should get it, but they never think of it, I'll bet ya. You ask (UNCLEAR) wouldn't know what you were talking about but they do, they worked hard and they did a bloody good job.

Speaking of ranks, um speaking of ranks, it was often the case that that aircrew would

- 04:00 **would rise at quite young ages to quite reasonably high commands because**

Yeah.

It wasn't a very long life span you had in that area.

Mm.

Did you ever find that you had boy officers who were lording it over you?

Well it's not a life, it's not a big life span for them. It's not for the other fellows that are on their crew too. Did I ever find?

Um very young officers that

Yeah well.

you know you'd have to work for?

We had a permanent air force bod who was OC [Officer Commanding] of the station and

- 04:30 he went from flight lieutenant to wing commander and when you get onto an air force station it's vastly different from just an air force station where you've got to hold parades, every dinner time, morning, dinner time and night to knock off, and you salute everything that walks. On an ordinary operational station there's none of that. It's Tom, Dick and Harry they're all in together with respect, you can't go 'round calling the head wing commander Tom, Dick and Harry but with respect you know, they grew up together

05:00 and so when this fellow got his promotion from, I think it was flight lieutenant, ah squadron leader to wing commander, that's the next step up, they had a parade, and the parade was to tell the troops, "Now that Mr Gillies has got his majority", he got his wing commander, "Would the troops please call him Mr or Sir?" Twenty-four years of age. That's how old he was. Now you're talking about, you know is that what you were talking about?

Mm.

Twenty-four years of age.

05:30 Now there were some fellows that were thirty. Navigators, observers, that were there but most of them, most of the young fellows were in their early twenties oh but the same went for the navy. I've seen young navy personnel, they used to bring in submarines into Plymouth and young navy personnel there and all they'd have on their cap HMS [Her Majesty's Ship]. They were the quiet fellows - never say anything. Just in naval

06:00 uniform, all black and they'd say, "We have to go." And I had one fellow say, "We'll have to go and see the boss." The boss was the commander of the submarine, twenty-four. Twenty-four years of age.

Incredible, isn't it?

Well it's only young fellas that have got the guts to go you know. They're the ones that can do it. You get older like you or I, your nerves'd go but the young fellas, the twenty, eighteen, nineteen, twenty-one, twenty-two, they're the ones that have got it. They don't care, you see them every day kill themselves on the street

06:30 because

You're right.

They've got no nerves.

Now on Plymouth what's an average day for you during the war at the Plymouth station?

An average day? Oh well, you couldn't take my day. I suppose, oh I don't know what time we even got up now. Six o'clock in the morning. Ah well, oh about eight o'clock till six at night if things were going right. If you weren't you'd

07:00 stop back and work to nine. I've stopped back and then write a letter to Val after that so nine but it's the mechanics that you've got to look at, the fellas that are doing the aircraft. There's no average day. They just work. Work till it's finished you know. As I say, not ten feet above the water, thirty feet above the water, cold, windy. I could show you an air force station, the conditions that they worked in still. They've got snow up to there you know working in it, and they don't seem

07:30 to understand, governments well I suppose they don't understand anything, politicians. You can't get them to understand because everything you tell 'em, they think you're embellishing it you know. I'm not embellishing anything, you know if I say they did a good job, they did a good job. They did. If I say that the British people have got guts, they've got it. There's no embellishing.

So excuse me, on a, I won't say a lighter

08:00 **tone**

Mm.

But possibly a more interesting (UNCLEAR) of the time, I know you were and still are a very happily married man but those WRENS and WAAFs must have made a lovely sight?

Oh terrific

Stationed there?

Terrific and they looked very well in their uniforms too.

That's what I mean, they must have looked?

They were lovely and it's a funny thing, ah I suppose I fall in love with their speech more, not someone, I think Stella [Interviewer] said before is the Englishmen in Africa like the Englishmen we have here?

08:30 I couldn't tell, but the Englishmen that we have here and we have rough Aussies, don't we? Rough Australians, as rough as bags some of them, but you do get English here who say, "Oh he's a whinging Pom." They're not that type of people. The ones I struck were very cultured, properly behaved, ah you never see them drunk, never untidy. Perhaps the WAAFs hold a tighter rein on their women folk, I don't know, but I could say without fail there mighta been one or two but without

09:00 fail, they were beautiful girls, and a lot of our fellas married them and they're here now. I've got a couple of my own and he took me here to his home in a little town called Newton Ferris and they had a guest house there and he used to say, well the old father used to say, "This is your room." Never let it, because it was always there for me if I was off. Ah a guest house and they came out here and the

daughter now lives at Black Rock and the little girl that she had, because he used to take me down to see

09:30 his little daughter, about the same age as Rhonda, she's now a grandmother. She lives up in Benalla and Betty's still down, Bill's passed away, Betty's still down in Black Rock.

And what did the WRENS and the WAAFs do on that base?

On our base? Well, if we take the WRENS first, they were the navy and they had that shed down on the, I couldn't get in and I didn't know what was there. I don't think anybody could get in. The young fellas wanted to get in there because they were good looking little girls. Only about half a dozen of them down on the,

10:00 on our shore they must have had something to do with the navy ships coming in and out. The other WAAFs they would be typists, car drivers, cooks, cleaners and all the really artisan staff. That's what they would do. They had nothing to do with the squadron other than that. They weren't weather people or fitters or turners or something. That's what they did. Cooks, domestics, hairdressers.

10:30 Oh the women weren't hairdressers, so they did these men for want of a better word, I'm sorry, but menial jobs you know.

Oh they did a good job. Still don't know what those girls did in that hut.

You mentioned, yeah this is a sad thing, you mentioned that

11:00 **it's not like the army in the air force.**

Mm.

You lose a crew on a plane and there's no body to bury.

No.

And you said you know you can't really mourn, you've got to get on with the job.

That's right.

But did you have padres, did you have a service or anything like that if a plane was lost?

Yes, we did and what you say it's true you know, if the plane goes out and the plane just doesn't turn up and all it is, "Lost in action." Now there's no mourning or something, you can't afford

11:30 to mourn you know it's, I suppose it's expected they'll go. They've gone and you just get on with it. The station's got to keep on going. Yes, they did have a padre but that was done at a later time. They had a padre, which came down from London, which will service a number of units you know and he used to come around and I forget what his name was. I've met him since, he's back here too. He was a minister from down your way from

12:00 Williamstown and because he was a minister they called him "Bish." Everybody [called him] Bishop, the Bishop, he was the Bishop. See, he wasn't a bishop of course, he's a reverend gentleman. He'd be a, oh squadron leader, wing commander or something'd be his rank, so yes they used to go around and they always had the two big occasions you know apart, funerals wasn't one of them, but they'd mention it, big occasions was Anzac Day, Christmas Day. They were the two days.

Tell us about those days?

Well I I've got

12:30 photos of them. They'd just have a get together. Anzac Day was a day of a bit of a church service they'd run and then there was a bit of frivolity after. Plenty of beer flowing for fellows and my mate was a terror. Ah you only get one tie and he's great when he gets drunk, his great thing is running around with a big pair of tailor's scissors, and going clip and cut your tie off. Cut the ties off everybody. He was a terror and I only spoke to him the last Anzac Day and I said, "How

13:00 you going Gill?" He said, "All right." I said, "How old are you?" He said "Eighty-eight", so he's still going. So that was a frivolity day and Christmas Day they had a bit of a lunch and I've got a menu up there and you say, "God what did they do?" There's roast turkey and I don't know, it might have been tinned stuff. I didn't find it but I've got a photo of it there and they'd have a bit of a service and then a Christmas lunch and not many concerts, never came around. There wasn't any time for them,

13:30 I don't think you know.

Well what would you do?

Mm.

What did you do, you say a fella got drunk and cut all your ties off. What would you do for fun or for a bit of a laugh or something just to break the monotony?

Well if you had plenty of dough, you'd play two up I suppose. That's what they used to play or play billiards. They had billiard tables, played billiards, but they used to play two up a lot. Ah and really there wasn't much else. They'd get

14:00 across to the pub, ah get down the pub to Turn Chapel or the young fellas used to get over the dance at the citadel at Plymouth but there's nothing else you know. It'd be a great night out if you could, I remember one of my first nights out is going over to a little restaurant called Smoky Joes. Sounds good, doesn't it? It was smoky too, but you'd pay ten shillings for an egg. I'm not kidding. That's right. Ten shillings - an egg. If you wanted a peach, they'd have a box of peaches from Spain

14:30 all done up in cotton wool. So instead of having packing like we have it in, you know the little cellophane pack where you put them in their little compartments, they'd be in wrapped with cotton wool. Each one.

What would a peach be worth?

Hey?

Five pounds or something, a peach? A peach? How much would a peach be?

Oh, I don't know, about the same I suppose.

Now how is your egg done for ten shillings? I'd want it roasted in a golden pan. What, how would they cook it for ten shillings?

Oh just fried. Fried egg. That's all you'd get, fried egg. No,

15:00 no hang me on beautiful things. Just a fried egg and a piece a steak'd cost you a quid.

What about the food in England? Was it a shock, the English food after Australian food? Was it much different?

Well I did all right. What they were under, they were all under strict rations, the English people, and the people that I used to stop with. My mate married the daughter. He was like the little mayor of the town of this little quaint little English village called Newton Ferris, which is about ten

15:30 mile or so out of Plymouth and he used to go home every night to his wife and family and he was like the mayor of the town. He looked after everybody you know. Organised the air-raid, all that, they all had their own little air-raid centres and organised the food and I'm not saying that he pinched any food, he didn't. He'd be that honest, it'd be all the same but we used to get towards the end of it, anyhow we used to get

16:00 rations, always got rations of cigarettes, tons of those cigarettes and towards the end we always got rations of beef or lamb from Australia. I used to take mine down to him and they'd think that was beaut but he could always find, you know another spot at the table for someone. Wonderful people. Their names weren't much different from ours. Their name was Sitters. Mum and Pop Sitters. Wonderful people. They came out here and they died at Black Rock.

Did you know them while they were out here? Were you?

16:30 Pardon?

Were you still in contact with them here?

Oh yes, I knew 'em here yeah.

That's good.

Wonderful people.

Um another thing in Plymouth that I thought was quite

He used to say, "I've gone out fishing, Lloyd." He used to say, and I'd say, "Have you pop? What did you done?" "Ooooh", he says, "Got a Salt Ash rig." Salt Ash was a town there and a Salt Ash rig and I said, "What's a Salt Ash rig?" He said, "A wet arse and no fish." That was a Cornish, oh what he would say for wet, no fish. "Wet arse and no fish." Salt Ash

17:00 rig.

Oh I've done that a few times myself.

Old Pop Sitters, and they were, you talked about their food, what they had, they were that zealous that you'd see a report every now and then, where they'd go along, they'd have inspectors going along looking at rubbish bins and if they saw burnt toast in your rubbish bin you were in for it. They'd be on you for burning the toast and throwing it out.

Really?

Oh yes.

What else couldn't you do? What couldn't you throw, would they look at chops and see if

there's any meat on them or something like that?

Oh well, I don't know. I know about the bread you know. Bread thing.

17:30 **Wow.**

Ah you'd be called upon every now and then. I was called upon once to be on a funeral burial escort. Ah we went to an English, they had prisoner of war camps there too and along the railway line they used to have prisoners of war working. They'd have soldiers watching them, not many but I suppose they were happy to get out and work and they'd have a (UNCLEAR) or something on their back. Big

18:00 flannel coats on and they'd have these on and they'd be working there. Now sometimes there'd be a bit of an uproar because these fellows would get with the English girls and there'd be hell to pay if they were caught and they had pretty freedom these prisoners of war towards the end. They used to let them wander 'round you know and they used to go out sometimes the English girls and then there'd be a bit of a riot and you'd get some other Pommie soldiers come in and see them walking 'round with their girlfriends or something but they used to have those and they were all right and

18:30 anyhow one time, I got off the track there. One time I was on a funeral escort and we had to go to this private house and we went out to the private house and we got in this little cottage and the coffin was in the little cottage in the front dining room or somewhere and they had the service and then the time come to put it out of the cottage in the front and we had to get, had to

19:00 ask them to shift all the people out of the front room because we couldn't get the cottage, ah couldn't get the casket out. I don't know how they coulda got it in. You couldn't get it out the window, there was something wrong with the window. You couldn't get it out the door because you couldn't turn. The room was that small you couldn't turn it, so we had to get 'em all out, stand it up on its end and waltz it around you know and then down the passage, in the passage and out.

How dignified.

Mm yes, I felt sorry for the people, 'cause you could always get them back into the kitchen or something. It is a bit hard, mm.

What about those prisoners of war?

19:30 **Did you have much at all to do with them? Were they a sight you saw often?**

No, I never did. No, I never had. Never spoke to them, I just seen them working on the railway lines and that.

Okay. Let me take you to June 1944, perhaps May 1944.

Yeah.

There must have been talk about a second front. There must have been talk about a build up. I've spoken to other men who've said, "We saw great fields full of aeroplanes and trucks," and so forth.

Mm. Yes well one

What was the scuttlebutt going 'round before that?

One would

20:00 think and I would say that things were that tight that you never heard that type of talk.

Really?

Ah it just wasn't on, you know they were very tight lipped, very frightened of putting around as you call scuttlebutt in case people took it for, I never heard it anyhow. We didn't know. We were, I suppose ah 1944, '43 was the worst, ah the worst year for submarines. 1944, we were getting on top. I think we'd got on

20:30 top and I told you about the boats in the harbour in on the 4th, 5th and

That's what I wanted to come to next, yeah.

6th of June, where they were singing and fires and why would they have fires around and singing, you know when they hadn't even had the second front. Now up till that stage or a little before, yeah I think was a movement but you wouldn't see them in the fields and that you know. I don't know where, I think all the things that they were going to take and tanks and that weren't in the field. They were already on ships in the harbours ready. They were loaded

21:00 and ready to go and I know that around near Plymouth and north of the Thames they had ah mock camps there with tents erected to make the Germans believe that this is where the accumulation of troops were, and they weren't there at all. This was to mislead them.

But you didn't know that at the time, did you? About those fake camps?

Not at the time, no. Oh, we'd be just as blamed as anybody else was if they knew it.

So

We wouldn't see it, anyhow because it's another hundred,

21:30 two hundred mile away

So

But we never had any scuttlebutt as to what was going on. I suppose once the 4th of June was there, we knew. I told you, I didn't tell you about nearly losing my life on Plymouth Harbour and I should have told you that when I should have known, which was about this time, that those people that had the fires and that and singing hymns and you know and all this and I thought you know, I think the German Air Force was

22:00 was U.S [Unserviceable] by that stage. U.S. as far as coming to England was concerned. They were still on the continent, they were worrying about (UNCLEAR) peninsula and still on the continent there to force what they had but they weren't strong enough to come any further and that's why they were just singing there when the ships took out. Now

What emotions did that stir in you when you opened up your window, whatever you did and you saw all these ships?

Oh, I think it gives you a feeling of proud-ness you know. Like I said to you before, you've been to London and I don't know whether you have. You may not. I get it, you know if I'm there,

22:30 this is Drake's Green, Buckingham Palace, all the things around England that you learned about and above all the Poms or the British Empire people. Once I went over to, I think it was the citadel, which is a big ah fortress type of thing at Plymouth, just up from where the Mayflower took off and there was something on there, I don't know what it was. Anyhow,

23:00 we were coming home and there were four of us. (UNCLEAR), Kelso, Speedy and the fellow by the name of McLeod and when you come onto the steps of the Mayflower, it would be from about the top of that piano, oh of the ceiling it'd drop down the walls, steps down there and you come onto this landing, which wouldn't be thirty forty feet wide. Might have been a hundred foot long, I don't know about that and there was an American camp there. Obviously,

23:30 the camp was getting stores ready, this'd be in the May or the June, May, didn't realise then getting goods ready for the ships, I suppose that were out there and to go back to Mountbatten across the water, it was only about three or four hundred yards, four hundred yards, so if you got a boat across we used to ring up and get an air sea rescue launched off. The Pommies'd just start it up and come

24:00 over. Run by Englishmen, the air sea rescue was. Come over and you'd get in and he'd take you back to the station but if you couldn't get in, you had a seven, six or seven mile walk around the road to go four hundred yards. You had to go 'round so on this particular night we got down there and we got down on the steps and there's a guard there, American guard, we said, "Oh can we use your phone?", you know, "We want to ring up the station and get a boat across." And he said, "Oh well you stand there. One of you go down that road there and get a phone down there." And so

24:30 McLeod goes away to get a phone and everything's all right and after a little while we hear march, march bang, bang. Up comes two guards and an officer and the officer says to the guard, "Who are you?" He said what his name is, a Yankee, and so he said to them, "Put him under arrest." They arrest this poor fellow that said go down and you can ring the phone and then silly Kelso, I don't know what was wrong with him and he's saying and the officer said, "Look, get up on that road way and I'm saying get now." And Kelso

25:00 is saying, "Look, all we want to do is" and he pulled out his pistol and off went the safety catch. I said, "My God, there's four Australians dead here." They'd shoot ya, no effort, but he wanted to

Why were they so upset?

Hey?

What was the problem?

Well he wanted to argue with him and he says, "I said move", and we should have had more brains because there was directions going away that there were prisoners of war escaping in England. This is just a week or two before the invasion started and the prisoners of war around England, you know that were escaping, they were escaping

25:30 in threes or four of us but there were three: navy, army and air force they were escaping, so no matter what they get, they could get away, but here's four fellows turn up in Australia you didn't know who they were. He was doing the right thing of course, the officer, but I could see four dead Australians lying down there but that was the nearest I've been because they're mad, and they're fully entitled to, they shoot first and ask questions after and that's what you've got to do, isn't it?

In a wartime of course.

Oh yeah.

26:00 In that situation. That's the closest I came.

And that was the?

Oh no, I was close another time. I went flying over Edison at one time and oh it wasn't as close as that I don't think. When you're flying on the Sunderlands they have hatches on the side open with a machine gun sticking out them because you got one fella there who'll manage both guns and I was cold, my God it was cold. They're cold, noisy things. There's nothing in them, it's only metal shell,

26:30 and ah the pilot did a bit of a turn and of course I went, whoop, and I thought, my God I was nearly out. I reckon, God, I reckon I was gone. I threw me arms up you see and grabbed the side yeah.

God.

I might have been miles away but to me it was close enough.

I don't want to get that close, I'll tell you.

Yeah.

Did you have much cause to fly often? Were you in a plane quite often?

No. I wasn't on, I wasn't on aircrew, no.

But to get from place to place would you fly at all?

No. No, there was no flying there in those days. You don't fly in warplanes.

27:00 You might in the desert. Not there.

So tell us about that, that morning you opened up and you saw all the ships?

Yeah.

Just talk us through the next few days again?

Well that would be the 3rd. On the 4th of June when we wakened up and I think it wasn't (UNCLEAR) I might have led you to believe that on the 4th they were all there. I think there was a steady build up over a couple of days, you know get one or two ships there and I couldn't

27:30 tell you. If I said there was fifty, there could have been fifty, there could have been a hundred. I'll tell you what, there's more than fifty I'd reckon. They were everywhere.

Were they all warships?

No, oh no. No warships, all cargo ships. Tramp steamers and what have you but I would say there wouldn't be a warship amongst them. Maybe they were out waiting for them to escort them across. No, just ordinary ships, cargo ships, and

28:00 that was on the 4th of June. Plenty in there. Waking up on the sorry, that was the 3rd of June. Waking up on the 4th of June and there wasn't one to be seen. Gone. Now and I'm telling you that I slept only from God, it wouldn't be a hundred yards to the water. Wouldn't be very far to the water where they were, the shore, and then they're out. I wakened up on the 4th they were gone, did

28:30 a day's work, nothing said, nothing on the radio or anything said. Wakened up the next morning on the 5th, they're all back again. Every one of them are back in there again. Now at that stage they reckon they were gonna go but apparently they got down a bit in the English Channel, the water must have got too rough or tides or something wasn't at the proper time to go, wasn't right for them, so they must have come back in again. So they were there again on the 5th, ah that night I can re-imagine

29:00 or the one before that night they had fires and they were singing and I'm talking about tanks, full locomotives, full train engines, full locomotives, cranes, troops crowded all on top. Got up on the 5th, they were all back there, got up on the 6th and they were gone and then come over the air, second front has started. They'd landed.

When did it come over the radio?

Oh about seven or eight o'clock in the morning. I can remember

What was the feeling and emotion and talk?

No nothing, just it's started, that's all,

29:30 yeah. Well we knew something was on at that time because of the quantity that was in the bay but you got to remember, Plymouth's a long way away from France around there. You look at our history diary from 10 Squadron and they'll say, "They heard the guns of the Second Front." I was there, I never heard any guns. I must be going deaf, but they heard them you know. That's what the history says and I didn't hear them so you there go, I must have been asleep.

- 30:00 **On that very note, over the last sixty years you must have come across a lot of myths like that, men say, "I heard the guns of this and that and blah blah." Do old soldiers, old RAAF men, do they gild the lily a bit sometimes some of them? Do they get carried away and say, "I was in that action." You go, "No, you weren't, you were over there?"**
- Yeah, I think they do. Now when you go to a, when you go to a, as I said before you know when you're shifting
- 30:30 around the country with the air force you usually go in ones or twos. You don't go as a group, so therefore when you get to a reunion you seem to stick with your little group and you'll see that those little groups, your crew that were on your plane and they don't know what the other planes are doing or that plane there. Your plane, your group and so they seem to congregate. Now I think they talk amongst themselves what they do but if you were outside they wouldn't say, "Come in here and we'll tell you this", they wouldn't and I think they're only
- 31:00 reminiscing you know I suppose. I don't know whether when they're with their own mates they can't lay it on too much. You've got to be honest and everything I've told you is honest. Happened (UNCLEAR)
- I'm not doubting it.**
- I didn't tell you one and I must tell you one [story] of when we had an air-raid in Plymouth at one time and in this big dormitory where you've got thirty or forty men lined up in beds and a new fella came in and they said to him, "Now if an air-raid goes tonight man, you better
- 31:30 travel and you go quick because these other fellas", he was sleeping up near the door, only one door out, "These other fellas'll run right over the top of you, so go for your life, an air-raid starts, don't ask questions just go." And the usual thing was of course I suppose if you slept in pyjamas, you had pyjamas on you, had your boots, your helmet and your greatcoat, your over coat, because you had to get out. The only defence you had was to get into an air-raid shelter. Nothing else. No rifles or anything. Into an air-raid shelter, so you'd go for your life down to the air-
- 32:00 raid shelter and they must have impressed this fellow so much that he took this to heart and when the air-raid did go he went. So he was first out to the air-raid shelter, when they got there, what do you think? There he was standing only with his tin hat on. Nothing else. Tin hat only and he could be there for half an hour or an hour.
- He might, did anyone lend him a coat or anything?**
- No, they were getting their own coats. He'd have to learn by his mistakes.
- Oh dear.**
- 32:30 **So there must be a million stories like that, of you know little funny things that happened?**
- Yeah I think there would be. Yeah, there would be.
- Have you got any more?**
- No, I haven't. No, I think around there would be plenty of them you know, if I could get fellows that went outside and single fellows'd have them because they know, you know they're really playing up. The married fellows don't. I didn't get out much. I was just in the dormitories, working or in the dormitories. Never had the money anyhow to go out.
- In the last**
- 33:00 **five minutes of this tape I just want to ask you when you were in London um, were you there during the time of the V-1 or V-2 bombs?**
- V-1, first of the V-1s yeah. Now these were devastating. Ah what would happen, the V-1 of course it was sent over from Belgium or Germany, more from Holland or Belgium they were sent across, they were a an aeroplane with, loaded with explosives, so they just had enough fuel to get over to London
- 33:30 and they'd run out. Now once they run out of fuel they would glide and what would happen was of course that if you were there you, I don't know what action you could take, you couldn't take much at all, because you didn't know where they were going to land and they had the devastating effect that you could see them. They were there, they were flying about but you couldn't dodge them and because they could fly and they glided around and around and all of a sudden they lose speed, they just go plonk, straight in. So they hit anywhere and this was a devastating
- 34:00 effect and this is why I said, you know I think Stella [Interviewer] said before they could have bombed Glasgow and I suppose they did up there, but they concentrated too much on the population in you know, on London and they used to go in and they hit places that they could never hit with bombs. Just fluke, you know in it'd go. Down railway tubes and when I say tubes, air vents for underground railway. They were devastating ah and what they used to do, they used to show
- 34:30 films, I hadn't seen them in person but they'd show films of Spitfire, which really saved Britain, ah they used to meet them over the Channel and fly alongside them and they'd fly alongside these pilot-less planes and he'd just, the Spitfire'd just flip him on the wing and tip it over and away it'd go. Go into the

Channel and blow up, mm.

Wow, I've never seen that.

They used to chase them, Spitfires. The plane would get alongside him and just flip him with his wing, you see fly and them flip him and they'd go. Once they got off balance they'd

35:00 dive in. They got a lot of them like that before they got to London.

That's quite remarkable.

'Tis, is remarkable.

All right um, oh I did have a question but it's disappeared from mind, that Spitfire image has knocked it right out. Were they vulnerable to ack-ack these, they were doodlebugs, weren't they?

They were doodlebugs. No, I think they well, yes they used to put up ack-ack

35:30 up after them, well of course they were, they'd fly pretty fast, you know they, they'd lose weight but then once they're over you, what can you with them? It's a bit too late, isn't it? You know, I suppose you could blow them up in the air someone's gonna get damaged, but I don't know whether they put that many over. See then they brought in the V-2 and it didn't do much better, but they didn't last for long. It's like the Battle of Britain. Everybody talks about the Battle of Britain and the Spitfire saved it but I think

36:00 it only went from about the April to the July or August [10 July-31 October 1940] or something. There's only about three months of it but then in that three months they caused bloody havoc, yeah.

What about being in the air force, what did you know about the effect that the RAF and the RAAF together and the Americans were having on Germany in terms of bombing?

Till the bombing?

In terms of bombing. Did you know much about?

Oh well, of 'course they won the war. Well I shouldn't say that. They made it easier,

36:30 didn't they for the troops to advance you know. They had to, you had to knock out the aerodromes first and I think that it got to the stage where London was getting bombed that much that I don't know who, it wasn't (UNCLEAR), he wasn't Prime Minister. It might have been Churchill or someone said, "Well this has gotta stop. As painful as it is, we've got to hit the big cities." And that's what they did. They bombed Berlin. Now I can remember out of Plymouth towards the end when they were putting on the thousand bomber raids, I haven't seen a thousand bombers in the air,

37:00 but I've seen I'd say a hundred at once. Lot of bombers flying out somewhere off fields in England coming and congregating and in and out, these planes that are just lumbering along these big Fortresses and these little fellas, these Spitfires'd be flying in and out of them giving them protection. Now they'd protect them down to the French coast, they'd take them out and they used to go down over Spain, Gibraltar, over the Mediterranean, up Italy,

37:30 in the back, drop their bombs and come home. Now they'd be going out, I can see them going out in my mind's eye now, oh six or seven o'clock at night. I can see them also coming back some of them at six or seven o'clock in the morning. That's how long they were up for and you'd see them come in over the English Channel, coming in over Plymouth and they'd be signalling the air force, the air station and the ones that would be wounded would be putting out fairy lights signalling, you know with their lamps and that and they were flying low, they'd have injured on board or

38:00 the plane was broken up or something and the fellas that were all right were flying, kept high. They flew high. Now they were the thousand bomber raids and I've got a paper up there, I think it was April 1944, literally April Fools' day when I looked at it, and you know two thousand bomber raids over Germany in the day. Two thousand planes in a day.

That must have been an awesome sight.

Oh well, this is what he did you know. This is what they did first up yeah. Magnificent you know.

38:30 Oh magnificent from our point of view but even then I could show you a photo up there, we've got a map on the wall where they've done the landing and they've got the Battle of the Bulge, you might have heard of and you can see the Bulge and the Germans are two fronts here and the Germans are pushing in and the they're getting in their (UNCLEAR). I'd say they nearly got through again but I think the air forces kept them from being bombed. Kept the troops a lot from being bombed you know, on the second landing

39:00 but everybody had a part to play. The little boats that went in there you know, terrific.

Tape 8

00:31 **I wanted to ask a little bit about the time you spent billeted.**

Yeah.

Um, you said that you felt very much like you were in the home country when you came back to England and that you were sort of enthralled by all the sights you'd read about over the years. What was your relationship like as an Australian in an English person's home? First of all with the old lady you stayed with and then with the Jewish mother and her daughter Adele?

No different. No different to as though I was home here. There was no

01:00 feeling that you were the foreigner in their country - "foreigner". Ah that you were the stranger in their country, none at all. I don't know whether, ah whether they thought, well perhaps, you know, he's here on behalf of the British Empire too. But they said, "Well you know, they're also Britishers." I just don't know but there was, I never felt any of that anywhere. I've never had any derogatory remarks, thoughts, looks, anything that you could say

01:30 you know, "What's wrong with those fellows?"

So you were just like a British person

Yep just

living in another country, somewhere else?

You'd think I was in Melbourne, doing what I had to do, only I wasn't there.

And did they know much about what was going on in Australia? Did they know

No.

About the Japanese involvement?

No, I don't think so. Well at that stage of course, I'd moved away from the private sector home and I'd gone into onto a station, so I didn't but I could take it I suppose [like the]

02:00 Sitters, they didn't seem to know much about it. They were worried about England.

Mm.

That's what they were worried about and of course at that time if you haven't read history, at that time you see and if you look at it and this is another one of my beefs, if you look at the history, all we get now and I'm not jealous, don't make any mistake about it, I'm just saying the fact, all we hear about now as to the war is what happened in the islands. What happened in New Guinea, the Philippines, Borneo, Japan.

02:30 Very little do we hear of what happened from Cairo, Rommel in the desert, all the fellows who went up through Italy, and through the back of Germany and England. There's nothing because there was two types of war. One was in 1939, it was all in Europe. Every bit of it was in Europe and then in 1943 was it or '42, the Japs came in and so it shifted nearer home and I can understand that it is nearer home.

03:00 **But the English didn't seem to have any knowledge of [the fact]**

No, well

that Australia was under threat?

No, well because they'd had the push on in the desert, the Germans were being pushed up the peninsula up Italy, you know and they had them on the run and this was their thing, and they were led by the government of course and Churchill was saying, you know we, they the Australian government said, "Let's get the troops home", and Churchill was saying, "No, leave 'em here. We'll finish Europe first, then we'll come to Japan." Australia didn't want that and you can't blame 'em. Let's finish Japan,

03:30 you know then we got back to where you were, back to Europe.

Now Adele and her mother were both Jewish. Had they come over to England because of Hitler or had they been?

No, I don't know. Well of course there's plenty of that in London, you had plenty of Jews and that. It's different from here, we seem to have them

So they weren't refugees themselves?

(UNCLEAR) pardon?

They weren't refugees themselves?

No, not that I know of. No, I don't think so. See, here you've got them, haven't you in St Kilda?

04:00 Like you get little enclaves of different people. If you go over to West Heidelberg you'll get Somalians. There's a

Yes, no I was just curious to know

Yeah.

If they had come over as a result of the war themselves?

I think that, no I think that they were just part of, they were British you know but maybe their religion was just Jewish.

Now um the Castle Inn where you worked

Carstle Inn.

Carstle Inn.

Carstle Inn. Mm.

(UNCLEAR) from Victoria.

Yeah.

I think New South Welshmen say Carstle Castle.

04:30 **How did you come to work in a pub while you were in the service?**

Well, apparently that pub would have been there, I say my goodness, I don't know, early 18th century, I suppose. Well make it about late 1800s or something. Castle because it wouldn't be using that away back in the dim ages. Castle Inn I-N-N and that was a pub, it musta been a little bit of a seaside resort there at one time and this was the old pub and the name not painted on. It was in

05:00 stucco like in the cement work, Castle you see it in the city you see it up there. Castle Inn and that was on this, was where the station was and they left it there and we used it.

So why did you work there? Was it just like a picket? You had to go and do your duty there?

Well it was the office. That's the

Oh I'm sorry.

That's where the office was.

I had some idea that for some reason on the weekends you rolled up your sleeves and went and pulled a few beers.

No. This is where the office was. That's where I worked and I'd look out that window from where I worked and I looked over to

05:30 Plymouth Hoe.

Oh, I can be so dim.

The Hoe and Drake's Monument and Plymouth Rock for the Plymouth Steps, Mayflower Steps.

An incredibly famous area.

Was a famous area.

Okay.

Well it was the hub of England really in those days. Not the hub of England, it was the hub of the British Navy was Plymouth 'cause this is where Drake, if you know your thing, Drake was playing bowls and the Spanish Armada came up and I don't know why, the problem was,

06:00 I think the King of Spain wanted England or something because

Well one was Catholic and one was a Protestant.

One was a Catholic, that's right and one was Protestant or something and this is where it was all religion, then right through there.

Oh it was all bloody times.

Yeah.

The Pilgrim Stairs. Your incident on the Pilgrim Steps or the Stairs.

Yes.

Did you, I don't think you explained before what, how you came to blows?

Well that's where we asked the fellow on the Pilgrim Steps, could we go and use his phone, so we could get

06:30 across to get a boat across to come and pick us up at the station and he went away and then the officer came back with these two men and put the American under guard with these two guards. They arrested that fella, they arrested him. I don't know what happened to him, the poor fella and he said to us, "Get up on top", but the big fella I was with, a big Queenslander and he wanted to argue with him you see but and I pulled out a young fellow, young officer, American officer, he pulled out his pistol and off went the [safety catch and I] thought, my God,

07:00 he'll shoot no problems. They don't ask first, they shoot and that's what you do. That's what it's all about.

Well what was the mood like in London or around Plymouth or wherever you went where you encountered American soldiers?

No problems. Quite well behaved, you'll always get a few brash [ones]. I told you the one about who in the citadel where they were molesting the young lady, ah you'll get that. Could have been Australians, could have been Englishmen, could have been anybody but that's what happens and no they were

07:30 quite good. I didn't find the Americans, you know to be, might have been a bit brash but they weren't, they weren't rude or vulgar with it you know. I think that we were a bit jealous of their capacity to date girls and that. Ah they must have, they had the money, they certainly had the style and they could blow down a girl's ear you know. They had the style, you wouldn't, oh you weren't there, you wouldn't remember it but they had the

08:00 capacity to do that and I didn't find them ah offensive in any way. You've just go to say, "Well this happens in every, in every situation." You've just got to sort out and say, "Well if you want to be friends with everybody, you got to overlook certain things." I found them all right.

Yes I (UNCLEAR)

Always very meekly dressed and well behaved.

They had dry cleaning and so on. I'm always wondering why Australian soldiers didn't sort of pick up some of their tricks with the girls but oh well that's another time.

Well they never had the money. They haven't got the polish. Let's face it.

They don't have our

08:30 **accents.**

Hey?

They didn't have the accent.

That's right, they haven't got the accent.

Now can you tell me what a divvy is?

Hey?

A divvy? Do you know what a divvy is?

Divvy? Yes.

What is a divvy?

Well there's a divvy - is a divvy van, a prison van. It refers to divisional van.

Same as today.

I think so, yes.

Yes. Okay.

Or they might be calling them, a divvy is a division but it'll be a divisional van. You got something, have you on a divvy?

I was writing some notes and

Okay.

I thought that you'd said a divvy and I didn't know what that was.

Well, have a look as to what your notes back [?]. Does it refer

09:00 to transport or something?

It must have been something like that.

Yeah divvy van. Put him in a divvy van or something.

Now one of the other RAAF blokes we've spoken too said that there was a man in charge of the pigeons on base.

Yes.

Did you have pigeons at Plymouth?

Yes. We never had charge of pigeons on our base but just up from the main gate there was a pigeon lot there and they did have pigeons, but that was run by Englishmen.

So there was none at the 10 Squadron?

None on 10 Squadron but there were cages up on the cliff. A bit further up where they had homing pigeons, mm.

So if an

09:30 **Australian went down over the, behind enemy lines**

No, we didn't.

How would they get a message back?

Well I don't know about (UNCLEAR) but we didn't have pigeons on aircraft.

Okay.

See what they were, they're pretty brave these fellas that went on the aircraft and flew. There's no parachutes you know. You went down, you went down. You didn't jump out and float down, you just

No parachutes?

Hey?

No parachutes?

No parachutes

For Australians?

Yep. No parachutes on (UNCLEAR). I suppose they were hoping that it'll alight on the water.

You'd be hoping you'd be close

10:00 **by, hey?**

Sometimes it dives in.

Now in your experience there, did you ever come into any situation that involved potential espionage from the enemy?

Espionage?

Yeah.

No.

No one was trying to infiltrate the area?

No. No, not that I know of.

No odd people seen taking photographs

No.

Of anything?

No.

Um now while you were away, especially towards the end, what did you really start to miss?

Start to miss?

Mm.

Oh family. Apart from family, I

10:30 don't know whether I missed anything. I think what I did do wrong coming back, when I came back when I finally got here and there was no doubt about it, you could have done anything. The money was there from the Commonwealth Government. They were prepared to retrain you and do this. What I should have done is taken up law because in fact that's what I finished doing but I didn't get paid for it.

In other words the government got me on the cheap. I used to run all the industrial cases from Melbourne

11:00 down to the Gippsland border. Everything to do with the industrial cases like shop closing hours, stamping and branding of footwear, baking hours, unpaid wages, no long service leave, no annual holiday. All these under payment of wages, people injured or killed in machinery. I did all those court cases but I was an inspector of factories, I didn't get paid for it. I never had a law degree and that's what I

How long after the war did you?

Should have done but I didn't because I was too busy wanting to get on you see, to get our home

11:30 together and that.

How long after the war did you do those cases?

Ooh, I went back to the taxation then I went to land tax, and then I left land tax and went up there in about 1950.

It's a long time.

About ten years.

Long time.

Yeah. I started then, mm.

And there were still cases in hand evidently.

Well I did them for years, yeah.

Oh.

Mm.

Okay, well let's talk a little bit about winding up your experience in England.

12:00 **There was talk of sending 10 Squadron to the Pacific.**

Yeah, that was what it was supposed to be. 10 Squadron in the Pacific, they never got there. They came down and got on the boat. I was sent to London. I went to London and stopped there for a little while and from there, I said "I wanted to go home and my time was up" and they sent me home.

So there was no talk of you going to the Pacific

No.

with 10 Squadron?

No, it was all finished by that stage. Everything collapsed and just they all came home.

And what about VE Day? Where were you for that?

VE Day? Ah, I was coming out of the theatre, that was the end of the war. I was coming out of the theatre in Plymouth with my mate and his wife.

What had you been to see?

I haven't got a clue and there was no adulation, nothing. Someone got out and they said, "Oh the war's finished." Now in London there was, but Plymouth there wasn't. It was just I think that the stomach was knocked out of the people, a lot too you know. They'd had it and it's lovely to say, "Oh the war's over" but if you've lost a family or something it's not so nice, even thinking of that

13:00 and I suppose they had to get back to normal life but there was no big parades, none of that and you hear them here you know and I said the [Vietnam vets] were always playing it, "No parade we weren't accepted, we didn't do that." We never had any parades either, but you know.

How interesting. So they just had the guts knocked out of them and they just probably (UNCLEAR)?

Oh, yes they did, mm.

So on that day and the days following it must have been quite surreal because

13:30 **I guess everything was business as usual?**

Business was as usual, that's right and what happened was of course and I can remember 'cause once the war was over then, ah things do slow up a bit, but you've still got to carry on, machines are still got to be equipped and from the mechanics' point of view. Everything done on the machines and then they've all got to be handed somewhere. You can't bring them home in your coat pocket, so they were

all handed back to the RAF. The R-A-F either for sale

14:00 or to be broken up or transferred somewhere else. The same with all the machinery, spanners, machine guns. I can remember machine guns going back, you know out of the stores' branch back to the English. They'd take them. Back to the English, but they weren't allowed to take new stuff and they used to send new machines guns, which unpacked out of the store back to the Englishmen and they send them back and said, "Well we can't take it. It's got to be second hand." So all they'd do is just take the top off and get a

14:30 sledge hammer and smash 'em. Put a dint in 'em with a sledge hammer and send 'em on. They're second hand and that's what they did. Lots of tools thrown overseas, big waste but they'd still be there counting them. You wouldn't get anywhere.

Your job. What were you faced with when the war finished or the war in Europe finished and you had to sort of (UNCLEAR)?

Just making well on pay, then we had to tidy up the books, so they could go with them on the boat to wherever they were going. They went to Southampton down on the boat and so the boats, the pay

15:00 books went to London and then they made arrangements for people to escort them back to Melbourne.

Now you might not be able to answer this

Or back to wherever they

'cause you didn't go to Asia but it's interesting that the men were separated from their pay books and the pay books would be sent to wherever they were going. Surely that would have been difficult to send pay books

Well, yep.

to different places?

Really, yeah I just, really I don't know whether the pay books were separated from them, it was only separated from them that it went

15:30 to somewhere for someone to hold them and go with them because I just can't remember. I can't even find my pay book and I used to do it but I just can't find it. Now I don't know. I haven't got any recollection whether we gave them all their pay books or not. I don't think we did.

'Cause

Because that's the

They must have been lost or?

That's the only record they've got, which should be theirs, yes. Yeah, so I just don't know what happened to the pay books from then on.

How unusual. So if a fellow was like yourself

16:00 **was being posted back to Australia, your pay book would go on a boat separate to you back to Australia and when you got there at some stage it would have to be?**

You would have to get your pay book, yeah.

You

So I don't know

You realise

What I don't know, what happened there.

How useful computers have become.

How they, I can't recall how they did that, yeah.

Right. So in those days

Because in that pay book was a lot of your personal history, it's all your jobs and everything that you get, your injections are in the back. It's your

16:30 address of course, it's your next of kin. It's all the payments you get. It's all your promotions. They're in that pay book.

And what about citations and things like that?

No that's done separately. You don't, no that's a separate thing. That's put out from air force headquarters or Buckingham Palace or a mystery.

And given that you're privy to such a lot of special or sensitive information about all the men

that you're writing out cheques for, writing out their?

Only personal information, yeah.

Yeah, well did you need special clearance of any

17:00 **kind to know that or to work with that?**

No, oh no that's, well I suppose you working in that situation you're sworn to secrecy. You know it's private stuff. It's the same as working in a bank you know. I could tell you now but you've got the thing on and I won't tell you but I tell you, ask me when we go off. I'll tell you exactly what in fact did happen on one of them but

And you can't say now?

Well I, you know. I could, it wouldn't make

17:30 much difference. What had happened was I said to you, you know these pay books holds a lot of information and one of them went up to London and at London they transfer the information off the old one onto this one. Now if you didn't transfer all the information when you get the new pay book, you don't know and in this case they'd left off his wife's allotment. There's a compulsory allotment to your wife. There's a minimum, there's also a maximum or in fact there's a minimum you

18:00 can pay her and there's a minimum that you can accept. He can't give you the lot but he can't keep the lot himself and give you nothing, so it's all fair enough. She's gonna get the biggest portion and your husband can allot as much as he likes up to a minimum. Might be he might have to save two shillings a day. He can't do anything less than that. It's got to be, 'cause if he does he's only a bind, on all his other mates you know borrowing and that. So this

18:30 one didn't have the wife's thing, and I don't know that went on for a few months or something 'cause we were paying him as a single man until such time as his wife's allotment stopped. This is what had happened. He was getting his full pay instead of half of it or his allotment going to her, and those things happened, we used to pay it back.

You wouldn't be reprimanded for a mistake like that. That'd just be an army error?

Oh no, that's

Yeah.

You know you've got to make a mistake.

Yeah. So

Another thing that I thought was a bit unfair too and it was an internal matter,

19:00 that if young ladies got into trouble, this is stuff that you won't hear, if someone got a young lady into trouble, they would usually shoot the air man off early back home. Bit unfair, leave her to carry the burden, back home but towards the end they didn't do that. They'd shift him around to another station but he had to stop but a lot of fellas

That doesn't really make sense, does it?

Well maybe a lot of fellas wanted to, you know wanted to come home, so the easiest way to come home was to get somebody in trouble

19:30 and come. I don't know.

That's scandalous.

Well I'm only suggesting that maybe. I don't know.

Well on that note, did you ever notice what you might call camp followers? Girls that were following airmen around?

No, none of that. No, well we had a set camp, so it didn't matter yes. No, we never had camp followers but I believe they existed in the army a lot.

Yes, so I believe. So flyboys didn't sort of come in from the north and fly from Plymouth and have?

No, no.

20:00 There was a stable population all the time.

Okay. Well was there anything of note that happened in the time that you spent in London before they shipped you back home?

Anything of note?

Yes. Were you just waiting around?

No, only that I wanted to, yeah I was just waiting around, I was with a cobbler whose brother-in-law was with the Australian Associated Press. I can't think of his name, Hal somebody and his wife

20:30 and two children were there and I can't even think of their name, isn't it terrible?

Now

And I was with them for a few weeks and then I wanted to go and have a, I don't drink beer, but I wanted to go and have one and I did at the Old Bull and Bush Hotel. By the time I went to come and make eyes at me down at the Old Bull and Bush, which I went in Hampstead Heath, which I had and I didn't do much else then I think in that last month or two in London. Then I went down to Plymouth. Then you couldn't

21:00 even, the war was well over. This is, I'm talking now, this'll be October, November, December, November and I couldn't even get in touch with Betty then 'cause I couldn't ring Val. I never had the money anyhow and couldn't get phones, so I used to ring Betty up at Newton Ferris, this is the lass that used to look after me in their guest house, the daughter. She's now back at Black Rock and I used to ring her up and say, "If you don't hear from me tomorrow night Bette, I'll be on my way." So I'd ring her tomorrow night, "No", and when I didn't ring she'd know she had to send a signal off to Val

21:30 that, "He's on his way." That's the only way you could get there.

So you were there for months after VE Day and they really

I which?

You were kept in England for a long time

Yes, yes.

Before they sent you back, which is odd for a man with a little baby.

Yeah.

I thought, would have thought you had the points to get home quickly?

You'd be no good as an officer Stella [Interviewer].

Why's that?

'cause you're too compassionate. You're too soft. They wouldn't be saying, "Oh poor old Joe Blow's got a baby. We'll send him home." No.

Well

Yes.

22:00 **Well if you were doing something important that makes sense but if they're just wasting your time**

Well they were important. They were saving you money. You had to get the accounts all up to date and what have you, yes.

So what were you doing in those days?

Yes, all pay books and that. There'd be plenty of airmen still in England, you know in hospitals and what have you. They'd be around and had to be paid, mm.

Was it a bit overwhelming the amount of paperwork that was involved?

Yeah, they had a pretty good, they had a pretty good idea. Ah, it wasn't in London

22:30 in the head office, it's not like on a squadron. Squadrons are free and easy. Work when you wanted to work, work at nighttime if you wanted to as long as you were blacked out. Free and easy and London seemed to be, you were there at eight or whatever the time was and you were there till six and that's it and I can remember going to Finchley and getting on that train and the conductor would yell out, "Olburn" H-O-L-B-O-R-N, Holborn, "Olburn" and "Olburn" he always (UNCLEAR)

23:00 didn't know what an h was, Holburn, yeah so.

Tell me then about coming home? For a few years now you've been receiving photographs of your little baby girl growing up

The?

For a few years you've been receiving photographs of your little baby girl growing up

Yes, mm.

And do you have any sense of what it is to be a father?

Oh I reckon. I've paid for a wedding and I've got a grandson. I've got a son but I've got three grandchildren

I meant then

Yeah, no I

23:30 **I meant then. You've got a little, you've only got photographs of your girl**

Then. No, you've only got a photograph. You haven't any sense there because there's no closeness, is there? It's the mother, that's the one you know. She knows. She's the one that nurtures them and keeps it going.

So what do you think about when you look at this photograph of this little person that you happen to be the father of?

Oh, she was beautiful. Yeah, she was beautiful Rhonda. She's a nice girl, to think that she's nearly sixty, my God.

So tell me about coming

24:00 **home then? How did they get you home?**

Well I got to Perth and I said to a fella, Pat Hunt who came from Williamstown. He said, "I've got a sister in on trunks in Melbourne." On trunks in Melbourne, I said, "Have you?" He said, "Well I'll see if we can get out." We got out at Fremantle and got out and got into the telegraph office or something and he asked for his sister, Miss Hunt, and on the line, she came and says, "Oh Pat, yeah blah, blah, blah,"

24:30 and he talked to her and then he said, "Listen Pat can you get this number?" We never had the phone on but opposite the old lady, the (UNCLEAR) you looked after there, she was always on her own, her husband was travelling in the railways and the next [thing] she went and rang up this lady and he ran across or she ran across and said, "Lloyd's on the phone." So she went across and that's when I spoke to her there, yeah. "At Heidelberg". "Is that right?" "She take you?" "Mrs James?"

25:00 "Yes". She got her on the phone and then I spoke to her and said, "Well I'll be home soon." So I don't know how much, might have been another three or four days or more but we came down from there and down onto Princes Bridge and standing on the wharf was Val and Miss in yellow all done up in daffodils or something and I couldn't get a word in. All she wanted to talk about was the birdies or something. Yeah.

What was that like finally getting back to?

She's a delightful girl. Hm?

Was it

25:30 **good coming back to Australian soil**

Yeah

after all that time?

Well she never knew me. You know she had a photo to look at, and daddy, that was daddy on the photo and that was it. Yes and it is lovely but we're very lucky, you know that we're in Australia. I (UNCLEAR)

And you were saying that that little Rhonda didn't quite come to terms with, the fact that the man in the picture was?

Yes.

This man now in her home with her mummy?

Mm.

How long did it take for her to accept that you were her dad?

Oh I don't know. Three or four weeks, wouldn't be that.

26:00 Couple of weeks, you know they soon, a few bits of lollies here and there and plenty of kisses and cuddles and they soon come around.

Did it take a bit of time to feel settled back in Australia?

Yes, it does take time. When I first come home, I couldn't sleep at all in the bed. Well, no fear 'cause I'd been on my own that long and I slept on the floor the first night I got home

26:30 'cause I couldn't sleep in a bloomin' soft bed. Is that right? On the floor. The beds are that hard, so you get used to them. So yeah, it takes awhile to get back in but I had a new house and relatively new garden, hadn't been formed up, and I was involved in trying to get on. We had no money and so Lloyd in his wisdom says, "Blow this public service, working in the Taxation Department", and I did the

unspeakable.

27:00 I went and did a course on cinematographic operator and I used to work at night as a cinematographic operator.

Oh so you're quite familiar with this equipment then?

Pardon?

I said you're quite familiar with this equipment then?

Yes. Well I used to work at the Old Star Theatre in Preston and I was getting about three or four pound a week for that and about four pound a week from the government, so I was doing pretty good you know and so we saved up, and saved up and then I went down to the Planet

27:30 Theatre in Thornbury and worked there for awhile and ah

Was your father sort of scandalised at your choice?

The which?

Was your father scandalised at your choice of this strange?

My father?

Yes.

He'd, no well I was away from home then and he didn't know anything about that. I just, we just kept on and did our own thing and then after that was over I think I was transferred to, no I wasn't. You can't have a job in the public service apart from the job you've

28:00 got and so I was, someone spotted me in the public service and I was reported and they used to work three nights a week overtime and I told you they got ten nine shillings a week clear.

That's right 'cause you're not allowed to moonlight, are you?

Pardon?

You're not allowed to have two jobs.

That's right.

Got two masters.

So anyhow, I got a thing down to the office of the forget what they call him, personnel manager and he had a thing, a doctor's certificate. "Is this still in order?" 'Cause I was suffering nerves. Oh, I had terrible nerves. I didn't, but the

28:30 certificate said I did.

So you weren't suffering from nerves but you?

No but the certificate said I was.

How did you bung that on?

I don't know. The doctor (UNCLEAR) I got one off the doctor and

Not saying you didn't have some terrible experiences being, you know nearly bombed every other night but

Yeah, I didn't have any nerves. This was on the doctor's certificate that (UNCLEAR) 'cause I didn't want to work overtime, so I produced that and I got out of overtime but then of course I was working at the theatre and

Did they know that you'd been a pay clerk?

No. So anyhow then

29:00 someone had [dobbed] me in, so an explanation is required as to why I was accepting outside employment without approval. So of course they had ah test cricketers and football players and players, fellas playing in bands which they used to hire and play and I put all this up you see and next I know is, "You're transferred to land tax." Didn't say stop and I didn't stop. I kept, carried on. So I went, we were trying to get on. I should have done law you see but I didn't. I wanted to get on. The next thing I did, I went and worked and the next I went and worked for the Brunswick Ice-works and pulled

As a dancer?

No, as a labourer, and stacked thirty ton of ice on my own every night, that was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday night - I never went. I went in about two o'clock Saturday morning in the summer and worked all day Saturday, all day summer and in those days I was earning about eight pound a week, which was big money.

- Well look, before we get, before we go too far down the track, I wanted to ask you about,**
- 30:00 **it's a stuffy industry anyway - the public service. Fortunately, we don't seem to have any anymore but anyway um, your brother when, what happened to him in the service?**
- Well, he went to Egypt. He got into Greece, got knocked out of Greece, got to Crete, got knocked out a Crete, got back to Egypt, came back here and was forever attending the repatriation hospital because he had an injury on his leg.
- 30:30 Wal had an injury on his leg. Now he then married and I haven't seen him for years but he shifted down to Phillip Island and passed away the other day but he was in the 6th Division, 8th Battalion. Mm.
- Okay.**
- But he wore a chip on his shoulder.
- About being in the services?**
- Yes. If you weren't in the army, you weren't any good.
- Ah a bit of sibling rivalry.**
- Yeah.
- Dear oh dear. So the war had**
- Oh well, he was always like that.
- 31:00 **It's sinews were long and difficult, weren't they?**
- Yes.
- So just to wind this up, do you feel that it was worthwhile - your experience in the war. That the effort that you made and the trouble you went to?**
- Well I suppose if you're talking for me personally, I'd say no. If you're talking about the general overall picture as far as
- 31:30 Australia's concerned or the British Empire or people, that's it. Never mind where they come from (UNCLEAR) I'd say it was worth it but for me personally, no it was not, no I think it could have been that much further on. I worked bloody hard for where I got. I finished up with the Department of Labour and Industry. Had to do examinations there and pass them, which I did do, and worked particularly hard and I finished up as chief inspector of factories but instead of getting there
- 32:00 at fifties I should have been there at thirties, that's what I reckon. I was good enough to do it
- Mm.**
- But it was a matter of age, it was a matter of seniority, if you were senior and I couldn't afford to leave because your superannuation's that high that you're paying for that, you can't afford to leave because all the work I was doing, legal stuff in the government, and doing for them for nothing, I couldn't leave them and go and do it outside because I wouldn't get the,
- 32:30 I hadn't got a degree. It wouldn'ta mattered a damn. I could do it as well but they won't listen to you.
- So it kind of messed with your career?**
- I could have been there quicker, yes
- Mm.**
- But that's the way it goes and I think I may have been at that stage one of the first ones ever to get on and buck seniority and I went for that job, there were seven, eight of us I think or seven of us and six of them were more senior to me and I topped them but this is about all - depends the arguments
- 33:00 you put up. This is the first time you see and you pay by results you know.
- Mm.**
- And I think that happens now in the public service, I don't know. I hope.
- Who knows what goes on? I shouldn't talk about the public service, should I?**
- INTERVIEW ENDS**