Australians at War Film Archive

Robert Swift (Snow) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:35 **I was wondering if you could begin for us by just giving us a brief summary of your pre-war, wartime and just post-war life?**

Well, starting at the beginning I was born in 1915 at Wollstonecraft, that's North Sydney, and moved to Killara

01:00 at the age of four. My father bought a house there, which had about an acre of land and an orchard and when we went to Killara there were gas lamps in the street and the house had gas lamps and the dunny man came and it was very rural setting. We used to have a sulky and a horse and there was a show every year on the Killara Oval,

01:30 and I used to on Sundays when I grew older walk down to the nearest dairy, get a billy can of cream too, through the cows to Mickey Donovan, the Dairyman, to get the cream, so that my mother could make ice cream. But how I got the name of Snow, my proper name of course

02:00 is Robert Alan, my mother used to call me Bob, but when I was four, the milkman used to deliver milk in the afternoons in a horse drawn cart with a tank on the back and two taps and on this particular day he walked in with his can of milk, and my two brothers who were older than me, one was six

02:30 years older and the other was four, were standing with me and he patted me on the head and said, "Hello Snowy," and since 1920 I've been called Snow, which I never thought would sound, or my mother never thought would sound so good as Sir Snow, as Sir Robert, so she always called me Bob, but the years at Killara were very happy.

03:00 It was a big old home and I lived there until after the war. My life before the war really, I suppose I was very privileged because of the Depression, my father had died when I was 12 but I had a rich uncle

03:30 who was a bachelor and he, my father and he had started a firm called Swift and Company, which were merchants, very well known at one stage, and my uncle after my years at Shore I was, Shore I started in '28, I was there until the end of '34 actually

04:00 and I was not a very good scholar but I loved sport. I was captain of boxing, captain of swimming, I played in the football team for three years and I was in the combined GPS team. I was in the cadet corps as a cadet lieutenant and a prefect.

04:30 So I loved school actually. My father died really the year I started but I was therefore sent to be a border, but the headmaster took me under his wing and he more or less became my next father I suppose, which now takes me up until I leave

05:00 school when getting back to the rich uncle. There was an opportunity to join a group of public school boys who were doing an around the world trip and you didn't need any qualifications other than the money, but that, really looking back on it now, I think we had five to six months away for £250.

05:30 We went across the Pacific to Vancouver and then across America and then to England. England, we were presented to King George V and the Queen Mary as they came out in a private interview at the side entrance drawn up. There were going out to their carriage for a parade through London

06:00 and they came down and King George V was in front and he stopped in front of me with his, smoking with his nicotine stained beard, took his cigarette out of his mouth and said, "Where are you from boy?" I said, "Sydney, Your Majesty." And he threw his cigarette on the ground in front of me and I was always sorry I never picked it up, but

06:30 the trip then took us to Germany where we were guests of the German government and spent a lot of time with the Hitler (UNCLEAR) and youth hostels where they were marching around with shovels and things. We had a famous time. We went to the Olympic Stadium which hadn't been finished then. The

Olympics weren't until '36 I think, but we waited and were

07:00 told that Hitler would be coming to inspect the stadium, so we sat there until he came along in an open [Mercedes] Benz sitting in the back and he pulled up in front of us and gave us a Heil Hitler salute and we all stood up and he drove off. So you can hardly say we met him, but it was then we were supposed to have gone from there to meet Mussolini

07:30 but Mussolini declared war at that stage on Abyssinia, so it was decided we shouldn't go. So we boarded the ship for home from Toulon, but we saw all the troop ships, black-shirted troop ships going out to Abyssinia. That was a famous experience for me and meant an awful lot. I've never forgotten it and had a great bearing on my

08:00 life in the future. But I came back and I was wanting to be an architect and through an odd coincidence I met my friend Bill Travers' father, Colonel Travers, who was General Manager for Frank Packer's newly started "Women's Weekly" was then a black and white giveaway paper

08:30 and he said, "What are you going to do?" And I told him. He said, "Have you ever thought of going into newspapers?" I said, "No." He said, "Come and see me and Frank Packer on Monday." So I went and they offered me, or Frank Packer offered me a job as a newspaper cadet but in the full sense of it, not just the journalistic side, but to train me in

09:00 the whole business of executive training, and he started me off in circulation, wrapping newspapers and I remember one of my first jobs was when the King died, the King I'd just seen, they had an edition out, so they printed another edition and we had to rush it around Sydney at night. It was all

09:30 printed in purple and black. Then the next job was the evening news building in Castlereagh Street where they still are today, and they gave me a broom and said, "Sweep it out." Of course it hadn't been used for years. I liked to say that I was the only person who I knew of who started at the top and worked his way to the bottom.

10:00 I was a greaser on the machines in overalls and an oil can the night that Kerry Packer's great grand-mother I suppose, Frank Packer's mother pressed the button for the first edition of the Daily Telegraph. There were people like Sam Hordern there and Jimmy Banks who used to draw Ginger Megs and they were all in dinner suits going onto dinner.

10:30 But in all I spent with him, with the war in between, 22 years and I have many good thoughts about the time I spent there. I finished up as advertising manager. I never really got onto the journalistic side which was a bit of a shame but I had many friends of course who were,

11:00 Cyril Pearl, godfather of one of my children, I can't remember his name, who am I trying to think of? Brian Penton, of course. David McNichol finished up as a great friend of mine and we did many trips together, but that

11:30 was more or less really after the war, but I joined the air force from Consolidated Press. I had been in the Shore Cadet Corps as a cadet lieutenant and I later joined the 17th Militia,

12:00 which was a North Sydney regiment, as a private. I was first of all batman to a friend of mine and I was cook for a guard up at, when we were guarding petrol bowsers or tanks up at Caltex. I got sick of that, so I volunteered for the air force

12:30 which I think was about May of 1940. It could've been before. Any rate I was called up to, and went to Bradfield Park, which was an initial training area where we did square bashing and classroom work and things, and that would've

13:00 been in, I suppose October, maybe before, but after a period there we were drafted, 40 of us I suppose, 30 to 40, maybe under. I don't know the exact number, and as the first Empire Air Training Scheme to be sent to Rhodesia.

13:30 So we left Sydney just after the, or left Melbourne actually cause we was pulled up there. It was the SS Nestor, a Blue Funnel Line. We left there just after the Melbourne Cup 1940 and I've still got the telegram that I sent from Melbourne to my mother saying, "Leaving

14:00 Melbourne today," which she'd kept. We went to Durban and up by train to Rhodesia passing through Mafeking where the dear ladies of the town knew we were coming and all turned out on the station with tea and scones for us, which was a nice welcome and when we arrived in Rhodesia, up in

14:30 Bulawayo they were most welcome and a lot of them left over from the Boer War, Australians but they, the air force welcomed us rather suspiciously because Australians passing through Cape Town had just before rioted and got us a bad name. However, the course finished up

15:00 and they said it was one of the best courses they ever had, but that was the first lot of Australians. I think there were about 400 or so who went through Rhodesia, and I went then to Guinea Fowl, which was an aerodrome where you did your elementary flying training on Tiger Moths, and in my logbook

15:30 it says that I went for my first flight with an instructor on the day after my 25th birthday, on the 31st of December, which means it must've been New Year's Eve of course, but after doing elementary flying on Tiger Moths you passed out from there and I

16:00 passed out with above average, which is the only time I ever got it actually, but we then went on to the Airspeed, which was a twin engine plane, flying Oxford trainers, which was a dreadful plane because the altitude there it had trouble getting off the ground. Any rate, after that course

16:30 in which we at that time we either became a sergeant pilot or you could be officer. If you were in the officer class you wore a white band on your arm and you were permitted to use the officers' mess, which was pretty big stuff in those days because they always had formal meals where you passed the port to the left and

17:00 behaved yourself but we didn't always behave. On one occasion when the next course was coming from Australia I went in with a few of my friends into town and we got drunk, and then came home with a donkey, with one of them sitting on the donkey and me leading it and saying to the guard, "This is Christ."

17:30 We were all added up to the fact, the next morning I was up before the commanding officer and he accused me of all this and I said, "No, no sir, I certainly had no." He said, "Well you tell me that dancing on the bar table and trying to remove the till is not being drunk?" And I said, "Well I don't remember it, sir." He said, "Swift, what are you doing?" I can still hear him saying it, very British, "What you are doing?

18:00 You're throwing sand in the wheels of the war machine." Little old me, the whole war going on, and me getting drunk, however from there we went down and I passed out as an officer and I had to get a uniform, which was very badly made by a tailor in Bulawayo. We went down to a place called George in South

18:30 Africa, which is kind of between Port Elizabeth and Cape Town via, what's the capital now? Any rate we went AWL [Absent Without Leave] on the way, so we were late arriving but it was a school that you were sent, excuse me, you were sent

19:00 to learn to navigate and we knew then that we would be going to Coastal Command. So after some time there we did the course. Then we went on a ship called the Reina del Pacifico, which was luxury liner and went via Bermuda and that way up to Halifax. It was a lovely boat. I had a cabin with a deluxe

19:30 suite and everything all to myself. There were only about on the whole ship, there were only about 60 or 120 of us I suppose. That was a wonderful voyage. Anyway, we got to Halifax and then we transhipped on to the Andes and went across in a huge convoy, which actually turned out to be quite uneventful to Liverpool, which brought us then to Liverpool in 1941.

20:00 We went to Bournemouth and spent some time there waiting to be sorted out, during which time the next King, King George VI and his wife inspected us. It was much the same thing except he wasn't smoking. "Where are you from?" He didn't call me boy this time. I said,

20:30 "Sydney." Oh. I never had any great conversation with my kings, but from there I was posted to, with others, to Catfoss which was in Yorkshire quite close to Hull or Aull as they like to call it, where we learnt to fly first of all a

21:00 short-nosed Blenheim, then a long-nosed Blenheim and then we were, of which I've got in my logbook that it was on my, I went on to a Beaufighter which was the next thing you transferred to. And to go solo in a Beaufighter you couldn't have an instructor because it was only a single cockpit, I went on my next birthday. So I'd spent a year to get to that stage, or

21:30 over a year before I left home. But any rate I went solo. I pranged an aeroplane while I was there. It was the only one I ever pranged. I'd been told to fly up to Dyce, to take a train to Dyce in Scotland out of Aberdeen and bring a Beaufighter back from there to the

22:00 squadron at Catfoss. The night we were there the aerodrome was snowed in and it was Rabbie Burns' birthday and they had a wonderful dinner, which I've still got the menu of with haggis and all the other things that went with it. Lord Dougie Hamilton was the CO [Commanding Officer] of the station, and dinner was presented by him

22:30 and the meal finished with a dram. Next morning, they'd cleared the runway sufficient to take off but in taking off a Beaufighter swings to the right. I was new to it. I pulled it off too soon, I hit the top of the bank, crashed, burst into flames and managed to get an axe out and chop my observer out.

23:00 But that was the only plane I ever pranged, so it must've been the dram that did it. From there I was posted, after some happy leaves in London, I was posted to a place called Wattisham, which is down in the coast, to 236 Squadron, which was a Coastal Command

23:30 squadron patrolling the Channel and doing strafing of the submarine pens and things into Europe, into France. I wasn't there for long and we were posted to a place down in Cornwall called Crabble, which is above the surf and above Newquay actually. Lovely place and it was spring with all the wild flowers

24:00 out, it was so different to Yorkshire, but we picked up new aeroplanes from the Bristol factory in Bristol, Cotter, and after fitting out and getting special overseas equipment we set out for Egypt

24:30 and we went to the Scilly Isles and set course from there to Gibraltar. I diverted a bit to have a quick look at Lisbon and landed at Malta, which was a very short runway carved out of the side of the rock and very gusty winds. It was not easy

25:00 and especially when we took off the next day to go to Malta it was gusty and we had overload petrol tanks and things to make the distance. So it was dicey getting off but we were briefed that we would pass, if were silly and we should keep out of the road, we'd pass a convoy with a fleet escort and keep away

25:30 from the fleet because they were very trigger happy, which we did and we passed them really around Cape Bon, I suppose and then set course for Malta where we landed. Of course we were short of fuel, we had to, in the middle of a bomb raid and put the aeroplane down, scrambled out and ran for a slit trench. I had my

26:00 dog with me, I've always had a dog. This one was given to me by a lady or a girl whose father was the master of foxhounds in a hunt just near where the aerodrome was and she'd gone into Hull, got a dog from the Lost Dogs Home which was a cross, not a good looking dog, not a good cross either really,

26:30 between a Whippet and a Wirehaired Terrier and it had a Wirehaired Terrier coat and rather looked like a Whippet, it was funny, but I called it Tickton after a while. Tickton Grange was where the foxhounds gathered. It became known as Ticky and later he became Air Vice

27:00 Desert Dog Tickton, and later became Air Rajah Dog Tickton when I went to India, but he flew everywhere with me. He eventually died in India, which upset me greatly, but I've got his tag out there, which used to hang around his neck, which had every country we flew over. Funny dog Ticky, he just stood

27:30 there in Malta barking at the bombs. From there we went on to Egypt and landed for a bully beef lunch I remember, but it was very vastly different to the mud of Yorkshire. Then that's really when the war started for me. That

28:00 was in '42, so I'd left Australia in '40 and this must've been, I don't know, April, May I suppose '42. But I joined a Beaufighter Squadron and 227, which

28:30 was very active at that time because the war in the desert was, we had advancing really then and when we got there all of a sudden we were retreating and that brings me to the fact that I would like to say that I was never on the winning side, that we retreated when I got to the desert, when I got to England they just retreated out of France and

29:00 when I got to India, they'd just retreated our of Burma, so I was sitting on a tank with girls throwing flowers to us. It was just the wrong time at the wrong, any rate, the squadron was very active and we had a CO who was, they called Ogden, was a famous pilot.

29:30 Had been a Beaufighter test pilot before, but he took us on one to where we were to escort the fleet and we were told to do submarine patrol around the fleet for them. There was cloud over the top and we were doing our

30:00 duty when all of a sudden down through the cloud came the Stukas, so we climbed as quick as we could, but on the way up of course the fleet didn't think of us, although we had one wing painted white and one black underneath, so they could recognise us. They just pointed everything up and shot and eight of our squadron didn't come back. So that left the 227

30:30 short and they amalgamated with a squadron called, not called, number 272 which I finished up doing my war in Egypt with. The job we were doing, I did two mortar convoys, was convoy patrolling, intercepting shipping and

31:00 stopping Rommel getting supplies from the mainland across to North Africa, which meant you had to stop shipping, stop one lot, I have in my log book there were twenty-four 52s bringing troops over and we had to stop them getting there for reinforcements.

31:30 So we did that, or a lot of them didn't get there. Another one was where they were towing gliders. One plane was towing gliders full of troops. When we weren't doing that we used to fly out to sea then fly west, come in behind them bringing up supplies and at low level shoot anything that was coming up

32:00 the road. Of course there was only the one single road and that was great fun. Used to fly at zero feet, climb up to 50 and then shoot with four cannons and six machine guns and blow everything off the road that you saw. Must've been very uncomfortable for the blokes in the trucks and things. On one occasion both sides were using the other

32:30 side's captured vehicles or vehicles left behind. I had a bloke called Jeff Patterson with me who was flying number two and we came over off the road this time, we came over a hill and there below us were

some trucks and I fired and too late I saw it had ambulance signs on it and it was a British ambulance,

33:00 but it turned out not to be a British ambulance at all. It turned out to be an Italian captured driving it full of ammunition and when I hit it, it blew up, but I had passed and my number 2 flew over the top and he came home, back to base with bits of Italian

33:30 newspaper inside his aeroplane. So he caught the full blast as we went over it. But mainly that was the work I was doing in the desert, but the desert war to me was a perfect war. It was like the, what they call today the open playing field, whatever that (UNCLEAR) means, but to me it meant that there was nothing in between them and us, desert,

34:00 no real villages or civilisation or anything. It was just us against them and that made it a much clearer, cleaner war. Not like the poor bomber blokes who set out in the middle of the ruddy night, got out of their warm beds I suppose but, and flew all through the night to bomb something. They didn't know what they were bombing

34:30 and you saw things flash and then go home. There couldn't have been any satisfaction for me in that at all. I think our war, low level war was wonderful. However, after that I'm now up to about September. I was there for [El] Alamein, left at the time of Alamein actually. I'd

35:00 been out and done a strafing job and just come back and someone rushed out and said, "You've been posted." So I said, "Oh," and it turned out that I'd been posted on immediate posting, promoted to, I was only a pilot officer at the time, to flight lieutenant and I was going out to be a flight commander which was something, out to India, to 27th Squadron.

35:30 Strange that, all the squadrons I was on, or most of them, had a seven in them, 217, 27, 27, four of them actually. However, I left within a week flying a new Beau [Beaufighter] that I'd picked up in Cairo,

36:00 but we had several false starts for various odd reasons and it took us two or three days to get away. I was leading two other Beaus, or was it four? Three other Beaus yes, and we had to fly to Habbaniya, or

36:30 Habbaniya, whichever pronunciation, which was near Baghdad and they said if you get caught in a dust storm, this was our briefing, get down low as you can and follow the pipeline cause there was an oil pipeline. Well we had to do that at one stage but we arrived at Habbaniya, which was a permanent RAF [Royal Air Force] station of some size with a swimming pool and all that nonsense,

37:00 but we did get to see Baghdad, but we flew down to Basrah down at the mouth of the, what's the sea down there?

The Persian Gulf?

Any rate, if I had a map I could show you but I haven't got my, Basrah's down, today

37:30 it's down where Amoritz [?] and all the other planes in that area land and what was then just a place where they rolled a barrel of petrol out to pump it into your tank. It's now of course quite a city, but then along the coast there, which was very wild and woolly we had to make a forced landing on the way because Sergeant France who was flying one of the planes

38:00 had some engine trouble. We landed for him to get it fixed and then we went on to Karachi and then in easy stages across India to Calcutta where I had to do a fly past and do a performance for the air officer commanding India cause they'd never seen Beaufighters before. It was the first one to land there.

38:30 Then we went to a place called Amataro where I was the first pilot to arrive therefore I became acting squadron leader, which was quite a thing because I knew nothing about it. However, the rest of the planes started to arrive after that and the real CO turned up

39:00 and he was an Australian who joined the air force before the war and been sent to England, and mental block. Didn't like him, mad with red tape. Isn't that strange, it's gone completely.

39:30 It'll come back to me. Anyway, he arrived and we formed the squadron and that took us to, really to Christmas time and unfortunately we had petrol lamps in the mess and I took a lamp outside onto the deck to

40:00 fill it with petrol. The petrol was high octane aviation fuel and there was a hurricane lamp down there some way away but it ignited the petrol and the whole thing blew up. I had to run on fire and that result is that they chased me,

40:30 rolled me in the dirt and the kitchen burnt down. So we lost all our kitchen supplies of grog and Red Cross parcels and I wasn't very popular. They tried to charge me for it. I'm not sure that they didn't charge me actually, but India was completely different to the desert and the whole feel of the war,

41:00 was terribly pukka walla. Each one was entitled, I think you got two shillings or something to pay him, for a bearer who wore a white uniformed robe, big sash with the RAF colours draped across his breast and his shoulder, turban with the squadron crest, 27th Squadron, which

41:30 was very old RAF, First [World] War squadron, and he was your servant. So when you came back from flying he would have a kerosene tin full of hot water on a fire. It would have holes punched in the bottom. He would pull it up in a little kind of a hut behind your hut and

42:00 you'd have a hot shower. Then you'd sit on your

Tape 2

00:30 but after a hot shower under a kerosene tin you come back into your hut. There were bamboo huts with brick floors and thatched rooves and in batches of four, but the bearer would be waiting for you. You would sit your bed and he would put your socks and shoes and things on and make sure that

01:00 everything was clean and pressed, and you would then go across to the mess and have pre-dinner drinks. Your bearer would stand behind your chair, every officer had his own bearer, and if you wanted something, my bearer's name was Adjiz, you'd simply say, "Salt Adjiz." So he'd pass you the salt,

01:30 or you'd say, "More Adjiz," and he'd go out to the galley and get you some more. He had across here the squadron, 27th Squadron thing, and he always stood to attention. He was a dear man. I lost him later because he had to return to his village or something, but we lived very well. The food wasn't that good, it was bully beef mainly or on occasion you got chicken or something, but we invited

02:00 the American squadron who came out onto an aerodrome near us later on in the war, we invited them across to dinner and they were amazed at the luxury we lived in, and so were we amazed at how they lived when they asked us over to have lunch with them. We went over and they lived in a big tent and they had packing cases all around them with their kind of squadron stuff I suppose.

02:30 So when you arrived for lunch they gave you a dixie, which was a kind of a square thing with a handle on it. You got in a queue and you walked up and a bloke put a couple of dollops of something in it and you went and sat down, looked for a packing case. It wasn't exactly the life we were used to and we thought they were doing in the hard way. But

03:00 this time we had moved twice and we were now at a place where 27th Squadron finished its wartime life on called Agartala, which was in the state of Tripura, very nice Rajah who entertained us and was good to us, but it was a big strip with built in paddy fields that had been cleared,

03:30 but surfaced. But where the war was different was that we had to get into Burma from there. Sometimes we had to get refuelled somewhere before we could because the duration of the trip before we could get into the targets we were after, but you had to climb over the hills, the Chin Hills, which

04:00 went up to 9 - 10,000 feet and this was after having flown at zero feet in the desert was a long way to go, but the unfortunate part about it was the cumulonimbus cloud was terribly dense and thick and lightning in it, and rain in it and you had to battle your way through it and get into a spin and spin out of it and fall down into the Irrawaddy Valley. Even when you get to the

04:30 Irrawaddy Valley there was the Irrawaddy and there were steamers going up, double decker passenger steamers and lots of little sampans and things, and railway mines beside the river. All the rest was just jungle and you were flying low over it and they were taking pot shots at you. You never saw

05:00 really who you were shooting at. It's a bit like the bombers I suppose, and we lost quite a few shot down like that but I reckon on the shooting that I did I probably killed more Burmese than I did Japanese, cause on every train there would be Burmese and on every ferry boat there'd be Burmese.

05:30 So it was a very unpleasant war. I didn't like it at all, mainly because the flying conditions were bad. I did one sortie, the first sortie that we did was done on Christmas Day 1943 when the CO led out three planes,

06:00 but didn't do any good because the guns had all jammed. I, on Boxing Day had, I'd gone out on Christmas Day and we'd had a church service where I refuelled and then early the next morning we took off for an aerodrome well into Burma and arrived over the target and there

06:30 was an aeroplane going into land and aeroplanes all drawn up on disposal beside the strip. I went in to attack the plane on the circuit, which was an easy pot shot, but not one of the guns fired, no machine guns, no cannons and no one else's guns went off.

07:00 I had three blokes I was leading. So we all went home disappointed. It took us six months before we could get the guns to work and it was never quite found out, I don't know what was going on. It was supposedly American ammunition that was the wrong size or something. It was very frustrating to go all that way, but eventually they got them working and my main, I suppose prize,

07:30 was when I arrived over, we had to attack a headquarters and I arrived over it where they were drawn up for morning parade, the whole units that were there and officer on the white horse and the Japanese

flag fluttering away, and I caught them by surprise and I had a big killing.

08:00 The flag fell down and the horse bolted and there was terrific commotion. Turned out it was Hirohito's birthday or something. I've got the clippings from the Calcutta papers and things and they reached out here. It got great publicity. I suppose that was the, if you get satisfaction from that kind of thing, that was the most I had in Burma. But

08:30 during the time I was there I was unhappy because we weren't doing that much flying. It was not the kind of clean cut job that we were doing in the desert. In the desert you'd do it and you would camp there and in tents on landing strips in the desert and your tent would be over a hole in the ground

09:00 for protection and you had more beer than you had water. I can remember shaving with beer one morning because there wasn't any water, but in India it was different because we could go on leave on the desert in Cairo or Alexandria but the only place we'd got to leave, go to leave was Calcutta unless we

09:30 went up into the hills, which I did on one occasion, but in Calcutta the great famine was on. We'd given up part of our rice ration, so they could have food, but out in the streets outside the Grand Hotel there would be, they would be fighting over the contents of a rubbish bin

10:00 just to get a bit of apple peel or get something that was in it. It was not a nice atmosphere, but one of the things I suppose from our point of view where we lived like the Rajahs, our bearers always went with us wherever we went and I would stay in the Grand Hotel and my bearer would sleep outside the door. There wasn't any, you didn't rely on the hotel

10:30 servants or bearer. You just shouted or clapped your hands and he went and got or did whatever you wanted. So it wasn't exactly hard living, but on one occasion I went up on leave. I got some leave and went up to Darjeeling and stopped at the Mt Everest Hotel,

11:00 which is a famous hotel up there and had a wonderful leave during which a very nice young lady presented me with a Dachshund, my very first Dachshund, seeing that my dear dog that had flown all the way with me had died just before, he got tick

11:30 fever. (UNCLEAR) so I was given that Dachshund pup, which I took back to the squadron and it was called Messerschmitt, which got christened to, shortened to Smitty. Smitty and I eventually flew back to Australia in the bomb bay of the Liberator. That's another longer story though. I always had a dog

12:00 with me and Smitty was the best trained one I think. I had no other breed of dog ever since that, which is over 60 years ago. But Smitty, I could say to him, "Come into the mess," he was never allowed inside, he used to sit outside, but I could say to him, "Smitty, stand up for the king you dirty rotten Hun," and Smitty would go,

12:30 and everyone loved Smitty. It was sad how he got run over at Collaroy, out courting. He thought the whole world was his aerodrome. Yes, well from the squadron I got after that leave, I volunteered for a jungle course

13:00 because there was talk of going into, being dropped into Burma and flying out enemy planes and things like that. Wingate was doing, (UNCLEAR) Wingate, and so I went on a jungle course because the monsoon was on, we couldn't fly and things. However, I got posted rather suddenly and was posted down to Colombo,

13:30 and to the Combined War Operations Room, which was about 30 feet underground in Colombo and run by the navy, and my job seemed to be to appear in a fresh uniform every day amongst the naval officers in their all starched white. There was a big glass topped central table

14:00 with the fleet on it and maps and things, and when the admiral said, "Move the fleet Swift," I had to get a bamboo stick and move the ship. I got very sick of that, and then they posted me down to Lake Kogala, which was a wonderful place down the coast with a, right on the coast with a big lake inland

14:30 and where the, couple of Sunderland squadrons were, Dutch, one Dutch and one British. The Dutch blokes used to go out, you never used to see them. They'd be out, you know, for hours and hours all day and night if they could because Queen Wilhelmina was paying them by the hour. Our blokes were out doing patrols in naval patrols and things, which was

15:00 not being paid for it either much, but Qantas [airline] also had a twice daily service from there to Australia to Perth. They landed on the Swan River outside the hotel there and the only land you ever saw and you were lucky to see it if the weather was good was Cocos Island and that

15:30 took, the longest flight I think was 31 hours or something. I did one trip with them on that because I became a controller down there which meant I was in the control tower on duty night and day and things for the squadrons and for Qantas. So I got a trip home with them and eventually when I got a posting home instead of going back to Delhi or

16:00 Bombay or somewhere I was able to fly home and by that time they were using Liberators. So I came

home in a Liberator with Smitty, who was in a basket made to look like a suitcase. The squadron doctor doped him and said, “That will keep him asleep for two days.” Actually it didn’t, I stored the suitcase in the overload

16:30 tanks and he woke up and chewed his way out of the basket and came looking for me down the centre isle. He was paralysed in the hind quarters still. Rather looked like a semi-loader with flat back tyres, but we were only carrying admirals and generals and air marshals. I was off duty at the time

17:00 and sitting at the back of the plane and I watched him coming down the centre isle and not one of those high ranking officers took their eyes out of their book at all. So he landed in, we landed in Perth, Exmouth Gulf actually. I had to leave him there because I couldn’t take him onto Perth, so I arranged for the duty pilot

17:30 to try and get him to me in Sydney. So he eventually arrived at Bankstown aerodrome sitting on the lap of a Spitfire pilot, hence my love of Dachshunds. I just love them. Why am I on to dogs when I should be talking about the war? Any rate, well from there I didn’t come directly home. I went to another squadron that was

18:00 being formed at Mount Lavinia, and that was 217. They were changing from Beauforts to Beaufighters, so I was sent there to help them. I don’t know whether to go and do an aside story there or not. I think I better leave it out. It’s to do with the WRNS [Women’s Royal Naval Service] arriving out from England

18:30 and a ball in the mess. No, perhaps that’s not for posterity.

We can come back to it later.

Hmm?

We could come back to it later Snow, if you like.

All right. Well that brings me back to Australia. Australia, they sent me to Ferry Flight taking various planes around Australia. Then they sent me, ‘course I hated that, well I thought I ought to be fighting the war,

19:00 I got a posting to an OTU [Operational Training Unit] at Sale. Why on earth they sent me there I don’t know. It was an OTU, Operational Training Unit to fly Beauforts. Beauforts are a dreadful aeroplane. It was kind of a forerunner to the Beaufighter but they were a very ordinary aeroplane,

19:30 and they used to put you under a hood and cut an engine on take off, all kinds of crazy things and I hated it, but eventually I finished the course and got a posting to an OTU on Mosquitos. So the two aeroplanes I flew during the war were operationally the Beaufighter

20:00 but afterwards the Mosquito, but I never got to the war in a Mosquito. I went through the conversion onto Mosquitos, which I loved, a wonderful aeroplane, and then was posted to one squadron which was reforming up in Queensland at Kingaroy and

20:30 they were a great mob of blokes and they eventually went off to Borneo at the tail end of the war and they had some losses up there which was sad because the war was almost over but before they went I was posted down to, back to Castlereagh which is a strip next to Richmond Aerodrome to a squadron which was forming there. I went down as a flight commander

21:00 on 94 Squadron, which the CO was Dick Hunt, Squadron Leader Hunt. He and I, I’d driven him actually funnily enough to, on the day we both went into Woolloomooloo to join the air force for our medical test and he’d been at Kings School and a member of the Palm Beach Surf Club, so he was an old friend

21:30 and he hadn’t known that I was being posted. I thought he must’ve asked for me, but any rate we saw the war out together and on the day war finished I remember we took a formation up and went down the harbour and great to do and the rumour got about that three of his squadron

22:00 had flown under the [Sydney Harbour] Bridge in formation. He denied it and so did I, but there was some doubt about the truth of the matter, but then I finished up after that, I was married in the meantime, but I finished the air force by being paid off in

22:30 the pig pen at the Royal Showground after what, five years and 55 days and the man who was paying me had my deferred pay, which I was looking forward to. They gave you your tools of trade and a sum of

23:00 money. I took as tools of trade because I wasn’t a carpenter or a plumber or anything, I took a suitcase and said I was a commercial traveller, and when they came to give me the money, all the money was coming under the grill and he said, “Hey hey, hang on,” and he put it all back again. It turned out, I’d known about it, I didn’t think anyone else knew, when I was

23:30 in England your pay was paid into a bank. It was paid into Barclay Bank, Barclays. When I went out to the desert it was paid into Barclays Bank in Cairo. When I went out to India, you were paid by the squadron adjutant with money of the, Indian money and that was that.

24:00 It wasn’t until later I found out when I was in Colombo, I wondered whether there was any money in, I’d

left any money in Cairo cause I needed some, but I cabled them and found out that they did pay me all the time in Cairo. So they'd been paying me twice. So unfortunately, they took it all back again. That was very sad.

24:30 Now how much more time, that's a very quick circuit of it. What other incidents can I add to make it a little more interesting?

We'll go back through all of it Snow, over the time, but if you could just tell us briefly what you did post-war?

Yes, post-war, that's interesting.

25:00 I went back to my old job. Packer had been very good to me. He paid me while I was away, and I have a whole wad of memos that he exchanged with me, some very unfriendly, others friendly,

25:30 which I can quote some if I have them by me, but I gradually worked my way up until I was advertising manager and he by that time had taken, having no father and my last father having been the headmaster, he rather took on a father image. I watched his kids grow up, Kerry and Clyde

26:00 and I was very close to the family. I used to act as host for his wife, Gretel, if they had a party in Canberra and things, but amongst doing the advertising duties and whatever else I was dancing one night with my wife at Princes and so was he and he said, "Snow, I want to buy some aeroplanes," and so

26:30 I, after some looking around I found a bloke called Eric McElry and the Mudgee family, the Lonergans, had cornered all the Ansons, so I bought him three Ansons, kept two for parts and scraps and did one up, putting panelling in and comfortable seats

27:00 and things in, and that became the office plane. So I was the office pilot as well as the advertising manager. But it was so different to what young Kerry has got today of jets with double beds in them and Christ knows what and permanent crew on standby and hostesses and things. In an Anson, which was a twin-engine training

27:30 plane you had to crank them to start them and wind the wheels up on a handle, and to see the boss doing that with me sitting in the controls was not quite right. However, I used to fly him up to his property up in the Hunter Valley and land in a paddock there which was a bit dicey. I'd fly him up to Canberra to try and get more newsprint cause the rationing was on and

28:00 up to see the Prime Minister. I flew him up on one occasion, we landed at the aerodrome in Canberra and Clyde, his eldest son was working as a cadet on the Canberra Times came out to greet him and they kissed each other, which I thought was rather strange to see cause it wasn't in those days any rate,

28:30 then Frank stood back with his hand in his pocket and pulled out two shillings and gave it to Clyde. Clyde said, "What's that for Dad?" He said, "To get your shoes cleaned," which I thought was a greeting. After that, any rate I drove him in, or we drove in to see the Prime Minister, but he used to like to try and fly the plane himself and that was terrifying,

29:00 especially with his wife shouting, "Stop him Snow, stop him, stop him," yeah. Yes, well I saw a lot of him. He sacked me two or three times then we all made friends again, but

29:30 in the end I thought I wasn't agreeing entirely with what he was doing or the way he was behaving I suppose, so I decided I'd rather be Snow Swift and do my own thing, so I left with his blessing, and I've got the menu from the farewell dinner he gave me at the Hotel Australia. But

30:00 I left cause I had a friend in Melbourne who had an advertising agency, Ted Best, he was the Lord Mayor of Melbourne at one stage, but he wanted to open in Sydney, so I started a firm here called Best & Swift, an advertising agency which got to be known as Good & Quick, but it was

30:30 mildly successful. It made its way. I think I'd left it a bit late in life. At that stage I was 50, I suppose. However, I eventually sold it and merged with another agency, which I became vice chairman of and that saw me out until I decided to build this place. But during that period

31:00 I had married Georgie Matson who was a, I'm pretty careful here, I better I think, who was a journalist with The Sun. I'd met her through friends and

31:30 I was working at The Telegraph and she was working with The Sun, so it was kind of a natural kind of an attraction I suppose, apart from the fact that she was very attractive. But any rate we got married and that was the war, the war was almost over then. I was still

32:00 in uniform. The only photographs I've got or we've got of the wedding are of me in uniform and we, I don't know quite why I'm diverting here, but any rate we went up to Surfers Paradise on the honeymoon and I'd rented a house, which turned out to be on the water and had its own boat around at

32:30 what's a name beach and the bloke next door looked after us. I'm going into water I don't really think is terribly interesting but he looked after us with coupons and oysters and we had a fabulous time. There was a pub nearby we used to go to and of course there were no

33:00 cars and rationing. We used to have bicycles and I thought I'd taught Georgie to drink rum with beer chasers until she fell of the bicycle, then I realised that that wasn't a good thing. What on earth am I talking about this for? However, after the war we lived a very social life I suppose, had three children,

33:30 Nicholas, Stephen and Bliss. Bliss wasn't really christened Bliss, she adopted that name because she became known as father's bliss because she was the first female child in the Swift family for 81 years, but they've all in their own way done well. Bliss is working now with a production house

34:00 that does all the work for Channel 7, doing these finding houses and she's the art director or something or other. I really don't know. Steve lives down the road here and Nick lives up near Georgie in Surry Hills. Nick has got two sons and a

34:30 daughter. The daughter has done very well. She's with Cooper Lybrand or one of the big accountancy firms and in Singapore at the moment. The boys have done well. They're both doing university courses. One, Dash has done one course, he's now down in Launceston doing marine engineering and something or other

35:00 because it's the only university in Australia that has the course. Cossie is, well I don't know really what it is but he's doing very well at it. Something to do with instead of electricity, all the other alternatives, whatever they are, and he's got

35:30 honours and things, so the family are well established, very close and we're very happy. So that covers the family. Perhaps I could do it in more depth. I have well, without going to great detail I have one granddaughter living in England,

36:00 who is 27 and the youngest one who is living down the road here is 7. So the family covers quite a large span, but we recently had our, Georgie and I recently had our 58th wedding anniversary and I decided that the family should give us a party.

36:30 So I said, "We will supply the venue and the grog. Each one of you has to supply a course." And it was a hilarious meal, it was great fun, with lobsters from Cairns and ducks from somewhere else, but I suppose looking back on it, it has all been worthwhile and I have been terribly lucky. I've had a charmed life

37:00 in every respect and I'm very thankful for it. Just who I thank I'm not quite sure, but whoever it is thank you.

That's wonderful Snow, thank you.

Well it's only what, 11.00 o'clock.

Tape 3

00:32 **Snow, you mentioned earlier a little bit about your childhood but I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more, what you used to do I guess for entertainment and recreation?**

Well living at Killara, which was the main part of my early life was in those days like living in the

01:00 country. The roads weren't sealed, they were just metal and dirt roads. We had a large orchard with fruit trees in it, apricots and plumbs, with a vegetable garden and stable for the horse and it was the only way into the city was by steam train. Sometimes you had to change at

01:30 Chatswood cause the train didn't go any further. When you got to Milsons Point of course you had to catch a ferry which took you to the Quay and if you were driving you crossed in the punt. There was always a long queue to get across. I

02:00 remember watching from my classroom window, the two spans of the Bridge being lowered together and bolted. They did one from either side and then lowered them together and locked them, a great tooting of ferries and a great fuss made about it, and the day the Bridge was opened I was driven over

02:30 by Mr Tilly and his wife and his daughter and he took us to dinner. We drove across the Bridge to the Hotel Australia for dinner where they had just redecorated the dining room with the first interior neon lighting used inside. It all seems so silly now, doesn't it?

03:00 But if you missed that punt on the way home, if you were late at night you had to drive up to the Lane Cove and drive across there to get back to Killara, and in the old days to get to Collaroy where we had a beach cottage my father built in the 1920s somewhere, you had to go around

03:30 through St Ives before they built the Roseville Bridge that you could get across, or go down and go across the Spit. My mother tells the story of how she, or used to tell the story of how she used to get to Palm Beach, and they used to go in a horse and carriage, stop the night at the Lilli Pilli at Mona Vale

which was an Inn across the Spit and of course in

04:00 a hand-pulled punt. Then they'd get to Church Point and they used to row from Church Point down here because there was no road, and that wasn't that long ago I suppose, but

04:30 yes, the early days, eh. I was at Collaroy in the house there and my brother at one stage in the '20s, I don't know what date it would be, but he was the senior belt champion and I was the junior belt champion and it was a very small club then but

05:00 we used to do patrols every weekend like they do now I suppose, but the big event was to go to Bondi for the annual March Past and carnival and things, and I can remember being in one of those marches with the band playing in front. Colonel Bogie March was the band, the music they always used to play.

05:30 One time carnival I was there. I was in the belt champion, junior belt champion race and I was doing very well, I was out in front and, but finding it more and more difficult, harder to swim, but I was still in front. Then I realised there was nobody near me at all.

06:00 And what had happened the shark alarm had gone and everyone else was wound in except me who was swimming madly out to see. We used to get in the back of a truck in those days and sit up in the surf boat to be driven to the carnival. It was great fun. I've always had a love of the

06:30 water and surf and sailing and at one stage I belonged to three yacht clubs, the Sydney Amateurs, the Prince Alfred and the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, which I'm still a member of and emeritus member, so I don't have to pay which is a good thing. I'm also

07:00 an emeritus or a life member of the American Club. Georgie and I were foundation members when they first started it, and on clubs I'm a member of the Australian Club still. I was a member of Tattersalls but I am no longer. I belong to Elanora Golf Club. I was a

07:30 member of Killara. Sounds I rather collect clubs. I don't know quite how it happened. It seemed to be the thing to do. What other things would you like to know?

Can I ask did you have any sense of the Great Depression as a teenager?

I more or less passed over that when I was talking

08:00 before. Yes, I did but we as a family didn't suffer that much which was extraordinarily lucky. I can remember well everyone coming and trying to earn a living or blokes walking down the street calling out, clothes props, clothes props, or, rabbits, rabbits, and then the bagman used to come

08:30 with a suitcase full of notepads, shoelaces, camphor balls and things, anything to earn a quid, but it didn't really, I'm not conscious of it having affected my life that much. I suppose that was very lucky.

09:00 Well that's why I said I had a lucky life really. I was, I suppose protected in many ways being the youngest of the family I probably got more attention than I should have. As far as the war was concerned, I've always been a fatalist and if it was going to happen it was going to happen, and

09:30 I always thought it wouldn't happen to me and I was very lucky. I still am lucky.

What had you heard about, or had you heard anything about World War I and what had happened?

Oh yes, not much. Except my mother's brother, Uncle Bill, he went to First World War and

10:00 he was a lovely bloke. He wasn't killed, he died normally along the way, but I had another uncle, Uncle Viv, who was a distant kind of relation. He owned a, been to the First World War and he owned a pearling lugger out of Broome I think, but he used to come to Sydney to see the family and things and my mother thought

10:30 because I didn't have a father it would be a good thing if Uncle Viv had a talk to me. So the only two things that Uncle Viv really said to me was make sure you get everything in your pay book even if you have a cold because you might get a pension for it, and the other thing he said to me is, and treat all women like your sister.

11:00 As I didn't have a sister, I went away to the war not knowing. He was a dear man though, Uncle Viv. But no, other than that I suppose I didn't know anything, but when you think of it, you know, I was born in 1915 in the middle of it and what, how many years later I was going to another one.

11:30 But the time I spent in Germany I suppose was the most revealing time because I was completely sold on Nazism and what Hitler was doing, and I suppose he did stop Germany from becoming communist, but I was

12:00 so impressed when I came back from that trip, I've still got the letter I wrote, the one and only time I ever wrote to The Herald. It's a long letter saying what a great job he was doing and how because of the Depression here that we should do something similar with our young men who are out of work and if

only they could be moulded together at all stratas

12:30 of wealth and age and put into national service how good it would be for the country and you know, that's 1935 and how many years later I'm shooting at them? Seven years, is it? Which brings me to shooting at them, the first aeroplane after I saw, which was an enemy aircraft, which was in '42,

13:00 a year or more after I'd joined the air force all been spent in travel and learning to fly and training and what not, but I'm out in the Mediterranean and only new and I see an aeroplane and I

13:30 say to my observer, look at the camouflage on that bastard, it's quite different to us, isn't it? And the next thing I hear, brrrr, it was my first enemy aircraft and after all two years or whatever of training I didn't recognise it, lucky to be alive.

What happened when you

14:00 **did, when you did realise what it was?**

I chased him. I chased him all the way back to Crete almost. He decided he'd go home, that I was better than he was. We were about equal speed, I never caught him but to be fired at with tracer and see it coming up to you and things

14:30 it can be unnerving I suppose, but I've got, maybe my memories are dim but I've got no real memory of being terrified at what was happening which is strange. Maybe my memories are dimmed.

15:00 **Snow, why did you join the air force?**

Well if you'd been a batman and a cook in the army you'd have joined the air force. No, it was glamorous and we were the Blue Orchids, or that was the uniform and learning to fly.

15:30 I was always keen on cars and things. I'd been a member of the Amateur Drivers' Club with a stripped down car and things, so anything mechanical appealed to me. My first car was a T model Ford, 1920 model or something which I bought for £10.

16:00 Wasn't exactly a sports car, had to go up the Brookvale hill in reverse because it couldn't go up any other way, but I suppose I was lucky at that age to have a car cause most people there was one car per family and today there are two or three. No wonder the roads are so crowded.

16:30 **Do you remember hearing that the war had been declared?**

Very well. We knew it was coming. We had presented to us by the rich uncle, a six valve radio set. I can still hear it now, "My duty to inform you that this country is now at war." I can still hear it, sitting in the lounge

17:00 room all clustered around it. I remember when it finished too. I was in, looking, hanging, the madness at Kings Cross, I had a flat there, just married and it overlooked the lane next to Macquarie, Macleay Street.

17:30 A very vivid picture of a girl with her arms wrapped around a lamp post and an American trying to drag her off somewhere saying, "Come on, come on," both so drunk they could hardly stand up, and I was, I was sorry. Somehow I knew it was that, I loved the war, it was all over. It's a funny feeling.

18:00 I was angry. I only just remembered that. I found that at this stage of my life I lost interest in the war. I suppose

18:30 all of us did soon after it. We were sick of all that. We used to have great reunions and get drunk and carry on but we never seemed to talk about it much. It's only recently, the last years I suppose that I've found it fascinating to read back. I'm now reading a book which was given to me by my friend,

19:00 Air Commodore Steege who lives down the road, about Cunningham who commanded the air force in the desert and I never, my son asked me the other day, "Did you understand what the war was about? Did you know?" I said, no, funnily enough we just went to a briefing tent or a briefing hut and

19:30 told what the target was and details of whether and what other armament to expect and things and off we went, but you didn't know what you were really, where you fitted in. It was just the job. But I was able with this book of Cunningham's, been fascinating, which I've been still reading but to get my logbook out and to

20:00 fight the war with him when he said, well the fleet were doing so and so, that incident with the fleet I quoted earlier, he recalls what the fleet was doing that day. Then the other places he mentions and things he does, I can tie back into my logbook and I

20:30 can see the part that we were playing, which was all just you know, go out and shoot kind of, but now it fits into the complete picture, so it's become very interesting. Without my log book I wouldn't, I wouldn't be able to remember anything. As I said, while we were having the tea, that it was stolen with my medals and

21:00 this young, I traced it through three different medal things, medal sellers, whatever they're called, and it had been advertised in the main magazine in England, a set of them, logbook, medals, etceteras, and they'd finished up and it took me over a year to find them,

21:30 with a young bloke, very nice bloke. I've got notes from him there and letters and things, he drove a timber truck and lived in a small town outside Albury. I went down and saw him and his wife and little baby there, but she had given them to him and paid for them with her American Express card or something for a Father's Day

22:00 present and it cost her $2,500 and for him to have them and that much money, and he used to show them around with other war memorabilia at country shows, and I thought good luck to him. But I did want them back and in the end I finished up buying them back from him

22:30 to reimburse his wife for the money that she'd paid. So I think I paid him $3,000 or something like that, but without them, my logbook, I'd be, was my whole war, so that was good to get them back. Yeah.

You mentioned

23:00 **Snow that you only had a small sense of what was going on during the war. I guess why had you joined any service initially?**

What exactly do you ask me?

Why had you joined any of the services when the war was declared and what kept you going?

Oh, adventure. My country needs me, there was never any doubt. I mean

23:30 I suppose the way I'd been brought up, there was never any doubt that you weren't going and the air force was the glamorous one and the best one and so let's get away, you know, and to go overseas as quickly as we did. When you look at it really, to go away like I

24:00 did after a very short period of square bashing the ear and to, a lovely ocean voyage, cabin to myself, friends with the captain, Captain Powers, he used to smoke a pipe and I did and he taught me how to roll my tobacco, and land in Durban.

24:30 We went to Fremantle first and were made a great fuss of there, but then to Durban, then by train and all the world travelling that I did, the Andes and I'd already had a 'round the world trip at 19 and here I am with all the details and fun of another

25:00 one. To me it was, where are we going next, what's on? You know. There were, I think I mentioned the periods of boredom, especially in India. That was the worst of it. Never bored in the desert, never bored anywhere else, but India was, mainly because of the whether, was hell.

25:30 I wasn't happy in India.

Was there a very strong sense of Empire when you joined, especially having met the King?

Yeah, there was, of course I suppose. Empire was, yes, the sun never sets on it and all that stuff. I suppose

26:00 we were just, we were part of the scene. We'd fought in wars before. Anzac wasn't built up in those days as much as it is now. Now it's become a, to march in the Anzac [Day] march today is a, first of all can I get around the ruddy thing? But the crowds today, I notice

26:30 it this Anzac Day. I usually go to Darling Point where the flat is and I'm ready for the next morning and I dally around because I know that by the time I get into outside David Jones in Elizabeth Street where we form up, they don't leave till about, I get in there about 11.00 or so and we don't usually leave till 12.00 or something like that.

27:00 This year I nearly missed the march because when I'd got there they'd moved and they were down King Street moving into Pitt Street to get down to Martin Place, and of course I had overlooked the fact that we're all dying off, so there's fewer of us, but the march didn't take that long and it was, but the

27:30 crowds were what I was noting. There were more kids, more flags and more trying to touch your hand and things. It was a great feeling. So it's become not just looking at Dads and it's become a national kind of a day.

28:00 I can remember the first one when I was living at Darling Point by St Marks and I could hear the bagpipes in the distance. I hadn't marched because I thought, oh bloody war, but I walked in and I stood, they used to come back to Hyde Park and I stood there beside the barrier and I could see these old blokes tottering in and there was

28:30 a mother and daughter standing beside me and some old bloke came in along being supported by two mates on the other side, and the woman said, "Oh Charlie, you promised you weren't going to march, you were just going to look," and I felt if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for me.

29:00 So I've marched ever since, but this year I had great success. My kids went in, they always try to wave. Then Dick Smith, who I know slightly, waved to me, but the big moment came when I got outside the, up to the Town Hall, I looked to see whether Lucy Turnbull was going to be there, but I couldn't

29:30 see her, but waving frantically from above, the balcony above was the Governor. Nick, I know, he's got a house opposite me, so that was a great triumph. No, but the spirit has always been good but to me it seemed to mean more,

30:00 the march seemed to mean more cause there were so many other wars since ours of course. But time is running out. Less and less every year I suppose now. I wonder what they'll do when we're all gone,

30:30 have another war?

Is it, you often hear veterans talking about family members marching in their squadrons.

I'm not in favour of it. I think it's over-egging the pud.

31:00 They weren't in it. I'm strongly, and I suppose I shouldn't be, objected to wives turning up at reunions. Wife's place is in the home, it was our war. I suppose that's wrong but I can't see any point in going along to a reunion. When you go along to talk to

31:30 your mates and remember and you've got to make polite conversation to his wife whom you don't know and talk about tea cups. It's not the time for it. Pretty old fashioned.

What sort of things would you talk about at the first reunions you went to?

32:00 Yeah, well I suppose once upon a time it used to be, well remember I was up there and you were out there and the bloody Hun [German] was in the sun and all of a sudden, brrrr, and he's doing this and now you go along and you talk about your prostate and your gall bladder and how's your leg, and oh. It's not quite the same. You've fought most of the battles anyway.

32:30 But with the South East Asia Air Command, which I didn't know who to march with when I came back but being with RAF squadrons, I didn't have anyone to share it with, except one bloke Dave Innes who wrote the book. So we went to the odd bods, which is mainly RAF blokes who immigrated to

33:00 Australia, but they met at the Cruising Yacht Club at Rushcutters Bay and they had brought their wives with them. I didn't, I didn't like that, so about that time we got the idea of forming with a bloke called Bill Hughes, the South East Asia Air Command. So we did, and I marched with them

33:30 ever since. We have a reunion down at the Automobile Club where the Imperial Service Club is now.

Can you tell me Snow about your enlistment day in the air force?

My what?

Your, when you joined, your first day.

Well we went down to Woolloomooloo

34:00 where you went to sign up and get your medical jabs and things and the building's still there. It was a car sales place. Went down there and you got in a long queue and you moved up and you got all your jabs, inoculations and everything else. In front of me was a bloke who became my

34:30 great mate and I shared a tent with in the desert, Ron Rankin, DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] and Bar and Squadron Leader he finished up, and he was fullback for the Australian Wallabies, had got to England that year but had been turned back because the war broke out. Big tough, rough fellow he was, finished up with a property up at Bungendore.

35:00 But he was in front of me and out came a traymobile thing with everything on it. He took one look at it, they put the needle at him he fainted. The big sissy, he fainted and fell into the tray and upset everything. Took half an hour to get the show on the road again. But he, I shared a tent with him and he used to, he flew a dog out from England too,

35:30 was a retriever and it got on heat on one occasion. He went on leave, I had to sit up at the tent mouth with a revolver shooting at any pye-dog that came along. I must've fallen asleep because one got to Sandy and she had six black pups which didn't please him. Yes, the desert was a so much

36:00 better feeling, it really was. The camaraderie of it, that was the thing that was so strong.

You hear a lot about mateship in the army but how was it in the air force?

The army was different. They were closer. They moved en masse as in they left here, they fought, they came

36:30 back but they were all together and they did have that feeling, and my brother who was always in the

artillery always used to talk about the battery, (UNCLEAR) the battery (UNCLEAR), but with the air force of course you weren't. You more or less fought your own war and your own little world and your own aeroplane. You relied on others of course, but you were moved from squadron to

37:00 squadron, place to place. I never served in an Australian squadron until I got back here and I was accused at one stage, not just me alone, of having overseas-itis because we used to do things like we did in the desert and have a top button undone and wear out clothes differently and you were allowed to have some panache, but down here I can remember at Sale

37:30 was dreadful, the Beaufort bloody place. They had a long bar and then from here to there they had a white line and you weren't allowed inside that white line except to go and get, pick up a glass, pay for it and walk out again. No leaning up against the bar and talking. Was the silly crap that went on here. Of course most of them, well most

38:00 of the blokes in charge had never seen a war any rate, and they were doing everything according to the book. You had to have your cap on straight and you had to do this and you had to do that. It was dreadful.

Despite in the desert, I guess not doing things exactly by the rule book and having a button undone, was there still discipline

38:30 **and everything was still?**

Yes, oh yes. Yes, there was a casualness about it, but discipline is not saluting the whole time and standing to attention, but discipline really in a squadron like that is respect. You have respect for your fellow pilots through a flight commander, who is in charge of you,

39:00 if you announce you're the flight commander then you're answerable to your CO, but it works without all the letter of the law laid down in the text books and the COs were pretty easy going, battle scarred with the more action they saw, the more

39:30 relaxed they became, and reading this book on Cunningham as I am now, he was a very famous, was a New Zealander, he was born here but was a New Zealander or brought up in New Zealand, paid his own way to England in the First World War at the age of 19 and learnt to fly and came out as an ace

40:00 and eventually finished up in charge of the whole air force in the desert with Montgomery, who was a very egotistical but brilliant man, but the two were completely different in that Montgomery was more to the book,

40:30 although he had his own flavour to the book, but Cunningham was much more relaxed and Gordon Steege reminded me only this morning cause I saw him that, I told him now much I was enjoying the book, that Cunningham on one occasion, he wanted men for his squadron and he flew to Cunningham and Cunningham just sat down on a packing case and said,

41:00 "What do you want?" He told him, and he called someone in, he said, "Get Steege da da da da da," but he was so approachable. Well there's not discipline in that, the discipline that was being displayed here. Here you'd have to, at that time, you'd have to fill in six forms and go through six channels to do it.

Tape 4

00:36 **Snow, I was just wondering if you could tell us about the training that you received in Rhodesia?**

It was very good because the actual was number one training school that had moved out from England, RAF, very proper but very thorough.

01:00 Wonderful instructors, happy instructors but very clued up. The actual altitude of Rhodesia made it more difficult because the air is rarefied especially in the middle of the day, but you first of all did familiarisation flight, which I said was on my day after my birthday on New Year's Eve

01:30 and that was a wonderful feeling the time, the first time I went solo to know that I was up in an aeroplane all by myself flying and it was a wonderful feeling of exhilaration. Learning to fly was not difficult, not in a Tiger Moth, they were wonderful. Oxfords weren't, the twin-engine Oxford as I said

02:00 before is a lousy aeroplane any rate, but we had fun. I had an instructor who was a mad bloke who'd been to the war and come down there afterwards as an instructor, but in Rhodesia they used in those days not have a whole sealed road, they only had tracks, road tracks and he'd see a car and he'd come down

02:30 and he'd fly in low behind it, hit the track then bounce up and land on the other side of it and take off again. That was rather exciting and then we'd chase, play chasings with giraffes in the game park and that was a wonderful thing to see them. They were rather like a kangaroo when they ran with their neck out like that. So it was fun.

03:00 What else about Rhodesia? I was kidded in to go in to the boxing champion competition between the army and the air force and the CO said to me at the station said, “Look, even if you don’t get anywhere or get points for your entry.” Well I was about two stone overweight in my division any rate and

03:30 out of condition but I said I’d go because he said, “I’ll fly you up in my personal plane to Salisbury.” So he flew me up and we went to Salisbury and the boxing contest was that night in the Micelles Hotel, still a big hotel there, and they cleared the dining room out and they had the ring in the middle and all the gentlemen arrived

04:00 in black tie evening dress and I weighed in and they’d told me that the bloke I was going to fight, don’t take any notice of him, he’s only a school boy. He turned out to be a school boy, he turned out to be about six feet four and built like a bloody Hercules. We weighed in and I went off with my mate Rusty, who was in Salisbury

04:30 and we were having a beer and a steak over the road when they came and said, “Hey, you’re on next.” So I had to rush back and change, get into the ring and I’ve still got the cutting from the paper, which said that a new, this is of the Governor who enjoyed the night, Swift from the army, from the

05:00 air force put up a jolly good show and after, although despite he was knocked down three times in the first two rounds, continued bravely. So that was my, and from an ex-captain of boxing of my school, I didn’t do a very good performance, but at least went down in history.

05:30 **Were there a lot of mixed crew at Rhodesia?**

Hmm?

Were there a lot of mixed crew at Rhodesia?

A lot of what?

Mixed crew, guys from the UK and other (UNCLEAR)

No. At the time we were there, we were the first lot of Australians, so we rather came in a big batch and the others were all of course out from England,

06:00 but we were rather muck ups really. I think we overdid the being Australian bit. I think when you’re young and in those circumstances it was perhaps forgivable. I can remember the first church parade we went on to. You were lined up on Sunday morning in two long rows.

06:30 The sergeant out in front, he stands up and he says, “Catholics and Jews one pace forward, one pace back,” and Catholics and Jews did that. Left turn, quick march and they marched off. Next Sunday we woke up to this, Catholic and

07:00 Jews one pace forward, one pace back. We all took one pace forward, one pace back and marched off. We did silly things like that.

How did the Brits treat the Australians during these kind of episodes?

Hey?

How did the Brits treat the Australians throughout all of this?

I think

07:30 we, actually we turned out to be a very good course cause in a way I suppose they’d hand picked them. All of them were special blokes in their way, from not just the public schools and things, but they were, they were a particularly good lot of blokes and I think because we were

08:00 the first, I sound as though I’m boasting which perhaps I am, cause we were the first I think they took more care in who went, but we only lost one bloke on the course and he was, he found he was, he passed out at altitude and so they sent him home.

08:30 They took him back into the air force back here but he was, he was killed actually passing out at altitude, so it was the right decision in the first case. But in those days Rhodesia was a very happy place, the relationship between the black and white and they were very nice people.

09:00 Changed today. I think one of the happy times in Africa was at George at the navigation school. George itself is beside, the aerodrome was beside Mount George, which had heather and snowcapped in the

09:30 winter time, but they had heather at the top and gum trees and wattle growing around the bottom of it, a very nice golf course. I was picked to play in the Western Province team. I was picked to play against Danny Cravens who was a famous Springbok. He had a touring side that toured around playing the forces

10:00 and we played up at Oats Horn, got badly beaten, but the feeling in South Africa then was not good. The blokes who wanted to fight were all up in the desert fighting, but there were a hell of a lot who didn’t

cause of the Boer atmosphere which still remained, and we used to stand up as they did there

10:30 and here in those days at the beginning of a performance in the picture show or something, stood up for "God Save the King" and they wouldn't stand up and they used to roll, try and roll beer bottles down to trip us up while we were standing up for "God Save the King." So the feeling wasn't that good. I wasn't very fond of South Africans.

11:00 But I was on one occasion returning from Musle Bay [?] having played football. I had a car, an old Studebaker, I had it full of the team. We had a few beers, we were on the way back still in our footy togs to the aerodrome and I came over the crest of a hill and met a car coming in the opposite direction. Unfortunately he, we collided and he

11:30 rolled off the road. He had his family with him, no one was hurt but police arrived and I was charged and because he was an Afrikaans bloke, the other driver when it got to court,

12:00 the judge hearing it, I didn't have a licence and I, the other bloke had been forced off the road and the judge listened and he called a morning tea break and he did this to me, and I went into his chambers

12:30 and it turned out he'd been a pilot in the First World War, wanted to tell me all about what it was like and what was it like now and we went back into court and I was discharged, mainly because I had a barrister or solicitor to defend me. Mainly because he found, I've never known where he found it, would come in very handy that

13:00 there is a precedent set somewhere whereby two cars collided and one was judged to be at fault because he didn't take evasive action, so they found the other bloke guilty for not having taken evasive action. I suppose that was South Africa at the time.

13:30 **What sort of other things would be?**

What's the problem?

What sort of things would the local lads, the Australians get up to as well?

The what?

14:00 **What sort of things would the Australians get up to, that you mentioned before that they pushed the Australian thing a bit too far at times?**

Oh, there was another occasion. I forget really the details of it but we had some celebration, maybe the course was breaking up. I think that was probably it and we'd finished our training and were going on and we had a drunken party, or we had a party and drank too

14:30 much and somehow, and I'm not quite what started it but we broke a hell of a lot of windows in the huts and that was during the night, and then the news got back to more or less the adjutant and staff quarters sort of thing that this had happened and there was going to be an inspection and it was timed for the afternoon or something.

15:00 So we rushed around them and by very clever scout work found out where we could get glass and putty and we replaced every window. Not properly, just put them in, puttied them in and when the inspection came, couldn't find anything at all, nothing. Windows probably fell out the next day, but any rate, that kind of

15:30 thing. I bought a car, an old A model Ford and I painted round Ls on the side of it and called it Clever Mary, which I wrote on the bloody lid of it after my mother, and I got a stern rebuke from the commanding officer for having painted the round L on my

16:00 car. That was the property of the air force and I had no right to do it. I suppose all those kind of small things.

What would you do for fun in Rhodesia?

Hmm?

What would you do for fun in Rhodesia?

Drink

16:30 I suppose, by the sound of it. No, they had baths and swimming and we were pretty busy any rate but people, cause we were the first Australians, took us into their homes and were kind to us and supplied entertainment and things.

17:00 I used to because my mate Rusty was at Salisbury and I was Bulawayo, we used to meet half way at a place called Mvuma, very small place, was only one pub in it and probably nothing else and a lake and some gum trees. He used to drive down from Salisbury and I used to drive up and we'd meet half way and the owner of the pub was a bloke who'd been

17:30 an Australian in the First World War, a bloke called Pop somebody or other, and we used to meet there

and drink and he used to supply us with chops. We'd go down the lake where there was a boat and light a fire with gum leaves and have a grilled sausage or grilled chop or something and row on the lake and he'd drive back up to, that would fill the week in, that kind of thing. They were pretty simple pleasures.

18:00 Oh, there were films, don't remember much about them.

You mentioned before that your first time going solo was quite an exhilarating experience. I'm wondering if you could walk us through your first solo flight?

Wondering what?

18:30 **You mentioned before that**

Yes, going solo?

Yeah, was quite exhilarating. I'm wondering if you could walk us through your first flight?

Oh no. No, just the wonderful realisation that it was me who was flying. I didn't have an instructor and it was all me and I more or less saying, I wish you could see me now Mum, here I am flying, you know. That was the exhilaration of it, that I'd conquered the air,

19:00 which is always a problem any rate because you always, more deaths come soon after that, they flew over confident, but I think the reason I got above average was because I was perhaps over confident in the beginning, but also they give you a navigation test and they put a hood over you and the instructor says, now turn on to east, turn

19:30 on to west, turn on to this or turn that way and when he said to me, turn on to 90 degrees, there was a compass in front of me and I screwed up. I thought, well I can either turn left or right and I flipped a coin and turned left and it was right. I think he said, "This bloke knows what he's doing," and I hadn't got a clue.

20:00 No, it just, I was never mad, I was just thinking the other day, I was never a mad keen bloke who had to be in the air the whole time and flying. To me it was all right I'd learnt to fly, so what, and I flew when it was necessary but I'm not one for like some of the blokes who couldn't really keep out of the air. Every spare moment they had to be flying.

20:30 But I did learn to love the Beaufighter. It was a wonderful flying machine. It was ugly as one of the books says here, Ogden I think who was my CO, wrote a passage. He said it was like a country convenience. It was ugly. It was called a Beaufighter, it was neither beautiful, it wasn't really made for

21:00 fighting. It was heavily armed and in its time it was the most heavily armed type of plane of its kind and the beauty of it was you had two great Hercules engines on either side of you. You had a lump of fire resistant iron behind you and under you. You had four

21:30 cannons underneath you and six machine guns in the wings, who were more heavily armed and more able to do damage and it was just a great machine. They could shoot holes in you but still get back. No, I loved it, very special aeroplane but I suppose the noise of the two engines on either side

22:00 of you close in, you could nestle down between them, so they were good protection, but the noise was great and with four cannons and six machine guns it's no wonder that I'm wearing hearing aids. I think it's just par for the course and then I woke up to the fact that I could buy them through the Veterans. I could get help. So I was a little self-conscious about it

22:30 at first and now it doesn't worry me at all and I've got the help and I've got a small pension. I got a letter the other day from the Veterans to say that they had just discovered I had a DFC, which was awarded in 1944 and that as a result of this my pension would be

23:00 increased back-dated to February last year or something. Evidently some order came through and my pension would now be so so. When I worked it out the extra they gave me was $2 a fortnight, and I thought for all that work to be a hero, $2 a fortnight is not really, not worth it.

23:30 The night I got the news that I got a DFC, I had been home on leave. Well I'd got, come back with a Qantas

24:00 crew the first time on the Catalina and I knew the Qantas blokes and they were friends of mine and I was on the way back with them to go back to Ceylon and we were in a hotel room, I forget the name of the pub, what is it - the pub there? The Great Western or something? Any rate, the main pub and we were playing strip poker with some

24:30 ANA [Australian National Airlines] hostess, they were doing ANA hostesses there and the crew. I was stripped down cause I'd been losing and was fairly naked and the phone went and the news came through and of course this caused great cause for celebration, so I finished up starkers standing up to attention while

25:00 Don McMaster who was the captain of the Qantas plane, a great bloke, pinned on me a DFC. The DFC consisted of part of his suspender which was purple and green attached to a champagne cork and I had

no clothes on, so they just pinned on to me. It was a great night.

25:30 **Can you tell us about the action, the actions towards receiving the award for the DFC?**

The what?

Can you tell us about the events that led to your getting the award?

Oh, I've got the citation there. It was on no great daring act. It was really for, as I said somewhere for hard work for because I'd done two mortar

26:00 convoys and I'd been in the desert and then I'd been flight commander and led the first flight into Burma in Beaufighters and got the parade ground and done a sterling job, and was one of those kind of ones. I suppose if I was honest, I really think good morale was low in India at that time and Mountbatten came out and I think they

26:30 wanted to restore morale or something. I don't think it was for anything really special. Mountbatten came out and addressed us at a meeting, very clever he was, and to get us stirred up for the war's on and things. He said, "I've got some information for you," he said,

27:00 but I don't want it to go any further. He said, "The attack is any moment now, this is the invasion of Europe, so keep your chins up chaps." Cause when I, we found out later the attack, the invasion was already over, so he wasn't letting us in. Make it a great secret, don't tell anyone. Clever.

27:30 **I'm just wondering Snow, if you, you mentioned before in your overview, the trip to George. I think it was the trip to George, was quite a luxurious one?**

Trip to George?

Trip to George.

28:00 On the boat you mean?

Yes.

Or to England or what?

Yeah, you had a luxury cruise.

Oh yeah, that was on the Andes, which was a famous South American royal mail liner, luxury cruiser with, beautiful boat, brand new practically. Had gone out to Africa with troops on board and we had it going back and

28:30 had a few of us and holds full of oranges and stuff like that, which all went bad on the voyage, or most of them any rate, but the cabin I had was huge. Had of all things a bidet in the bathroom, which no-one had ever seen one of those before and they all came to have a look at it. What was that?

29:00 I remember the barman was a little cockney fellow and we sat up in great style in the dining room, but in the bar we had it all to ourselves and I'd show off a bit and I said, "I'll have a brandy Charlie," whatever his name was, after dinner. "Coming up, sir." I said, "Is it good?" He said, "Sir," still hear him saying it, "It's

29:30 so good you could put some on your hanky and sniff it." But it was like that, you know, the whole ship to yourself. Yeah, changed when we got, picked the Andes up in Halifax. That was again a great brand new liner, but they'd stripped it. They never finished it and stripped it, just turned it to trooping, and you slept in you know,

30:00 rooms or cabins or whatever, six and twenty to a room and things. It was dreadful, but funnily enough in that convoy one of the ships with black smoke pouring out its funnel and trying to keep up was the ship I'd left Australia in, the SS Nestor. She was in the same convoy after all that time.

30:30 **Was she having trouble or was**

Yeah.

she always in that condition?

Yeah, she fell further and further behind. She couldn't keep up. I never heard whether she was sunk or not. I don't think she was.

Arriving in the UK, can you tell us what your first impressions were of

Hmm?

arriving in the UK, can you tell us what your first impressions?

Well arriving in Liverpool with sunken ships in the Mersey.

31:00 After that rationing I suppose. Blackout. Bournemouth was a good place to assemble. We lived in

boarding houses there and ate reasonable food.

31:30 People asked us out to dinner to entertain us and things. They used to have in the central park of Bournemouth a group of young ladies who were there to entertain the troops and they used to have tay donsons and

32:00 things like that. They were known as, well Lady Ryder was the lady who organised the whole thing and she was a very famous lady for doing good work and stuff, but the girls or the young ladies got known as Lady Chatterley's young riders, which wasn't very fair because they came from

32:30 very good families. What else did we do there? Oh, we did clay pigeon shooting on the beach. We did lectures, recognition, night recognition. I've still got written in my logbook, after all went for an inspection for night vision, exceptional, only cause I cheated. When I went to walk out, I fell arse over tit down the steps.

33:00 Which served me right. I've still got a scar but I've got exceptional night vision.

How did you cheat on your night vision test?

Hmm?

How did you cheat on your night vision test?

I lifted the thing up. I was hoping to get to a night fighter squadron actually, so I had a reason. I wasn't just cheating.

33:30 But then again I volunteered because my brother was out in the desert in the artillery, I volunteered for army co-operation. I thought it would be great to be with my brother, so they posted me to Coastal Command. I've got another letter I found, I didn't know I had, from Air Ministry saying that, or from

34:00 Australian Headquarters in London saying that they had received my request for, now that Australia was at war for a posting home, so that I could actively be engaged in the war for Australia, and the bloke who'd written the letter had put, don't we all, along side it, but if it's any help to you, I'm posting you to the Middle East.

34:30 **Did you see much damage around Bournemouth?**

Hmm?

Did you see much damage around Bournemouth through the Blitz and

No.

things like that?

I was in a couple of bombing raids. One in particular in London, but I

35:00 wasn't conscious that much of the damage. Maybe we weren't in the part where it was. I don't know. I met a woman in Cape Town who was going back to London and said, "When you get to London look me up. This is my name and this is my address."

35:30 So, when I got to London I did, but the street wasn't there. It was just flat, the whole of that part. That's when you really, I suppose became conscious of it. Another time I was bombed while I was in the bath. I decided I hadn't had a hot bath for some time and I wouldn't get out, so I stayed in. That was in Overseas

36:00 League I think, Overseas League had took in airmen and things like that.

Can you describe?

I didn't spend much time in London because we didn't get that much leave. I met some friends, one bloke I've got a photograph of there in London with Geraldo's band and things and

36:30 he was a bloke, my great friend at school and we've got a photograph of us taken together. But generally speaking for instance, Christmas and New Year's Eve in 1941 was spent at a place called Bridlington or

37:00 Beverley, Beverley Arms and Bridlington which are little villages near the aerodrome, so there wasn't that much. But we lived in a mess at an old country home which was, they'd moved the art collection out, or part of the art collection out from the Hull Art Gallery and had it out there. Was a lovely old home with a gatekeeper's cottage and you wound up through

37:30 it and we lived very well. You could always smell down the aerodrome when they were having jugged hare because the smell used to come down across the fields to you, but I can remember one time there when we'd had lunch and a chap took me by the arm and took me to the window and said, French windows opening out onto the croquet lawn, which was covered with snow. Oh, he said, "Look Swift," he said, "Look."

38:00 He pointed up into the sky. I said, “Yeah?” He said, “Isn’t it wonderful to see the sun again,” and all you could see was a lighter patch in the clouds, and I thought that was about the time I would like to have been going out to the Middle East. But I took my wife back there afterwards after the war, and you can’t relive things but I took her back and went to the gatekeeper’s cottage

38:30 and knocked on the door and a bloke came around from the back with dogs yapping and barking and said, “What is your want, sir?” I said, explained I’d been here during the war and I just wanted to show my wife what it was like and would it be all right to go up. Oh, he said, “Yes sir, I suppose it would, you won’t find it much changed.” He said, “It’s a nut house now.”

39:00 So we didn’t bother to go up. The aerodrome where I learnt to fly Beaufighters was a caravan park. No, you can’t go back. I’ve got photographs there and I often thought I might like to do it. The first Christmas and New Year we were in

39:30 Rhodesia, we took a train and went up to Victoria Falls and stopped at the hotel there. I’ve got the menu for the Christmas dinner. The train was very slow and you could get out and walk beside it, but we had a great leave. The mist from the, I remember the mist from the Falls used to kind of come across

40:00 like a fog. The other one I’ve got, menu I’ve got as I mentioned, the one at Dyce, did I? I think I did.

You mentioned a few.

With Lord Dougie Hamilton and taking off,

40:30 the dinner there.

I’ve got quite a few on my list but I’m not sure if we have that one actually.

But it was a great dinner that night. They piped it in, the haggis in and it came in all on flames and we played afterwards a game called Are You There Moriarty? And then you lie

41:00 flat on the floor facing each other head to head and you’re given a rolled up newspaper and one person has to say, “Are you there Moriarty?” And the other has, other one has to try and hit him with his rolled up newspaper. So you’re ducking and weaving and to see Lord Dougie Hamilton on the floor with a WAAF [Women’s Auxiliary Air Force] officer trying to bash him with a newspaper was very interesting.

41:30 **That’s what it’s all about.**

Tape 5

00:31 **Snow, I was wondering if you could tell me about your first impressions of Egypt when you arrived?**

Sunlight, warmth, we landed on a field that was next to the freshwater Nile and next to a

01:00 vineyard and the owner of the vineyard was very hospitable and invited us to dinner on the top of his house. He had a lovely garden on the top of it. I remember he was Greek, was Greek food

01:30 and he warned us against drinking Ouzo, said, “Our heads and legs would disappear.” Very hospitable and was a very lovely night. Generally speaking our camp area where we were at Idku was near the mouth of the Nile.

02:00 It was a permanent station there with a big lake inlet from the sea. Our camp was pitched amongst date palms I suppose. We were two to a tent. We had a wooden mess hut with a bar and dining room in it

02:30 made out of packing cases the aeroplanes had come out of, concrete floor, big double doored fridge in it which we used to break the padlock on at night when we got hungry and when you opened the door all the cockroaches ran out. We were comfortable. The Australian General Hospital wasn’t far up the road and they

03:00 had young VADs, Australian VADs [Voluntary Aid Detachment] and nurses who used to come down. We had an impromptu band of a saxophone and drum and something else, so we used to have parties. I remember one night we came back late and we landed on the full moon

03:30 and the mess had invited some of the girls down. Us, who had been flying, shot a terrific line by walking in with our parachutes still on. We usually left them in the plane, walking in with them on, taking no notice of the girls at all, walking straight past them and up to the bar and ordering drinks.

04:00 But generally speaking it was a very happy mess. Was quite close to the sea, so it was cool and I can remember going of course to the beach to have a paddle and there these weird nets strung for long distances along the beaches and I asked what they were and I was told this was for the,

04:30 to catch the immigrating quails who were emigrating from Europe to Africa and who, when they had flown the Mediterranean and were so tired, that they flew straight into the nets and were picked up by the natives. We each had a servant to a tent, so we were well looked after.

05:00 Most of our operations took off at first light and we arrived at the target as the sun was coming up and we did our day's work of maybe whether it was strafing, on one occasion I got a note that we came down the road and came on a whole detachment

05:30 of transport lorries. I got six of them and blew them up and Jeff Patterson got another four who was with me, then we continued on down the road shooting haphazardly at whatever we saw. Then we'd be back to the mess by lunchtime, I suppose where we'd have a bit of a rest and then

06:00 change and there'd be a gharry to take us into Alexandria where we had the use, the officers had the use of the Alexandria Sporting Club, which was a lovely building with its own big swimming pool, racetrack and in the middle of the racetrack, a nine hole golf course. So we were living

06:30 pretty well, so we could go in and play golf and have a swim and sticky cakes and afternoon tea and then back for the next day. So we weren't living that hard but you had to stand up in the back of a truck to get into Alexandria and that was a bit tiresome especially when, as they did in some of the villages we drove through, they were feeling

07:00 it was rather anti-British, so they used to hand on occasions, I never struck it but others had, tie a rope across the streets, which were likely to catch you around the neck and throw you out of the truck. Why that feeling, I don't know but Idku was a happy place. When we got to the

07:30 desert that was another matter because you lived hard up there. As a newcomer I flew up to join a detachment that we had up there and I landed and went into the mess and they were serving lunch and I had Ticky with me and when they put the food down on the table and I said, "Jesus,

08:00 what's this?" I wouldn't give it to my bloody dog. I still remember a bloke who'd been there for some time look at me with very disdaining eyes. He said, "When you've been here as long as us, you'll love it." Made me feel very new.

Can you describe the work Snow, of the Mediterranean

08:30 **convoys you were, those operations?**

Well the whole centre of it was to get supplies, to stop Rommel getting supplies into his troops at Benghazi or Tobruk or wherever, and for us to get our supplies through to Malta, and Malta at sometimes was down to almost no petrol at all.

09:00 So either you were stopping their, not their convoys, well there were convoys of ships I suppose. There was plenty of shipping getting across or trying to get across but our convoys were to make sure that our supplies got through to Malta and that was the difficult thing, and at stages we had

09:30 to escort planes with provisions and whatever to Malta, and the chances are that you would lose at least half trying to get through because the range was that you couldn't not get through. You had to land because of lack of petrol and they were being shot down as they went in.

10:00 I never was on one of those dos, which I'm glad I wasn't, but I did do the naval ones and I spoke of that this morning, the navy pointing their guns up, but they took a terrific amount of organising, those. One we did, a detachment across to, where

10:30 was it? Sicily or no, I'd have to refer to my logbook, but the squadron went across there as a whole thing and then set out from there with a convoy which had formed up there, which was way behind the lines really, but that was a

11:00 lovely place because we camped down on a freshwater stream in a mulberry grove, which ran into the sea. Was a great change after the desert. The actual fighting of it was, a lot of it was, nothing occurred and you'd come back thinking that was a waste of time, but I've got lots of times in my

11:30 logbook, nothing sighted. You'd go out with a target in mind and told you were looking for a schooner or looking for something and you'd come back with just nothing sighted, so it wasn't all excitement. On one occasion with Jeff Patterson, who flew number two to me, I came across a German dinghy with three blokes in it. Obviously, they'd baled out into

12:00 the sea and when they saw us arrive I spotted them and went over and two dived overboard and left one in. He was wounded, so he couldn't get over the side, and I said to Jeff, "Well I can't shoot the buggers." He said, "No, I can't either." So we went home, reported it, but the next day,

12:30 we got a reprimand and a signal went out that if in such circumstances dinghies were found like that again, if they looked as though they were going to return to their own lines or drift back to their own lines, they were to be shot. I always thought it was the wrong decision but it was the one that was issued. Sometimes you'd find them

13:00 when you were strafing having swimming parties, the Germans having swimming parties on the beaches, then you had to shoot them. That wasn't, it's all right if they're in uniform, to see them with no clothes on it doesn't seem right. However, we did but the strafing perhaps to me was the most exciting and fun of the whole thing.

13:30 Low flying is always exciting because you get a sense of speed and if you've got targets presented to you and lots of fire power you can see an instant immediate reaction to your sighting and whether you damaged them or what the situation is. I always found that very exciting.

14:00 But that, of course I didn't get in, as I think I mentioned, I never had it in Burma. I've got photographs there, lots of them actually. We were called the train buster squadron of cannon shell bursting into the engines and things but it was never quite the same. It was always rather, nobody was involved

14:30 except an old steam engine and carriages and trucks and things. That wasn't the same as the movement and the activity of the strafing in Egypt. Anything else?

I was going to ask, you mentioned the difficulty I guess

Mentioned?

The difficulty of strafing the Germans in their swimming parties

15:00 **or, was there any operation that you just couldn't perform? Was there a time when?**

No. You never thought of couldn't perform, you thought of this is going to be nasty, or this is a bad do or this is a crook one, but you never thought of no, not doing it. Perhaps the strafing of aerodromes,

15:30 enemy aerodromes and really the whole of that war as Cunningham says, was possession of aerodromes. Of course without aerodromes, advance aerodromes in the desert, landing gales and things, which all was very rough, the army couldn't proceed, but if in attacking them they were always heavily

16:00 armed and you had to go through. They always knew you were coming and you, especially the (UNCLEAR), the first bloke usually got away with it but anyone else they had been alerted and that was a sticky do that, to go in and face that fire, and watching tracer come up to you was never a very

16:30 happy sight because it came up to you, death in coloured lights we used to call it. You'd see it just floating up to you like a balloon almost and all of a sudden it would be on you and it'd be past you and you'd think well that one missed, but that was, you had a sensation of watching it come up to you.

17:00 **How much tracer bullet could a Beaufighter withstand before**

How much what?

How much tracer bullet could the?

Yeah, well that depends of course where it hits you, but a Beau used to come back and it's one of the things it was renowned for, shot to pieces but still holding together. They took a terrific amount of punishment and for that you were

17:30 very thankful. I came back on lots of occasions with holes in me but depends where it hits you and how it hits you but with the armour you had surrounding you it was difficult to get a shot at the pilot. The navigator who sat at the back of you in the fuselage in a

18:00 perspex cappella, he was in a more, much more vulnerable position and to give him some kind of courage, Dutch as it may have been, they cut away, we cut away part of the cappella and gave him a Tommy gun, a machine gun that he could protect himself with, so that

18:30 that gave him more courage. We used to call them the fortune teller because they had to navigate you to the target and they weren't always that good. However they, it was someone else on the plane and someone to say someone's coming in behind, look out, he's coming in from 4.00 o'clock or so and so. So it was a comfort to have them there.

19:00 Maybe the fortune teller's a bit unkind, they weren't that bad.

How close was the relationship between the pilot and the navigator on a?

Can be good and can be bad. I didn't have that happy experience. The one I got, I knew at OTU. You team up as a crew and you wait a couple of days and then they say, pick

19:30 your crew. I was rather, in the first instance at Catfoss I was rather, who cares? But it did make a difference because the bloke I got, I waited really, I didn't go specifically looking, I just waited for more or less who's left over kind of. The chap I got to fly me out, with me to the Middle East wasn't a good

20:00 navigator. He nearly took me into the, where was it? Crete or somewhere, by mistake and we nearly didn't get to Malta, but apart from that he used to get sick and in the end they had to invalid him home from Egypt.

20:30 The next navigator I got out in the desert, I inherited. He'd been out there for a while and he was wonderful. Then he got, tour of operation finished and the next navigator I had arrived out fresh from England. He was a good navigator and he was a good kind of, style of chap but we didn't get on that well

21:00 together. He nearly lost me on the way out to Karachi. He was going too far south. I reckoned he wasn't and we had, when we got to Karachi we had over a few a beers, we had a slight disagreement, but then we did the rest of the war together and it was a good relationship.

21:30 But it can, it could be wonderful and it could be a bit dicey. Franklin, who was the CO, Harry Naish's navigator, was a wonderful bloke, he flew with me quite a bit. He was an older bloke, he was actually a stock broker I think but a very nice, very qualified and competent navigator.

22:00 **The navigator, who was often ill, was it airsickness or was it a case of fear possibly?**

I don't think he was suited, shouldn't have been in the air force. He was, I can't say he was scared the whole time, but he just didn't like it. I did have a navigator when I came out here onto Mosquitos,

22:30 a young bloke keen as mustard but got sick every time he went up. He used to have a cake tin he took up and was sick into. You're flying and he's sitting there being sick into a cake tin. It's not very pleasant but nothing he could do about it, but we never got into action, so it didn't make much different actually.

I've heard other

23:00 **air force crew**

Hmm?

I've heard other aircrew mention LMF [Lack of Moral Fibre],

Have you?

LMF and I was, just wondering if you had any cases of that?

Oh, I really think the bloke who flew out with me from, to the desert had LMF. I think that was his problem really. I think that he, apart from the fact I don't think he was

23:30 sufficiently educated to be a navigator. I don't know what, how he finished up actually. I lost track of him, but the two navigators that I keep in touch with, we ring each other whenever the mood comes. One is an Englishman who was Ron Rankin's

24:00 navigator and he was an extraordinary bloke. Pinkerton was his name. We always called him Pinky and he was Scotch, but not, Scotch, English really but a farmer and he finished up, and I used to go and stay with him. Haven't done it for a few years, but he had a

24:30 big estate with a big house and he was a mushroom grower and supplied most of the mushrooms to Sainsbury's, the big stores, their stores, and a good golfer and had a big lake on his property with trout in it. So he had a good life and he finished up being very wealthy. Well he still is I suppose. His health is not too good now though.

25:00 The other one in Ireland, he lives out of Belfast at a place called Goonagadee [?], which was a famous port, was the first port really between England and Ireland at one stage, very old, but he, oh his wife's just been put into a home because she's got

25:30 Old Timers [Alzheimers] and he had his 21st birthday when he first arrived out in India with us, so he's not that old I suppose, but he's, I don't think he's that happy at this stage of his life which is sad. I went and stayed, visited them last time I saw them and

26:00 they met me and took me out for a day in Belfast and we had a look around the Cathedral and all the things you should do, and then at lunch time we were just in the square, the main square looking for somewhere to have our lunch when I had a nasty turn and collapsed and they rang

26:30 the hospital and two ambulances arrived. One fitted out with all the heart stuff in it that you needed and it took me off to the Royal Victorian Hospital, Queen Victoria Hospital, where I spent a week in the Coronary Care Unit

27:00 with 40 other blokes and then there was a ward alongside that with about the same number, which was strangely enough a mixed ward with women and men, but you were all coupled up to the central monitoring thing and you're not allowed to move around and was hell. But then in the end the professor, who was a woman in charge of the hospital,

27:30 they draw a curtain around your bed and had two doctors with her and two nurses and they were watching my thing on the monitoring screen, and the professor says, "Well we've tried this and we've tried that drug and we've tried this. I think the only thing left to do is to try the shock treatment," with which the little nurse

28:00 down the back of the queue said, “Look, he’s gone into rhythm.” The shock was enough of the shock treatment to put my heart back into rhythm, and discharged, the professor discharged me with a note to whom it may concern, I’ve still got the letter. In effect it said, “His condition may have been caused by over enjoyment of his holiday.”

Can I just stop you there for one second? Snow, getting back to Africa, can you describe for me the different, I guess firstly with the Mediterranean convoys, just the different flying formations that you would be involved in?

Sometimes we flew in formation on the way out to say intercept whatever the target

29:00 was. Then you’d break up and everyone went for themselves, mainly we flew in pairs and you had a wing man and my wing man was Jeff Patterson usually, who was an Australian and who went to Rhodesia with me. So we’d been together and we knew each other and we made a good team, so you flew together and one was there to help the other if necessary

29:30 and you got greater fire power in the strafing if you came down both together, but if you flew in formation, it was for your own protection and to provide security to each other really and so that you did arrive at the target together, but it was never a terribly tight formation. It was a loose formation.

30:00 But generally speaking if we hit as we did, a large collection of JU-52s [Junkers] loaded with troops, each bloke picked his own target and went for it, and we learnt that if they carried troops they used to slide the windows back and all with Tommy guns and things fire out the sides, so the fire was pretty,

30:30 pretty heavy, but we learnt that the best way to take them was head on, so that you came straight at them and pulled away at the last minutes. Cause then you weren’t getting the fire from the side and they couldn’t evade you. So that was used with great success.

Did you have a system for, I’ve heard that

31:00 **some fighter squadrons had a system for counting enemy aircraft that they downed. Did you have a system for counting hits?**

Well the whole system was the same everywhere, that you had either your own, you’d go back and report and you’d say a probable or you’d say a confirmed, but the confirmed had to be confirmed by another pilot in another

31:30 aeroplane for you to say that, if you were on your own, I suppose you could and I suppose it was done, you’d have to see it actually crash, just firing into it. What’s your problem? Just firing into it and the bullets exploding wasn’t good enough to say that you’d shot it down.

With the squadron, would you, how often would you be flying, would pilots be flying, would crews be flying from the squadron?

How often would you be flying?

Yeah.

Very, very much with Beaufighters and the work we were doing. They were always planned. We didn’t ever

32:30 scramble like a single-engine fighter who were up and down all night and day. Whenever there was an alert, they were up and down but our jobs were coordinated with fleet movements or troop movements or instructions. They were planned and we were briefed accordingly, so that once a day, but it wouldn’t be every day. It depends on the availability of targets. The time I was there I don’t think we

33:00 were that busy looking at my logbook. We had enough time to get into Alex [Alexandria] and relax, not every day of course but no, I don’t think that, I couldn’t say that I flew every day, not over the period I was there.

Was there a form of roster or shifts between the crews?

33:30 Yeah, there was a certain amount of urging for jobs. I can’t think of the word I’m searching for, that you had to constantly if you felt like it be included in what was on and not just be held on one side for the dirty jobs or something. It depended first of all on

34:00 your flight commander and he’d know who was the best one for the job, whether there was any difficulty about it, whether it needed better navigating or better shooting or what, and he would choose accordingly. Very often it was the whole squadron would be in it, if the do was big and all serviceable aircraft would be right but you never had full

34:30 serviceability of the squadron especially in the desert where flying conditions were dirty and tough and sandy and the aeroplane suffered as a result. So if you had, I suppose 60 percent that would be pretty good, of aircraft available and that then meant you had more crew than you had aircraft, so it’s a matter of who was picked I suppose.

Can I just stop you there for a second, Snow?

35:00 **Were there times Snow, when you would be flying a lot in a row? Were there times when, I mean it was very tiring work or?**

No. In that regard I think I was lucky, the squadron was lucky, all squadrons. Certainly in India, it was lack of flying, it was boring

35:30 and boring. Of course, you couldn't get through, time after time I've got in my logbook, had to turn back, weather unsuitable, and you'd get, you know in this dreadful monsoonal weather and you just couldn't fly. You'd have to go home again and because you've got all the worry, I suppose of getting ready, getting briefed, getting off the ground and then flying for

36:00 a couple of hours and then having to turn around and come home again. I had one occasion where I fell out of the air. I didn't know where the hell I was and luckily I fell between two mountains and not into the mountain. Another time coming back from Burma, I was hit by low flying, when I was flying across the tree tops and somebody

36:30 shot at me and around your engine is a, within a cell, is a wire that goes around and locks the cowling in place and by a lucky, the bloke whoever fired at me, hit it and broke it, cut it and which allowed the engine cowling to open up like that, which made it very difficult

37:00 to fly because you had one engine normal and the other like this, and I was very lucky to get back over the hills again cause I had to climb up to 10,000 feet to get back and then through all this awful weather. I got back all right and the plane wasn't really damaged, it was just a day or two's work to repair it. Other times there were just odd holes but they were not, they were easy patched.

37:30 **As a pilot how much did you know, or know to fix with the mechanics of the aeroplane?**

Me, nothing, but there was one bloke, Ernie Coates, a wonderful bloke. He was quite old and he was in the desert and Malta. He was older than me, that made him quite old, but he had a

38:00 car business in, near Sale in Victoria and I've never seen anyone more methodical. He used to go around and inspect everything on his aeroplane as though he was a ground irk. He'd kick the tyres, he'd inspect this and inspect that. I always admired him for it and I wish I'd been the same. I wasn't really,

38:30 I was too casual I suppose, but I'd go back and simply say to the mechanics when they, or the crew when I landed, well she's making a funny noise in that over there and down here, there's a squeak and over there, there's something, and walk away, which it wasn't in my best interests I don't think, and I don't think that's really for admiration

39:00 but you asked me the question, I've answered it.

Thank you. The man who walked around his plane and checked everything, was it sort of a ritual before flying as much as anything else?

Yes, and when he came back he was able to tell them, his ground crew, what was wrong, but yes, before you went you should, it

39:30 was your duty to find out whether your plane was serviceable or not.

Did you usually fly the same aircraft?

You tried to. I always tried to fly S for sugar or Swift and that's only, part of it is superstition I suppose but other parts of it is that you know that aeroplane and you know if it's got any faults or any features and

40:00 so on. If you're flying a different aeroplane every time, none of them were ever exactly the same, so it makes the job just a little bit more difficult.

Tape 6

00:33 But we used to, informing the squadron, one squadron at Kingaroy, we used to have to go down to Fisherman's Bend down in Victoria and pick them up where they were being made down there, or assembled and made, or if they were locally made or if they were imported. The imported ones were supposedly better than the Australian.

01:00 I'm not sure whether that was right. I had no experience to answer that, but I did on one occasion flying one up the coast because of the, my mother lived at that stage in the beach house at Collaroy, the end of the street just on top of the beach was a

01:30 hospital for kids with polio and all those kind of things and they used to wheel them out into the sun onto the sun decks and one of the things I used to do in taking the plane back from Victoria up to Kingaroy was to do a run along Collaroy starting at the Heads and diving down, go across the top of the hospital and give all the kids a thrill. There was one kind

02:00 of a pine tree, a fig tree, a palm tree near there that you had to be very careful of, but in the book of the history of the Collaroy Surf Club it records the fact that the kids all used to wave and shout and love it and that I was seen waving out the cockpit with my dog looking out too. So it's in the book I've got over there, but then

02:30 we'd go on up the coast cause it was low flying, you could do what you want to. One occasion I hit a very bad hailstorm and this was perhaps the danger of the Mosquito being rather frail, the hailstone pitted the leading edge and the fabric on the wing tore, peeled back and wrapped

03:00 around one of the ailerons, which made it very difficult to fly, but I managed to land it all right but it was one, I suppose one of the hazards that, they weren't very successful. We got one in India to test. It eventually crashed, or not eventually, very soon crashed. They were sent out to see whether they could stand the weather conditions, the hot weather and the humidity and things, but actually

03:30 to fly a lovely aeroplane.

What was it about them that was so lovely, Snow?

Manoeuvrability mainly, speed and manoeuvrability, very light on the controls. Whereas a Beaufighter was heavy, was like a truck compared to a Mosquito. It was good too in a Mosquito that your navigator sat alongside you and you had someone there to talk to and someone to compare your

04:00 notes with and so that made it more enjoyable and more efficient really, because with a Beaufighter you're talking on the intercom the whole time. If it wasn't working properly, you had no communication at all.

Did you ever have problems like that in, I guess battle situations?

04:30 No. Not, well not certainly in a Mosquito because I never flew one. No, we were forming the squadron up there and of course I got when they went away, I got posted south to 94 Squadron, but then I carried out on when I bought the aeroplanes for Frank Packer. He wanted to, his idea was to drop newspapers

05:00 on country airfields or towns, and I did all the testing on that aerodrome where 94 was, Castlereagh Strip beside Richmond, and we tried bundling them with wire around them, rope around them, sewing them up in hessian, but there was no way we could drop them that they didn't burst, so the idea was given away. The

05:30 Herald then started flying DC-2s in at night into country aerodromes and they lost one and I think two, so the idea was given away. They went back to trucks and things until night flying got better.

Swift, with the weight of the Beaufighters that you were flying, did you ever

06:00 **find yourself forced to engage with enemy aircraft?**

As in a duel like a combat of the two planes.

Yeah, I know they weren't designed for that.

No, I didn't. You ask me, the answer is no, I didn't. You sized it up: either he had the advantage

06:30 or you had the advantage and you made your plans accordingly. One, you pissed off and went for it or he did the same and you chased him, but they weren't that manoeuvrable that you could have a dog fight with them. No. I suppose we were comparable to JU-88 really and

07:00 [Messerschmitt Bf] 110 might have had a bit of advantage on us, but in either case it was not one you could have a duel in.

Were you told much about the German air force before you got to Africa?

We certainly were told how they looked as I told you, and I didn't recognise them. The briefing yes, was good, aircraft recognition, aircraft capabilities.

07:30 You knew what they were capable of. The [Messerschmitt Bf] 109 was a surprise I suppose but that didn't affect me cause I never came across one. You knew with bigger aeroplanes than yourself you could be more manoeuvrable which would give you an advantage, but I never came across any sitting easy

08:00 targets anyway, except the JU-52s.

Snow, I was just wondering if you could tell us, I think you mentioned briefly in your overview when you were in Cairo and protecting a convoy over to Malta and you had a German aircraft come out of the cloud and you actually, your squadron found yourself amongst other, a lot of friendly fire.

08:30 Yeah, well there's not much you can do about that. We went up into the cloud and tried to find him but they had made their dive and pissed off. So it's in this book here I'm just looking at of what happened

with Squadron Leader Ogden I think it was, but

09:00 they just dived through us and there's not much we could do to find them again, so our main worry was to get out of the road of the fleet and to do that we just disappeared, but I don't know how they got on after that actually, but as I said we lost eight aeroplanes on that one too.

Would there have

09:30 **been any communication between squad and convoy throughout that?**

It depends on whether there was radio silence. In most cases there was radio silence and they used Morse lamps and things. I must confess I was never very good at Morse code and Morse Lamps were blokes flashing off battleships and dodging planes and things I couldn't read at all, so I don't know what they were saying, but

10:00 not really, you were not supposed to be talking, so whatever you were saying could be picked up by anyone else. I remember we used to sing and listen coming back to the radio was our favourite thing, coming back from a do in the desert. Lovely sunny day and the job done and you're still alive and you

10:30 tune into the German radio station and listen to them singing Lilli Marlene, da da da da da da, and you know you'd feel happy and free, but as for calling up someone else you only did it if necessary.

How did that incident sort of effect, I guess the morale of the squad by the time you got back

11:00 **to base knowing that you'd lost eight planes?**

Depends on how difficult the job had been. If you'd been on the winning side and shot lots of trucks and blown up this and petrol dumps and all those kind of things, then you felt very happy. If it had been a day with nothing sighted or was dreary

11:30 and just, you know a bus trip out and a bus trip home and nothing much to talk about when you got there. So again it depended entirely really on the success of your sortie.

Did you realise going into the air force the,

12:00 **or at what stage did you find out about, I guess the high casualty rate?**

What stage did I find out what?

The high casualty rate?

No, well we didn't know about that of course. It was only really after the war was over that I caught up with the fact of the terrific losses that Bomber Command had, and I was jolly glad I wasn't in that. They had a dreadful time. I'd have hated

12:30 to have been in it. I must say they had certain comforts. They were in England, they were on aerodromes that had proper messes and they had cups of tea brought by WAAFs to them in the morning and when they got back from a do, they had bacon and eggs and all the little comforts, but jeez, I'd have hated to have gone out night after night with

13:00 bombs and shells and things going off all around me. That would've been a dreadful life. No satisfaction, none. I read in the book, The Bomber Command, which I've not long finished, but in the early days of the war they had no real navigation at all, no proper bomb sights and they sent a flight of a squadron out to bomb this target in Germany

13:30 and they came back and they were cock-a-hoop and whooping with the great success of it and the squadron leader got an immediate DFC, but when they got the photographs they were about 50 miles away out in the fields, they hadn't bombed the target at all. It was just inefficiency, but again on the efficiency angle, Montgomery

14:00 and Cunningham, the efficiency of cooperation between Montgomery and Cunningham was wonderful. They worked it out to a T when it was most successful, purely by being able to work with each other and cooperate, but generally speaking the cooperation, and even in our case, I don't think was good.

14:30 I mean in my logbook, as I say there were too many 'nothing sighted.' You'd spend the whole morning out looking for something and it wasn't there. So it was duff information.

Were there any particular operations in Africa that were particularly difficult?

No.

15:00 Well I mentioned aerodrome strafing that was difficult. Fleet escorts weren't always a great piece of cake.

Why was that principally?

First of all, I suppose cooperation.

15:30 We at one stage did a training exercise with them where we went out on patrol boats and they went up, their officers went up in Beaufighters, so we understood each other's situation. Gives a better perspective of what it was all about, but it didn't have great results, that. It made a pleasant day of

16:00 it, I suppose in some form of teamwork, but I don't think it was really for the betterment. They had very much their own set ways. Very difficult the navy, the oldest service, you did it their way,

16:30 but no, I don't think they were that much more difficult than any other ordinary job.

So you found that the navy had a very strong set sense of tradition because of their age?

Yep.

Their establishment?

Yep. But once, I'll tell a story and Isabel [interviewer] will have to forgive me, but

17:00 I met up with my friends who I'd left Australia with and who'd been to school with me. We met up in Alexandria and we had a terrific night out but we chose as the venue, the Fleet Officers' or the Warrant Officers' Club in Alexandria, the Naval Warrant Officers' Club, and at that stage because of this ill feeling between the air force and the navy

17:30 because of the convoy job things, the feeling wasn't good and one rude word led to another and a fight broke out and any rate the military police or the naval police arrived, bundled us all in the back of a dog catching van and wheeled us off to Kazralani [?]

18:00 Barracks where we got in a queue. Some of us had our tunics torn off and there was blood and black eyes and things all over the place and you had to shuffle forward up to a desk where there was an officer, red cap, sitting down with the cap over his eyes.

18:30 What do you call them? Marine, doesn't matter, sitting like this and you had to march up and say, "402416 Swift 22 Squadron." He'd take your name, off, and you'd go outside and you had to get back into your gharry and they'd drive you back up the desert. Don't know why I'm telling this story. However, my mate Rusty Kerith, who was in front of me, he pulled up in front of the

19:00 officer with the cap there who was a, what do you call them? The military side of the navy, any rate he said to him, "Are you a fucking sailor?" The cap went up about that far and two steely blue eyes looked out. My mate looked at him and said, "Well go to fucking sea." He didn't get marched outside into his gharry. He got marched out into a

19:30 cell and Gordon Steege who was CO at the squadron, the bloke who lived down the road, it took him two or three days to get him back to the squadron. Don't know why I told that story.

You were telling me about the establishment of the navy.

Yes, that was it of course. The ill-feeling that existed.

20:00 The air force always thought it was superior any rate. Always referred to the brown jobs, the pongos the suede shoe brigade. Any rate, a good time was had by all.

Did the flak go back the other way?

Hmm?

Did the flak go back the other way?

I'm sure it did. I don't remember any incident

20:30 but I'm sure we always won.

I was just curious what tactics as a Beaufighter pilot you would employ to deal with anti-aircraft fire on strafing operations and things like that?

Oh, you always do, I mean the only thing you can do is take evasive action, which is making your plane skid, so

21:00 it's never in the one level of flight, and to do that it's just a matter of peddles and elevators, but trying to make the target more difficult to hit. That applied to any kind of fire at you, whether it was air to air or ground to air or what.

21:30 **Sounds very much improvised depending on the job?**

Oh yes, of course, yes.

Can you tell me Snow, what the general, I guess feeling or impressions of the German forces were? We've been told a number of times that the campaign in Africa, or you know, against the

22:00 **Germans up in Africa was quite a chivalrous war.**

Yeah. Yes, I think that's quite right, and that echoes and illustrates really what I was saying about the war. It was a clean war, them up there and we down here and nothing to interfere with it and there was one side trying to out manoeuvre the other and

22:30 there were many instances. I'm sure I've got none that I could quote but I've heard about chivalry of handing water over and helping blokes, you know who were wounded and things like that, but from hearing me tell you that I was shooting at blokes with no clothes on at the beach doesn't sound very chivalrous. So I don't know quite what,

23:00 how to answer that question, yeah.

Orders are orders as well.

Yes.

Do you remember hearing about Japan coming into the war?

Funnily enough, I was trying to remember that only

23:30 during this week and I'm trying to work out where it was, and I think I must've been, when did they come in? Was it when I was in, I was going to refer to my logbook. When did they come in? It was?

It was '41, late '41.

'41, If it was late '41, I was, and that's where I can refer to my logbook.

24:00 **Yeah, please do.**

It didn't seem to be of any great importance. I mean we, the war there was the war and that was all over there kind of. I think it must've been because I applied, didn't I? I said earlier I applied to go home or be sent, posted home and was told no, I

24:30 couldn't, but they'd send me to the Middle East. So that must've been the time, I must've done, applied then, right. I don't remember any great flap or thing about it. Strange.

Do you remember before your operations to Burma what you were told about Japanese? Did you hear much about what they were up to?

Well, we knew they had good planes.

25:00 The Zero and things, and that they were a formidable enemy. Other than that, no, we had no special information about them. No, except we were supposed to kill them.

25:30 Yeah, no.

Did you become aware of stories of say atrocities?

Atrocities and things, no not at that stage. No, that all kind of emerged later I suppose with Singapore and the prisoner of

26:00 war and Changi all those kind of things, but no, they hadn't kind of, I don't know, been published or we weren't aware of them any rate, that they were, or I wasn't any rate.

When you sat down in India you mentioned before that you were there during the famine. I'm just wondering what you saw of it on a day to day basis?

Well, I mean it was everywhere. Rubbish bins was the main one that made you conscious

27:00 of it. Giving birth in the railway stations. It was pretty awful. I had a letter of introduction to Lord Casey who was the Governor of Bengal at that stage but I never presented it. I don't know why. I was too busy doing something else I suppose, but it was a dreadful time. He was

27:30 doing everything possible to try and alleviate it but it was just a dreadful time for them. But life seemed to go on and I'm thinking life seemed to go on fairly normally for the Sahibs. They used to go out to the races and they had a lovely racing club with swimming pools and

28:00 tennis courts. They wouldn't be suffering that much. I went to one person's home who invited me to lunch and there was a blackboard that I noticed on the way in for the staff and they had I think a staff of like five or seven or something, sweepers and cooks and whatnot, but on the notice was,

28:30 we all, it said was, we will be seven for dinner, and that's as much as the housekeeper, that the lady of the house had to do. She wouldn't know what the seven were going to get until she sat down. She had to write down the number. So I don't think life was that bad. I saw one incident that's got nothing to do with the war at all except the club

29:00 to go to was the, oh I think it was the Four Hundred, I think it was called. I saw a bloke one night take a

cigarette out of his mouth, throw it onto the floor but it went onto a lady with a spangled dress, sparkles on her dress and she caught fire and they had to roll her over to put her out. Got nothing to do with the war but it was interesting. Another night, I went down

29:30 to an opium den with a bloke who was in the American Consulate's office there in a rickshaw. He was going to show me all about it. Lay down on the floor with our heads on wooden blocks in a long row, Indian and Chinese gentlemen, did nothing for me. So I got in the rickshaw and went home again.

30:00 Yeah, well that was leave in India I suppose. Darjeeling was the best place, it was a lovely place. I saw a documentary the other night on the 50 years of climbing Everest, not from Darjeeling but they used to start off from Darjeeling in the early days when they used to do the East Col or the West Col, one of them,

30:30 and you could see if you went up early in the morning through the rhododendrons, you could see the sun rise on Everest and all the tea gardens down below. It was a lovely place.

You mentioned superstition before, Snow.

Mentioned what?

You mentioned a little bit about superstitions before. Did you find that pilots overall were a bit of a superstitious bunch?

31:30 I think any, yeah, be condemning or not. No, I can't answer that. I think everyone really had a pet thing, especially in aeroplanes where you're pretty much, in a Beaufighter anyway by yourself. If you're part of a crew there was always someone

32:00 took something along I suppose, but I don't think especially to answer your question. No, I don't think especially so. Not more than anyone else. I think it depends very much on the person.

What was the general, I guess relationship like between aircrew and ground crew in various places that you were in?

You depended very much on them and sometimes they were very much, your ground crew were very much

32:30 neglected in praise for the job they did because without them you'd have been hopeless and you know they'd work all night on your plane to have it ready for you the next day or take particular care, and no, they were very much appreciated and certainly you got to include

33:00 then in your, any praise you gave for the work you were doing. No, I have very fond memories of my crew and various crews wherever they were, the trouble they took and the interest in the work you did. How did you get on? What did you do? Tell us this and tell us that. No, they were, you were a

33:30 team.

I've heard that quite often you'd, getting back from an operation you'd actually, you'd actually discuss it a lot with sort of crew back on the ground and things like that.

You always discussed it with them first because they were the first

34:00 to greet you. First of all, whether it was a successful do, what was the opposition like and then how did she perform, have you got any complaints, should I do this or should I do that? Then it got technical into servicing it for you. So it was service or when next you wanted it and as soon as possible, but one

34:30 of the things that was always a problem was spare parts whether it was in Egypt or whether it was in India because it's different to being in England where they just send them out on the nearest van or train or something. As long as you're out in the outposts it's very difficult. They set up in

35:00 Cairo, a repair in the market area and things. They could almost rebuild engines there using local labour, which must've been a wonderful thing. I didn't know anything about it, I just read about it the other day, I hadn't heard of it, but recondition engines and repair them.

That's incredible.

35:30 **I'm just curious with the, you mentioned before about coming back from some of the ops [operations] in the Beaufighters. I mean you could be quite shot up and get back. What was the process of repairing those, would they just sort of weld, sort of just replace a panel or weld it over?**

Yeah, I suppose so. I was never there at the time. It depends

36:00 on the damage that was done I think. Whole sections would have to be stripped and new sections stapled in rather than welded. The only incident that I knew of was my cowlings, which they had spare parts for and could just put in. The other bits, the holes and pieces were, I don't know what they did to those. I suppose they put chewing gum in them or

36:30 something. No, some jobs obviously took a longer time than others. One of the big problems was if you wrote an undercarriage off and your plane collapsed in a bad landing or perhaps you'd had some enemy activity into the undercarriage section

37:00 and when you touched down, she just collapsed because then you'd skid for miles and you'd flatten everything out and you needed a new undercarriage and you needed a new everything and that was the main problem. With a Beaufighter they swung heavily to the right, which you had to allow for it and that caused many accidents.

37:30 You had to advance one throttle in front of the other to counteract it and with opposite rudder and, all right, all right.

Tape 7

00:32 **Snow, if I can ask you about the time, the operations over Burma that you were working with? Was there, you mentioned that you were often shooting more probably more Burmese than Japanese in operations. Were they?**

I'm sure of that because the mere fact of shooting river steamers. They weren't all carrying troops up or anything. They were just,

01:00 they were very big double deckers, pretty big. I've got photographs of them, but the number of times I saw Japs, the only time I saw the Japs really, anyone to fire at, is a Japanese firing at him, was on the parade ground. Of course that day I might've evened the balance a bit but just to go around shooting

01:30 trains and sampans you know, innocent blokes fishing or whatever. I mean, I can't see what good but we were told to shoot anything that moved, and the idea of course was to stop them bringing up supplies up the Irrawaddy towards Mandalay. (UNCLEAR) down I suppose. But no,

02:00 it's, I'm sure I'm right. That's why I dislike the war there so much. It was like the comparison to the desert was them and us. I keep saying it and I can't get, it's most apparent to me that your question was right. I mean I suppose all fair in war and

02:30 whatnot but it doesn't seem to be fair.

Was there ever a real hatred amongst your squadron to any of the enemy, the Germans or the Japanese?

No, no. Just enemy. I never came across anyone. I suppose there were, there must've been blokes

03:00 with deep hatreds for a particular reason but my experience was it was just the enemy and they were the enemy and they had to be overcome.

Can you tell me

03:30 **about your, when you were posted back to Australia after the?**

Well that was pretty joyful. I suppose it was in some ways

04:00 a difficult time because I had been engaged before I went away and whilst I was away my fiancée fell in love with an American. I was doubtful whether I would talk about it but it did, it wasn't any great consequence looking back on it, and though we still remain friends, she now lives in America, but I suppose the welcome home could've been

04:30 spoilt a little bit by that, but otherwise it was just wonderful to be home. To have fresh bread, oh my mother's cooking. See my friends, cause about the time a lot of them were coming back any rate and Sydney really wasn't very much worried with rationing I didn't think.

05:00 Everyone seemed to have someone who'd supply them. I always remember landing in Perth on the trip home and for breakfast at the Esplanade Hotel there were five different kinds of meat for breakfast. I thought if this is rationing, hooray. There were kidneys, there was steak, there were chops, there was this and that. So I don't think it was any great hardship.

05:30 But no, coming home to get into a suit again. Wear your suits, that was something, get out of uniform. The freedom of it, yes, that was great. That was as long as the leave lasted but of course that didn't last forever and you were back in uniform again I suppose.

06:00 So there was in Australia, there was a different air to the war. I really don't think that the people in Sydney any rate knew what was going on as far as the difficulties and hardships and shortages and things that war provoked elsewhere. I know that my mother moved

06:30 from the house at Palm Beach when the scare was in Sydney, from Collaroy when the scare was on in Sydney and lived up at Bowral in the chauffer's cottage of a friend of ours to get away from it all. It all

seems looking back on that, you know they let off one torpedo or something.

07:00 But I think Sydney was very much changed and first of all the Yanks came over and they certainly changed the way of living, and then the British navy came after them. So the town was pretty much a different place to the one I left. Don't know who to blame the most, Poms or them Yanks, but

07:30 they (UNCLEAR). Yes. No, I didn't notice that much of a change in the way of living. I mean I suppose the fact that there were servicemen everywhere meant something and there were shortages, some shortages.

08:00 Beer was short. Luckily my mother had saved under her bed or under somewhere sufficient for me to get over my early thirst. No, can't take that question any further. I don't think there was that

08:30 much. I'm thinking of change, I'm really not conscious of it. It was a pleasant way of life again. Yeah, housing was short, was a great shortage, getting anywhere to live, but the nightclubs and the

09:00 restaurants and things all seemed to be progressing much the same. What else?

One thing that I'd love to talk to you about because it's been such a theme throughout your service is your two dogs.

My two dogs? My millions of dogs.

Well your two?

How many dogs have I had? Dear oh dear.

09:30 The two war dogs were Ticky, Air Vice Desert Dog and Air Vice Rajah Dog or Air Rajah Dog and Smitty, and after that came a whole series of one. Rommel was another one. They all had names: Rommel, Keikel, which is German for Dachshund.

10:00 This one here is called Amy because the last dog I had had a congenital kidney complaint and had to be put down at the age of three which upset me greatly and the lady who did it was a vet, an American lady and she looked after her very well and then said she'd have to, so she put her down and they're all buried in the garden just

10:30 there. There's three or four of them there, but her name was Amy and I said with tears in my eye, "If I ever have another dog Amy I'll call it after you," and that's Amy.

Can you tell me how you mentioned that you got Ticky when you were in?

Got what?

Your first dog when you were in London?

Oh, in Catfoss?

Mmm.

11:00 Oh, that was interesting in a way. The master of foxhounds had two beautiful daughters and a lovely wife and he was old and fallen down the steps, stairs and broke his leg and had gout and always had to have his leg up but he was terribly fishing and hunting and whatnot, and I was invited across to dinner one night and the daughter of the, youngest

11:30 daughter of the house had got to know that I loved dogs. So she went into Hull to the lost dogs home and got a dog for me, which is the famous Ticky, the cross between the Whippet and the Wire Terrier, and presented it to me, and she bought it in, the old man looked at it and said, that dog's got

12:00 worms. Give it a worm pill. So she went and got some worm pills and gave it to him and then I had to take the dog home through the snow on a bus back to the squadron and of course then the dog, had to face the fact that the dog had to sleep with me in a dormitory with the other blokes having had a worm pill.

12:30 So I spread newspapers all around the place but it didn't much matter to poor Ticky. She was, the rest of the blokes weren't very happy with my dog, but Ticky grew to be so faithful. Didn't mind where she was or what she did. She was extraordinary. They've all been wonderful, yes, you too.

13:00 **Can you tell me about?**

But, talk is still on dogs, when the dreaded Harry Naish left the squadron we were, new squadron commander in 27th squadron and Agartala in India was the famous Nicholson, Mick Nicholson, who was a VC [Victoria Cross] winner, and he was the only VC awarded to Fighter Command

13:30 in the whole war, and he got it when he was in the early part of the Battle of Britain when he could see his hands on fire and he'd been shot and he still stopped in the cockpit, he got out and he saw a plane and he got back in and shot it down, and he said the worst part of it was that when he landed some

farmer rushed up and stuck a pitchfork in his bum and that hurt the most, but he spent ages in hospital,

14:00 skin grafts and things and finished up with one hand like a claw that he could put a cigarette in there and a glass there and he was like that the whole time. He was a wonderful man but he arrived on the squadron the first night we had him there, he immediately took off that day on the rival and did a job just to show us that he was all right. He'd never flown a Beaufighter before. Off he went and did a job into Burma.

14:30 Came back and we had a party that night and he wasn't used to the Karuh, awful Indian gin, as we were. So he fell asleep and he fell asleep in a chair and he'd brought a dog with him. Funny looking kind of a sheep dog, black and white thing it was, and we left him there asleep with his dog curled up in his lap, and off we went to our various places. He was still like that when we came back in the morning, but he was an extraordinary man.

15:00 He eventually got back, he went off ops and then he came back and just cause he loved flying and loved being in the war, he got in the back of a Liberator or behind the pilot in the Liberator and the Liberator crashed into the Bay of Bengal and he was killed, but a famous bloke. Anymore dog stories, no?

15:30 **Did any more of the?**

My war seems as though I'm fighting the dogs.

Was it common for aircrew to have a pet?

Yes. They were squadron pets too and things. In, at Agartala most of the blokes had a pet of some kind. One bloke had a little panda bear. That was a bloke called Horn, he was a flight commander. Another bloke called Dave Innes,

16:00 he had a monkey. I had a monkey at one stage, naughty little bugger and it, I rebuked it and it took offence at this, grabbed hold of my toothpaste, climbed up into the rafters and just squeezed it on top of me, but most of them had some kind of a pet.

16:30 **How did you discipline the dogs to be on the plane during flights and not, and behave?**

I didn't, Ticky was really the first dog I took flying and she took to it like a duck to, he took to it like a duck to water. Used to just put him up the ladder into the hatch and used to just curl up

17:00 and there he was. David Innes in his book, Wings, Beaufighters Over Burma, says I took off with Air Vice Desert Dog for India, to become Air Rajah Dog. My dog and a wooden case full of ballet records and a portable gramophone, which there was very little room for plus my kit,

17:30 but however they all fitted in well, but the main thing I suppose wherever you landed was getting a feed for your dog, or water or something. Any rate.

What would you feed them, especially if food were short?

Anything. Well part of your own or whatever. Yeah.

18:00 Bully beef. Baby food at one stage, Lactogen I think it was called. But Ticky eventually died. Yes, he did darling, he eventually died of tick fever, which I hadn't come across. Evidently, they had big cattle ticks in India

18:30 and I didn't know this. I flew him in on the mail plane into Calcutta, had to leave him with the vet but he died.

How did they, the dogs cope with noise in the plane and the movement and the?

Don't know. It seems cruel in a way, doesn't it? I often thought back but it never seemed to affect Ticky and when I landed in the desert, you know

19:00 the ground crew always used to say, she must've known because as soon as my plane was in the circuit area, she'd come down from the tent and she'd always be there to meet me. I don't know how true that is, it sounds unbelievable.

Was there a great affection amongst everyone for each other's pets?

It depends on the pet. Some you liked, some

19:30 you didn't I suppose. I don't think anybody liked that bloody monkey of mine. I didn't like it either in the end. No, I suppose the big thing about the mess in India

20:00 **Snow, I was wondering if you could maybe just tell me, we were just talking about the dogs, but I guess maybe your fondest memory of Ticky?**

All of them were fond, a particular fond one, no. Sad ones when she got sick.

20:30 No, not really, I can't. She was a wonderful comfort and I think that's what you miss when you're away from home and you can talk to dogs and they don't talk back and they understand things and wonderful

company, that's all I suppose I can say.

21:00 Dachshunds are special because of this one man bit. They believe that their master is their master and a wonderful, wonderful person, which is good for your ego, and they don't ask much of you. They like to curl up and be near you. They never wander.

21:30 They're clean. They're greedy, they'll eat anything as much as you can give them. Like the Germans I suppose. They're good hunting dogs. I had one once, it was Smitty, who went down, they were bred originally for badger hunting

22:00 and they, foxes, hounds used to chase down their burrow then they'd put these things down with the big digging front paws to dig them out, and the one I had once got stuck down there and I had to dig him out. Smitty, yes they were good at putting up quail in the grass.

22:30 Otherwise, they're just very lovable.

How much harder would your time have been through the war without the company of the two dogs?

Very hard. Yes, very hard. Now what about something before the war? Do you want any more on that? Family history or anything on that?

If there's something else about your childhood that you'd like to tell us or?

23:00 Only to go back to my ancestors, I suppose. No, that wouldn't be terribly relevant. I think I've covered it all.

I might just ask a few, we have a few final questions that we usually ask.

All right. Let's get on with that, hey?

I guess looking back over your wartime experiences,

23:30 **do you consider the war to have been a positive time within your life or one of negative experiences?**

Well it depends really. I don't quite understand what you mean positive or negative in my life. Do you mean it had an affect on my life?

Mmm.

Oh, I'm sure it had an affect. I'd have been a proper little if I hadn't been in the war, if I'd just grown up and not had the experience.

24:00 It gives you the opportunity to know who you are, what you are capable of, how much you can stand of various emotions. Perhaps how brave you are or how fearful you are. How you react living the whole time with various

24:30 men in various situations. I'd have been a dreadful person if I hadn't had the levelling and hardening and broadening of the war. Anyone who, I'm sure, well no, how can I be because I had such a wonderful war. The blokes who were prisoners of war would probably have a

25:00 different view of it. I had an extraordinary, when I look at it, wonderful war if you have to go to a war, but mine was nothing but really adventure, travel, fun. I've got no regrets about it, all only I thank whoever

25:30 for the opportunity to be exposed to it. To me, what it obtained, I'm not so sure about wars, about that, I don't think they do any good at all. Nobody ever really wins them. They promised all kind of things for when we came back, the world was wonderful and I think the post-war period was a wonderful period

26:00 of we've won and we're getting on with it and everything was wonderful. Now it's all crook again. Nothing but people blowing up people and people hating people and scares about this and scares about that. No, I'm only thankful I had the opportunity to know who I am.

26:30 **We were just talking about your experience and you were saying you had no regrets about ever going to the war.**

None. I'm sure everything I, as I said I think before, I am a fatalist I suppose, and

27:00 I think there's no use trying to control your life. I think it's controlled for you. Every time I ever tried in the war to control my life and influence them to get a posting or something it seemed to go wrong. If I just let it happen, it happened, and that became my philosophy I think.

Is it difficult to settle in coming home?

27:30 No, looking back, no it wasn't. No, it was easy, it was easy. I think I pretended a bit that it was. I overdid, I think I'm being very honest about that.

28:00 Cause you're a bit apt to give the impression or want to give the impression that you've been through hell, but no, in reality I don't think it affected me, my life.

Did you talk much about your experiences and what you'd been through?

No, I didn't. It's only really now that I've bothered to sort it out.

28:30 Occasionally at reunions, you'd recall things but I don't think my family know very much about it at all, and it's only now that I think perhaps they're showing, cause they're more mature now that they're showing some interest.

29:00 Bliss now is, she's showing some interest but she's the youngest. No. What else?

I was just going to ask, nobody ever asked? I guess, Georgie or friends, family?

Not really. I think they've picked up bits and pieces but

29:30 my middle, the youngest son, I don't know how old he is, 50 something or other, he's now starting to read war books which is interesting and he's swapping them with me, and I think I mentioned before, he's asked me whether, how I fitted in or did I know

30:00 where I was in the war. It shows that he's starting to think about it I suppose, but they're rather detached from it I think, my family. I don't think it applies to all families who have plenty of sons following in their father's footsteps I suppose. But that's why

30:30 I was hoping this, I might be able to get a copy, so that at least they would know they could've sat down and talked like you to me. However.

Is there a moment that stands out Snow, in your wartime experience as possibly the proudest moment?

31:00 Oh I suppose when I got the DFC. Is that what you, when I went down to Government House with my mother and my wife to be presented by the, who was it? The Duke of Gloucester, was it? Yeah, the Duke of Gloucester presented me with it at Government House. Yes, that was a proud moment. Proud because my mother was so proud

31:30 I suppose. Made it more valuable.

If a young man came to you and asked you, he said, "He wanted to join the air force to go to war," would you have any advice for him?

Treat every girl like your sister. No. How can you?

32:00 I think the main thing is to be alert, pay attention and try and work out what's going on. First of all, learn to fly and that's dangerous. There were so many killed in learning to fly in the war by carelessness, by not paying attention, by being over-confident.

32:30 By not being good at what they were supposed to be doing. I think the only advice is to look after yourself, pay attention and I don't know, what else can you say? No, I think learning to fly is a wonderful thing,

33:00 but after that it depends what the war is like or the war is so different today, any rate in the air. I visited my old squadron when they were in Scotland, this is 27, and the bloke who was in charge of the aeroplane was the navigator, was the squadron leader and all they did, we used to go to a briefing and they'd say, and the weather here

33:30 will be so and so, the enemy will be there and they drew things on a blackboard. Now, all they do now is go and get a tape and put it in the machine and it flies the aeroplane. I can't think that's terribly clever. Very different, not much fun in that.

Before we finish Snow, is there anything else you'd

34:00 **like to say, any final words, anything we haven't covered?**

No, not really. As long as my family come out in it strongly. I hope I haven't omitted anything about them or for their, because I think the family have made it worthwhile. I'd have hated to have not

34:30 had family, even if they don't listen to me talking about the war.

Thank you very much for that Snow. That's wonderful.

INTERVIEW ENDS