Australians at War Film Archive

Charles Hulls (Allen) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:42 I was born at a farm just about five miles off Leongatha, which is in South Gippsland and I had two brothers, one older and one younger and the farm was pretty isolated. It was a dairy farm so we had out duties to do

01:00 and my life really came to my own knowledge when I was about 3½. My father used to boil some water down at the house and take it up to the shed, and I was following him one day and he put it down to go into the dairy and I had backed off and backed into it. I had this boiling water all over my arm and down my back and so on.

01:30 The story that I thought was true and my father told me was that I yelled so loudly that my neighbour next door came and picked me up and took me to the hospital because they had a car and we didn't, so I spent about three weeks in hospital. Fortunately it cleared up pretty well. That was the first episode that I really remember. Otherwise it was always getting up early in the morning for the cows and night for the cows and so on,

02:00 but it was a fairly isolated life because in those days there were no cars in the '20s. There were no cars really. It wasn't until getting towards the '30s that the farmers used to or did get a car occasionally. But we used to go into town, and the next thing I remember is that my mother used to go into town about every fortnight in the gig and we used to have a white horse we called Bluey, of course,

02:30 and so we used to go in about every two weeks for our supplies. The truck used to come out and pick up the milk and the butter and leave us with bread and so on. The bread wasn't always what you'd call very fresh, but it was a start. The next part I remember, as we grew up we made our own amusement. We used to go out and chase rabbits; there were plenty of those around. There were rabbit plagues.

03:00 You would go out to near the bush – we had about thirty acres of bush at that stage – and the rabbits, you'd go down there and the rabbits would be out there of an evening and the whole ground would just move off so we had to put poison down and so on to try and at least save some grass for the animals. Otherwise the foxes were around and as we grew up, older,

03:30 my father was very keen on fox hunting because we had a few lambs and calves and things, and there were quite a plague of foxes used to live up in this area. So we got to know a little bit about that, and another game we had was to try and trap parrots. The parrots used to come in and we used to grow some oats for the animals, and

04:00 cut it up for the cows to make chaff as they came in to do their milking, and all these parrots would come in and look to get these oats. We worked out a system whereby we had a square netting situation and we would prop it up and put the oats underneath and when the parrots come along we would pull the string and catch the parrots. Anyway, we caught quite

04:30 a few and we'd keep them for a few months until we got sick of them and let them go again. So you had to amuse yourself in those days. We had neighbours who, I suppose, were within…the closest neighbour was within about a mile, but then we had others who were two or three miles away. Although there were some young children – our cousins lived up the road about three miles – you didn't see a lot of them unless you walked down there –

05:00 this was before schooling anyway – unless you walked down there and went to visit them. It was quite an occasion to go out visiting when we were young. The next main phase I remember was the Depression and I was about eight or nine, and I didn't realise, of course, what was happening but things were getting pretty tough and we didn't always have enough to eat and we had a very nice big orchard. My mother used to say, "Well, if you haven't

05:30 filled up, go down the orchard and fill up on apples," which we used to do. Also I can remember one occasion that stands out very much in my mind which brought to my notice about the difficulty of the Depression was that there was a bill came in from the grocer of £5 and my mother broke down in tears

and she said, “We will never pay that.”

06:00 That is just the difference between those days and the present time. Anyway, there came to schooling and there was a school, a typical country rural school about one mile away. As with a normal rural school there were about twelve of fourteen with the one teacher only and we used to walk down through down the hills and across a creek.

06:30 There were a lot of snakes and so on around in those days so we were all equipped with a snakebite outfit that we used to carry. It was made up of a tourniquet that we had and some Condies crystals and a razor blade, and we were given instructions how to lance it and to suck out the poison if we got bitten. I didn’t get bitten but I can remember

07:00 walking to school one day and you know, you get a premonition of a snake. They were big black snakes. I don’t know if you’ve seen any snakes down in Gippsland, but they are big, and there were black snakes, brown snakes and tiger snakes. Well this was a big black snake, which was curled up just in front of me, and I had my foot posed in the air but my foot didn’t go down but I got past it with a great leap. There was another occasion in fact when it was dry in the summer, the snakes used to try and find water. They’d come around the house

07:30 and one day there was a little space under our laundry area and he was obviously coming in for water and he came in and my mother was going to do the laundry and there was the snake sitting just down the bottom, so we couldn’t get it out so my father had to get the gun and shoot it. That was the sort of thing that we took for granted. They were the things that went on.

08:00 At school – I was pretty keen on school, strangely enough at that stage, and there were about twelve or fourteen people there, the three of us with my two brothers, I think we had five cousins came, and about five neighbours and that made up the whole school area. The situation was that it was a very pleasant time for us because we got to know all our neighbours and our friends

08:30 and I enjoyed school. In fact I got a certificate for attending six years without missing a day, so I was lucky to be healthy too I guess. But it’s a different life going to school out there, and the shock came when…We went up to Grade 8 where we used to get a merit certificate and the shock came when we went into the big town high school with about a hundred and fifty students.

09:00 So we went in – I was in there for about four years. So I went off to Leongatha High School and there were many more people and it took a little while to adjust because we really hadn’t socialised beyond just our local group of people. There weren’t a lot of social functions or anything

09:30 of that nature going on in the area we lived, out at a place called Korumburra East, and so when we came to Leongatha that was a socialising task that we had to fulfil, and I must admit I was a pretty shy sort of student. Being about five miles out, there was no transport so our parents bought us a bike each so we rode the bike each day backwards

10:00 and forwards. The hills, of course, at Gippsland would be well-known and we had one wonderful one which was about three quarters of a mile long and a steady grade and it was fine when you got up the top because it was downhill the other side but the converse was that when you were coming home you still had the same struggle to get up the hill. So no matter what the weather was or anything of that nature, we rode into the high school

10:30 and I enjoyed my time there because I got into more organised sport. There was a local cricket team that was based in Korumburra, just in the paddock just off the rural school, and I used to longingly watch it when I was young. We started cricket because my father employed an Englishman who was very keen on cricket and he used to get us out there in the yard and we played cricket and he showed us how to do it,

11:00 and whenever the opportunity offered we’d play cricket. We owe him a lot because the three of us went on and played a lot of cricket over the years. The cricket team at Korumburra was one that had quite a good basis and in 1939 we won our first premiership when I was fourteen. It was a great celebration to

11:30 come into the team and to have won with my two brothers who were playing also. At the high school we used to go ‘round and play sport to [UNCLEAR]. There was great rivalry there with the team over that period. The academic work again interested me although I took on new

12:00 subjects and didn’t do quite as well as I thought I might, and I became ill in one year there and was forced to repeat the final year again. That was in 1940, and of course, by that time the war had been declared. I can still remember that evening it was declared. My father was on the phone and I was ill that year and they went on talking and talking, and I thought,

12:30 “Won’t they ever stop talking? What are they talking about?” And he told me the next morning that war had been declared. I was just sixteen at that stage. It was quite a momentous decision to hear this and to then to face up to the fact that we might be invaded which was the talk at that stage.

13:00 **Can I just ask you what illness was it that you had?**

I just had a series of colds and things of that nature and just couldn’t shake them off. After that the

doctor said to me, “Now you’ve got to get plenty of fresh air,” so they set up a bed for me out on the verandah with mosquito nets, and I never looked back after that. It was an interesting cure but that is what we were advised to do.

Can you also tell me what subjects you were doing at school, what you were interested in?

13:30 Yes, well my main interest, I did quite a lot of arithmetic, as it was called in those days, with geometry and algebra, English I was fair, French I hated and wasn’t much good at but we had to do it in those days, geography which they don’t do now which is sad, and history which I was interested in as well. When I got to the leaving certificate as it was then,

14:00 I took on accountancy and that was a subject that I really enjoyed, so that really pointed the direction of my life, as you’ll see a bit later on. I came to the stage of leaving school, and you had two choices. You either went to the bank or you went teaching. And so we went over to Warragul one day and they said, “We’re going to give you a test on teaching.” And so we walked in and

14:30 they gave us about a five minute space and we appeared and spoke to the class and they said, “Yes, you’re a teacher,” so off we went. I was given my first appointment as a student teacher at Leongatha State School in 1940, and by this time my desire to…My brother was going into the forces and my desire to go into the forces was becoming stronger. I was seventeen at that stage.

15:00 He went into the army and I chose there and then that I wasn’t going into the army, so I thought I wanted to get into the air force. In 1941 I did my student teaching and in 1942 I went into teachers college and they dropped the age of the

15:30 entry from eighteen to seventeen. My birthday was on 31st of December, which seemed to be a very convenient time because my father said to me, “You can go, but you’re not going until you’re eighteen.” Being seventeen by the 1st of January I was able to get into the Melbourne Teachers College, and then of course when eighteen came he signed the papers and I

16:00 was free to go in.

Can you tell me a bit about your parents, where they came from? Do you know much about them?

My mother’s family came from Scotland and she lived on a farm, which abutted the school. In fact her father gave a space for the school to be built, the rural school to be built. She came from quite a large family. I think there were

16:30 six girls and three boys. We went up to Warwick this weekend and it was her brother who had his 90th birthday. Mother lived on the farm there and my father lived on our home farm with his brothers and sisters, and his father died when he was twelve, I think, and

17:00 he took over the farm because he was the eldest, and so they had quite a struggle for many years, and in fact I could name him as a total workaholic. He never really ever took time to go off and have holidays at any time. He worked three score and ten and that was it. His parents came from Gloucester in England and they were pioneers. Both

17:30 the Hulls family and the Taylor family, my mother’s family, they were pioneers in the district. My father’s mother originated from Bendigo when they had the gold rush and when the gold ran out they decided to come down and settle on the land in Gippsland which was a heavily timbered land in that time and they had quite a struggle to get through. I think they came through via Leongatha North and back down

18:00 the valley, and they selected these blocks and they were first leased by the government – they couldn’t buy them, they were just leased – and then after a period, once the leases ran out they gave them the option of buying them at a minimal value, we would say now, but it was quite a big value and it depended on the amount of improvement that they’d made to the land,

18:30 so that if you had substantially cleared the land and cultivated the land and had good fences and so on, you got a reduced value on the land of the payment when you finally took over the ownership. But life on the farm for those people was very – it was a pretty tough life compared with these days. We had no lights, just candles

19:00 and kerosene lamps and things of that nature until about the 1940s. They had no electric washing machines. They had the old copper and things of that nature that they had to do, and no fridges. We had the Coolgardie safe. One thing we did have was plenty of vegetables and plenty of milk, and they used to slaughter the sheep or cattle and get their own meat. And then, as I said, we had

19:30 the bread and butter and things used to come from town. So everybody was happy but there was no frills on life in those days. During the time that my mother and father grew up was the First [World] War time and it was quite a social centre out at Coolum because they had a hall and they used to have their dances there and raise money and things like that for the war effort.

20:00 I appreciate how difficult life was for them.

Your father didn't go to the First World War?

No. He was still in charge of the farm at that stage. He was about nineteen or twenty at that stage.

And the farm, is that the farm that you grew up on? Was that the same farm?

Yes, the same farm. It was about a hundred and fifty acres which bordered on a river, the

20:30 Tarwin River, which flows down from Strzelecki right down to Inverloch. That size block was quite sufficient in those days. Initially we used to milk cows by hand and I used to do that, and that's why they said I was a good footballer because I had tough hands. Later in schooling when we were going to high school we got the machines

21:00 and that was an easier job.

Were you milking cows before you went to school?

Yes. We all had our jobs to do and we were quite happy to do them. There were no difficulties. I would like to bring a story to you about discipline. I suppose you would describe me as reasonably straight-laced but I got an early lesson. My father, he was a fairly quiet man but what he said

21:30 he was usually pretty sensible in what he told us to do and not to do was what we were supposed to do. I apparently had a great urge to climb trees and we had some wonderful pine trees and we had one about seventy feet high and I said, "I am going to climb this tree," and I am up about seventy feet and I was only about ten or eleven and I heard this awful crackling down at the bottom of the tree.

22:00 We used to get butter boxes and there's my father down the bottom cracking up a butter box. Well, when I got down he really gave me a hiding, and I really didn't ever forget it. That was my discipline for all the rest of my life, and I think it was a good lesson.

Why was he breaking up the butter box?

Because he told me not to climb trees because it is dangerous when you are ten or eleven going up sixty or seventy feet.

It's an odd thing though to

22:30 **tell a kid growing up in the country.**

Oh it is. Well, you see, we didn't have a lot of social contact so we took our lead from our parents, which is one of the significant things they don't do these days. I watch my grandchildren now and sometimes my hand itches a bit but you can't do much about it. You've just got to watch and let their parents do the discipline if that is what they desire.

Were you living in the original farmhouse?

23:00 **Yes, and it's still there. In fact I heard at the weekend that…They sold the farm and my younger brother stayed on it until 1996 and they moved then down to Inverloch and we heard just last week that they are going to renovate the old house and sell it with the orchard block as a sort of living area**

23:30 **for people who work in Leongatha or nearby, so that it will be restored which will be very interesting.**

What is it like?

You enter it…it is one of those with the kitchen and dining room area which were always fairly big on the left-hand side and a big verandah out the front and then you went up a passage and the

24:00 rooms went off the passage and there were three bedrooms and the three of us, me and my brothers, all of us slept in the one room and then there was always a spare room. You always had to have a spare room even though nobody came. It had the verandah extended right around it so you had some very good views. It was on a hill and we always had to have a lot

24:30 of protection through rows of trees around the windy side.

Cypress tress?

Cypress or pine. The pines got a disease some years later and they had to replace those but in the meantime my father had grown another cypress hedge. He was a very keen gardener and we had wonderful flower beds as well as

25:00 the fruit trees and things, and his Sunday was getting out in the garden and digging away. He used to prepare flowers for shows and so on and that was their interest for my mother and father. They eventually became judges of the local agricultural show and all the shows around the district, so that was their delight.

And your mother too?

Oh yes. She used to be the one that showed it in her name.

25:30 My father used to sit back and enjoy it.

Did she bake?

Oh yes. Well that was another thing. If there were any visitors you always expected them on Sunday, and so she would bake for the Sunday and it would always be a beautiful big cream cake. As I grew up a little bit more, I suppose sixteen or seventeen years, mates used to come down a little bit on the weekend or the Sunday, and

26:00 the cake would immediately disappear but everybody came for afternoon tea at that stage, and they visited unannounced which was another big difference. They didn't sort of ring up and say, "Can we come?" You knew that people might come and I think our mother operated because of that process.

Where was the kitchen?

The kitchen, you came in off the front verandah and the kitchen was on the left-hand side with the

26:30 dining room there, but it was a lounge, and then you moved around the verandah and then the passage came off that part of the verandah so it wasn't separate – it was all connected, and then the lounge was off to the left of the first part and our bedroom on the right and then two bedrooms up the front.

So was it like a lean-to kitchen?

Oh no. It was part of the house.

When was the house built?

27:00 I think they said it was almost ninety years old I think, the house. But the renovators – I heard last week from my sister-in-law that the renovators are going in and her son lived there when they were living in another house just nearby and their son lived there and he did a good deal of renovation and that would have been

27:30 in the 1950s or '60s. The people who are going to take it over now are going to have a lot more renovation to do. Somebody said the roof blew off the verandah, so they've got quite a bit of work to do.

So your father, he didn't grow up in that house then?

No. He was born in Bendigo and they went on to an initial farm for a little while and then

28:00 by the time he was twelve they'd moved and his father died when he was quite young, as I said, and that was the house he then grew up in for the rest of his life and that is where we all grew up. And then my brother took it over and his children grew up there and now they've all moved off, sold the farm. The only other impression I had on the farm was that

28:30 Gippsland was a place where you got an awful lot of rain, about thirty six inches of rain every year, and so when the cows used to come up there was mud and you used to have to wash the cows before you could milk them and things like that, and there was mud everywhere and so as time went on there was increasing amounts of concreting all around the yard and so on, and

29:00 also when the cricket was on my brother started off by putting the wireless up into the shed. He rigged up a wireless so he could listen to the cricket while he was milking and then he got on to leaving it there and we had music and so on and the cows actually were very quietened down by this. It was interesting.

What kind of music did they like?

I think it was just the normal programs, I don't think it was any jazz or anything like that going on,

29:30 but that was one of the interesting things. It certainly calmed the cows down.

Was that something that other farmers did?

Oh yes. They all eventually latched onto it. I suppose that would've been in the 1940s when it started. Before that I remember we had a crystal set and we used to listen to cricket from England on the crystal set. It was a little bit doubtful particularly at night.

30:00 **You said you were isolated. Were your parents religious? Was church going part of your life?**

Well, that's an interesting question. My mother particularly was religious. My father had an inner faith in himself I think and I never ever probed whether

30:30 he was particularly religious but my mother always took it on herself to buy books, Christian books, and to have a little sort of lesson or talk to us every Sunday evening – not every Sunday but a lot of Sunday evenings around the fire. Again I remember that very well. It was always difficult to get into church although the minister used to come out to the school once

31:00 every month or so, and he arranged to have us all christened and came to the home and did the christening at home. Religion has played a fairly important part in my life as you will see later on, not exactly because of religion itself but because of the direction my life took and why it took it, and also

31:30 how it helped me to make decisions and things of that nature which perhaps when you meet Christ, it is very difficult to – you need something to hang on to and that is what I found was important. So again I heard quite a lot in that regard.

What was the nature of the discussions your mum would have?

Well, she used to have

32:00 picture books with all the normal good Samaritan stories and things of that nature, and all of those stories were illustrated and she would go through the books even before we could read. People in those days were pretty religious as a group but not so much these days, of course, but I think it was a feature of, say, my mother's family

32:30 and my father's family as well, that although they weren't in contact with churches as such all the time, they had the knowledge of religion and the normal stories and so on.

The school community primary school, what primary school was it?

Korumburra East State School, a one-teacher rural school it was, and

33:00 as I said, my two brothers went there and five cousins, some from up the road and some from nearby, and then neighbours. When I say neighbours, I mean those within reasonable distance.

Do you remember the teachers?

Oh yes. I remember the teacher boarded with us and she was known as Miss Gilbertson. Anyway,

33:30 as lads growing up we thought we would try smoking and we used to get paper and tea tree bark and there was a grove of tea trees a little way away from where we went to school. We would get all steamed up and have this smoke flying left right and centre and we'd wander off home. I'd said we went to school and we went over

34:00 a creek and then the road went up like that, a main road, and we were all puffing away on the far side of the road and we heard the—we don't know now whether she did it, but we heard her cough on the other side of the road and, of course, we never heard anything about it when we got home so we thought she was pretty good after that. Then the next person came – a Northern Irishman, and he was

34:30 a delightful fellow and he used to drive his car each day from Leongatha, and you would have to cross the river and the Tarwin River became flooded occasionally so that was quite an experience. He wasn't a very rich man but he had this old car and he used to have two boards, one board up there and one board down below

35:00 and you could look through there. There was no glass in the front of his car. He was a very interesting fellow and we enjoyed him too.

Did he board with you as well?

No. He lived in Leongatha. He and his wife lived in Leongatha.

Was he very Irish? Did you know much about his background?

No, not really. We didn't sort of inquire very much about it but we knew he came from Northern Ireland and he had that slight accent.

35:30 He used to encourage us to play sport and so on, all within the bounds of the time, but he kept us at it pretty much otherwise. When we got to the high school, again we had a headmaster who I admired a lot. He was a fellow who…I suppose it was because I was good at maths but he was a demon in the classroom, and

36:00 he would…everybody would be scared stiff. He was about this high – he was only short but he had a voice like a foghorn, and he used to say, "Dash me boy, don't you know how to do that?" Everybody would shiver and shake but he was a person who again had very high ideals and I guess I looked up to him along those lines. I was eventually

36:30 made assistant prefect so I got to know him better under those circumstances. My very good mate was also in… he went into the air force later, and we met overseas.

You went to school with him?

Yes. He came from the country too so we were sort of kindred spirits, both pretty shy and we got to know one another pretty well.

37:00 I still keep in touch with him. He lives in Adelaide.

Were you aware of the CMF, the Citizens Military Force, around the area?

Yes. They had the Light Horse group and they were stationed down towards Wilson's Promontory and they did a training exercise, which came right through our farm. They left all the gates open – that's what I can remember about that – and

37:30 then some of the local lads started to get called up in the CMF, so I was aware of it at that stage.

So they'd leave the gates open and you'd have to go and…?

Go and get the cattle. I suppose they couldn't have cared less at that stage, but it was quite a big contingent of them that were training up around Leongatha and down towards the pond. Those days were…

38:00 The war had moved on. We saw the Battle of Britain and so on and that is when the Spitfire urge came to me and that's what I wanted to be. We didn't really know the seriousness of the war at that stage, I suppose I was still pretty idealistic at fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. Even when I was down at teachers college it was only the fact that so many of the

38:30 men who came into the teachers college, they just went off to the war and we finished up with about 30% of the ones who were in. My deadline was the end of the year because my papers weren't going to be signed until then.

Which teachers college was it?

Melbourne Teachers College in Carlton.

So you were living in town?

Yes. Well, that was an experience too.

39:00 I didn't have any real connections in Melbourne but we found a boarding house with I think about thirty or forty people either going to uni or to teachers college were boarded, and this lady was in Storey Street opposite the University High School and she had about four single-storey houses she had taken over. One she lived in and the meals were given in the three other houses.

39:30 So we were quite free really. When she was coming down, we used to always get the drum from the people up the street but, being seventeen in those days, we used to get into pillow fights. We were in the front bedroom upstairs and we used to always have a lookout up there, and so, "Here she comes." And we'd all get down and doing our studies.

40:00 But I mean that was just par for the course. I met some very interesting people there and one of them who became a very good friend of mine – I still remember going to the first meal, because meals in those days compared with the farm meals were pretty sparse, and this chap Cliff said to me, "If you don't get enough to eat with the meal, there is always plenty of boxes of fruit. You can pick up what you want on your way out." I realised after I'd got up there and come back that

40:30 he really had me on the line. The meals were very…they were just ordinary I guess, but we used to have to then go down to the Victorian Market and buy our own supplies. It was again a learning experience because I went again from a reasonable sized community, I guess, to a bigger community in the teachers college and all the surroundings, so it was again a very big learning

41:01 experience.

Tape 2

00:33 My 18th birthday came on the 1st January 1943 and I joined up and was called up at the end of that month to go down to Somers in the Initial Training School and stayed there for about three months.

Can I ask you why you wanted to join the air force?

As I indicated, the army had no

01:00 attraction for me at all having had my brother involved and with the Battle of Britain, I guess that was the influencing factor. We all wanted to fly Spitfires as youths as we were growing up and that was the great image that we had about flying all around the skies. That was the only direction I wanted to be and that was my aim, to become a pilot and that was the big testing section down at Somers.

01:30 We had to go through academic work which, fortunately, I found wasn't too difficult, and we also had the physical side of things, through all the training and all the drilling. It was a very strict process to get us all into shape as eighteen-year-olds. We came to the selection process and

02:00 that was a very tense period down there, because they used to line you all up and they would indicate the selection criteria and then they would just read out the names. "You're posted to so and so as an air

gunner and posted to so and so as a navigator," and my name didn't come up on either of those and I thought, oh well that sounds pretty good, and then I went in at the end of January

02:30 and at the three months I came out at the end of April and I was posted to Benalla as elementary flying at Benalla.

Had you flown at all?

No. I hadn't been near aircraft at all.

Do you remember?

Yes, we followed those trips. The air race was on from England. We followed that fairly carefully and Kingsford-Smith and the loss of

03:00 the planes on the way to Sydney and things like that, they certainly interested us, and I can remember being up in our bush one day and hearing this strange noise, and it got louder and louder and it was the first aircraft that we had seen going across, and it was very interesting – that I had seen going across. It didn't register particularly at the time because I was still reasonably young, but I guess that might have

03:30 been something to do with encouraging me to think about that, in that direction.

I am curious what you were saying about the Battle of Britain and the news you were getting about the Spitfire pilots. How was that reported?

It was pretty dramatic in the papers. We used to get the daily paper delivered down at the main road. The main road went down at one end of the farm so

04:00 we got that and I guess it just gradually caught up with us. I think it was probably over-glamorised but it was the group that stopped the immediate invasion from France. They featured Hurricanes but none had the draw like the Spitfires. I guess they must have pumped them up as the plane that

04:30 was the major one to combat the German planes.

So this is also going on, you're learning about this? You were at the farm and then you are at teachers college?

Yes

And you're in a new town?

Yes, that's right. So it was a little bit more direct for us in town rather than out on the farm because we didn't have close contact with other people. But if you remember in

05:00 1942 times were much more serious than we were told and my brother at that time was up in Queensland. He told the story that before the Battle of Midway came on he was posted out on a point on the coast with a rifle and he said the closest person to him was about three hundred yards away and they were the intending forces.

05:30 So again that wasn't very attractive.

Whereabouts was that?

That was up in Queensland, near Townsville.

He was in Darwin?

Yes.

You would have been at teachers college when Darwin was bombed?

Yes, that's right, but again I think that was only reported and it was only minimally reported because I think the censorship was getting to

06:00 the situation where they didn't want to scare the people, the local populous, so they were reporting just about the minimum, and the number of raids and so on that went on after that we found were considerably more than were reported.

You were at a learning institution, was this part of your (UNCLEAR)?

It didn't seem to be as much, no.

06:30 What we did in teachers college was to learn the art of teaching and then we had to go out on teaching rounds. Now they were the thing that terrified us most because you would get criticised and all the rest of it and then you'd have your reports written up by the teachers and so on. You had to carry out things like taking a singing lesson and all this sort of stuff, which was terrifying enough. In the main, the war didn't impose on us

07:00 the way you might think it did. We were young, I guess we were full of interest in our own lives and the ladies that were around and all that sort of thing. It wasn't something that became a major issue until…

During the year there were more and more lads went off into the navy, into the air force and into the army, and of course

07:30 as the year came close to the end it became much more realistic for me that my time is coming to go into the air force and see what it is all about and that is when realism struck.

And what about back home on the farm and in the local area? Were they digging trenches and…?

They had what they called the VDC [Volunteer Defence Corps], the Volunteer Defence Forces, and my father joined that.

08:00 No, they just used to assemble and do their drilling and they were issued with uniforms and things so it became much more a realistic aspect to them at that stage. And again, my brother being away, actually I didn't go back onto the farm but my younger brother had to leave school at sixteen because my father got ill.

08:30 He had a few heart problems so he had to come back and help on the farm, so that made a difference to the situation. They realised the starkness of the war when the lists were coming out as well form the Middle East and all the rest of it.

When he finally signed your papers, what was his attitude?

He was quite happy to let me go then but he had another aim I think and that was

09:00 that I should at least have something I was qualified with before I went away, so that I'd have something to come back to, and I was grateful for that because it did give me something to come back.

Your brother had already gone off, so he was in Queensland.

Yes, and then he went off to New Guinea after that. Yes.

So how was your mum, without having two sons?

Well she wasn't very pleased.

09:30 I think she was very worried. She was a person who did worry a bit, and I guess we were typical sons and not too worried at that stage. Nothing was going to happen to us and we used to tell her so and all the rest of it, but she had been through the previous war and that was even worse than the Second World War I think. So, as I said, I eventually fronted up to

10:00 an aircraft, a Tiger Moth up at Benalla in May.

Can we talk a little bit about Somers and the training and your induction into the air force?

There were large numbers in Somers in those days. We lived in huts with palliasses and

10:30 had to get up and be on parade and all the rest of it and you had to be shaved. It was a discipline-orienting process when I look at it now. They were tough – they talk about sergeant majors but they had this sergeant air force fellow too, obviously trained in the job and they knew they had the authority and they used it. If anybody went outside the rules,

11:00 they used to have to do drills or be put on kitchen duty or something of that nature. We had all our injections and things like that which slowed us down a bit anyway. Then we had the academic areas. Again, although it was a discipline-forming process, we also had our individual aims as to what we wanted to get to at the same time, and therefore

11:30 the academic areas and learning Morse code and things of that nature became important because if you had an objective of what you wanted to be you had to perform well.

How did you find the discipline?

I guess I was a fairly submissive sort of lad and it didn't worry me unduly and basically didn't get into any trouble, I suppose. And again, I guess it comes back to my farm

12:00 upbringing. I mean, we were never in any gangs or anything like that or roughed up other people. We weren't aware of all those sorts of things, so I complied pretty significantly and I knew what I wanted to be and if I could get there I'd put my best foot forward. That was

12:30 the whole process, although there were relaxing times. They used to take us off down the beach and we'd have a swim and all the rest of it as part of the physically tuning process I guess.

Was there anyone else that you knew that you entered with?

No. My name was Hulls and there was a Noel Hide who you sort of line up beside them all the time so I got to know him quite well.

13:00 We used to go on leave and he used to take me up to his uncle's place in the city when we were on

leave, and I couldn't get back up home and down again to Somers just of a the weekend, when we had weekend leave, so it was quite pleasant to be able to come up to Melbourne and live in a family scene again.

13:30 They became very good friends and kept in touch with me during the war.

Did you have a girlfriend?

No, I didn't and I was quite happy about it at that stage. There were others and Syd was one, he is a friend of mine, he was engaged and he had grown up with this girl and they sort of committed to each other before he went away, and then

14:00 when we were in Germany – she used to write every week – and then when we were in Germany he got a 'Dear John' letter [letter informing that a relationship is over] which shattered him completely. Anyway, the happy ending to that, he married and then divorced and she'd had married and her husband died and they are now married and together. They have been together for about ten years, so a happy ending.

14:30 I did – that's a little bit later on – I did meet a lad from Wonthaggi and my parents got to know their parents and so on, and he was also engaged and she went off and got married too, so I don't know whether I was the catalyst for all that, but anyway, I really was very grateful that I didn't have any particular commitments in that regard because it was,

15:00 it left you reasonably free. At the end of April '43 I went up to Benalla. I think I indicated to you that I was posted as a pilot which I was very happy about, went up to Benalla and we first of all, in the first month, had to

15:30 act as… I don't remember the exact term, but what we used to have to do was sit on the end of the plane, on the tail part, and hold it down while the previous course of pilots ran up the plane – in other words ran up the motor, I should say, to test that the motor was going successfully, but if they didn't have some weight on the back,

16:00 it would tip up. The first month we used to have to get up early and they used to start flying at an early hour and you'd be out there and you'd have to sit on the plane and freeze and so on. After that month you then changed spots and you were the one sitting up the front and normally with an instructor at that stage when you start off, and the next course were the ones that were holding the tail down.

16:30 So we then went through the first stages of trying to learn to fly. Fortunately I had a fairly temperate instructor and he was very encouraging. One thing I did say in the interview was that we'd never given any thought that somebody might be killed in the flying game. Well that came to us very early because

17:00 before I had soloed, two went off very early in the solo. After about five or six hours they were taking off and they converged on the aerodrome and went in and one was killed and one was seriously injured, so they postponed the time of preparing people before they went solo and I think it took me about nine and a half hours which then became about the median time.

17:30 Anyway I flew off from Benalla. There was a satellite out at Winton – you've probably heard of Winton, where they run the motor races – and I went off for my first solo from out there. Everything went OK and then my second solo my instructor took me around for a couple of circuits and then he said, "Now there's one thing you have got to watch on this plane. The right wing is hanging a bit low. Make sure you hold that up on take off."

18:00 On your second solo you're just delighted to be able to get in the plane and think about getting off the ground. Well as it happened there was a ditch about fifty yards along and he said, "Now make sure you hold up until you get over the ditch." Away I go and all of a sudden I did a marvellous cartwheel. I hit the ditch all right, the wind hit the ditch, over I went and I found myself hanging upside down. I pulled

18:30 the harness and at the same time the fire extinguisher dropped into my lap, and half-dazed I am wandering around, and the instructor and others arrived. I was petrified that I was going to get scrubbed at that stage. That was one of the things you feared, that you were going to get tossed out. Anyway, I was paraded up to the CO [Commanding Officer] and my instructor must have put in a pretty good word for me about the wing.

19:00 Anyway I was commended for my quick thinking in case of fire. So I got away with it.

Did you have the fire extinguisher?

Yes, I was half-dazed walking around with the fire extinguisher.

So it cart wheeled? So was it on its roof? Were you lying upside down?

Yeah, it just went straight over. It cart wheeled and then went onto its back so to speak. Your head sticks out a bit there so I was a bit lucky again,

19:30 but it sort of stood up a bit like that, and I just dropped down because my feet dropped behind. So that was an adventure.

What do you think was the reason for it?

What happened was that the plane hadn't been properly rigged and was flying one wing low and it does do that. In normal planes you can adjust that by your

20:00 controls, but on a Tiger it is just the bare stick and the wings as they are. You can't go adjusting anything. The instructor told me to make sure that I held the wing up a bit above normal so that I could compensate for this low side of the wing on the right-hand side. When I hit the bump of course I forgot all about those instructions and I wasn't going to hold it up like that and away I went.

20:30 **So the bump ran across the airstrip did it?**

Yes. It was just a gutter across the airstrip and under normal circumstances it wouldn't have been very serious but there was a lot of looseness in the springing in the wings anyway, and that is what caused the problem when I hit the ditch.

Did you like flying the Tiger Moth?

Oh I enjoyed it. Yes.

21:00 After that I went very well and I enjoyed it thoroughly. We could go on…aerobatics was an exciting exercise, because the Tiger Moth is very aerobatic and you do things like loop the loop – the earth goes behind you and then comes down again – and then when you go into a spin that's when it's a bit scary. The whole thing just continues to spin down and you have got to

21:30 do your exercise properly to get out of the spin so the instructor takes you up and does that and then he says, "You can do it." It takes ages to get up to that five thousand feet. Then the other hair-raising one, they would eventually take you up and they'd stall the machine and so the propeller would stop dead and then what you had to do was virtually dive at about – they

22:00 say ninety degrees, but it was probably about eighty to eighty-five degrees – and the air would rotate and start your motor again. That was really pretty scary when you're not used to it. You do these things with the instructor first and then you had to do simulated forced landings and things of that nature. You had to look to where the wind was blowing so you always landed into the wind and things

22:30 like that. So you'd look around and see what the farmers were burning off or they had a chimney with some smoke. So again, it was a fairly disciplined learning process but one where you learnt things that you had never seen before or never anticipated, and there were some who got air sick and just didn't continue on, couldn't continue on because…I don't know whether it was their nerves or what it was.

The training accident that you mentioned –

23:00 **were they killed?**

One was killed and one was badly injured, and that wasn't the only one. We used to have to do night flying and these two took off, the instructor and the pupil. Now the instructor sits in the front in the Tiger Moth, and the pupil sits at the back, and one of the things is that people what they call 'froze',

23:30 where the situation just gripped them so much they couldn't do anything, and this student froze on the rear control and the instructor – this is in night flying – and the instructor couldn't get him to release his grip and so he pulled out the – he used to take out the front joystick when the instructor wasn't there, so he got the joy stick out and he

24:00 tried to bang the student on the head to make him lose his grip. Anyway they both went in and got killed. It was pretty tragic.

Did you ever experience that, freezing up?

No, that's a personality factor but it is associated with your overall system, your nervous system, but some people just apparently have that

24:30 fault, I suppose, but it is a known fact, one of course, which the instructors used to hate. Night flying was reasonably scary in a Tiger Moth because you just had these few lamps along the side where they'd set up the runway, and it wasn't easy to judge the height you were at and the Tiger used to bounce a lot anyway.

When there was an accident

25:00 **like that, what would the instructors say to you? Would there be some talk about it?**

No, very little discussion, but there was one thing that I learnt very early in flying, and it proved to be helpful all the way through, and that is that you keep within the rules when you are flying. In Benalla we used to have fellows who would say,

25:30 "I got down to fifty feet today and it was great." You were told never to go below five hundred feet, because you didn't have the experience to see the electricity wires, and you didn't have enough experience in control, and more so when we got to Canada in the Harvards. There were people killed

there because they just didn't follow the rules. Wartime became a very stark

26:00 aspect for us then because there were three killed at Benalla, and so you had to get down to doing what you were told.

What about the other subjects? You mentioned before that you had to know how to land and wind direction and so forth, and so you would have been doing this in meteorology?

Yes we continued to do the academic side of things. There certainly was more in meteorology. There was engine

26:30 maintenance and things that could go wrong with engines, and aerodynamics. I think it was there that we started on aircraft recognition. We continued with things like navigation, additional navigation because we had to do a cross-country from Benalla to Echuca and back down again. It was quite a nice flying area because

27:00 it was fairly flat and easily recognise places.

What aircraft were you being taught to recognise?

They were only just the local Australian aircraft at that stage. In other words, they were leading us up to the next stage. In Canada we had to start to look at the common German aircraft, battalion aircraft and so on.

27:30 They used to give us some exercises in flash recognition and things like that as to what type of planes were in Australia and so on.

And navigation exercises?

Yes. The application was the cross-country flight. We used to have to go up near Echuca and land and then we went onto another leg and then back down

28:00 to Benalla.

What would your brief be?

You would be told that you had to go through those three areas, three points. You'd have to work out your compass course taking into account the wind which was supplied to you, and then aspects of recognition which you would see when you were getting into the areas.

28:30 And of course at that stage you are very happy to see rivers and things like that where you could recognise them, or towns and things like that. It was a fairly minimal sort of exercise I guess but at least it started to teach you the basics. Roads became important, railway lines became important to you so that where they join the airport was so far out from that, so all those things were…You had to work out your

29:00 flight plans and then be checked and off you go.

What if there was low cloud?

It was wonderful compared with England. England was horrific to fly in. In fact, on one training exercise they used to have industrial haze and in England you could only see straight down. There was

29:30 a lot of haze. Clouds were bad anyway. I remember I went off on this flight and I stuck to my plan but I got lost and I didn't know where I was, and the favourite trick then was that you would go down and try and find a railway station which had the name on it – you used to be able to do that in Australia. There were stories of fellows who used to go down and read the name off the railway station. Of course,

30:00 in England they took them all off. Anyway, all I could do on this particular trip was just to continue on my flight path and there was a…we were down in Shropshire and there was a big hill called the Wrekin, which is just outside the aerodrome, and when that popped out of the haze I was a very happy person, because it's a pretty terrible feeling to be completely lost and if you just can't pick up something you can sort of panic,

30:30 and you think you're going one way and you're not, you're going the other and so on.

What about the night flying exercises in Benalla?

They weren't too bad. I think we only had one or two circuits ourselves but we used to go out with an instructor and do night flying, but once you got to training at the SFTS [Service Flying Training School] in Canada, that's when you had more night flying,

31:00 and then in England we used to have some but not a lot in Spits because they were not easy to handle at night. You don't see it in the daytime but with the big motors they used to have a lot of flame coming out of the exhausts which they were supposed to put mufflers in. One of my mates took off and there is this great call from him, "I'm on fire. I'm on fire." What they'd done,

31:30 they'd forgotten to put mufflers in. Anyway, he came 'round and landed and they found out that was what the problem was. The poor fellow, he was quite devastated by it all. Night flying isn't a very pleasant experience. You're on your own. You didn't have the facilities to refer to somebody and say, "Where are you?" And give you your location, so it wasn't easy.

Did you do night flying solos at Benalla?

We did one or two circuits only.

32:00 I think that was about all, and that is when this incident happened before this guy went solo, and that is what they did to test you out. That probably took the tension to another level, I guess you'd say, night flying compared with day flying. At least you can see what is going on in the daytime.

I understand landing can be difficult when you've just got those small kerosene lamps.

Yes, that's right.

32:30 **Do you think it is the height?**

Yes, I had difficulty when we were in Canada. In fact I was nearly at the stage where I felt again that I was going to be scrubbed, but what happened was, they used to have the same sort of thing, but the only problem in Canada was we were flying in the winter. They used to have snow banks as high as the house on each side of the runway

33:00 and they used to clear them back as far as they could but it was still a fairly scary experience. I had an instructor who was on his first year of instructing and he said, "Well it may be my problem and not yours," because he couldn't get me to judge the height so he got the flight commander, and he said, "Look, he'll take you around and talk you around." So he took me around and he said, "You see

33:30 those lights there? Now, do you see the distance between them? You start to level off when they get to this distance, and then when it gets closer still you are getting down further and then you close your motor off." He said, "You try it." So I went around and I did it perfectly. And he said, "We'll do it again." So I did it again and I got out and it really solved the problem. You just need a hint like that to be able to get you back onto the track.

34:00 So I was very lucky there. It was just experience from him that gave me that advantage.

What did you need to do to qualify? You spoke before about being told and having your name read out. How were you assessed for your qualification?

Down at Somers they took us into a room and they said, "See the light on the wall? You have got some rudders

34:30 there and there is a stick here and you have got to try and follow the light that I move around the wall." Anyway, we all did the test. I don't know how convincing it was but I wasn't very happy when I came out. There were certain things that they used to follow and nobody ever knew the criteria exactly, but an air gunner had to be reasonably short

35:00 to fit into the turret, and so a mate of mine I met subsequently – he was about this high – he was certainly a gunner and then a navigator was supposed to be more academic, but my worry was, was I was going to be posted as a navigator because I had done reasonably well in the exams. But after they'd read those two lots out, well the rest go as pilots, and I guess there is some connection with the

35:30 adaptability test. I think it's a big game of chance in many ways, and of course they interview you and so on, on the way through. "What do you want to be?" Well everybody said, "I want to be a pilot." I don't now whether that made much difference either.

Did you only fly Tiger Moths at Benalla?

Yes, that was all. Tiger Moths, and we just had three months of it and I think we got up about a hundred hours

36:00 on those. Then the next hurdle you thought about was whether you were going to be posted to a singles service flying training, SFTS or to a twin, because the twins went onto bombers and the singles went onto single engine aircraft, and my initial posting was to Deniliquin,

36:30 which was the Wirraway Training School. I was posted there at the end of July and got to the station to go to Deniliquin and they said you are going overseas on Monday. It gave me two days, so my parents came down and met me before I went off. We went to Bradfield and were held there for about a week and

37:00 then they put us onto a ship, and that was in the middle of 1943 when things were going very badly in the Pacific. So they put us onto the SS Washington which was a hospital ship going back to America and they had all these wounded guys on and so on. So we headed off, and I don't know where we went but it certainly wasn't a straight course. They told us we went way down south and up the coast of America,

37:30 and it took us fifteen days to get there and we landed up in Greenock in Scotland. That was a bit of a

shock.

Were you escorted?

We didn't have a thing. One occasion, without intending to be racist at all, there was an alarm one night and we all came out on deck and this big dark boy, he said,

38:00 "Is he one of ours? Is he one of ours, man?" You could see his eyes, scared. None of us were very thrilled about it all but anyway, nothing came of it. My problem on that trip was that the first night, being an American ship, they put on a wonderful meal and when I came up past the diesel part I wasn't feeling very well.

38:30 I finished up getting sea sick, and I still did the wrong thing and I stayed down there, and I wouldn't have minded if somebody had blown me up half way across. I was in a terrible state. Fortunately this friend of mine from Leongatha who had trained and was going over – he'd had his full training – he looked after me, and I was very grateful for that.

So how did you feel about this sudden change, and

39:00 **particularly given that the war in the Pacific was pretty hot by then, so you've been sent off on the Empire Training Scheme?**

Yes, that's right. Well again, it was a new adventure and youth does a lot to you in that it puts aside many of the worries you would have if you were a mature person, and

39:30 this chap from Wonthaggi was on this same trip across with me. I didn't meet him or know him very well by then, but we got to San Francisco and they put us off onto a train and up to Vancouver and we had the most wonderful train trip you could ever believe. We went

40:00 through the Rockies and we stayed at the Rockies and we had service on the train, the whole works. We went through the Rockies and stopped off at places like Banff and Lake Louise, and then went out onto the Prairies through Regina and Winnipeg and dropping off the twin engine fellows – they did all their training out that side. We continued on and went way out to the Lakes, and

40:30 then down to Toronto and up to Montreal. So that took us about nine days, a magnificent trip, all for free. We enjoyed that, and we arrived at Montreal at a drome called St Hubert's, and they flew Harvards there. That was the next experience, getting to know a much more complicated

41:00 aircraft which…you had to raise the wheels and put the wheels down before you landed, and we had the inevitable people who forgot it and skidded in along and ruined the aircraft which didn't make a very good impression.

Tape 3

00:32 **I just wanted to ask, had you originally had a preference for singles or multies?**

Yes. The original aim was to get there and fly that Spitfire all the way through. I was considering myself very lucky by the time I got to Montreal. All the tough decisions had been made and at least I was going to get that far.

How do you think they decided whether someone was suitable for

01:00 **fighters?**

Well again, I think age had something to do with it because my friend that I spoke about at school, he was a little bit older and they seemed to go for people who were older at that stage. I mean I was still just nineteen then and there were people who were twenty three and twenty four and that was old in that context.

01:30 So I think age had something to do with it but I don't really know. Maybe it was to do with temperament or something of that nature. I think they kept fairly good personal records of contact and discussion with people so it may have come through that, but I really couldn't tell you.

By your reckoning there weren't certain temperaments that were suited to

02:00 **one or the other?**

I guess the ones that were…My assessment would be the ones who were steadier personalities and so on and were a little bit older, and then there were the others who were perhaps carefree and all the rest of it. I didn't think I displayed too much carefree stuff but anyway I got there which was the main thing.

You mentioned how you got seasick. Was that on the

02:30 **Pacific leg?**

The Pacific leg, yes, and to be seasick for ten days is awful, I can tell you. It was all compensated by the train trip, it was magnificent really, and that is one of the things that we revisited that area a number of times because my daughter lives

03:00 out of Calgary at Red Deer, and only about an hour and a half out of the Rockies, and we've been over there and have seen quite a bit of it again.

How much time did you get in San Francisco?

It was just a changeover from the ship to a train. There was no time off at all. Even all the way through they were just stops, they weren't

03:30 time off as such. I got quite a few good photos and things of it. I've got my albums there – I don't know if they're of any value at all.

What sort of camera were you carrying?

I just had a fairly modest one really. You also had others who had better cameras and you would get odd photos off them. I was just saying that when we got to

04:00 St Hubert's, the Harvard confronted us and they make a very distinct whine. I don't know whether you've seen them at air shows and things of that nature. They are a very rowdy aircraft and the runways used to…one of them used to take off over the huts where we stayed and you would get used to it but it was a pretty terrible noise. They were much more powerful, of course,

04:30 and they were easier to fly once you got used to them because you had control of them. You had more power and they were more aerodynamic and so on. We did much the same sort of thing. We had to do aerobatics and we had to do cross-country navigation and so on. The only problem was that while we arrived in August

05:00 over there – it was beautiful surroundings of coloured leaves and trees – never seen anything like it before in my life, absolutely beautiful – and then the winter came on. Now winter is fine for people love snow and things like that, but when it gets to 48 below, it gets a bit cool, and that's what it got down to when we were there, and they still went on with the flying, and so ice used to cover the

05:30 runways and that was very difficult. They used to come 'round and park in rows, and it became such a problem for the aircraft that if you swung 'round too fast and went heading towards the next aircraft and chopped into its wing, there was no question of going to the cooler for a month,

06:00 and so you were always very, very careful of trying to park your aircraft because the ice was there and you had very little control. Also when you were doing navigation it was even more difficult to pick up landmarks and things of that nature. When you were flying over we used to do cross-country from Montreal and up into the mountains and around about the mountains. We had one

06:30 fellow who got lost and he had to land in one of the paddocks and he managed to get away with it. But again, we had three people killed there and this is the thing where the discipline is terribly important. We had double bunk beds and the chap above me got killed and the chap left of me got killed,

07:00 and I used to hear them talking and they would say, "They are wonderful aircraft and you can go down to two hundred feet and you can skid along and have a great time." Well, you could do all those things too and you would get away with it nine times out of ten but both of them, these two guys, were killed that way. There was another experience where one of the instructors – there used to be a big river bed and

07:30 they used to do low flying around the river. The only problem is that the instructor took the student around in the morning and that was OK and in the afternoon they strung a flying fox over the top of it and they chopped the back of the tail off. They managed to get back but we didn't see the instructor again and he was the flight commander too. They obviously took fairly strict action with him. We had a sprinkling of French Canadians

08:00 and they were wild. There was a big bridge in Montreal, the Jacques Cartier Bridge, and it's well above the St Lawrence River, and these guys who were just learning pilots used to get their families on the bridge and they would turn off the lights and loop the bridge. I would never even try to think of that, but they used to do that just to…

08:30 You could hear people doing loops because the motor accelerates when it is going down and up. So that was one trick. The other trick was one of my mates had a French instructor and he was very crooked on – this is into '43 – he was very crooked on not getting overseas into action, and he used to take people way out into the flatter area

09:00 and he'd put his wheels down and run along the road. And my mate was sitting…the instructor sits in the front in a Harvard, so he's running along the road out in the country with his wheels up, and 'round the corner comes a car, so he just hops over it and continues. He said that was an experience he wasn't looking for, but that is what happened. But then, as I mentioned before,

09:30 it wasn't easy flying because if you ran into a snowstorm they are devastating to try and…you can't really see anything. There was a railway line which ran along St Hubert's border and at night, not in a snow storm necessarily, but some of the pilots used to line up on that rather than on the flares that were on the parallel runway which caused a bit of excitement if you read

10:00 a few eerie shots go up. It was a very pleasant area to train because we weren't too far from Montreal and our favourite was to go down to the Chicken Coop. Chicken wasn't very common then and we used to have chicken and blueberry pie. I used to love blueberry pie so we would go and have a good meal of that. The only problem was when we got to England there was a report in the paper that the Chicken Coop

10:30 had been prosecuted for feeding cat. Anyway, it didn't worry us at that stage. During the time at St Hubert's we had a visit from the Australian commissioner – Sir William Glasson I think his name was – and I've got a photo of that here. I don't know whether that's the sort of thing

11:00 you want to have a look at. At the end of January we graduated and I got my wings, and we thought we would go straight away but they took us down to a place called Lachine which was just out of Montreal and transported us up to the Laurentian Mountains to a holding depot, a place called Domaine d'Estrelle.

11:30 I went back and visited it in 2000 when we went over there and it was a very pleasant place. There was a lot of snow and we did a lot of skiing and things, but in 2000 it turned out to be the highest priced and the most glorious resort you'd ever see in Canada. It's one of the top resorts in Canada so we got a little bit of comfort there, and then we went 'round to Halifax and we were put on a boat,

12:00 the [SS Nieuw] Amsterdam , which was filled up with aircrew, with ten thousand aircrew on it.

You got to Halifax but can I ask you a couple of questions about outside Montreal there? You said there were a couple of accidents of the guys on either side of you. You were basically saying it was their cockiness, I guess.

Yes, it was overconfidence.

Now, what sort of effect would

12:30 **those sorts of accidents have on morale at the time?**

Well they certainly made you think about it. I mean, we didn't talk a lot about it but it was something that really steadied people up, I guess you would say because, again, it was a very pleasant place to be and it was fun learning to fly and so on, but when you have that side of it injected in it, it'd sort of pull you up a bit, I guess you would say.

13:00 **What about the Harvard? It sounds like they were quite pleasant to fly most of the time. What sort of vices did they have?**

The Wirraway was an aircraft that used to flip on landing if it got down too low on revs and so on and speed. It used to just flip straight over on their back and there were a number killed at Deniliquin on that. But the Harvard

13:30 was a lady compared with that. It was a good plane to fly and had no real vices like that, so we were very lucky in that regard. A lot of the boys at Deniliquin and places where they trained on Harvards went in because…it was through inexperience.

You also mentioned the aerobatics of the French pilots and looping under the bridge.

14:00 **Was that something you were taking to as well, that side of flying?**

Well, you weren't supposed to do it for a start. I mean that was just taboo. They would've got rubbed out if they'd known. They used to turn off their lights and then head out to the country after they had done it so nobody could pick them up, but I mean it was just taboo and these guys, they were just crazy sort of fellows that wanted to do it. Well again, my conservatism came into it. I suppose. I didn't have

14:30 any desire to do that, because once you get a couple of deaths from no matter what cause, maybe it might have been you next. It didn't really come to the surface that way but I guess it was more unconscious.

So how many hours would it have taken you before you were able to go solo?

I think it was much the same, about seven or nine hours I think on a Harvard

15:00 because at least you had some experience of flying itself but this was quite a step up in the power of the planes, so you had to get used to that as well, and the conditions and so on. The conversion I don't believe was as difficult as the next two stages ahead.

15:30 **Were they training you in formation flying?**

Oh yes. We did some formation flying, not a lot but some formation flying, and again they aim to sort of develop your flying ability and also your navigational ability and your awareness of, I suppose, some of

the traps of flying as well, and navigation again.

Can you give us some examples of

16:00 **how they would have furthered your navigational skills?**

Well again, you had to work out your routes 'round the…they would give you points you had to go to and you would have to work out with your geographical, meteorological information what course you would have to take, and you would have to go and test it out by doing it.

16:30 It was all pretty practical stuff. We did go on a navigation exercise in an Anson at one stage just to hone up our navigational skills as well. We were the ones that were in charge of the flight and the pilot had to do as he was told. I suppose he knew where he was going but we used to have to take him 'round these various legs, so that was a somewhat different experience.

17:00 After getting our wings we went on this mountain trip for about three weeks and then they took us 'round to Halifax and we embarked there in about March I think it was, sometime in March '44.

17:30 **That three weeks you had in the mountains there, I can't remember the name.**

Domaine d'Estrelle.

Was that really just R and R [rest and recreation]?

Yeah, well I think it was a bit, after the course. I think it also had to do with the holding, getting the…As I was just saying before, they put ten thousand trained aircrew on the boat that went across and

18:00 they were bringing them from all parts of the states to assemble them at Halifax to get onto the Nieuw Amsterdam which was the ship that we went across on, and so I suppose we were lucky we were held up at Domaine d'Estrelle. We didn't object to it at all Over the Christmas period we had a break and we went down to New York on leave down there. The interesting thing about that was when I was

18:30 at RMIT [Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology] there was an American invited out and he taught when I was in the business department of RMIT under me, and I came over to America and taught for a year over there in Albany, and his family had a family home down on the Hudson and on one of the trips – a couple of times we've been over there – on one of the trips I went down to his farm

19:00 and the railway line that is at the end of his farm is the one that went through to New York so I'd actually been past it before, unknowingly.

How long did you have in New York?

We only had about five days I think, but we got around a bit and they were very hospitable.

What was the morale like amongst the Canadians and the Americans? Did they seem to be keenly aware of what was going on?

19:30 I guess they were, but again it was more a general awareness from the media and the papers rather than…although there were, of course, people coming back injured at that stage and the lists were still being put up in the papers and so on, so it was certainly a heightened awareness to the whole thing and they were just rebuilding in America so it was a major effort not only from servicemen but from

20:00 people who were, women and so on, who were working all towards the war effort, was the major development after Pearl Harbour then. There was certainly a heightened awareness overall about the wartime situation.

How were the Australians received in general?

They were welcomed, yes. We had a wonderful time, and I think

20:30 they were all very grateful having us there I think. I say it myself because we got more invitations than we could possibly cope with. We had a few larrikins, of course, among the group.

Can you recall any of those experiences, be it social outings with the locals or

21:00 **the larrikinism?**

Well there was a village down the road from Montreal, I think it was called Lachine, but they used to bring out a regular invitation each weekend for our people to go down there and they used to look after them. I didn't go a lot because there were a couple of other people that I used to

21:30 visit. My instructor came from Montreal but this village used to welcome them and they'd all go off down there for the weekend, and in fact two of them got married, ladies from down there, so maybe there was a method in their madness. They were well looked after and they enjoyed it.

Did you have any romances during that period?

Well, it was rather strange. I went down

22:00 to New York and we met this family and they invited us out and we met a girl there and she was very attractive and I got on quite well with her and she said that she would write to me which she did. She eventually sent me a photo, quite a snazzy looking photo but I didn't make any offers and I wanted to keep well away

22:30 from that. When I came home, her photo – I'd sent it home to my mother apparently, and it was sitting up on the piano and I took my first wife up to the farm for the first time and she said, "Who is that?" So I had to explain that she was far away and I didn't ever contact her again really, but just one of those things.

You had corresponded?

23:00 Yes, we had corresponded after I went to England and so on, but you have got to be realistic, you don't go back to America. But she was a very pleasant person. So that was the situation there. From Halifax, as I say, we got on this ship. We were unescorted across the Atlantic and that was the time when the U-boats were really on the job.

23:30 The only escort we saw was right out in the middle – it was the Sunderland [flying boat] - on the horizon, about once, so we all held our breaths but there were so many people on board that we used to start queuing about two hours before each meal, so you would have breakfast, you would start to queue for lunch soon after, and you would queue for dinner about

24:00 3.30, so we were very delighted to get off. It took us about five to seven days – they diverted us a bit and then we came up to Greenock in Scotland and out came about a flight of Spits, so we reckoned we were in heaven then. By the time we docked it was night and they put us straight

24:30 onto a train and they took us straight down to Brighton. That was the next shock that we had. There were no lights anywhere because everything was blacked out. Even the train was blacked out and so on and we arrived down in Brighton right on the south coast after travelling a day and a night down there. So we found ourselves in a very different environment, and again,

25:00 what you have been asking me, the heightened awareness of wars, certainly had arrived. In Brighton we were posted into the Metropol Hotel which was the famous hotel that was blown up several years ago. That was full of pilots and other aircrew, and again we entered into this process where…

25:30 It was the stage where there were a lot of pilots in England and we expected to go straight onto training and so on. Now, from the time we arrived in Brighton until we left, after having several other moves it took us seven months to get out of the place before we went onto an advanced flying unit. We stayed in Brighton for two months and they really didn't know what to do with us much.

26:00 They gave us a parade and said, "Ok, off you go." Then we went up to the aircrew holding unit at Whitley Bay which was up on Newcastle on Tyne, and they put us through a commando course up there which rather pulled us out of our lethargy, and then we came back to Brighton and we were posted up to Carlisle, up

26:30 in the Lakes District to do a refresher on Tiger Moths, and that sort of got us back a bit into flying. We came back to Brighton again and then we were posted to the Tower, another Tiger Moth drome at Theale which was south of London, so they were trying

27:00 to find things for us to do which was very frustrating because we all wanted to get on with it. Eventually in November – so we'd wasted about seven months – we thought wasted anyway, before I got posted to advanced flying unit up at Turn Hill near Shrewsbury in Shropshire, and we went out to a satellite there and again we struck

27:30 winter and we were flying Miles Masters then which were a bigger aircraft, a single engine aircraft but much easier to handle because it had big wheels, wide wheels, and easy to land and so on. We spent winter there and we had quite a deal of snow and so on. We had about three months there as well, maybe four.

28:00 I met an interesting character there a chap by the name of Tiny Wince. He was a Jamaican, he would have been six foot eleven, I think he was. He was a good mate of mine; we used to go out on leave together a fair bit. He was from Jamaica and he subsequently became the Olympic champion in 1948 for 440 metres, but he was a really laid-back guy because we used to

28:30 be booked out to go out flying and Tiny had been booked out and hadn't come back after two hours and so they decided that something might have gone wrong with Tiny. They looked down the end of the aerodrome and there is an aircraft parked down the end – he had switched it off and gone to sleep so it caught up with him. But he was a real character. I don't know where he went to in his flying after that, but he was quite a character.

29:00 **As you say, those seven months sound like they were quite frustrating?**

Most frustrating. There was a lot going on. We used to go on leave and we used to go down to London and it was the time when the flying bombs were gong on in London and things like that and it was quite

scary stuff and I was in a London street one day and you could hear the things coming across. They were like a

29:30 motor mower putting across and you just prayed that the thing kept going because they would come over and when the motor cut they would do a bit of a further dive. This one cut fortunately directly above me that day, so I was pretty right. One of my mates was on leave when the V2s were coming over. The V1s were the motorised ones, and the V1s were the ones that used to shoot up into the stratosphere

30:00 and then just drop down. He was drinking a beer in a pub one day and one went off and he finished up with the handle of his grog and that was all that was left, so he was pretty lucky. There was a lot of tension around England at that stage because if they'd come on then in their invasion they probably would have been able to just walk through a lot of it, but the

30:30 defences all on the coast and things like that, everybody alerted to it – there were balloons up, and all in all they were in readiness but I don't know whether they would have been able to forestall them. That was the time when the Yanks were starting to send their material in too, and the other thing – you would see these big formations of fortresses go out and the ground used to shake. They were big formations

31:00 and you would see them – they used to fly in a box formation and you would see them coming back and they would never fill up the holes – they would leave the holes where they missed the aircraft and the box would come back with all these holes in it. Quite interesting. The British and Australians at the time used to go over in a single stream and you would hear them going over continuously.

31:30 They were on an individual trek. When we were down at Brighton we were put around to a place at St Ives, which was a little bit further around, and this night we heard gun fire just over the channel and we got up the next morning and a German aircraft had been shot down and the pilot had bailed out, but he finished up in a tree in a cemetery and his chute hadn't opened properly. The aircraft was

32:00 just on a line over our hotel so we realised we were a bit closer than we thought, so these things were a little bit dramatic but of course they really reinforced...The living conditions were the same. The food was very difficult to get – they were on rationing and so on. When we went out to Shropshire and places like that we went up to… near Chester for the OTU [operational training unit], just

32:30 after that, and the people in the country were wonderful. We used to ride out on bikes and they would give you eggs and so on. Generally the food for us was pretty good but it was tough for the people.

So when had you landed in Greenock? Was that early 1944?

Early '44. I started on my AFU [Advanced Flying Unit] in November '44.

33:00 We came out of that in January or thereabouts and then I was posted to an OTU up near Chester. While we were at AFU, they converted us to Spits. There was a Spitfire at the main…We were out on a satellite drome at Condover and the main aerodrome they had a number of Spits,

33:30 and that is where you did your first trip. It was an experience too because all you did was, you were given the layout of the cockpit and you had to learn that and they would put you in and say, "Off you go." Whereas before you always had an instructor there and he'd say, "Ok, this is how you do it." I can remember that very vividly because even though it was only a Spit 5,

34:00 they are easy to take off, and they are really a wonderful aircraft to fly and so easy, but we'd never had power like that before. It was about 1200 horsepower and by the time you get it off and think, "Ah, that is wonderful. Where am I?" you are sort of heading out. You get up there to enjoy that and eventually find your way and then you decide you've got to try and land the thing. As you probably know, the motor is so big when

34:30 it gets down into a landing attitude so that you can't see any more than like that, so you had to do a circuit and lay it on its side and come around and then just eventually straighten it up as you went over the fence. They are so sensitive that a slight adjustment compared with other aircraft you would be going up like this. I remember one poor fellow – he was on his first flight, and

35:00 everybody used to come out of these hangars when the signal was given and you'd think a bloke was in trouble and this guy came down and he virtually got down and he checked it and it was up like this and he did this about five times and by that time all the people were out of the hangars and he finally went 'poop', straight in, but he didn't get injured fortunately.

How was your first landing?

Well, mine wasn't the best either, because I came down and they said, "Now you make sure you

35:30 level out and give yourself plenty of room." And I thought I was ok, and all of a sudden I cut off the motor and I went 'poong' and it went 'poof' and I thought that was not too good, but anyway, it's like everything else – you soon get used to it. You soon have to. They just gave you an initial few hours on the Spit there before you went up to the OTU, and that is where you really had to learn to fly, and

36:00 formation flying and the whole works, gunnery and everything like that. It was much more exciting. We

were well out of the way of things. There was a Mustang base a bit to the left of us over in Wales, so if you saw a Mustang you tried out your skills on the Mustangs. You shouldn't have done it either.

How would you do that?

Well it was an

36:30 unwritten rule that you'd test the Spit against the Mustang. We could always turn inside a Mustang, tighter than a Mustang. Some of our fellows from Canada went there and I think two of them got killed – at least one of them got killed in the Welsh hills. All these hazards were there all the time, although he was unlucky. We used to get direction from the tower if

37:00 you called for a homing direction. We'd never had that facility before and he called for homing and they had a new lass on and she read the direction that he called in from and told him to continue on this course and it should have been in reverse. The poor fellow just went into the hill. So these things happen too.

So you would have mock dogfights?

Yes, that's right. And then you used to have some real ones where

37:30 you were taken up with instructors and things like that, to get used to some experienced blokes and it was quite good. You were really starting to fly then and you realised it was…you were going to start looking after yourself. Then the frustration set in again because we didn't get immediate postings and that was getting very close to the end of the war. And then

38:00 finally we got a posting to 451 and they were up in the Orkney Islands, and it was just around about the end of the war then, so we went up to the Orkney Islands for about two weeks and that was an interesting experience. There was no trees and all the rest of it. Then they brought us down south of London and re-equipped us with new Spit 14s

38:30 which was the five-bladed one, and they were pretty powerful. We stayed down at this place called Lasham for about a month or six weeks, and there was an offer came out from Montgomery. They wanted two people to fly Austers – the war had finished by then and they wanted somebody to fly two Austers

39:00 over to Montgomery's headquarters in Germany, and I was lucky enough to draw the straw on that one. So we took off from southern England and went across to Belgium and stayed there a night and went over to Holland and stayed there a night and then went across to Bremen I think was where we had to go, and then we got a couple of days leave in Brussels which was quite good. While I was away the other pilots were bringing in the new aircraft and my best

39:30 mate…They struck very bad weather and the weather in England was usually pretty terrible and one mate was killed and another one had to bail out, so it was a bit of a shock. We were there until I think it was about September and

40:00 they trained us then on those and the speculation was we were going to come out to the Far East or we were going onto occupation. They took us over on occupation in September. That was an interesting experience. They took us to a drome at Fassberg near Belsen, which was just over the way and so we used to regularly fly over but we didn't get in to see it.

40:30 That was a permanent Luftwaffe base and then they moved us up to Wunstorf, a place up near Hanover, and that was late September. We used to do a lot of formation flying there. On October the 5th , which I remember very well – we used to do a lot of close formation and you'd be a formation

41:00 of twelve, three fours, and I used to generally fly in this Red 2 which is the one directly behind the leader of the squadron, and to give you relief they would put you out into open formation. You would do…instead of all turning like that, one third would go under and the other third would go across the top, and

41:30 so you would move around in that way, much easier. They called us back into close formation and the leader of – was here in Red leader number 2, and so I was catching up here because we were forming up, and the leader over here found himself over there and the shortest space between two points was straight across. The only problem was I was in the middle of it and he cut my tail off at about 1500 feet.

Tape 4

00:32 The purpose of going across on occupation was to display, we were told, to the general populous that we were there, that we were formidable, but we were on display and so we did basically constant close formation and open formation

01:00 just to give ourselves a bit of relief, and it was in one of those one of the members of the squadron got

out of position and he cut across the back of my path as I was forming up and cut my tail off. Fortunately we were only flying at about 1500 feet and I had full motor on to try and catch up and

01:30 so the aircraft went up rather than straight down. We didn't ever have any formal training as far as bailing out and things of that nature, but they did tell us that we had to remember or work out in our mind and think of a routine that if it did happen what we would do, so I used to do that fairly regularly. What you had to do was pull a knob and push the hood away for a start, undo your harness and then lever

02:00 yourself out and get out. That was fine. I was very lucky. It all happened according to plan and I eventually got out. The only trouble is I forgot to pull out my radio connection and it stretched and stretched and, 'whack', it hit me right across the face and gave me a wonderful blood nose, but by the time the chute opened I decided I'd better have a look where

02:30 I was gong to land, so I looked over and there was a big clump of trees coming up. They'd told us, "If you pull one side of the chute you can slide your chute and you'll land elsewhere." and I thought, "Which one will I pull?" So I gave it a tug and fortunately it went the right way and I landed in a ploughed field. Since it was an occupation the kids of the local village – I went down near a little village called Horst in Germany, and all the local kids came racing out.

03:00 I was pretty shattered by that time and I grabbed one of the kids who had a bike and I put the chute on the bike – I had blood everywhere – and we got out on the road and I tried to communicate with them where we are going and so on. So I thought we'd go this way and we headed off, and I looked behind us and coming along is an army truck. I thought, "I hope they speak English," and sure enough it was

03:30 an English army truck and in typical form the fellow on the left hand side leaned out of the car and said, "What happened mate? Did you fall off your bike?" Well did I give him an earful! I'm a fairly moderate sort of guy. Anyway, that was written up in the Wing newsletter that used to be sent out – I've got a copy of that – so they took me down to the army

04:00 depot and gave me a cup of tea which I could hardly hold, and I was eventually picked up and got back to the squadron and found out the fellow who had cut my tail off, I was his second victim – he had knocked somebody else off at another stage in the same way so I didn't see him again. They sent him straight home. Contrary to what happens these days – and I think this is an important point

04:30 for my later story – their theory then was, "Ok, you've got out of it. Have you still got your nerve? Next morning up you go and away you go." And that's what happened. There was no counselling or anything of that nature. I didn't go into hospital or anything like that. I had an examination, of course, but I was very lucky I got out quite unscathed. So that was that part of the story.

Where

05:00 **had the plane gone down?**

I didn't know, but I have an interesting ambition perhaps these days. There was a story on the TV of a chap who went down in Holland or Belgium and he went back to try and find his plane and actually found it. There was a group that you could contact that found the plane. I said to Pam I wouldn't mind going and find out where the thing went.

05:30 There would only be one half of it and the other half would be somewhere else.

So you never had words with the pilot who cut across?

Didn't ever see him again. No. He did that apparently in Belgium or somewhere on a trip. He got away with it. His wing hit my tail and just broke it off, and he tried to bail out and he couldn't get his hood off. So he did land.

06:00 I think I might have seen him once after that but they certainly sent him away very quickly.

When you actually got hit was there any radio contact? Did you have to say, "I am bailing out," or was there no time?

No. I didn't have any time for anything and they all told me after they all thought I've had it. Apparently they thought it was a fair while that I took to get out. I think the thing that saved me was, as I was saying, that I

06:30 was catching up – you had full motor on to catch up and it went up before it spun, and it was spinning and flicking at the top and that's when I got out apparently.

Do you remember what was going through your mind other than getting out?

Just to get out. Just to get out, and then, as I say, it was just so peaceful after I got out and then I decided I'd better go and have a look where I was landing. It is an interesting experience to bail out, in any circumstance I would think.

07:00 It is very quiet and calming, in that way.

What sort of reception did you get from the kids down below?

They were delighted. They were all excited and all the rest of it. Of course I couldn't speak with them, but they kept growing in number and they were all jabbering amongst each other. It was quite fun. They thought it was great.

07:30 **And what about your mates? When you got back to the squadron what sort of…?**

They were just delighted to see me. They had all written me off. I think the first time I tried to get through they were all at lunch and I couldn't get through and I was getting pretty agitated by then. Anyway they eventually picked me up and I got home late in the evening – this was during the morning that it happened, 10 o'clock. I have a few beers at 10 o'clock on the 5th of October.

08:00 **Is it ok if we go back to England for a little while? You were there…D-Day was early June 6th , 1945, so you were there for that build up?**

Yes. We were down south of England and certainly there was a lot more aircraft activity. We didn't actually see the

08:30 army activity because that took place further down towards the coast. We were at Lasham, which was about thirty kilometres south west of London. We were on a drome there doing our preparation. I'd say there was heightened tension in the whole area because at that stage there were less V bombs and all those sorts of things

09:00 coming across. The papers gave us the indication too that there was less activity from the German side of things, although there was still plenty of activity happening in the local areas that we were in. We used to get an occasional aircraft that would drop in that was

09:30 off track or something like that, so the build-up went on probably…We got there in about March so it was a pretty heightened time at that stage. We weren't near the coast but there was plenty going on. The army was the main build-up in that regard. The people in London…

10:00 even over the period before that, we noticed they were pretty stressed because…A lot people don't realise what they went through in their bombing and so on, and we used to go out and see families and girls and things and some of them were really quite, well, affected by the whole thing because that tension had been going on for two or three years. The kids had been sent up to the country

10:30 and all the rest of it, so it did affect them quite a lot.

With D-Day, obviously rumours were floating about before that. Do you recall anything about that period?

Not particularly. No, we didn't get to know that particularly. I think the whole thing was pretty

11:00 well kept secret and apart from some noticeable increased activity there was, naturally, no publicity or anything of that nature to even inform us. Even within the air force circles there was no talk about it at that stage. I admired the English, the way they

11:30 put up with things and they all got on with the job. A lot of people criticise them but they did a pretty good job and they did it pretty well.

When D-Day sort of happened, how full were the skies at that point?

Yes, well there was certainly plenty of aircraft around and these bombing raids, they were…The thing that still impresses me is the way the Yanks…They used to go on long

12:00 bombing raids to Berlin but they'd continue and then they had all the others that went to the coast and all the coastal defences and so on. There were just so many aircraft you became blasé about the whole thing. There were all these aircraft everywhere, and it's amazing the number of aerodromes that there were around that southern part of England. Amazing. One of the fellows that was in our…

12:30 that was on 453 – he was down at Lasham, or further down at Limb, and he took off into a circuit on his first trip and he obviously got lost and landed somewhere else, and one of the great jokes was that they didn't know where he'd got to. They didn't see him again, and they found that he was sent home by his

13:00 CO because he couldn't find his own aerodrome. I guess it was a pretty anxious time but it was all fairly tense at that stage and it wasn't until the thing broke that we knew why it was in such a state.

You were saying how later on you

13:30 **were aware that war was ending. Was that the turning point there and then? Is that the realisation that…?**

Yes, that we weren't going to get there, but then they said as soon as we got to the squadron they said, "We're going to send you out to the Far East," so that had a new hope. That was pretty frustrating to go through all of that for two years and then get to the stage where

14:00 it was all over before you got there.

How did you fill your time in Brighton, two months in Brighton, only reporting in the morning?

The pub was pretty attractive for a lot of them. We used to go down on day trips and down the coast a bit and things like that. It was an interesting sort of place. There were markets and so on and then other days you would just hang around the hotel. In fact we went for one swim, I think, in Brighton on their

14:30 pebble beach, but that was all because there were all the fences just at the back of us.

In that sort of situation where there's lethargy and boredom, people tend to get up to a bit of mischief sometimes, Aussies especially.

Oh yes.

Can you tell us a bit about that sort of stuff?

Well I wasn't very much involved in all of it, but there used to blokes

15:00 put in solitary confinement for getting drunk and upsetting people and crashing up things. Again, I was a quiet type but I didn't get involved in any of those shows and neither did my immediate friend. I was basically with the chap from Wonthaggi a fair bit then.

15:30 He was later posted to bombers so we parted our ways there, but I used to see a fair bit of him at that stage down in southern England. One of the things was the build up of pilots through the Empire Training Scheme and through the people that were...I mean they weren't having the losses then that were happening earlier in the war. This mate of mine who

16:00 came across with me on the first trip across the Pacific, he was on the Pathfinders by then. I mean, he'd been in it and was onto the Pathfinders stage. That was the time they needed more pilots but, of course, once people got onto squadrons it was hard to drag them off too. They didn't want to come off. It was the thrill of the thing I guess.

You mentioned you did a commando course?

16:30 Yes.

What was that experience like?

Well, they used to certainly toughen us up a bit. They used to take us out on long route marches in full gear. I think the most interesting exercise was, they took us out, they stripped us of all our identity – and, of course, this was a fairly tense time, early '44, about April, May '44 – they

17:00 stripped us of all our identity and took us out about ten, fifteen miles away and said, "You've got to get back and not be challenged and picked up by people," and all the rest of it, and so you had to employ all the skills. It was just at dusk so we all headed out and we were dropped at various places. They did the exercise twice. They had half the people inside trying to

17:30 stop us getting in, and the other half were out. One of my mates who was a very ingenious guy and he was a very good imitator – I don't know where he got it but he got a farmer's jacket and a farmer's cap that they wear, and he came into the station and he complained bitterly to the guard that all these guys had been running wild over his farm and could he see the

18:00 commander. So anyway – and he had the accent. He picked up the accent well – he was a very good imitator. Anyway, they gave us crackers and we were supposed to use these crackers to show that we'd got inside the camp again, and so he got in and he eventually was given an audience with the CO and he was going crook at the CO and took out a cigarette and lit it and pulled out the cracker and dropped it under the CO's table.

18:30 The poor old bloke nearly passed out, but he was given a great commendation for his initiative there. But what happened with us, we were going pretty well and we got a bit way laid, three or four of us, by a pub, and it cut out at a certain time but we then got almost into the camp again. They used to take us on long walks,

19:00 hikes and full equipment and stuff, and then phys. ed. and all the rest of it. It was called an Aircrew Holding Company, in disguise for the commando course. We were pretty keen to get on with it then. That was after three months – we were still attached to Brighton but then we had the flying on Tiger Moths

19:30 and the tower duty and another month or two wait before we got onto the AFU and then OTU. But anyway, I suppose it's a good thing in one way.

I've got a picture of that guy behind enemy lines speaking English with a German accent and getting away with it. You mentioned the tower duty?

That was just controlling...It was only a Tiger Moths' drome,

20:00 and we just had to give the ok for people to come in and land or take off with the ‘very’ gun over the lamp, and then if they were coming in when they shouldn’t have been, in the wrong direction or something, we just used to have to shoot off the very, so it was pretty boring but I suppose they had to do something with us. Most of them…We weren’t the only ones. There were

20:30 lots of others all around doing the same sort of thing, scattered all over the place. Perhaps the other big change I should mention was the build-up of the Yanks in England, and there was certainly plenty of them as the time went on. They had very big bases down in the south west of London and over towards the southeast. That is where all the big bases were and they, of course, they went on leave

21:00 and very extravagantly so and of course with all this strife here and there...

Between the Americans and everyone else?

Yes. Some blokes, because they had all the money to spend. We were fairly limited on our funding, not that we spent much anyway. They used to take all the girls at the dances and stuff like this, so it was a different life.

21:30 **You mentioned in passing the WAAFs [Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (British)]? What sort of presence did they have in the bases?**

They did a very good job really. A lot of them were in the ops [operations] rooms. Others were in the cooking duties and clerical work so there were usually quite a number of them.

22:00 There were drivers and they relieved basically the men for other jobs, more physical jobs, but they did an excellent job. There were not only girls in the WAAFs. I remember meeting a girl in the Land Army. There was a lot that went into the Land Army and they helped on the farms and helped produce the materials because

22:30 food and so on was pretty scarce for a number of years there. They all sort of hopped in and helped. Lots of them were in munitions and a lot of other civilian jobs which saved men doing them.

Did you get to know any personally?

Yes. We moved around a bit but I did know

23:00 one girl when we were up near Chester. Nothing happened with that one, but when I came back to London I did get to know one lass and it became quite serious and she said, “I’m not going to Australia.” And I said, “I’m not staying in this cold place.” But anyway, we kept in touch for years and in fact when I went over to teach in America

23:30 later on, I brought my family back through England, and we met her family. She subsequently passed away but it was quite an interesting friendship, but it emphasised to me that it would be very difficult to go and live in another country or ask somebody to live in another country, and that is exactly what my daughter did. I tried to give her my point of view but it doesn’t cut much with love.

24:00 In some ways I think she has regretted it. She regretted it in her early years but she has got three children now and that is her life, but it is a big step to take and again I am very glad I didn’t sort of go on with it at all.

What did she do, this girlfriend you had in England?

I think she

24:30 was only in an office. She wasn’t in the forces at all. She lived just down near Twickenham where they have the rugby. I remember it very well because I walked from there into London one night virtually because I couldn’t get a tram or a taxi so it was a fair way out. That was war I guess.

25:00 **Were you hearing much news of your brother? He had gone to New Guinea, if I’m not mistaken?**

Yes, that’s right. He used to write to me occasionally but my mother was the medium. She used to give me the news and I used to write regularly to her. He had a pretty rough time. He got wounded and his mates were killed around him and he got malaria, of course, and things were pretty bad, really, for those fellows. He came back and

25:30 he got attacks of malaria for years after and he just didn’t seem to be able to lift himself out of the effects of the war. He got married and ran a very successful farm for many years, but he always seemed to have something that he never ever got out of himself or never ever told us about and so on. From being a fellow who was

26:00 open and happy and all this he was…I suppose you would say he was depressed with the whole issue. It affected him quite seriously. It was just hard to tell unless you are in those situations yourself how it would affect you. I had a situation,

26:30 it did affect me. I went back, got back here in 1946, mid ’46 and went back to teaching, and then I went

on to a Commonwealth Reconstruction Training course and did a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne with an exemption of French which encouraged me to do it, and that was ’49 I finished that.

27:00 In 1950 I was posted to South Melbourne Technical College which is a tough old place. I was down there teaching maths and science. I had one maths subject in my degree because I was interested in maths. I had done no science since I did my Intermediate and here I was trying to teach chemistry. That wasn’t particularly successful but

27:30 during the latter part of that year I became ill, and I guess it might have been a build up of a number of things and I became rather disinterested in life itself I guess. I wasn’t married; I was engaged at that stage. I finished up going to repat and I spent about

28:00 five months in Heidelberg, and it was diagnosed as delayed shock. I heard all sorts of names for it, but… I told you that after the prang I was told to go up and fly the next day. I think that I would have been better to perhaps, on today’s thing, have counselling and so on, but it was a total collapse for me at that stage.

28:30 Having been through a uni course I thought I would be covered for everything but it certainly wasn’t the case, and so I decided – I was in hospital for about six or seven months and had pretty severe treatment but fortunately I came out of it. And this is the link that I was saying before –

29:00 I really found it difficult to know what to do and how to focus on life, and it was back to my early religious background that sort of helped me. Fortunately I came out of that and I changed my job. I had

29:30 a period of superannuation where I didn’t have to go back teaching and they assessed that I should have two years off before I went back to teaching, and I decided that I was probably well enough to do something, so I went and did work at Myers as an internal auditor, because I’d done some work in my degree – I did an economics major and so on – and I went into the internal audit department there.

30:00 And it just sort of gave me a settling down period although I had another blow there because I copped rheumatic fever at that stage, so I don’t know quite what it was but it all sort of built up and caught up with me at that stage. Anyway, I was put to bed for about six weeks and I eventually got over it. I had a very good specialist and he looked after me pretty well and I have had no reaction at all since then.

30:30 I came out of that pretty well and when I went back to teaching I went out to Swinburne and I decided that I would probably do something in the accounts area of teaching which I did in the junior school at Swinburne for a start. That sort of got me going again and I had planned a combined

31:00 arts and commerce degree, and so I picked up the commerce degree and I went and did some refresher training in accounting and so that started to build me up again. At the same time I was giving a lot of introspection as to why did I get out of the aircraft and how did it happen and why did it happen, and that

31:30 troubled me quite a bit and then again that brought me back to a more religious background. I wasn’t religious but I was just trying to find something to hang onto. It also gave me a desire to say to myself, “I have been spared to do this. You had better make something of your life.” I then got a desire to do what I did and do it well.

32:00 I was transferred from the junior school to the senior school and they used to have senior techs at that stage, and they had a diploma course in secretarial practice and I taught accounting and economics and business in that part of the course. Then it struck me that the only way that you could do an accountancy course was through Melbourne University, or as it was

32:30 then at Monash, but there was no real practical application to accounting. I decided that I would have a look at developing a diploma in commerce, which would be a specialisation in accounting only. I was given permission. I was ridiculed by the engineers – how could you bring an accounting course which is an unrecognised course into the tech?

33:00 Anyway I had a very understanding director and he encouraged me and we started off with about fifteen students, about twelve of whom were Asian overseas students, and it started to go quite well. That was in 1955 and I stayed a lecturer until 1957 while this course developed. In 1957 I took over head of the department of that

33:30 job and by the time I left in 1962 we had built up about seven hundred and fifty students. There used to be only a part-time accountancy course at Swinburne in the evening, and I came across the idea of bringing out people on part-time day release. They used to get five hours from public service and things like that to do study, so

34:00 we built up big classes in these and then we also had the full-time going quite well, so I built up from me being the only individual teacher there to I think I finished up with about twelve staff and seven hundred and fifty students plus a lot of part-timers who helped us. That was when I really got the drive to really do something and create something and I felt I was getting on the track to do it. It was a strange feeling but I had great ambition at that stage and

34:30 it just sort of turned the whole thing around for me. I had a great emphasis on the fact that I was never

going to go back near Heidelberg again because I had seen enough of that place, although I did go and have regular checks but nothing else occurred – it was really just a total episode that I had – and

35:00 so went onto the latter part of my life. That was a pretty distressing period in my life but it was the discipline of growing up and the discipline of the air force that helped me through this, plus the sprinkling with the background – you can call it religious but perhaps a moral background and so on. It helped me

35:30 and it has meant that I have had strong links with the church ever since, and I still continue to do so.

You were achieving all this at a pretty young age?

Yes.

Mid-twenties?

I was a bit older than that. I became head of the department about thirty-odd I think,

36:00 about thirty-three, and then at that stage the job at RMIT came up and that is when I applied for RMIT head of accountancy there. Again they had a big night school. They had three and a half thousand there in the night school and they ran Melbourne High School

36:30 totally for four nights a week, just as a part-time operation. I got that job and then I introduced all the same things: a full-time course and a part-time day course.

I really appreciate you sharing that with us, and how you recognised having to bail out and then going back to fly the next day obviously

37:00 **must have had…?**

It made no difference to me at the time but I recognised after that it was just such a traumatic episode I guess.

You said you had six months in Heidelberg. What was your treatment in Heidelberg?

I had insulin treatment, which is not very pleasant. They wake you at five in the morning with a big needle about this long, and they

37:30 put you into a deep sleep from about six o'clock until about eleven, and then they feed you sugar and that brings you round quite unaffected, but it is to – the theory was to rest your mind and

38:00 all the rest of it, but it takes you down pretty deeply because…I don't know whether you've heard of near-death experiences. What happens when people are in car accidents or something of that nature and they go into hospital or picked up after the trauma and then they talk about going down the tunnel to the light, or they're

38:30 up above the operating table seeing what is going on. One of the times that I was under, I saw this tunnel effect. That really also made me think a lot about my life. I can remember going down the tunnel and there's this bright light and it really drags you down towards it, and I kept saying, "I don't want to go. I'm too young.

39:00 I don't want to go." And at that stage they brought me around, but that again was pretty traumatic. I have heard people discuss it, and there are books on it – I read something on it. Some people say, "It's just your mind reacting," but it might be an interesting thing to compare in the ultimate, mightn't it?

39:30 **We were talking about England. Is that OK if we go back there? You were flying Spitfires eventually. What was it like to get in the cockpit of one of those and**

40:00 **finally fly a Spitfire, something that you'd been longing to do for a good period?**

Well, as I said, the first flight was one of just making sure you got up and down and then trying to adjust, but after a while you find that…The desire to fly a Spitfire was the ultimate at that stage because it was just such a wonderful aircraft to fly and it was so responsive. It had very few vices and at that stage

40:30 it was one where you could turn it very easily. It had all the attributes of a wonderful machine, and so I was absolutely delighted to do it. The more experience you got with them, the easier it seemed to come, although when we went onto the 14s, they had the nasty habit of being…they were so powerful, relatively, and it was still in the same

41:00 fame, that if you didn't put on the proper settings for your take-off, it had so much torque that it would swing you completely to the left like that when you started up the runway, so you had to be very careful to get it set up properly before you took off. One of the things that I did when we were down at Lasham and we were checking out and getting ready to go to Germany –

41:30 I thought I would try it out just on slow rolls so I took my finger and I did seventeen consecutive slow rolls just like that with my finger. That is how easy it was to fly, and it also had the power. Most times

when you do a slow roll in the Tiger Moth, as soon as you start to roll the thing drops way below the horizon like that. A Harvard, you can just keep it up there where a Spit,

42:00 it had the power just to stay there. It was just such a wonderful aircraft.

Tape 5

00:31 **So you are in Orkney. That is where you joined the squadron?**

Yes. After two weeks we went down to Lasham, which is just south of London, and spent about two months there converting the aircraft and getting the others flown in, to get all the aircraft, the two squadrons in, and

01:00 then we went over to Germany in September.

What period of time were you at Lasham?

It would be about two months I think, six weeks to two months, somewhere about that.

This is leading up to the end of the war is it?

The war would have finished by then.

01:30 Lasham - 7th of July. July ’45 - Lasham, to Germany on 13th of September, so it is two months, and that was when I took the trip over to Germany to deliver the Auster, just a little light aircraft.

02:00 We went over to Germany in the September and then October was when I bailed out and then we went to Wunstorf at that time which is near Hanover after coming from Fassberg where we only spent a couple of weeks.

Where were you based when you first went to Germany?

A place called Fassberg

02:30 which was just near Belsen camp, and that is when we used to fly over and have a look although you couldn't see that much of it. We only stayed there two weeks and then we went on to Wunstorf where we stayed the rest of the time except for the month we went up to Berlin. We went up to Berlin in late November and came back in late December.

Perhaps we can go through each of the places. Fassberg, what

03:00 **were you doing there?**

That was really just our initial base I believe and it was a permanent Luftwaffe aerodrome and it was I suppose a staging post to where we were permanently placed which was Wunstorf near Hanover and that was where we stayed. That was our main base for the two squadrons.

03:30 All of the time we were at Wunstorf we were doing all these sort of show-and-tell. There wasn’t much individual flying at all, it was mainly all formation flying – just fly over the cities and show them that we are still around and all that sort of thing. There wasn’t much relaxation as far as the flying was concerned.

04:00 That was pretty difficult, close formation particularly.

Were you doing any flying out of Fassberg?

Just a little bit I guess. It doesn’t register very much at all. We just arrived there and settled in a bit and they moved us on.

I am trying to get a picture of what Germany was like at that stage.

04:30 **You were there really during quite a unique period, a historical period?**

Taking the people first – we were near Hanover which was fairly heavily bombed. We didn’t get a lot of adverse reaction from them. I think most of them were…the impression we got most of them were glad it was over. We had German ladies in the mess and places like that, and

05:00 they seemed quite resigned to that fact. Perhaps the greater impressions we got were when we got to Berlin because we were right in the city there. We went to the Gatow airport where they carried out that big airlift later on – that was between late November and late December – and

05:30 Gatow was in the British sector and Berlin was divided into four sectors: British, French, American and Russian. Our sector was next to the Russian sector and we were not allowed to fly out of our area into their area at all, whereas you could be reasonably free elsewhere around the city.

06:00 **You couldn't fly into their air space?**

You couldn't go into their air space at all. They wouldn't allow us. They were quite hostile. They were the hostile ones when we got there and when we were there. I will give you an example. We used to go into…First of all, all the facilities and the messes and so on were much the same, and they were still well stocked and all the rest of it, but we used to go into a night club in

06:30 Berlin where they said we could go and told us we could go. We used to go in by truck from Gatow. It was quite a trip, probably ten or fifteen kilometres in our terms, and there was a lot of traffic on the road and this night one of the trucks going in – it wasn't ours, I think they said it was a British truck – brushed a Russian transport and their transport was very primitive, it was mainly

07:00 horse-drawn, and apparently that truck didn't stop, so the Russians set up a machine-gun on the back and sprayed the next truck that came through and that is our allies and that is what happened. When we went into town we met the Russians – they were in the same sort of places we were. All I could say – and I don't want to be too disparaging – is that they were uncouth

07:30 and lacked any sort of social skills at all, and I'll give you a crude example. They used to wash their hands in the toilet and things like that. That's not a story; that's what happened. In fact there was quite a bit of animosity between the Yanks. We were all in the same area, the Yanks and the British and the Australians, and we weren't involved in it, but a Russian soldier was killed one

08:00 night in there, murdered I suppose, so that really heightened the tension too, but we didn't get a really good impression from them at all. But still, you've got to keep it in perspective. They'd had a very rugged time getting through, and they had been hammered down by the Germans and they had this (UNCLEAR) policy so life wasn't easy for them at all.

08:30 When you come to walk around the city there was virtually no building you could see that had any windows in it. They were all completely bombed out, and these people used to scuttle up out of the cellars. That is the only place they had to live. It was a devastating scene and I've got albums there and I can show you the pictures of the

09:00 before and afters, and they're just revealing, just what the devastation was from the bombing. I guess Berlin wasn't the worst bombed place of the whole lot but there was nowhere they could get refuge at all except in the cellars and deep underground. So that was the buildings. The people, as I say, didn't show any great animosity to us at all.

09:30 I would say that they were completely depressed and beaten down by the whole process and they were struggling to survive and even live, so that's when the black market came up. That was carried on down at the Brandenburg Gate which was the junction between the east and the west of Berlin, and that was away from

10:00 the area where we stayed. We were out in the other section, not in East Berlin but in the western section. We were issued with cigarettes; it was a thousand or two thousand a month and one of my good habits was I didn't smoke, so I was able to do a reasonable amount of bargaining. So I picked up a very good camera at that stage and got a lot of photos, but it was just

10:30 fascinating to see the operations down at the Brandenburg Gate. It was just quite open the whole thing.

Can you give me an example of the trading?

When you get people who are desperate and want to eat they will trade cameras, they will trade anything that they can possibly…heirlooms and all of their family finery and so on.

11:00 When you think about what most of us were after was just a camera or something of that nature because that is what we could bring back, and I guess it helped the people to survive.

What did you trade for the camera?

About four thousand cigarettes I think, something of that nature.

11:30 It didn't cost me very…it didn't cost me at all but others who were heavy smokers – and that was the time when probably 80 or 90 per cent of the squadron smoked – they had to preserve their cigarettes or not do too much buying. That was one of the aspects. We used to go around and have a look at the Chancellery and that was devastated of course, and

12:00 where Hitler killed himself and things like that. They were all places that we went to.

You went there in an official capacity?

No, we were just on our leaves. We used to go in and have a walk around. I don't think we flew very much at the weekends but again we had to put on our displays, particularly up there, flying formations and everything that implicated…

12:30 but we were not given a lot of freedom to do any individual flying because some of the boys were quite keen to take on the MiGs which wasn't a very good idea, the Russian MiGs, just for sport.

So the MiGs are flying, you guys are flying Spitfires, so who else was up there?

Well there were the Americans, they'd have their Lightnings and

13:00 Kittyhawks and things like that, and the British had much the same as we did.

This show of strength?

It is a bit strange isn't it?

Who were you showing off to?

Well it was just the populous I guess, the population, to show that even though you might think it's not over, it's all over. That is my interpretation of it, that

13:30 it was a desire to indicate that the whole business was over and they would have to sort themselves out. We didn't go into anything like the people on the ground in the army. They used to patrol their tanks around and all that sort of thing, so ours was up in the air. That's about the only interpretation I could put on it.

So did you have all four armies

14:00 **patrolling on the ground?**

I didn't know that I could say that exactly but there used to be tanks and so on patrolling. Where they came from I didn't recognise but one distinct thing was we just didn't see anything from the Russian side in the ground patrolling. They had their, as I say,

14:30 their old transports and all the rest of it. We didn't know what they were taking in in their transports either – it may have been just people going into the city because we would just go by in the truck and notice them.

Were you able to go into the other sectors?

We didn't, except that we went in from West Berlin into East Berlin but I am not sure who owned the fully eastern sector,

15:00 but when we went down there we went in with a covered truck and we did have someone in the back with a rifle and that is how…We went through the Brandenburg Gate and we just went 'round to have a look and see what was going on and they said, "Well you'd better take some armed guards with you," so that's what we did and fortunately there was nothing happened. They gave the impression in the East that they were just leaving things as they were

15:30 and they weren't…they were more hostile than those in Western Germany.

They would have seen the Russians in there?

Yes, that's right. So we didn't look for any real trouble at all. They didn't seem to come through the Brandenburg Gate into the British section at all. In other words, I believe there was a pretty fair standoff even at that stage. When we were at Gatow,

16:00 they were having the Moscow conference and one of the Skymasters landed at our drome as they were going through to Moscow. Things hadn't been settled out at all then. This hostility in the Russian sector was significantly different. We had no

16:30 problems as you would probably expect from the other sectors at all. Getting up close to the Russian people who were there, they were just people pushed into the army I presume and not knowing anything much else, because they would have even if they were eighteen, they would be twenty two or twenty three at that stage and know nothing else.

I understand the Germans were very fearful of the Russians. They were very worried about the Russians…

17:00 Yes.

getting there first and what had been left in the hands of the Russians. Did you see any kind of discrimination by the Russians towards the German people?

No, we didn't come across any at all. We didn't travel outside the aerodrome a lot though, and we didn't see it when we were going around the streets on our own, mainly because

17:30 the Russians weren't there to discriminate against them.

Did you hear anything?

No. Of course there was a big fuss when this fellow was murdered in the city but it didn't reflect on us at all. Presumably it was the Yanks. That is what we heard anyway.

Was there any press coverage at the time in Berlin?

No, I don’t think so.

18:00 **Media coverage?**

No it was all…That was probably about four or five months after the end of the war and the way things looked there wasn't a habitable business building to be seen and people in the main were just trying to survive, and it wasn’t until the aid started to come to them later on that they did start to rebuild.

18:30 At the end the Russians were not too happy to let anybody see what was going on and for many years after we understand, or from what I learnt they didn't do much about cleaning up the East at all, Eastern Berlin. That is about the picture that we got from it.

Now that the aerodrome was near your base, what were the conditions like

19:00 **out there? What state were they?**

It was first-class. It was a permanent base and the only thing probably that reminded us of the war were the graves in the forestry and around the mess and the buildings. It was winter and it was pretty cold so we didn’t sort of go out too far.

19:30 **Were there any German aircraft at that aerodrome?**

I didn’t indicate but at both Wunstorf and we saw them at Fassberg, there were piles and piles of damaged Messerschmitts, [UNCLEAR], all JU [Junkers], all the rest of it, [UNCLEAR], and I mean big piles. I’ve got pictures of them which show them all piled up there, just junk.

20:00 Whether they did that – well they wouldn’t have a lot of time to do that. It must have been done when the aircraft came back and they were just dumped I guess instead of trying to repair them. Another thing I should indicate, we were only allowed to fly when we were going up to Berlin and back to Berlin. There was a corridor and you had to stay on the corridor from Magdeburg up to

20:30 Berlin, and you had to stay on the corridor otherwise you could get into the Russian sector. The Russian sector extended much more than just to Berlin itself at that stage. None of the wartime agreements had been reached at all. It was a pretty serious job because also the ground staff

21:00 going up had to go through all these roadblocks all the way up. I didn’t go through that. The pilots, we flew over it so we didn’t see it, but some tales from the ground staff, they weren't very pleasant, because they’d get pulled up and then challenged and then they would go another few kilometres and the same sort of thing would happen, and it was a very slow trip for them.

21:30 **Even though they were travelling down this corridor?**

Yes.

So the Russians were suspecting them?

They are a suspicious group. They were a suspicious crowd as to what was happening. I don’t know, maybe that came from their upbringing or their treatment or something of that nature but they certainly kept all of that up all the time they went from

22:00 Magdeburg, right up.

There must have been challenges to their attitude in some ways. You mentioned before one of the pilots taking on the MiGs?

Yes. Well that was just our reaction to their confining us, so I never ever saw one but some of the others said, “We saw one.

22:30 We tried to tempt him but nothing happened, so we decided we had better get out.” It was just the reaction of the boys to their restrictions that they put on us.

So “tempt,” as in flying to the Russian sector?

Yes. I think I probably saw one or two Russian planes up at the time I was up, that’s about all, but others said, “We saw one and we followed him ‘round a bit,

23:00 but he didn’t respond,” so they decided they’d get out. They probably had instructions to shoot – that was the implication. I am only just saying that off the record. That was our implication.

Were there incidents that you can tell us, hostilities?

No specific incidents with our group at all.

You talked about when they

23:30 **opened fire on the truck?**

On the truck. When you are in a group visiting you don’t get to know the scuttlebutt around the place as

to what's happening and what becomes of these sorts of things, and we were only there for a month anyway. From the reading of the meetings and so on there was a fair bit of tension even at the top level. You can imagine that there would be pretty definite

24:00 protests and a fair bit of haggling went on at the final meetings. Potsdam followed the Russian meetings and that is where the final break up, cut up went.

Were you being briefed each day on what you would be doing that day?

Not really, no. From what I can recall we didn't do

24:30 a great deal of flying but when we did it was pretty solid because what we used to have to do was virtually keep in close formation all the way around – it was just sort of a circuit like that – whereas when we got back to Wunstorf and places like that, instead of staying in this close formation – I mean nearby, the guy is just there in the other plane. There's one there and there's one behind and there's one in front, and that's where I used to fly, sort of up the front.

25:00 It's not much fun. You really do find it very exhausting. When you could go out in open formation then you can go out and you stay in your fours and you've got more space between you. There was no particular briefing. There were a few other medicos and things like that who used to brief us occasionally, but that was for another purpose. A few used to go out

25:30 and enjoy themselves I suppose. Food, it was a very compelling need, I suppose you'd say. Food for survival and the young ladies, and the bars of chocolate that the Yanks would bring in and everybody brings in.

So you are talking about prostitution?

Yes.

And food was the currency?

Yes.

26:00 Money wasn't any good to them when they were starving.

Was it common? Was it rife?

I wouldn't say it was rife, but I knew people in our squadron who had partaken of it. They used to get in the bar and brag about it a bit and things like that. You can't tell whether it was all true or not but at least it was sufficient to indicate that it went on.

26:30 **Was there a dedicated red light area?**

No. There was this Fatma Club, I think it was, was the club that they used to go to and the population used to come there. The girls used to come there and the others used to be out in the street.

It was like a nightclub?

Yes. That's what I said before, that all of the

27:00 drinks and all the rest of it from the German Luftwaffe supplies were still there. Most of us did a good deal to try and empty it out but we weren't successful. They were well stocked. Champagne was the order of the day most of the time.

And music? Did they have music?

Yes. Dancing and music.

27:30 **Live music?**

Yes, I think they did. I've got a photograph; yes, they did have live music, because a lot of the Germans as I say were very relieved when the whole thing was over, and they were trying to get back to sort of normal living but the scope was very limited. Apart from the limited number of markets and shops, there was no

28:00 businesses that were operating that you could see. There were no sort of government jobs in the government section; a lot of that dissipated completely. A lot of people who were in the Nazi area were attempting to disguise their identity because they didn't want to be picked up as people who…

28:30 war criminals and so on. We were warned not to put ourselves into compromising positions in relation to testing or giving cheek to people and so on, and to treat the civilians as civilians. They kept us pretty straight down the line I guess, but

29:00 boys will be boys as I've indicated.

What about the surrendered German army? Where were all those men?

They faded away. They weren't around when we were there. I guess they got out of their army clothes

and went back into civilian clothes that they could find, but I didn't see one German in uniform.

29:30 That was four or five months later, so whether they'd gone back to their hometowns or what, I don't know. There was certainly none around Berlin. I don't think there were even any policeman that we saw. Most of the areas in Berlin like the Brandenburg Gate – they had the Russians on the Brandenburg Gate, because they were protecting the border to go in.

30:00 We didn't go out into any other parts at all because we were confined within this city of Berlin overall. No, the army just dissipated I guess.

Were there many young civilian men on the streets?

No. Very, very few. They were mainly…The ones you saw on the streets were mainly older people or younger people, and

30:30 predominantly females so there was a great loss of the male population and, as I say, whether they went out of the city or not I am not sure but they were certainly not around when we were there.

No one was doing any kind of reconstruction?

No. They hadn't really started. They'd done a bit of cleaning up on the western side

31:00 but nothing very much at all, and they'd done nothing whatsoever in the east and they didn't for several years after, from what I read. They got on with it in the west as time went on and there was plenty to clean up too. It was the buildings that were so devastated that was the most impressionable thing. I mean, you would come to a big building

31:30 and there wasn't one window in it and there were bits blown off here and there. It was just as though the bombing had occurred and they had perhaps cleaned up a bit around it so that the traffic could get through, and that was about it.

Yeah, I've seen footage about after the war, where I think they've cleaned the streets, but just every single building in the street. You read stories that

32:00 **(UNCLEAR). So how did people make…You said they were living in basements and coming out into the streets. Were there different areas of the city for different kinds of trades, for example? I mean there was the Brandenburg Gates for black marketeering. Was there evidence of that where people were starting to establish…?**

No, I couldn't say there was because my, I suppose,

32:30 and ours was a fairly limited look at Berlin. We were there for a month, we did some flying, we used to go into the club a couple of nights a week or thereabouts and by the time we did a couple of trips around, there was not much more that we saw than over the month, and then we were back down to Wunstorf again, near Hanover. Certainly

33:00 the impression was the number of males, young males particularly, on the streets was very limited. It was most unusual to see such a disparity between the older people and the quite younger people.

Was there a hospital? Was the Red Cross running a hospital?

I don't remember. I didn't come across one.

33:30 We didn't have much to do with anything like that. I'm sorry to be so vague on it, but we really didn't see a lot outside the aerodrome apart from these occasional visits.

And the club, was that the only club in town?

It was the only one we went to. I couldn't say

34:00 whether there were others or not, but it used to attract the British, the Americans and an occasional Russian member, so I guess there weren't too many around.

Did you say an occasional Russian?

Yes, well there weren't a lot of Russians. I suppose I saw, over the period of the months I was there I probably saw half a dozen, but remember that was within the Western sector.

34:30 I don't know, they could have had their bad experiences and the Yanks weren't too tolerant I must admit.

That's what you saw? What, would there be a fight or…?

I couldn't say that I saw any fights, but we saw the result of the fight when this fellow died and that caused a tremendous skirmish. It would be wrong of me to emphasise the Yanks too much, but they did have

35:00 that reputation.

What, for picking a fight?

Oh well, if they don't get what they want, if they can't go in and take what they want they do pick up a fight, or somebody stopping them getting what they want. Yeah.

You said at the Brandenburg Gates people were bringing their personal possessions and

35:30 **family heirlooms and trading. How extensive was it? Was it a lot of people?**

Oh yes.

Was it a big marketplace?

Yes. It was like a marketplace, probably as big as Victoria Market, but not as organised of course because you used to have to make your deals and you never ever knew…I was just trying to think whether there were any policemen about there, but I don't think so – but there were more individual deals because if you wanted

36:00 something that I had as a German citizen, you'd be offering the money or the cigarettes which were the currency at that stage. Quite a few, probably up to three or four hundred, and other deals would go on around the streets.

When you went up to

36:30 **Wunstorf**

We went back to Wunstorf, down near Hanover. Yes, and that was near a big lake, Steinhuder Lake and by this time the weather was getting better. It was winter when we were up in Berlin and then we came back in January at Wunstorf, and there used to be quite a bit of flying between

37:00 Wunstorf and back to England and one of our squadron leaders was killed on the way back because the weather clamped down on him and that was it. The danger was always there if you weren't careful and he ran into a fog or something and into a hill.

Was that…?

No, it was individual. It wasn't our squadron leader, it was the other 453 Squadron leader

37:30 and we don't quite know quite why he was going back but they seemed to think he had some purpose for going back. He was a jeweller in everyday life. There was a story that he'd acquired what he wanted and was going to dispose of it back there but that would be cruel to say that was true. He was killed in mid-January and about the 19th of January we were called back.

38:00 There was agitation of a lot of people who wanted to go home that had increased over the Christmas period. That sort of emphasised home again, and so we pulled out on 19th of January. That is a bit of a story, because we took off after a very big party and 453 took off first and they were told to get into close formation and nobody would do it

38:30 because they were accusing each other of being not clear in the head. So they straggled off. They were supposed to put on another show for the station. Our bloke got up in the air…Before we got off he said, "I'm going to put you in open formation." He said, "For goodness sake keep a straight line." I didn't drink much, it didn't worry me. We put on a bit better

39:00 show and we got down to [UNCLEAR] in Holland and one of the first group pilots run off the runway and got bogged, and there was a bit of a question mark about that. That was quite a humorous stage of it. We then came in and we landed at the same aerodrome and the others just took off as we were landing. Our next stop was England and when we

39:30 took off and we got over the continent a bit, you could hear all this radio talk saying, "Where are we? Can't see a thing." and what had happened, a fog had come in and blanketed England completely and one of the things that…Our aircraft had what you call local crystals and they couldn't call any widespread distance in England

40:00 and they could only virtually call straight down and round and they were trying to call the aerodromes and see where they were. I mean they could've been flying out over the North Sea. Our leader who was very sensible said, "OK. We're going into Manston. You're going to land in formation." We just got to Manston – it was a very big runway at Manston – so we landed three abreast, got up the end of the runway and it just

40:30 fogged in like that. You couldn't see a yard in front of you, so we were very lucky and we could still hear these guys saying, "Are we going to bail out? Are we all going to bail out? What are we going to do?" Eventually one of the local stations over near Bath heard them and guided them down and they all came down through this pea soup cloud and they landed on an aerodrome

41:00 in the middle of a valley. They were all saved. It was tremendous.

It was remarkable.

Yes it was.

Whoever was guiding them in.

Oh yes, it was a great effort but the fog was so thick that we had leave for twelve days before we could pick up our aircraft at Manston, and then we went back and I think we delivered them finally over

41:30 the other side of London about the end of January, January ’46 and then they gave us some more leave and we went down to a place called Charmy Down which was near where the other boys had landed, down near Bath – there’s a holding depot – before we got onto preparing to come home at that stage. Right up until the finish

42:00 the drama was there.

Tape 6

00:31 One other area that we did get impressions from the civilians was the frauleins working in the messes that we had at both places, but mainly at Wunstorf, and they seemed quite happy because I think that they were getting good meals and they didn’t have the same sort of anxiety as the people in Berlin

01:00 themselves, just trying to find…I mean it was survival for them, but these girls seemed to be quite happy and did their job well. There was non-fraternisation at that stage, certainly there, and nobody would be silly enough to involve themselves there. We had a fair bit of recreation there. One of the things another friend and I, this chap

01:30 from Newcastle and I did, was go out deer hunting in the forests nearby and we went out and we had a butcher in the other squadron – he used to prepare the venison and we used to have venison meals for the squadron. Syd was a very good marksman and we went out one day and there was a herd of them – they used to

02:00 run freely all over the country around the sort of wooded areas, and he shot into this group and got two with the one bullet so we had a big meal that night, because we didn’t get a lot of meat so he was quite popular. They were just the impressions there of the population.

02:30 We didn’t see the farming population or any groups like that at all; we didn’t sort of come into contact with them. I think that’s the main areas that we’ve covered there.

You must have travelled the country roads a bit, did you, to go deer hunting?

No, not really. We used to walk out from the drome. We didn’t get out…I think you could occasionally go into

03:00 Steinhuder, which was a village on the lake, but I didn’t know very many people who actually did that. The forested areas were within walking distance of the aerodrome.

Were those villages being guarded? Would they have been be under guard?

No, not at that stage. They were just sort of trying to return to normal life I guess. When you’ve been –

03:30 from their point of view – when you’ve been at heightened tension and all things happening for five years it would be a very big let down and difficult for them to return to what they would consider to be normal life, because there were no structures or anything of that nature to fit into.

Yeah, and food was in short supply.

Yes, that is right, though

04:00 they weren’t quite so bad in the country as you would imagine. It was the cities that suffered badly.

Were the allies bringing food in for the general population?

Yes, they did fly in food stocks or bring them up the corridor as well. We didn’t have anything to do with that at all but we weren’t particularly aware of it but it was happening. They wouldn’t, lots of people wouldn’t have survived if that hadn’t been the case.

04:30 **And so your duties really were just, as you said, to be seen?**

That’s right.

You had no other duties?

No other official duties, which might seem a bit strange but I guess it was to stop anything else arising. The deadline had been reached and not that they’d let it happen again I guess, or any minor uprisings.

05:00 **I am just wondering how aware you were of what was happening officially amongst the higher**

echelon of the military? Was that something you were conscious of?

Not quite at my level or in our area but we did get a bulletin for the Wing which sort of

05:30 set out some of the things that were happening, and I guess we were aware of the tension that was at the leadership level in those sectors, for example, and the parties involved there where the main tension was, and it related to how the spoils were going to be broken up in the country of Germany itself because the push was that the Russians wanted

06:00 as much as they could get. That is what we understood. It wasn't until the Moscow talks and then the Potsdam talks that things were sorted out.

What about supplies to yourself, to squadrons? Were you being well supplied?

Yes. We had regular supplies.

06:30 I think at Wunstorf a lot of it would have been perhaps flown in from England but some of it would be coming from the dairy herds and so on, because out in the country they didn't have the same devastation at all. A few might have made a few misses here and there and devastated an odd village but not to the same extent. There were no

07:00 obvious shortages to us, and in fact the meals were quite good and our conditions were very good.

Did you say earlier, I'm not sure, whether you had the WAAFs working?

No, we didn't have any. No, we didn't take any females into occupation at all but we did have our own ground staff in the squadron. They stayed with the squadron.

07:30 Have you seen the books that they subsequently wrote on our squadron? There was a book called From Bradfield to Berlin. The squadron started out in the Middle East and they had one specifically on that. I'll just show you those at the finish if you like just to give you an impression. There were some anecdotes in one of them – I haven't read them all, but they're mainly to do with the Middle

08:00 East. The squadron went up through Italy and Malta and then onto England, so that was when I was still at school.

That mission you had to fly the Auster, Montgomery. I know you mentioned it earlier. Could you tell us a bit more about that episode?

When we

08:30 came down to Lasham, the squadron leaders got a request to send two Austers across for Montgomery, over Becksberg in Germany, and of course they are small light aircraft and they haven't got much range. They drew lots and I was lucky enough to draw one of the lots and there were two of us in each aircraft. My mate Syd wasn't the one who came in my plane but he drew the lot in the other one. We each had another chap from the

09:00 squadron and we took off and we picked them up in the south of London and flew off across the channel over to a place on the coast in Belgium called Knokke for the first night and then we went over into Holland the next night and then over into Germany and delivered them the next day. That is when we then had to wait to get a trip back and we got an aircraft going to Brussels and it happened,

09:30 and we spent two nights in Brussels waiting for the next one to take us back.

You hitchhiked home?

Yes, when we could, but we were a little bit choosy I must admit. We wanted to go and see Brussels while we were there.

This was Montgomery HQ [headquarters]?

HQ, that's right, and that would be late August or early September,

10:00 '45.

Were you told exactly what they were going to use you for?

They were sort of army liaison – I think that was the term they used, and it enabled him to get around quicker. We were actually attached to the British Occupation Forces, BOF [actually BCOF: British Commonwealth Occupation Force] and

10:30 we were just attached to that force and he was in control of the whole issue. It was a quite an interesting little episode.

Had you flown an Auster before?

No. They were funny little things and they were very susceptible to wind and you used to have to, when we struck a bit of wind, one would have to hop out and run along

11:00 and hold the wing while the other taxied in because the wind would blow it around and blow them over. They were just very, very light.

Hold onto the wing while you…?

So they wouldn't …so that you could taxi them straight, otherwise the wind would blow you sideways. It was an interesting experience. They are just like the light planes they learn and fly here. Sometimes you see them flying around up above.

11:30 **They were used for surveillance?**

Army spotting, so I suppose there were army pilots who could handle them over there. They would have been used to it.

I wanted to ask you where you were on VE [Victory in Europe] Day?

I think I was in Nottingham,

12:00 which meant that we must have finished…yes, we'd finished OTU by then and I went to visit… Remember I told you this man taught us to play cricket? His brother lived in Nottingham and I went to visit them and I think it was about that time that VE Day came up but I think I finished up in London just the same.

12:30 But that was a really hilarious time. Talk about obvious relief about the whole thing – it was amazing. You can understand it too after so many years of difficulty.

What did you expect for yourself? What did you expect your prospects would be?

After that? Well, that's what I say, we were then told that we would either be going to the Middle East or onto occupation once we got to

13:00 the squadron. We were quite enthusiastic about going to the Far East at that stage but in some ways it was just as well we didn't. The dropping of the bomb just closed it right off, so I guess that's why they sent us across to occupation.

Did you want to come back and defend Australia?

We would have if we had been asked, yes. By that time the Yanks were getting well up towards Japan by then.

13:30 There wasn't that fear but they felt they still had to continue the occupation of the islands and the assault on Japan itself, so that was the sort of direction that we were indicated.

What about during that time at Brighton '43, '44 and you would have been conscious of what was happening in the Pacific?

14:00 Yes.

Did you feel that you were wasting your time?

Many times I felt we were wasting our time sitting seven months in Brighton and going hither and thither, but there was nothing we could do about it. People were asking could we go and join and finish our flying and so on but the pile up of pilots had been so immense by then that you sort of had to

14:30 take your time, but probably if I had stayed here and gone up to the Deniliquin posting I would have been up in the islands by the time I finished getting to England. That probably would have been the situation because people who went in after me were certainly up in the islands a lot earlier than I was getting to England sitting around.

15:00 We eventually came home. It was the beginning of March 1946 that we boarded an aircraft carrier, HMAS Formidable, and that was one of the best things we did because I'd had a sad record in my seamanship going over to America and then over to England – I didn't enjoy the trips at all, but with the aircraft-carrier it was

15:30 a big ship and it didn't rock and there was plenty of space to get around. In fact, we used to do exercises and we played deck hockey and it was a very pleasant experience. We came down to Gibraltar and 'round that way and then through the Suez Canal. That was quite an experience to go right through there and we struck a sandstorm in the Suez Canal and we stayed there for a day or so. And then

16:00 we came out to Ceylon and they let us off a day in Ceylon as it was then, at Colombo, and we saw another side of life there with the beggars in the streets and the thriving of people everywhere; it certainly showed up another side of life. Then we went around via Western Australia and around to Sydney,

16:30 but the most striking thing was when we were coming within the range of Australia, we got the Australian radio station. I can remember this lady was one of the announcers and I thought what a terrible twang that woman's got and it was just that we'd been accustomed to other speech for a period of about three years and you don't realise that

17:00 we've really got quite a twang about our language. I didn't realise either until I went over to America and taught for a year, and some of the kids weren't too sure of what I was saying at times, because words like 'orange' they didn't know what we meant. They called it 'awringe'; they are much broader in some of those things, and 'tomaeto' and 'tomarto',

17:30 those sort of things are very difficult to interpret. Even my Canadian grandson now, I can virtually hardly understand him when he comes on the 'phone. He's so broad whereas the other two in the family are not too bad. That's the difference we noticed when we came back within range of Australia. We eventually came 'round and berthed at Sydney; we went right past Melbourne and then we had to come

18:00 back directly into Melbourne. We were pretty glad to get home by that stage.

Who was on board that ship?

It was all 451 and 453, the two main groups, and I think there were a few other odd people. One of the other things that was happening was that, even then in March after the war finished, they were

18:30 dumping aircraft and aircraft engines off the aircraft carrier out in the middle of the ocean, just dumping them, unused engines. I've got some photographs of that going on too.

This was the cargo on board?

Yeah, a lot of the cargo but they were big ships; it was one of the main aircraft carriers. I don't know how many thousand tons it was, but it was big.

19:00 Anyway, it was a very pleasant completion to our trip.

You had lots of space on board?

Yes, tons of room. There was always something happening. It took us about twenty-odd days by the time we stopped and got right 'round but it was quite a good run.

19:30 **You went past Melbourne, past the heads, were you able to see?**

No they told us Melbourne was over there and that was it. We disembarked, they held us at Bradfield Park for a night and we all got on a train and came home. Then we had leave for about I think three weeks, something like that, and that is when I found it very hard to

20:00 sort of settle down again. A mate of mine and I decided – he lived at Mildura and we got together and went on a trip to Tasmania to try and get things out of our system a bit. Then I was discharged at the end of May '46 and then I was still a member of the education department then because that's what I was when I went away.

20:30 They then asked me to go teaching for the last six months of the year. I began at Leongatha school with my mate because he was a teacher also. It was nice to get back to the farm life and friends that you knew and try and get all the rest of it out of your system again. We used to go fishing and chased a few rabbits and things like that.

21:00 At the same time my father had a big paddock of potatoes that had to be picked up and I think the first week we were there we had to pick up five hundred bags of potatoes; it was back breaking – I didn't know I'd even lived by the end of that. It sort of got us back into the environment anyway and I enjoyed that, and when we were at school

21:30 that also brought us back to reality – we had to do preparation and so on, and at the same time I started my Bachelor of Arts course by doing one subject by correspondence. I don't know quite how I convinced myself I should do that, but it was geography and we were both doing it and we both passed it, believe it or not. That gave us a good start into our full-time study the next year. The

22:00 alternative was to go out to a country state school as a one teacher, so that was a pretty big incentive to get on with your studies.

You didn't like the idea of a one-teacher school?

Not out in the country, no.

But you'd had such good experience.

Yes I did, but I just didn't want to go that way. I don't know whether I consciously viewed it that way but I certainly had no desire to go

22:30 out to the country. In fact we were told to go to the countryside. My mate and I were told to go to the country for the six months, and in the mood that we were in, we came in and saw the education department and said we weren't going and they said, "OK, we'll send you up to Leongatha." "OK, we'll do that."

That is interesting, you had a bit of attitude?

We had a bit of get up and go.

23:00 **Why do you think that was? What was it like going from what you had experienced in the war years, the regime but also a certain amount of freedom, too, especially being a fighter pilot, that lone wolf thing, isn't it?**

The guy who had sent out the letter, we'd heard of him but I can't remember his name – I hope it doesn't offend anyone –

23:30 his name was Donovan. He was supposed to be the dictator of the education department so we both trotted in and fronted him. He ranted and raved a while. We said we are just not going, and he said OK where do you want to go? So we went back up to Leongatha. That got me back into cricket again, too, because my brothers were playing cricket because it was coming up to the summer period for cricket, so that was the encouraging part.

24:00 **Was there sufficient understanding, do you think, for returned servicemen?**

From my personal point of view I got a welcome from the local community. I had a special night and they welcomed me back and I think in the main, yes. There was great relief, of course. My elder brother was back because he'd been called

24:30 back to the farm because my father was ill. He got out in 1944 so he was back home and I think overall we were very well received.

What about your little brother, how did he cope?

I think he was a bit disappointed because he couldn't get away but he understood the situation and he had a pretty good time because they had petrol rationing and there used to be

25:00 a group of the farmer boys, they all had bikes and they used to head off to all the local dances on their bikes and they would travel for miles down the road as far as Loch, Bena from Leongatha, or across over to Mirboo. And I think when I look back on it from when I came from the farm and if I had been there all the time, apart from the

25:30 the bit of news you got in the paper and the numbers of the people who were ill and the deceased, there was very little urgency that hit you because they weren't in the zone. They knew nothing about the continued bombing of Darwin, they didn't now how close the Japanese were to coming, so it wasn't as though it was an urgent situation for them. That is my interpretation of it.

26:00 They continued their life in a reasonably straightforward manner although they did have to work a lot harder because of the people who were away, but from what I gather they enjoyed themselves over that period.

What about Syd?

He came from Newcastle and he went back and

26:30 we contacted each other for a number of years but his fiancée had been married in the meantime and he was a very sad boy for a long time when we were in Germany particularly.

Was that when he got the letter?

Yes he did, the Dear John letter, which was pretty tough. Anyway, as I say, they got back together again eventually, which was a happy ending but he was pretty devastated for a few years. He didn't ever tell me but I

27:00 reckon that he had a pretty similar reaction to my elder brother, that he didn't seem to get himself out of the situation of war at all, and I guess it was the devastation of meeting his ex-fiancée and so on who was married. She met him, but as it happened it just hadn't worked out at that stage.

27:30 After four or five years we seemed to lose touch and then there was a squadron secretary who used to put out a newsletter and one of my other air force friends found his name in the RSL [Returned and Services League] monthly and rang me and said did I know there was an association for 451? And I said,

28:00 "No I didn't." He said, "There is the secretary's address," and I wrote to him and at the same time Syd had looked it up and he had rung the Secretary, and just when he rang, the secretary said to him, "I've just had a call from a friend of yours." That was the time we both came into the association, which was rather unique, because I hadn't heard from him for ten, fifteen, maybe twenty years then. You are sort of in touch with him for a few years and then your lives

28:30 part and it is only over the last six or eight years that we have really got together. Every time we go up north when we drove up we used to call in and stay and see them. That was a good thing to bring us together again and a few others that we knew but many of them now, there are very few left to be truthful. He said I should go up to the

29:00 march last Anzac Day, which I did and he said, “I think that will be the last one of our squadron.” There were only four there when we got there. There may have been others around that didn’t come but it wasn’t a great number. There were thirty in each squadron, so I am glad I went.

Did you know any of the others?

Yes, the others were fellows that I knew, and that was the interesting thing: even though there was thirty years, forty years, fifty years

29:30 apart, it is just the same sort of thing you have lived with and it didn’t seem to make much difference. They change and you don’t. You think you don’t anyway.

The bond?

Yes, still strong as ever.

You lost a couple of mates, didn’t you?

Yes. This one when they were delivering the aircraft, I lost a mate when I was

30:00 on that Germany trip and he ran into the hill. Then this other mate who taught with me up at Leongatha, he’d bailed out that same weekend but he got away with it too. Since then there are a lot of people who were…I started to bring them together about

30:30 on my 50th birthday. We had a place down at Rosebud and I used to bring them together on my birthday or soon after as we could get together, and we kept that going for a number of years up until about ’96 I think it was. We started off with about eight or ten coming and then we are down to three. There are two who are ill at the moment, and then there’s me.

31:00 We are getting pretty short down this way too. We tended to at least keep us informed about what is happening, and who is ill and who is not and so on, which isn’t very pleasant, but at least you would like to know what’s happened. We made the effort to go up on the Anzac Day and that was quite rewarding and they had a dinner afterwards and so on.

31:30 Syd came down from Newcastle with his son, and children are now allowed to march as well.

I didn’t ask you about – you mentioned it off camera about the Lancaster coming in with the POWs [prisoner of war]. We didn’t actually talk about that, what POWs were there?

We didn’t have very much to do with it at all but from what I remember, the aircraft landed

32:00 and they probably had a look around Berlin itself. I am not sure, because that was the only eligible aerodrome for them to come to Berlin on. It was just that…I’ve got a photograph of them coming in or doing something. That is the only thing that brought it to our notice.

Why was it the only eligible aerodrome?

Well, it was the one that was closest to Berlin itself.

32:30 Remember when they had the…not the siege on Berlin…they had to fly in all the supplies? They all went through to Gatow because that is the closest aerodrome to Berlin itself. None of the others were reasonably close to be able to transport the material in.

33:00 What was the reason? There was a blockade on Berlin. I don’t know whether the Russians were involved in that or not – maybe I’m a bit biased, but there was a blockade on Berlin and they had to fly in all the supplies through Gatow and that went on for quite a few weeks, and that was the only supplies they were getting in.

Was that while you were there?

No, no. This was later.

33:30 That was the only aerodrome that was nearby to service Berlin. That was the reason they came in there I guess.

That was just one Lancaster taking a small number of POWs?

Yes, and I think there were also others there who perhaps they can take a fair few who were viewing the devastation of Berlin as well, some of the air crew who hadn’t

34:00 gone home. I don’t know all the detail about it but it excited us enough that the aircraft came in and landed.

Were there any other comings or goings of interest at the aerodrome?

No, not really. That was wintertime. No, there was nothing much doing at all.

34:30 **What were the conditions like in winter?**

It was pretty cold, a lot of snow, but it wasn't as cold as Canada I can tell you. Canada was devastatingly cold although all the barracks we had were heated, as you'd expect, whereas in England they weren't. When we had winter in England, no heat. We used to have these pot-bellied stoves, and everybody would pull their beds up and try and keep warm.

35:00 That was when we were down near Shrewsbury in Shropshire. We used to have to brush all the snow off the Miles Masters before we could fly them. Berlin itself, it didn't leave any great impression on me of any hardship being in winter, to answer your question. I didn't notice any particular hardship compared with, say,

35:30 being in Canada flying in snow banks, or in England freezing to death at night. They were the sort of impressions that we got in the various places. I convinced myself I wasn't going back to live in England anyway.

The barracks were in quite good conditions?

Yes, they were permanent Luftwaffe barracks. They were spot on. As I say, the frauleins were the ones who did all the work,

36:00 in and around the barracks, and they were very pleasant.

And the mess?

Yes, the mess was very good.

Were there supplies there left over?

I couldn't really tell you on that, but I think, probably, most of our supplies were brought in. I didn't have any contact with that at all so I really shouldn't say too much about it.

36:30 We did supplement by getting a bit of venison occasionally, that was all.

The airstrip itself, I know there were lots of junked planes around, but what about the condition of the airstrip? Was that in good condition?

Yes. All the airstrips we were on were in good condition in Germany. I don't know whether they didn't bomb them or they had repaired them but it was a fairly short time if they'd repaired them, so I guess they hadn't been damaged too much at all.

37:00 **It is surprising though isn't it?**

Yes it is. The three we went on, from Wunstorf to Gatow, were all permanent air bases for the Luftwaffe so they hadn't concentrated on them at all to try and destroy them. Perhaps they were a little bit far back to be a very valuable airport.

37:30 They would have only been used for fighter aircraft anyway – they weren't big enough to use, although the Gatow one was certainly big enough to use for multi-engine aircraft.

The Ruhr district in Germany; that was industrial?

Yes. That was down south.

Did you fly over that?

No, we weren't anywhere near that. That was pretty well pounded I think. That was where all the industrial development and so on

38:00 was taking place. Those two, particularly Wunstorf, were out in the country and it was a pleasant spot near a big lake, and a very pleasant place to live I would expect for the people around there.

38:30 **Your posting back to England – I guess you knew by then you would be on your way home pretty much?**

Yes, no doubt about that. Yes, that is true. There were pilots who had been on the squadron probably for three and four years, some of them, some of the older ones, whereas there was a bunch of us who were in much the same pattern as I was who

39:00 would replace those who wanted to get home urgently. There was a mixture of younger ones and then there was a number of older ones. They just wanted to see what was going on over there I guess. A lot of them came out of the squadron and then went back onto commercial flying, back here, when they came home.

And you weren't interested in doing that?

39:30 That is a story too. I got married. I had ideas when I came home because I was going into a university course so I decided to do that first and then I had my illnesses, and I was just wondering whether I was going to go back to teaching or not and I got married about June '51

40:00 and we went on our honeymoon up to Surfers as it was then, which was one hotel and one boarding

house I think it was, and I spent half the way up talking to the pilot and I wasn't very popular. And just finding out what the conditions were and I'd almost made up my mind to try it, but one of the difficulties was having flown single engines it's a different matter to learn to fly twin engines – there are differences, so that put me off a little bit and I went back to teaching – well

40:30 I went into Myers to try something different and then after I got permission to go back out to Swinburne, and that is where the academic area started. So yes, I did have ideas but I was somewhat dispelled I suppose you would say. It probably was pretty rude anyway to be doing that.

Tape 7

00:31 **I guess one thing we haven't discussed or we could perhaps discuss in more detail is actual flying experience. We've obviously heard about the story of the accident in the formation over Germany and just now you were telling us about your own little stunts.**

When you know you are coming towards the end of your flying career you perhaps get a little bit more reckless, I suppose you would say, and

01:00 the word went around in the mess that there were two chimneys that were out in the country a little bit that you couldn't fly through straight ahead, but you had to go through on your side, and everybody who had tried it got through OK. And it came around to my turn and I said I will have a go at it. Eventually I did one of my reckless acts and managed to get through OK. That is the sort of thing you get a bit silly when you know you are getting near the end and coming home. Probably you shouldn't but

01:30 that is what happened. A challenge is, if it's reasonable, you think well you've got the odds a bit towards you, so that was the challenge I took and it came off.

It sounds like you obviously had faith in the machines?

Yes. They were a most reliable machine, as I said before, a beautiful machine to fly. If you wanted to do it to that precision, you could do it without any difficulty at all and you always had the power to be able to do it.

02:00 When you get in lighter planes and you perhaps turn a Tiger Moth to go through that, it might not respond as quickly as you would like it to, but with the more powerful aircraft in those days it gave you the opportunity. But, of course, they are now old fashioned compared with the things that they can do with aircraft now. Syd comes down and they have the air shows down here at Avalon,

02:30 and he comes down every second year and we go down and catch up with the modern machinery and long about things a bit, and perhaps wonder why we lasted as long as we did when we see some of the old things flopping along.

You flew a number of different marks of the Spitfire didn't you?

Yes.

How much did they improve in that period that you were flying them?

The first one I flew was 650 horsepower,

03:00 and they used to have…they either had a tapered wing or a cut off wing and the tapered wing gave you more lift and therefore it was easier to fly but the cut wing gave you more ability to turn, because you didn't have the drag into the wing. The first ones I flew were the 2's and they

03:30 were just the normal long wing and they had a speed of about 400 on the flat and level, and when we went up to the OTU they gave us 5's and 9's and there was a variety of either cut wing or long wing and they had motors closer to 1000 and 1200 – I think there was a difference

04:00 between them with something like 1000 horsepower compared to 1200. And when we came down to the 14's, the five bladed ones, they had not Rolls Royce motors, they had Griffin motors, and they were 2100 so there was a tremendous difference in the power, and that is why you had to be terribly careful taking off because the torque was just so great it would pull you right off the runway, so if you didn't trim them correctly you were in big trouble.

04:30 They didn't lose a great deal of manoeuvrability and of course they gained a good deal in speed with that additional horsepower, but they were still the same gentle aircraft to fly.

And in terms of the cockpit itself, that hadn't changed?

No, they hadn't changed really. There was no change in the cockpit. The only thing was the nose got bigger so you could see less, but when you're flying straight and level you've got perfect vision.

05:00 We loved the old Spit no matter what form it was in.

Can you describe the cockpit for us?

Yes. It was a mass of dials, I guess, but the main ones were your straight and level indicator and your horizon where you could pick up…the sort of thing you had to use in cloud, to fly by those sort of things which I never ever liked much, because

05:30 while you flew by these in cloud, your instincts told you that something else was happening and that is why so many people crash. Your instincts feel that you are turning around or doing something like this but you've just got to be steadfast on your horizon and your indicators. You had your rev meters, you had your navigation compasses and

06:00 temperature gauges, a mass of gauges in front of you, but the main ones – as I say there were only about three or four that were main ones that you used. You had your stick, the joystick, in the middle and then you had two rudders like that and you had your

06:30 wheels on this side so you used to have to change to take up your wheels and then you had flaps and things like that to put down, so it was quite complicated. It is just like anything, like driving a car – once you get used to it you can become quite natural. There was only one time, it was in Canada and I had just about finished my last flight in the Harvard and I almost forgot to put my

07:00 wheels down, and that was a no-no; that was the finish. Anyway I got away with it so it was alright.

What sort of guns would you normally have on the Spitfire?

We had…there were 303 machine-guns in the early models and then they had four cannons, and we used those on OTU practice and so on, so that was the normal armoury, but they also could carry

07:30 light bombs and the squadron towards the end of the war, on D-Day, they were bombing the rocket sites over there. They did quite a bit of that, so they told me. That was the extent of the armoury that they could carry, plus long range tanks if they were going further.

08:00 **How were you trained in gunnery?**

They had a gunnery range and they used to take us out there for live firing at the range and they had bombing runs too that we trained on and you would also have firing targets and you would get your results back on that. But as well as that when we used to train in dog fights they would

08:30 load the cameras and you would get your camera results back. It was as realistic as they could give us at that time.

Were they cine cameras?

Yes, in those days.

So they would show you the actual footage?

That's right, yes, to see whether you missed or whether you hit or what was going on. It was quite good.

How did you go with that?

I think I was average. I wasn't any star at that.

09:00 I got by quite well.

When you were flying over Germany would you be armed at all times?

No we weren't. Sometimes we wished we were but we weren't.

If you had been why would you?

You get that information at times and particularly with restrictions we were under in Berlin, but

09:30 obviously you wouldn't be allowed to do it.

But you would have been able to go out and have a bit of target practice?

Yes.

Did anyone ever do that on the sly?

No, well not as far as I knew. I don't think that they ever armed them up or allowed them to be armed up.

What can you tell us about the squadron itself? You joined fairly late in the piece; as you say, they had been to the Middle East, Italy, up to England.

10:00 **How many of the older guys were there when you joined?**

Our squadron leader when I joined was the squadron leader who was originally in the Middle East; he came up in the Middle East and then took over the squadron before they left the Middle East, and he

went right through Italy, Malta and then into England and while they were waiting for D Day and so on,

10:30 and he was a magnificent leader and he had just been going onto the Far East and I think he was the one pushing that issue at the time, but as soon as it was clear that he wasn't going there he went off home. The two flight lieutenants had been through a good deal of it and there were probably, out of the twenty-eight or thirty,

11:00 there were probably six or eight others that joined in various other times, so that meant about probably something like 50/50 of reasonably new and then other mature people. Some of them got to Germany and then for some reason would drop out and wanted to go back home

11:30 quicker than they thought. The ground crew also followed through and a lot of them stayed on until the end.

How were the new guys like yourself received by the veterans, as it were?

We were quite well received. There wasn't any animosity at all and we were pretty enthusiastic and we were pretty well accepted. We were all disappointed that there

12:00 were delays; that was really the main thing that upset most of us.

Were they likely to offer advice though, in that way? Were they…?

If you had any problems with flying or if you had any questions to ask they were very forthcoming, the majority of them, but by that time most of us had four hundred or five hundred hours and in the main probably a third of it on Spits,

12:30 although not a lot on the latest one – most of us were reasonably good pilots by then. Although there was one guy, he would always look and see whether he was on the formation list and hope he wasn't flying next to you.

There had been some trouble had there?

No he was just…he wasn't a good formation flyer, going in and out towards your wing and all the rest of it.

13:00 He was supposed to be keeping straight. Particularly as I say I used to have the job of flying number two to the boss. Most of the others had…The front guy on each side had only one to his right and one behind him, and the same all the way down his wing, and the same on the other side. The guys in the middle row where I sat, I had one

13:30 in front of me who I had to follow, one behind me and one each side of me. You've only got one bloke to make a mess of it and it can get a little bit hairy. It was really a traumatic sort of exercise at any time, and you used to come down and you'd be sort of wet with perspiration, because it was serious stuff.

How many of those flights or those sorts of exercises would you have done?

14:00 We used to do them probably every second day when we were on occupation. It just depended on the circumstances. We used to go down to the flight every morning, and depending on what was required, we may even go out in the morning one day and the afternoon the next, something like that. You would fly, depending on the state of the aircraft and all the rest of it, probably –

14:30 we used to fly over the weekends at times too – five or six days you'd have probably eight or ten flights. Depending how long they were, there might be some reason to do different things and let people go out in just a small group of a flight of four and do some work, but it was fairly constant, and then you may get a few days off,

15:00 two or three days off.

How does one wind down after those stressful exercises?

With a beer. It was…even though I say that, you used to always be very careful that you didn't drink late if you were flying the next day. I used to try and relax, I used to have

15:30 football or something like that. I remember playing hockey in Germany I think it was – we had a hockey match. I used to play a bit of hockey when I was at the uni; they had the equipment there. We used to play rugby, which I didn't play, and when we were in England in Lasham when I first came down, they had cricket matches there. You would do those sorts of things for general sport and recreation but it was just a matter of

16:00 cooling down or doing something just a little bit different to relax yourself. Again you didn't sort of consciously feel that you had to do something, but I guess you sort of slowed down a bit just to get yourself back to normal. But it used to push your blood pressure up a bit I can assure you.

I am sure there were those…it sounds like you tempered your

16:30 **drinking but I am sure there were others who got stuck into it. Was that a problem though, perhaps with flying the next day or…?**

I think I told you when we left Germany, they really had a big party in the 453 Squadron, and nobody was game to get anywhere near anybody else when they took off. One of them even got bogged down in Holland when he got there so he wasn't in too good a shape anyway.

17:00 He must have sobered up a bit when he hit the cloud in England. Some of them used to drink fairly heavily. I think there is a report in here and I've got a cutting when it reported my bail out and the Englishman came out, and there was another story at the top and it compared my bail out with a guy who had

17:30 been staying in a two storey barracks and his mate woke up in the room and found him walking out the window. He wondered what he was doing but he obviously wanted to go to the toilet and he took the wrong door and he finished up, fortunately he landed in the snow and his mate went down to see where he was and he was wandering back up. He said you had better get back to bed – amazing. So some of them used to drink fairly heavily.

18:00 I guess I had my times but it wasn't when there was any danger of flying. I never had any that interfered with my flying at all. It's a matter of survival. You can drive a car and get killed if you drink, and it's that much worse if you are in the air.

So what would happen? You'd have a few drinks and would there be singing?

18:30 We used to have our squadron song to the tune of Lily Marlene and people would get to and beef that out, and then the old blokes would start to talk about what went on and so on. And people would talk about what happened during the day or something of that nature, or if somebody got some news from home which most of us used to share anything that happened. It was a real camaraderie and it was

19:00 the sort of thing that lasts for a lifetime. It's as though you can meet the guy fifty or sixty years later and the same feeling is there. You don't sort of lose it, well in the main. Syd said there was one guy that he looked up and he had changed quite significantly. I don't quite know why and he didn't know why but in the main we've met others who, the ones that I keep in touch with and they're all exactly the same.

19:30 **Do you remember the words to the song?**

No, I can't remember them all. It was a skit on 'Third Boyfriend' who was in the air force anyway, and something about 'by the barrack door

20:00 and along came the Spits', and it worked all that in, and it was quite interesting but it is funny that you can't remember it all. It was quite a jolly song when it was on.

Did the squadron have a motto?

No, they just had the…No, they didn't have a particular motto, but

20:30 the secretary to the squadron said in his last newsletter that he had been trying to get approval of what to put on the crest and he had suggested something and they had to get particular approval from England and he couldn't get it, so we finished up without any motto. The one they were using they didn't approve, but I don't know what that was, so he was a bit upset about all that.

21:00 It is too late. Things have gone by now.

Then there was the kangaroo?

Yes, it was the symbol whereas it was something in Latin that they usually have. I'm no Latin scholar.

Just thinking you showed us your photo albums earlier and there was a mascot apparently.

That was just a dog that we picked up

21:30 at the drome and he was living there so we all adopted him. Toby. Fortunately he kept out of the way of the aircraft so he survived.

He never went up?

Nobody ever got to take him up. He used to hang around the barracks more. He was quite a friendly dog.

Did anyone have any particular rituals or lucky charms or any of that sort of thing?

No, not that I knew of.

22:00 I didn't have one. I think with the bomber boys they were in the air longer; they had a much longer period of tension whereas our time was pretty well occupied. They might have hung their rabbit's foot on their gun or the dashboard or the navigator's desk, but we didn't.

22:30 I didn't know anybody who did either.

Should we flash forward? You had us up to the point earlier in the day where you were at Swinburne.

I think if we just go back to the stage where, by this stage in the ’50s I had resolved in my own mind just where I wanted to go and I determined because I had been given the opportunity

23:00 I should do or I am going to do to the best of my ability and that was the tremendous drive that I had. I finished off my commerce degree because I was wanting to go into the accounting area and that was in 1957, and then in 1961 the job came up from RMIT and I had built up Swinburne

23:30 from about twelve students to seven hundred and fifty and introduced these courses. When I went to RMIT there was an established part-time school, as I indicated, with about three and a half thousand in it, in the business school. And then I introduced a full-time day course and a part-time day course and in contrast to just having accounting

24:00 we had about nine courses and some others were introduced: real estate valuations, public administration, local government and then there were three post diploma courses, as they were at that stage, in taxation, finance and I think public administration. They were able to go up to an advanced diploma.

24:30 That was a fairly busy time and then the Victorian Institute of Colleges came in which was a central body to introduce degrees into all the senior technical colleges including RMIT so I had a good… Being the dean of the faculty at that stage I went through being the head of the department and head of school, and dean of the faculty because as it grew it just became

25:00 too big to handle from one point. At the same time I continued study and in 1963 I took out my Bachelor of Education after doing that part-time. Then as the jobs came up, I found that in order to keep them I had to keep my study going, so in 1965 I entered an MBA [Masters of Business Administration] at Melbourne. I did that on a part-time basis whereas the majority did it on a full-time.

25:30 That was a pretty tough one, but I did alright out of that because I won a Melbourne University prize in the first part of that. I finished that in 1967 and about that time there was a letter came for me from a chap in America. He said he was coming out to do a sabbatical and he wanted to come to Australia and spend his sabbatical teaching.

26:00 I didn’t have much to offer him as far as a full-time position was concerned but we said we would try and help him. That was probably the best thing I ever did because this chap came out from Albany in New York State and he taught with us for a year. Most Americans are not modest, I’ll say, but he was a fairly modest chap and particularly when he met you and got to know you.

26:30 He was one of the funniest men I ever met in my life, he really was. He was the guy his family had the farm down on the Hudson and that is where the connection came. He came out for a year and I had finished my MBA by that time and he invited me back with my family for a year in ’68, ‘69 so we took three children over there and had a wonderful time and I taught there for a year,

27:00 in this college which was part of the New York State University. By that time I had finished my commerce and I had specialised in accounting and I started to write books and articles and in the finish I was co-author of seven books in accounting. This drive just kept me doing things and I really felt I had to produce which

27:30 didn’t always make me very popular at home, but anyway that was the way it was. We went to America and came back via England again and back home, and in 1970 I took the job of setting up and gaining degree recognition for RMIT in the business area and we were one of the first to get it.

28:00 That opened out a lot of things; it opened out consultancies for me and I got a consultancy to…we started off in Singapore examining a college in Singapore for its business, the work and so on, and so it was a new era that was opening out as well which was very interesting. We had about six weeks in Singapore and then it was controlled from the Philippines.

28:30 We’d fly to the Philippines for a start to get a brief and come back and then we reported back to the Philippines. That was an era that started me off on what I thought was going to be a good consulting situation. The only difference was that my boss needed a Deputy Director and he said, “I am not asking you to come over but you can make up your own mind.” And of course he didn’t really leave me much option.

29:00 By that time the business school had gone through from the department to the school and then to a faculty and we broke up all these courses under heads of department. I think we had something like two thousand students then – that’s in the daytime apart from the evening students – and about eighty staff so it was a big operation by then. Then the boss said, “You are the one to do it if you want to.”

29:30 I was deputy and I had the job of looking after all the faculties in the advanced college as well as looking after the finance and administration in the central college. There were about twelve hundred staff at that stage. If they couldn’t convince their dean that they wanted to do something, they would come across and see me. I had a couple of pretty good secretaries who kept

30:00 me well shielded. That was an interesting experience and at the same time the head of the institute was

coming up and a lot of them after about 1970 were given full-time off to do a doctorate and I realised each time that I had to have my qualifications up to a level to get the job. I applied in 1972 or ’73 to take time off to get a doctorate and

30:30 I was knocked back by the boss. He wouldn’t let me go. Instead he went off on a world trip for the next year. Anyway, I was still determined to finish my doctorate. I actually missed out on the directorship. Brian Smith, he would have been there when you were there, he was a great bloke and a good bloke to work with. I probably wouldn’t have been here because it was a pretty devastating sort of job. Not only did you have to do all the day work,

31:00 you had to attend all the functions at night and so on. Anyway, he did a marvellous job and he left and a new director came in, as they were still called at that time, and he gave me time off and I went out to Monash and did the full-time requirement – that had me off for six months – and I finished my doctorate in 1983 just prior to my retirement. I had another objective in mind because I

31:30 was still wanting to do…I didn’t want to get out and retire at sixty. I wanted to get into consultancy so I found that was basically an essential to do to get into consultancy. So that was the story. RMIT was a very busy place but a very homely sort of place at that time. We didn’t have a lot of money but we had a lot of success in many areas because of the nature

32:00 of the courses and the nature of the staff that we had, and it was a very satisfying effort so I felt that I had achieved what I had aimed to do right from way back, so I left in a pretty satisfactory frame of mind even though I didn’t get the top job at the time. So that was the period at RMIT, but also I was unable to…he wouldn’t allow me to go on consultancy which upset me as well but I couldn’t say too much about that.

32:30 I used to go off to conferences and I went to a conference in Vienna. My specialisation in my doctorate was space management because RMIT had a terrible problem with space management and I did a comparative study between RMIT and Curtin which was a new institution and it was a very interesting study and I finished that just as I left.

33:00 Overall I was very satisfied with what I contributed at RMIT and I felt that I left on pretty good terms with everybody concerned. So that was that phase of my life.

The business faculty, was that on Swanston Street?

That moved around. I started off in building 1 when I came in, and we used to do all the lecturing up around there and pick up rooms wherever we could,

33:30 and that was one of the things that used to really get me upset, and then we moved across to over Swanston Street. That was where the business school would’ve been when you were there I think, and subsequently it has moved down to a major building down in Bourke Street. That was a really big expansion and they bought up the old Capitol Theatre. So they spent a lot of money.

34:00 The other factor was that the business course that I set up and the business degree that came under me, was expanded out to all the other colleges and again, that was a good deal of satisfaction from my point of view, basically an accounting course. They went off into other areas in other colleges but the basic course was the accounting course, which had the numbers. We had equally or bigger drawing power than any of the universities

34:30 which again was a pretty good result. That only came from the statistics that were on applications and that was a big job when we used to get hundreds and hundreds more than we could take. There was a lot of disappointment in the people who were applying. Anyway, that was a satisfying phase although a very busy one as you could imagine. That was 1983 I left, and then

35:00 I thought I would take life a bit quietly for a while but it didn’t last long and I used to do some part-time lecturing at Monash, where I did my doctorate, and my supervisor and I used to do consulting from Monash. And he involved me because my background in financial administration was a fairly unique one in that you would go into a tertiary institution

35:30 and I used to be able to find out where the difficulties were in relation to their financial problems. One of the problems in academic life you would probably appreciate is that those that get pushed up into – this was a few years ago – up into administrative positions came through from the teaching and academic area, but their background in finance and business and so on was pretty limited. At least I had some background with the Myers area

36:00 and then, having taught accounting and all the rest of it for years I was able to pick up those jobs. We used to do consultancies also outside Australia. My supervisor was connected with the United Nations, UNESCO [United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation], and he did a lot of overseas work and we did a conference and investigation over in Sri Lanka as it was then, and

36:30 so we got around a bit, not only in there but around Melbourne and each of the other areas. So that started us off and by 1987 we said we are really doing a lot of work and we really haven’t got any basis on which to gain much out of it so we established a company and set up offices out of Caulfield just opposite

37:00 the station at Caulfield in the Caulfield Institute, as it was then. We started that in 1988 and in 1989 I was back to full-time work. In 1990 my wife became ill with cancer and it was a fairly stressful time and

37:30 at the end of 1990 we were both working part-time and I think we pooled about half a million between us for the year in part-time work. It was funny - he was a real academic; he was a nice fellow and from an educational background and he had some idea of finance but he used to leave the financing to me, and in 1990

38:00 he would say, “Work it all out.” and I would work it out and he’d look at it and he would say, “We’ll double it, double the fee we are going to charge.” and he would double it and we would get it. That was the sort of atmosphere we went into. Of course, we became terribly busy and after each one we would get another job and another job. Fortunately at the end of 1991 when I first qualified, he got a request from UNESCO to go full-time on a job up

38:30 in Pakistan and he asked me about it. I said, “You go if that is what you want to do.” So I ran out the lease that we had on this building and I came back and brought it back home and then I controlled what I did myself. I did mainly…I suppose I had been into almost every institution in and around Melbourne, and we had jobs up in Darwin and the

39:00 Gold Coast, and we really were humming along. When you start to sit back and look I thought I had better still control this. It went on ‘til year 2000 and then I finally put a clamp on it. It went from – ’88 we formed the company, and so it went on for twelve years. It was a very satisfying period and it also got us around.

39:30 It gave me a little bit of pocket money and things and also a way ‘round the tax and I should have been able to do that if I was in the accounting field. It was rather funny because at RMIT my son went through accounting there at RMIT and my second daughter went through accounting – my second child was a daughter, and

40:00 the third child is a daughter and she said, “I am not going to go through accounting.” And so she went through transport economics but she would have turned out to be the best accountant of the lot. She is a very precise lady and plans everything and so on, but anyway she went through there. The kids used to be embarrassed because we had a couple of characters on the staff and they would get up and they would say, “Well now we want to know what to do

40:30 with this particular problem.” And he would look around and he would say, “Now young Hulls, you should know.” And of course the kids used to shrink down and hate it. But anyway, we all got through and so that started them off. My daughter who had gone to Canada, she met her husband in one of the big accounting firms when she went out to work, and my son is a director in a finance and financial planning company and my youngest daughter

41:00 is down at Mornington, decided to go into hospital administration so she’s doing work in that, so they all sort of branched out, but it is rather funny how things work out. So that is the picture of my life. I continued to play cricket all the way through

41:30 with one club for about fifty years and I stopped playing cricket in 2000 when I stopped work, and my age was 76 and I had been playing cricket for fifty six years I think, so that was the game I loved and I still do.

Apparently. Did you bat or bowl?

I batted and I did a bit of bowling in my early days. I got a couple of centuries and I captained a premiership team down here in the Heidelberg district. It was a very interesting part of my life.

42:00 I enjoyed it.

INTERVIEW ENDS